

WEEK NINETEEN
DAY TWO

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Psalm 84:10

For a day	יוֹם <i>yowm</i>	– a day
in your courts	חֵצֵר <i>chatser</i>	– a yard enclosed by a fence, a court
is better	טוֹב <i>towb</i>	– good, welfare, bountiful, joyful, kindly, most pleasant
than a thousand elsewhere.	אֶלֶף <i>'eleph</i>	– a thousand
I would rather	בָּחַר <i>bachar</i>	– select, choose, decide for
be a doorkeeper	סָפֵף <i>caphaph</i>	– to wait at the threshold; be a doorkeeper
in the house	בַּיִת <i>bayith</i>	– house, dwelling habitation
of my God	אֱלֹהִים <i>'elohiym</i>	– (plural) can mean rulers, judges; in this case the supreme God
than dwell	דוּר <i>duwr</i>	– remain, dwell
in the tents	אֹהֶל <i>'ohel</i>	– tent, covering
of wickedness.	רֶשַׁע <i>resha'</i>	– a moral wrong, iniquity, wickedness

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I love C. H. Spurgeon, and I love his paraphrase of this verse:

“God's worst is better than the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury. “

Under the most favorable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. True believers know by experience the joys that worldlings will never fathom: to dwell in the knowledge of His love and sacrifice, to exchange all kinds of fears for His blessed peace, to trust in His faithfulness, to finally find a sense of belonging and home, the meaningfulness and fulfillment in service to God and others, the power of the Spirit applying precious truth to our souls, and the increasing sense of wholeness as He restores His image upon us. We have experienced Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life—nowhere else will do.

There is a point of comparison the Psalmist makes that should be pondered in today's culture: the house of the Lord in comparison to the tents of wickedness.

Days in God's courts are days of hearing the Word, of repenting, of believing, of praise and adoration, of communion of the saints and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of revival, of service—of preparation for heaven.

Days in the tents of wickedness are days of pleasure, of money making, of harvest, of traveling amid beauties of nature, of recreation and leisure activities and self-focus.

I wonder how many could honestly say that one day of gathering with God's people to worship Him is better than a thousand days of other pursuits? Was the psalmist using hyperbole? Maybe, but don't shrug off his point: the root of all wickedness lies in shunning fellowship with God. The Psalmist's greatest pleasure of enjoying God in the company of God's people is greater than anything that the world has to offer. If we can't join him in these feelings, maybe we need to re-examine our values!

~Jeanine Dungan

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This verse presents us with a choice between living within the boundaries of God's law (within the walls of His heavenly courts) and living outside of it (in tents of our own fashioning). Our narrator chooses the former. In fact, our narrator would rather live SO within God's boundaries that he's at the threshold of God's very house, considering that "confining" space far better than having a tent to himself. Not only is dwelling in someone's doorway quite constricting, but also being a doorkeeper is not exactly a comfortable position. You've got to be outside in all weather, no matter how horrible and dreary, and greet people from all sorts of places, even ones you may not like very much.

So, in essence, the writer is saying he'd rather be uncomfortable for the Lord and uncomfortable in His service than comfortably lounge, and remain, in the idleness of the world or the moral wrong it praises. Why does he say this? Well, you see that term "better?" Well, in the Hebrew, that word means "good in the widest possible sense." It's not just good for the heart, or soul, or body to be in the courts of the Lord, but good for EVERY SINGLE PART OF YOU. One day—just one—within the boundaries of the Lord is better than one thousand days doing, and going, wherever you please. Not many of us believe that, do we? It's hard not to long for the apparent safety and shelter of a tent when the clouds are rolling in and you're being pelted with rain. Trust me, I know this from experience—it's awful. Weather like that will come; discomfort will arise from doing what is right. Jesus even told us so.

But, during these moments—days, months, years—we must take the attitude of Peter. When many disciples turned back and didn't follow Christ anymore, He asked the Twelve if they wanted to leave as well. And Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). When faced with the choice of following Jesus and "living his own life," Peter's baffled by it. Choose? Why? Nothing, nobody, gives what you give. No one compares to You! Now Peter didn't wake up believing this—he began believing slowly, and, bit by bit, with every miracle, Peter began to know, for sure, that Jesus was Who He claimed to be.

The author's statement in this verse is a bold one, much like Peter's: the briefest time within God's boundaries and in God's presence, is THE BEST THING. The absolute, unwavering, hands-down BEST. What a confident statement about living within the boundaries of God. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8), for "in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

~Joanna Toso

WEEK NINETEEN
DAY FIVE

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Nothing compares to our God. To dwell with Him is to find all that is good. The temporary pleasure and deceitful ease that may come from dwelling in sin can't hold a candle to the wonder of being right with God through Christ. Hebrews 11 provides a long list of others who believed as the Psalmist. One example is Moses, who chose "rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (Hebrews 11:25-26).

It's not that those who choose to live like Psalm 84:10 are lumps on a log while they are here in this world. Hebrews 11:32-34 describes them like this:

"And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight."

Many suffered greatly for God's Kingdom rather than enjoy the pleasures of this world. Hebrews 11:38 describes them as "those of whom the world was not worthy."

Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Choose this day whom you will serve (Joshua 24:15). Lord, let our whole hearted answer be You, rather than the world or self! Let Hebrews 11:16 be true of us:

"But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.
Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,
for he has prepared for them a city."

~Charlotte Travis

