

The psalmist expresses his love for the LORD through his heartfelt desire to be in the house of the LORD. He comments on the blessings that come to those who put their trust in the LORD and that even the humblest of jobs in the LORD's house is much better than the best that the world can offer.

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To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

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**“To the chief Musician”** – This psalm, like many others, was intended for the worship leader to use when leading the worship of the LORD at the temple/tabernacle.

**“upon Gittith”** – The meaning of “Gittith” is uncertain, but commentators suggest it refers to a musical instrument, a style of music, or perhaps even a specific tune to play while reciting this psalm.

**“A Psalm for the sons of Korah”** – The author is not given, but the intended performers of the psalm are specified. The sons of Korah were descendants of Kohath and were a family within the tribe of Levi that were designated to be gatekeepers and musicians at the temple (1 Chr. 9:17-32; 2 Chr. 20:19). Clues within the psalm hint that the author may have been one of the sons of Korah.

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1 How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

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**“How amiable [lovely] are thy tabernacles [dwelling places], O LORD of hosts!”** – The fact that “tabernacles” is plural may refer to the various parts of the tabernacle/temple. In fact, a commentator pointed out that the parallel statement in v. 2 mentions the “courts of the LORD” (the enclosed area surrounding the tabernacle/temple building itself), implying that the “tabernacles” of v. 1 may refer to the courts. The psalmist is declaring the loveliness of the place where the LORD abides and manifests His presence.

**“My soul longeth [to yearn for], yea, even fainteth [to be complete; to be exhausted] for the courts [an enclosed area] of the LORD”** – The courts refers to the enclosed area surrounding the tabernacle/temple. Only the priests and Levites could enter the tabernacle/temple itself, but ordinary Israelites could enter the courts to worship the LORD. The psalmist is expressing his deep yearning to be as near the physical location of the LORD as possible. His desire was so strong it was mentally and emotionally exhausting.

**“my heart and my flesh crieth out [to cry out in joy and praise] for the living God”** – The joy in his heart manifested itself externally in a cry of joy and praise for the LORD. Any such worship must begin in the heart or else it is not genuine.

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3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even thine* altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

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**“Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even thine altars*”** – The psalmist seems to be envious of the birds who build their nests near the altars in the courts of the tabernacle/temple. These birds spend the bulk of their time near the altars of the LORD where the various burnt offerings are made. People were not allowed to make their residences there but the birds were able to do so, living their lives near to the LORD.

**“O LORD of hosts [armies], my King, and my God”** – The psalmist uses three names to address the LORD: (1) O LORD of hosts – speaks of the LORD's power with an army of angels; (2) my King – speaks of the psalmist's loyalty and allegiance to the LORD as his King; (3) my God – speaks of the psalmist's loyalty and allegiance to the LORD as his God.

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4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

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**“Blessed [happy] are they that dwell in thy house”** – Those that “dwell in thy house” refers to the priests and Levites who lived near to the tabernacle/temple. As the LORD led Israel from place to place during their 40-year journey in the wilderness, whenever they stopped to reside for an extended period, the Levites would camp around the tabernacle so that they could perform their duties at the tabernacle. After the temple was built, the Levites would be on a rotation in their duties at the temple and would reside in the temporary quarters at the temple during their period of service. The psalmist expresses the joy these men experienced when their times of service required them to dwell at the tabernacle/temple.

**“they will be still praising thee”** – The Hebrew word for “praising” is in the imperfect tense, indicating continuous action. These priests and Levites are continually praising the LORD through their service as well as their voice.

**“Selah”** – The meaning of this word is uncertain, but most commentators believe it means to pause and reflect on what has been said.

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5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; in whose heart *are* the ways of them.

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**“Blessed [happy] is the man whose strength is in thee”** – It is a happy man that finds his strength in the LORD. When the storms and enemies of life come against him, he does not have to rely on his own finite strength. He can depend on the LORD to help.

**“in whose heart are the ways [highway; public road] of them”** – Removing the italicized words (indicating words not in the original Hebrew), we have: “in whose heart the ways.” Taking into account that this line parallels the first and also v. 6, the psalmist seems to be saying that if a man looks to the LORD for his strength, then the LORD will put his heart on a highway (as opposed to a path). His way will be better prepared than those who don't have the LORD as their strength. It's like the difference between driving on the interstate vs. a dirt road.

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6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

The Valley of Baca was an arid place on the way to Jerusalem. The picture the psalmist is painting is that when a man looks to the LORD as his strength, the LORD will not only put him on a good road but He will also provide an abundance of water when this man travels through dry places. The idea is that the LORD will take care of the man who looks to Him for strength.

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7 They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

The “they” may refer to men whose strength is in the LORD or it may refer to the priests and Levites mentioned in v. 4. Whoever “they” are, the LORD provides them strength to go further on their pilgrimage to the temple. When that strength wanes, the LORD gives them more, allowing them to “go from strength to strength.” Once they have reached Zion (Jerusalem), they appear before the LORD at the temple.

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8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

Perhaps inspired by the thought of going to the temple to appear before the God that He longs for, the psalmist begins a prayer, asking the LORD to listen and hear what he has to say. He then says “Selah,” prompting us to stop and think about these things.

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9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

The psalmist addresses God as being a shield and protector of His people and asks that God look on the face of “thine anointed.” This reference to God’s anointed can describe anyone who has been anointed under the authority of the LORD for an office. It can refer to a king of Israel or to a priest at the tabernacle/temple. The Messiah is also referred to as the LORD’s anointed. Most commentators believe the psalmist is asking the LORD to direct His attention to the king and look on him favorably.

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10 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.

**“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand”** – The contrast stated later in this verse suggests that this statement is saying that a single day spent in the courts of God’s house is better than spending a thousand days elsewhere, even though the “thousand” is not specifically stated. The factor deciding what is better is whether or not you are in God’s courts, not in the number of days spent there.

**“I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”** – Perhaps the psalmist was a doorkeeper in the house of God or maybe he is merely using a humble job for the comparison. The psalmist is contrasting being a doorkeeper at the house of God, a job that likely earned little notoriety, with being the guest of honor in the tent of a wicked person. He would rather be associated with God, regardless of how humble his position, than to be honored by wicked people.

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11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

**“For the LORD God is a sun and shield”** – The psalmist gives us the benefits of being associated with God rather than the wicked. He describes God as “a sun” (the sun being a source of illumination and associated with truth and righteousness) and “shield” (a source of protection from the enemy).

**“the LORD will give grace and glory”** – Another benefit is the fact that the LORD gives His unmerited favor and acceptance to His people, as well as the glory of being associated with Him.

**“no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly [complete; entire; wholesome]”** – God desires to bless His people and will not withhold from His people anything that would benefit them. If He withholds something that we think is a good thing, it will be because it is actually not a good thing. The Hebrew word translated “uprightly” refers to being complete and entire and in this context means someone with a wholesome character – someone with integrity.

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12 O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

The psalmist ends with a declaration that the man that trusts in the LORD is “blessed” (happy). He rests in the provision and protection of the LORD and does not have to fear.