

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR SEPTEMBER 5, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Psalm 84 THE COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

- ¹How lovely is your *dwelling place*,
Lord of heavenly forces!
- ² My very being longs, even yearns,
for the Lord's courtyards.
My heart and my body
will rejoice out loud to the living God!
- ³ Yes, the sparrow too has found a home there;
the swallow has found herself a nest
where she can lay her young beside your altars,
Lord of heavenly forces, my king, my God!
- ⁴ Those who live in your house are truly happy;
they praise you constantly. *Selah*
- ⁵ Those who put their strength in you are truly happy;
pilgrimage is in their hearts.
- ⁶ As they pass through the *Baca Valley*,
they make it a spring of water.
Yes, the early rain covers it with blessings.
- ⁷ They go from strength to strength,
until they see the supreme God in Zion.
- ⁸ Lord God of heavenly forces,
hear my prayer;
listen closely, Jacob's God! *Selah*
- ⁹ Look at our shield, God;
pay close attention to the face of your anointed one!
- ¹⁰ Better is a single day in your courtyards
than a thousand days anywhere else!
I would prefer to stand outside the entrance of my
God's house
than live comfortably in the tents of the wicked!
- ¹¹ The Lord is a sun and shield;
God is favor and glory.
The Lord gives—doesn't withhold!—good things
to those who walk with integrity.
- ¹² Lord of heavenly forces,
those who trust in you are truly happy!

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The Psalms are an ancient prayer book, or hymnal for worship, from the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Eugene Peterson reminds us that in many translations these poem-hymns can sound smooth and polished. But as prayers that's just too perfect. Prayer is elemental. It's how we get everything in our lives out in the open before God. In Hebrew, the Psalm are earthy and rough. They are not genteel. They're nakedly honest, so disturbingly real that they are ways in which we can see ourselves, and express our own prayers and soul-thoughts. (adapted from the introduction to the Psalms in *The Message*)

dwelling place :: it's thought that the Psalmist is talking about the Temple in Jerusalem, the place where the presence of God dwells, where heaven and earth meet.

Baca Valley :: It's not known where this valley is exactly. The importance seems to be that it represents an arid, lonesome, achingly dry place to which only God can bring blessing.

The city of God is safe not because it's a sphere of innocence, protected by unscalable walls and sophisticated security systems. It's safe because it's the sphere where God's help is available. There's a history to this helping, with centuries of documentation. God isn't a desperately conceived new remedy but a tried-and-true help. The verb for "help" is used in verse 5, where I translate it "God as your service." God knows the kind of world we live in, and God knows how vulnerable we are in that world. God anticipates our needs and plans ahead. God's there right on time to help, there at the "crack of dawn."

In Romans 6, Paul moves to a new concern. He has been writing about God's life; now he's writing about *our* lives, and the new lives we live on the basis of justification. ...

¹ So what are we going to say? Should we continue ~~sinning~~ so grace will multiply?
² Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? ³ Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore, we were buried together with him through **BAPTISM** into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. ⁵ If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his.
⁶ This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, ⁷ because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him.

¹⁰ He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. ¹¹ In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Psalm 84 paints a poetic picture of what it means to live a life of integrity or happiness. How would you describe such a life in your own words?
- Paul talks of baptism as a death to an old life and a birth to a new life, like going down into the water to drown and being lifted up to a new existence. How have you experience baptism (or daily faith) as this sort of resurrection? If not, why not?
- To what do you want to die? For what do you want to live more fully?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

But one thing he has said has created a problem before he even begins this new subject. In emphasizing the action of God, Paul has said that God does *everything* and we do *nothing*. He has excluded from justification any work we might do or any merit we might claim. No scheme of self-improvement, no mystical experience, no high-minded religion is worth anything. God did everything on his own initiative and treated *all* people, religious and pagan, equally. As sinners.

Having said this, how can Paul then tell us to do something? If nothing we do makes any difference, why do *anything*? If our sin doesn't turn God away from us, why not sin? If nothing we do can make God withdraw his offer of salvation, why not live it up?

Paul answers by stating that the new life of holiness is the sequel to the act of justification. From this point on, every sin is a contradiction of who we are, and therefore is destructive to the new life growing within us. (adapted from a note on Romans 6 in *The Message*)

Sin:: The word in Greek (*hamartia*) means a loss (forfeiture of failure) because of not hitting the target. It is composed of two words *ha* – meaning “not” and *-mar+ia* meaning “a part, or share of.” It's most often translated as sin. But we seem to overlook the deep notion that *hamartia* is missing the mark that God intends for us, and thus not being part of, or sharing in the gift of life/community/good-stuff that God intends for us. It's much deeper than just a bad action. If God is life and love, then *sin* is the state of being cut off; having no part of life and love.

BAPTISM:: The word in Greek (**BAPTIZO**) means to submerge or immerse. It can mean to submerge something to clean it, (like a bowl or cup); it also can means to ceremonially dip an object or person in a ritual. It also means to submerge entirely, as in “to drown.” All of those connotations are present within our use of the word to baptize as the sacrament (visible action of an invisible truth or promise) of joining or belonging to the family of God in Christ: the Church.