

## The End of the World

### Psalm 84 (NIV)

*For the director of music. According to gittith. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.* <sup>1</sup> How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! <sup>2</sup> My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. <sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. <sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. <sup>6</sup> As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. <sup>8</sup> Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. <sup>9</sup> Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. <sup>10</sup> Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. <sup>11</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. <sup>12</sup> LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Back in February, you may remember we tried something new called “The Great Multitude Challenge.” The idea behind it was to encourage everyone to be here in worship to give us a small preview of the great multitude people that are in heaven worshiping God and that we will join in when we get there. Then COVID happened, and it drastically changed that vision. Basically, “The Great Multitude Challenge” was kind of dead. It was disappointing to say the least. And I remember expressing my disappointment over this, and the phrase was said, “It’s not the end of the world.” COVID raged, livestreams failed, a problem we still don’t have a real solution for and I just pray it works each week. “Well, it’s not the end of the world.” Then add an earthquake, murder hornets, wildfires, and COVID cases spiking again. Now more than one of us is honestly asking, “Is it the end of the world?”

When you look at what God has to say about the end of the world, we are certainly living in the end times, but “It’s not the end of the world.” No trumpets. No sun extinguished, all the stars are not falling out of the sky. It’s not the end of the world yet. But would it be so bad if it was?

Times of trial and stress like what we are experiencing right now serve at least one good purpose: they make us long for something better. I want a life without COVID-19, without wearing a mask in public places or gloves while serving the Lord’s Supper. I want to shake hands and give hugs without it weighing on my conscience or theirs that we might give the other person a serious illness. I want everyone to be able to come to church in person without feeling like they are risking their lives or the lives of others. I want to never have to worry about whether or not people will get to worship today and hear what God has done and is doing for them all depending on whether or not our livestream works. I want for me and all of you not to be horribly stressed out with the constant changes that we are undergoing. I don’t want any of you to not be able to work, to lose your jobs, your home, any of that. And I want the ground under our feet to always be stable and never shift, not to see hornets that are nearly the size of my palm, or breathe in the smoke for wildfires that threaten people’s lives. I want heaven.

This is exactly what the psalmist is expressing when he says: “How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” (verses 1-2) It’s these thoughts that make me long for the end of the world. Let’s be done with this earthly pilgrimage. Let’s just be with God, nestled with him like the sparrow and the swallow have nests with the Lord. I want to be safe and secure, to be happy and without the enormous stress of everyday life, to just praise God every single day with all of the great multitude in heaven.

But it’s not the end of the world. So, how do we get through these end times? “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.” (verses 5-7) We go forward to heaven each day by the strength that God gives us.

As each day goes on, I’m sure that you too end up in those places where you are exhausted – mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually. You wonder how you can keep going. You think, maybe you even say out loud, that you cannot go any longer. Yet, the day ends, and you get up again the next day. The days keep coming – one after another. It’s not the end of the world. This is the Lord giving you strength. He maintains your body and its life that it actually wakes up the next day – even when it’s exhausted, hurting, achy, and worn out. He gives you the strength to go one more day...and then one more...and then one more. He keeps giving you strength until the day your end does come and you appear before God in Zion.

So we pray: "Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob." (verse 8) Give me strength for one more day. Get me through this one. You have gotten me through all the other days already, and some of those days were so very dark and troubling. Yet you give me the strength to go one more. You are our sun, the light that brightens us each day and gets us up. You are our shield, protecting us from how many other bad things and catastrophes that could strike us but don't. And we know that you will listen to this prayer and take care of us because "the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." (verse 11b)

My walk and your walk is blameless because of Jesus. He lived perfectly for us under God's law. He never gave up. He pressed on every day of his life from birth to his cross of Calvary. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for his Father to take that cup of suffering from him, but asked that the Father's will, not his will, be done. After the angels comforted him and strengthened him, he pressed on to the cross. As God gave him strength, Jesus pressed on for us so that his life would be substituted for ours – his perfection now ours through his gift of baptism, his suffering and death paid for our forgiveness, wiping out our debt of sin, all the times when our walk in life was not blameless and we dwelled in the tents of the wicked.

Because our hope for heaven rests entirely on what Jesus did for us, this is a hope that cannot be taken away. Heaven is ours, and we will dwell in the Lord's house forever. So we can and do joyously yearn for that day, looking forward to the end of the world. We look forward to joining in that great multitude praising Jesus Christ, our Lamb. This day is going to be so lovely when all of this pain and suffering and hardships are all over.

Until then, Lord, give me trust in you. Strengthen me to wake up and continue each day. Keep before me the wonderful place in heaven that you have prepared for me. Keep that joy on my mind each and every day to press on knowing that the day will come, the end of the world will come, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

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