



GROWING UP IN GOD  
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

**Psalm 127**

***A song of ascents.***

***Of Solomon.***

<sup>1</sup> *Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labour in vain.*

*Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the guards stand watch in vain.*

<sup>2</sup> *In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—*

*for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

<sup>3</sup> *Children are a heritage from the LORD,  
offspring a reward from him.*

<sup>4</sup> *Like arrows in the hands of a warrior  
are children born in one's youth.*

<sup>5</sup> *Blessed is the man  
whose quiver is full of them.*

*They will not be put to shame  
when they contend with their opponents in court.*

Sometimes Father just pulls us up short and asks us why we are doing what we are doing and where we believe we are headed...

*'A few years ago, I dreamed that my father offered to give me a ride to my car. My car was only a block away, and I could have easily walked there. But after some light-hearted insistence on his part, I finally agreed to let him take me. Instead of going the most direct route, he ended up taking me all over the area: down one-way streets, through parks and office communities. Forty-five minutes later, we were back to being within one block of my car. Frustrated, I asked my father to stop so I could just walk. As I got out of the car, my father remorsefully said, "I just wanted to spend some time with you." It was then I heard a voice from Heaven say to me, "This is how you treat Me." "No," I quickly*

*retorted, "I'm not like that at all! I make time to talk with You." But His response left me aghast: "Yes, you are ready to talk with Me when you want, but you are not available to talk anytime I want.*

*You are more interested in reaching your goals than spending time with Me." John Paul Jackson.*

Our goals, our building, our house...but the Psalmist tells us, except **He** builds, we build in vain.

Sometimes in His great love for us, He pulls us off the road and gives us the spiritual equivalent of an MOT...up on the ramps we go so He can inspect just what is going on inside...it isn't that He doesn't know, it is that we don't know.

Sometimes things have to be removed, replaced, re-seated or straightforward stopped, in order that we are in good running order...in order that we may run in such a way that we may win (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Solomon, that great king who started so well and finished so badly, sees that all effort not done by divine inspiration is wasted effort, *'unless the Lord builds the house'* – forget it! Wasted effort...he says...wasted effort.

Forget getting up early and going to bed late, forget trying to make things happen, forget pursuing your goals because except **He** builds it...forget it.

What are you currently seeking to build?

Are you building as a 'co-worker' with God, or are you doing something for Him that He hasn't requested or commissioned, and therefore will not bless?

Are your goals in alignment with His?

*'Except the Lord build the house...we labour in vain'*

As we ascend the hill of the Lord, as we grow up and go on, there are times when we find ourselves in confinement – He narrows the way down to His way, we no longer travel the broad road, but the narrow road which leads into **His** heart and **His** desires.

We find too that there are many diversions which can take us off course...our idea of 'faith', for instance.

We may think we are zealous for Him, we love Him, but find that what we thought was a strong 'faith' was just a strong **feeling** – it was 'false' faith – faith in something He had never said He would do, never asked for, never promised, but we hung on, tenaciously declaring what we wanted, thinking that He **must** do it because we were so determined; taking texts out of context to prove our point *'if two or three agree as touching anything...'* that's a favourite – He's **got** to give it to us...praying to the point of obsession, only to find He was not obligated to answer us.

Bombarding Him with petitions, promising anything, 'standing in faith'...and nothing happens, perhaps even quite the reverse happens and we are left disappointed at best, disillusioned at

worst...beloved of God, we were not in relationship, but religion...by **our** efforts we thought we could get something out of God...we thought we could control Him...force His hand...

We discover that we were not in alignment with Him at all...it wasn't faith at all, just our religious ideas which in the end proved to be just wasted effort.

Religion comes from a Latin root which means to 'tie back' – religion is man's effort to tie himself back to God...you fast, and all you get is thin - because God hasn't asked you to fast...but you thought you could grab His attention, He would be pleased with your self-sacrifice – but nothing happened... all you got was hungry...you were off on your own, trying to build something, get something, twist His arm...religion – not relationship.

When we attempt to take something that He hasn't said we could have...when we haven't spent time with Him to hear what **He** is saying...we are committing spiritual 'rape' – trying to force Him...

*'Except the Lord build the house'* (that's spiritual) *'they labour in vain that build it'* (that's religious).

Religious activity is usually fruitless, and it can be damaging....

