

Psalms 84:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Analysis

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. This famous declaration expresses radical reorientation of values—one day in God's presence outweighs a thousand days elsewhere. The Hebrew yom be-chatzerkha (יום בַּחֲצֵרְךָ) means literally "a day in your courts." The comparison "better than a thousand" (tov me-aleph, טוֹב מֵאַלֶּף) is deliberately unbalanced—not comparing equal quantities but asserting that one day with God exceeds a thousand days anywhere else.

The second half intensifies the claim: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God" (bachati histopheph be-veit Elohai, בַּחֲתִי הִסְתוֹפֵף בְּבֵית אֱלֹהֵי). The verb bachar (בָּחַר) means "to choose, prefer"—indicating deliberate decision, not passive acceptance. Histopheph (הִסְתוֹפֵף) means "to stand at the threshold" or "be a doorkeeper"—the lowest position in temple service. Doorkeepers merely opened gates and guarded entrances (1 Chronicles 9:17-27), lacking the priests' privileges and honor.

"Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (midur be-aholei-resha, מִדֹּוּר בְּאַהֲלֵי-רָשָׁע) contrasts the doorkeeper's humble position with comfortable dwelling in wicked prosperity. "Tents" (oholim, אוֹהֲלִים) may literally mean nomadic dwellings or metaphorically represent the wicked's households and lifestyle. The point: luxury and prosperity among the wicked is inferior to humble service in God's presence.

Better to stand at God's doorway than sit enthroned in wickedness.

This verse confronts every believer with a values question: What do we truly treasure? Do we actually believe one day worshiping God exceeds a thousand days pursuing worldly success, entertainment, or comfort? Would we genuinely choose lowly service in God's house over comfortable prosperity among the ungodly? The psalmist's conviction challenges our practical priorities.

Historical Context

Temple Service and the Christian's Priority on God's Presence

Temple doorkeepers held a legitimate but lowly position. They opened and closed gates at appointed times, guarded entrances to prevent unauthorized entry, and collected offerings. While Levites, they lacked priests' prestige. Yet Psalm 84:10 declares that even this humble service in God's house surpasses luxurious living in worldly success.

The "tents of wickedness" likely refers to comfortable, prosperous living that requires moral compromise. Ancient world offered many opportunities for advancement through corruption—taking bribes (Exodus 23:8), showing partiality to the rich (James 2:1-9), participating in pagan religious festivals for business advantage, or compromising integrity for profit. The psalm asserts that such prosperity—even when comfortable and secure—cannot compare to humble faithfulness in God's service.

Scripture consistently teaches this priority. Moses "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:25-26). Daniel risked death rather than compromise prayer life (Daniel 6:10). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose a fiery furnace over idolatry (Daniel 3:16-18). These saints believed—and proved through costly choices—that God's presence exceeds worldly success.

Jesus taught the same principle: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the

whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Paul counted all things as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:8). The early church endured persecution, poverty, and martyrdom rather than deny Christ—demonstrating that they truly believed God's presence was worth any cost. Modern prosperity gospel contradicts Psalm 84:10 by suggesting we can have both—worldly success AND God's presence. The psalmist knew better: one day with God beats a thousand days anywhere else.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Do you genuinely believe one day in God's presence is better than a thousand days pursuing other goals, or do your priorities suggest otherwise?
2. What would it look like today to be a "doorkeeper in God's house"—choosing humble service over comfortable prosperity?
3. How do modern believers compromise with "tents of wickedness" by pursuing careers, entertainment, or lifestyles that require moral accommodation?
4. What practical choices would change if you truly internalized this verse's values—that proximity to God outweighs all worldly success?
5. How does Christ's teaching about gaining the world but losing your soul (Mark 8:36) relate to the comparison in Psalm 84:10?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	טוֹב	יּוֹם	בְּחִצֵּי יָדְךָ	מֵאֶלֶף	בְּחִתִּי
H3588	is better	For a day	in thy courts	than a thousand	I had rather
	H2896	H3117	H2691	H505	H977
הֵן דֹּפֵק	בְּיַת	אֱלֹהֵי	מִדּוֹר	בְּאֶהֱלִי	רָשָׁע:
be a doorkeeper	in the house	of my God	than to dwell	in the tents	of wickedness
H5605	H1004	H430	H1752	H168	H7562

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 27:4 (Parallel theme): One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Psalms 63:2 (Parallel theme): To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Philippians 3:20 (Parallel theme): For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Luke 2:46 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

James 2:3 (Parallel theme): And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: