



EPILOGUE

God's Dwelling Place

Psalm 84: 1-4

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. 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, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

Dear Opal and Friends,

This morning as I was reading my devotional from Psalm 84, the Spirit urged me to pen my thoughts in a letter to you knowing in advance that I would fully realize it would remain unread because of God having called you home before Thanksgiving.

However, no matter how frequently I labeled this beseeching as nothing but a senseless act and a figment of my imagination due to your absence, strong whispers kept going through my mind with such insistence that I now find this old girl's fingers flying over the keyboard.

Perhaps, this is the last message the Lord wanted me to deliver on your behalf to everyone still walking the earthly paths as a missive of encouragement to finish the race set before them so that, like you, one day they too will claim God's dwelling place as their eternal home.

Certainly, as this writer became enticed with the description in verses 1-4 from Psalm 84, the beauty of the language that depicted heaven was so intimate and inviting that my soul literally cried out for more; especially given the promise from God that, as a Christian, I am sealed for all eternity; meaning that nothing can separate me from his mighty hand.

Opal, since no mind can conceive what God has in store for those who love him, it leaves mere humans striving all their days to paint visual images in their mind of the beauty that encompasses every space of heaven.

Although no one has ever returned to describe in great detail the radiance of the celestial city that is God's dwelling place, most people contemplate its physical appearance that awaits with uncertainty. And...oh, how mere humans hate the unknown!

Even if you try to compare it to God's prior actions by using an array of material man has surmised as factual regarding the creation, most times, it feels noisy, hectic, and filled with images that resemble a surround sound movie that appear almost violent in nature, alive with animated graphics and robotic images wearing oversized eyes and displaying actions that reveal it as synthetic because of stirring around using immutable stiff movements lacking emotion.

However, at no time have I ever thought of it in this manner, especially given the spectacular artistry, elegance, and delicacy of nature; meaning all that encompasses planet earth and beyond.

First, can you visualize God gently holding a tiny bird in his hands as he decides on the features that will make it an important element of the world; meaning everything from size, feathers, to dramatic colors? Are you able to see the delight he takes in fashioning it as unique and special by gently maneuvering his hands to tenderly caress the little thing into being? Then, are you capable of imagining his reaction when he hears it sing its first melodious notes in his honor that fill the space all around, its bird song that we take for granted each morning? Even after just these simple paltry examples, is it any wonder the Scripture above from Psalm 84 tells of the sparrow and swallow wanting to build nests near their Creator? How is it they realize where they want to be with such certainty and man cannot?

Then, as you allow your eyes to roam over a meadow that is painted using blooms flushed with orange, pink, and purple flowers whose aromatic fragrance is so heady and exquisite that its vapor creates a heavenly veil over all the earth and those who inhabit it, is there any wonder that the onlooker has surmised that she is standing in the most idyllic corner of all that exists? At this moment in time, a place that is lit by only the soft glow that serves as the prelude of the heavenly sunrise about to make its spectacular golden entrance, in the eyes of the spectator, all that is unfolding must be labeled as perfection itself brought to life by the One and Only Supreme Being, God himself?

Yet, when one ponders the words from Scripture that share the Creator's purpose for bringing into existence this indescribable landscape, that being the earthly home he miraculously brought into actuality for his children, it serves to magnify truly how much he values each one that his hand molded and brought to life with his own breath, a happening that truly proves beyond doubt that actions speak louder than words; behavior that serves as an unrivaled definition that depicts the love the Father has for his children.

However, yet still, there is perhaps an image that forces the above paragraphs to pale in comparison by contrasting it with the precise moment the Almighty's tender hands brought to pass that of a baby's first smile; a happening when



witnessed by an unexcitable mere man whose heart is made of stone, even he is brought to his knees in surrender. Folks, is there any finer moment than when we experience those little infant's lips breaking out into a greeting just for us?

Given this contour in question and an all-out effort to use words to pen an accurate account, it is simple to reach the conclusion that even the greatest of writers are incapable of constructing a body of work that prepares mankind for God's dwelling place that waits for all who love him. Admittedly, anything this writer cobbles together could only be labeled as insufficient in its entirety.

Even so, no matter my inability to describe the magnificence of God, since the Great Promise Keeper is true to his word, reading the remainder of Psalm 84 made me realize how blessed I am because of trusting in him. Not only did it offer hope and strength for the rest of my journey home, but also prompted me to shout and sing for joy that you, my dear friend, Opal, now reside in such a magnificent dwelling place, all because God is at the center, the Great Creator, whose face you now see with those perfect eyes of yours. No longer are you 80% blind, but are able to fully gaze upon his beautiful adoring countenance.

Although, unlike you, many of my readers still have miles to go until they rest, the verses from Psalm 84: 5-7 offer encouragement with the following description: *"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca (meaning desert and dry areas of life), they make it to 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."*

Friends, with these words at the forefront, let us forever keep in our minds the importance of reaching out helping hands and hearts to others in their time of need. By so doing, the better angels in all of us will be those that serve as soldiers working on God's behalf. And... above all, the journey of life becomes possible only through loving our neighbors as ourselves. *However, it is imperative to issue a warning that each disciple must be ready to grasp hands that are covered in a different color of skin than theirs and possibly are calloused from tilling the hard rocky soil of the earth; an act that prompts all creation to acknowledge and accept the truism that we are equal in the Creators eyes.

Next, in the event that words from doubting voices fill the air declaring, "Since that is an awful lot of work, I must know what's in it for me", read on. Psalm 84: 10-12 supplies the answer in dramatic fashion with this description: *"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. 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. Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you."*

Timothy Keller, author and pastor, stresses the meaning of this Scripture by writing, *"This is not hyperbole, for "no good thing does he withhold" from those who trust in him. The New Testament will reveal the unimaginable scope of this. If he did not begrudge us his own Son, "How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) For Christians this can only be Jesus."*

Another Scripture from Revelation 21: 1-5 adds even more emphasis to what the environment will be like for the children of God in his dwelling place with the words: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also, he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Additionally, there are verses in the Bible that graphically use jewels of various beauty and colors to describe heaven; terminology that is not literal, but words that mean **splendorous, marvelous, breathtaking, exquisite, and magnificent!**

Friend, in today's world that is challenged with individuals that have lost their way and choose to violate God's commandment that his children must "love their neighbor as themselves" by creating and participating in noisy disorder and chaos, Scripture is clear on the consequences of such behavior. **Romans 6: 23** reads, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Folks, if the thought that is running through your mind, *"I have committed too many sins for God to ever allow me into his dwelling place"*, please be aware that everyone who has walked on the face of this earth has fallen short, including Opal. Not one of us is without blemish. However, Scripture also lets us know that if we repent and truly mean it by courageously changing our course of action, then you can not only meet my friend, Opal, who is now walking the streets of gold in heaven, but sit at the feet of your One and Only Savior, Jesus.

However, continuing on the same pattern will eventually result in separation from the Almighty who created us in his own image; behavior that leads to only darkness and disaster.

Child of the Creator, the sum of these actions prompted Timothy Keller to write, ***"God created the world, so when we disobey him, we unleash forces of chaos and disorder. When you, a being created to live for God, live instead for yourself, you violate your design. The ultimate plague is sin, and it will disintegrate you without the antidote---the grace of God in Jesus Christ."***

Until we reach his dwelling place, let us hold tightly to the hope and assurance that we are not on this journey alone by imprinting in our mind the beautiful words from Psalm 85: 9-13 that read: ***"Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."***

So, let us look to this poignant promise of hope as our road map in traversing the journey home to glory land, reaching out to the great and small, downtrodden

and disenfranchised by being inclusive, respectful, honest, humble, and loyal to the values our Lord demonstrated while walking this earth as a suffering servant.

Then, if we internalize the prayer to God, Jesus said on behalf of those who mocked and wounded him, **“Father forgive them, they know not what they do,”** his sacrifice will constantly ring in our ears and be reflected in our daily actions. Then and only then, my friends, will righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Finally, when my spirit is lifted by God at my passing from the physical to the spiritual and brought into his dwelling place, the following tender lyrics from Amazing Grace will have come to fruition that we so often sing:

“Yea when this flesh and heart shall fail

And mortal life shall cease,

I shall possess, within the veil,

A life of joy and peace.”

Dear readers, my friend, Opal, understood and internalized these principles by finishing the race set before her. No matter the Valley of Baca she walked through, the Lord was her strength and source of hope who blotted away her salty tears, moistened her parched lips, and wiped the sweat from her brow. He led the way through the darkness when her sight was gone by shining the light and preparing the way for her steps to follow. He was in front and behind her feeble aging body and could be seen in the smile that never left her face. Her walk was one where faith and love met together and righteousness looked down from heaven everyday of her earthly life.

Let us all join hands and hearts and follow her lead always remembering that **“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”** May God be praised forever and ever. Amen!



As our closing, let us read or sing the lyrics to the old familiar hymn, "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be", in celebration of Opal's life and assurance that we will one day enter into God's dwelling place for all eternity.

How Beautiful Heaven Must Be

**1 We read of a place that's called heaven,
It's made for the pure and the free;
These truths in God's Word He hath given,
How beautiful heaven must be.**

Refrain:

**How beautiful heaven must be,
Sweet home of the happy and free;
Fair haven of rest for the weary,
How beautiful heaven must be.**

**2 In heaven no drooping nor pining,
No wishing for elsewhere to be;
God's light is forever there shining,
How beautiful heaven must be. [Refrain]**

**3 Pure waters of life there are flowing,
And all who will drink may be free;
Rare jewels of splendor are glowing,
How beautiful heaven must be. [Refrain]**

**4 The angels so sweetly are singing,
Up there by the beautiful sea;
Sweet chords from their gold harps are ringing,
How beautiful heaven must be. [Refrain]**

Source: Church Hymnal #105



*Love,
Colene*