Though the psalmist doesn't mention it – the emphasis in this Psalm is on **wisdom** – 'skill in living': skill to live right, build right, ask right, to understand what's important in life, knowledge to number our days and to see as priorities what You see Lord, the things that Your heart desires...

As we go up and grow up in God we begin to see more and more clearly that without Him we can do nothing – and nothing means just that – nothing – all **my** hopes ambitions wishes, round my feet in ashes lay...

All our sweaty efforts, even in prayer, will produce nothing, zilch, nada, of lasting or eternal value. I heard someone say recently that God told her to stop praying in tongues – she was outraged, *'We always do this'* *'Yes, I know, but I want you to stop it!'* It had become a ritual, something they always did, it no longer touched the heart of God because it had become – a formula – to get Him to move on their behalf.

Even praying in the Spirit can become a means to an end...religion, not relationship.

Time for a rethink methinks.

He's just not going to do things our way any more...part of our growing up process. Put away those childish things.

When our graduation day comes someone will sum up in three minutes what our life consisted of...everything reduced to a few ounces of dust and minerals...from whence we came we return...

Unless we experience a shift in our thinking to an eternal perspective, we shall find ourselves earthbound eagles, unable or unwilling to rise to the heights to which He is calling us – the aerial view...

Unlike Solomon, He has set **us** in heavenly places *'in Christ'* where we are outside of time, looking down from space, all the resources of heaven at our disposal; we have an eternal perspective - if we will take the time to look - but how many of us are locked into a 'time/space' mentality and lifestyle?

Toiling every day for that which perishes...feet firmly placed on the ground – 'I'll be happy when...I have the next holiday, get down to the right weight, land that job, purchase that car/house, get married' ...fill in your own blanks.

If this is you, He has a message for you beloved -

### **Isaiah 55:1 – 3 NIV**

<sup>1</sup> *"Come, all you who are thirsty,*

*come to the waters;*

*and you who have no money,*

*come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk*

*without money and without cost.*

<sup>2</sup> *Why spend money on what is not bread,*

*and your labour on what does not satisfy?*

*Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,*

*and you will delight in the richest of fare.*

<sup>3</sup> *Give ear and come to me;*

*listen, that you may live.'*

Wisdom calls again, give ear and come to me; **listen, listen**, that you may **live**...there is a difference between life and living.

There is a difference between abundance and measure...time and time again God marks the territory out – you can have this, or you can have that, you choose...You can have as much of Me as you want...but you may have to get rid of a thing or two to make room in the cupboard...

He brings us, because He loves us so, to the point where we have to choose again and again to continue the upward path, to pursue the upward call – He doesn't force us, He tells us, sit down and count the cost. Ask Me what I require and see if you are willing to pay the price of the high calling...because except you do, you labour in vain.

And, the psalmist says – value your children, they are a heritage from the Lord, with them you are building the next generation...invest in them...

Awesome responsibility.

Without Him, sans wisdom, what **will** we build into their lives?

We need all the help we can get.

Early in his career Solomon was aware of that so when asked by God what He should give him, he answered -

### **2 Chronicles 1: 10 -12 NIV**

*<sup>10</sup>Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" <sup>11</sup> God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honour, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king<sup>12</sup> therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honour, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."*

In asking for the right thing, putting his responsibility to govern wisely above every other consideration, Solomon receives not only the greatest wisdom that anyone has ever had, but riches and honour exceedingly, abundantly above that which he could have asked for or thought...

Solomon started so well, he was focussed and wholehearted, and he had everything going for him, wisdom, wealth, possessions, honour, all freely given to him but he stumbled in one fatal area, he loved women who loved other gods...and they drew him away from the Living God. He lost that most precious relationship...

God had even appeared to him on a couple of occasions *'If I could see Him I would believe'* really?

Solomon ended up writing the book of Ecclesiastes, a disillusioned, out of fellowship believer -

### **Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8**

*<sup>2</sup>Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"*

'Vanity' – there's a word well worth looking up in the dictionary – pride, narcissism, self-importance, conceit, arrogance...

It is perfectly possible to start with everything and end up with nothing - unless we stay anchored in our walk with the Lord – unless the 'set of our sail' is such that we can catch the wind of His Spirit – and go wherever He takes us...

We are going to need that quality of 'stick-ability' in this climb, faces set as flint, we are going to have to make decisions that no-one but God sees and hears – and stay with them when the going gets hard -

A W Tozer (paraphrased) said this in his little book 'The set of the sail'\*

*'Men and women of the Bible have left us a record of spiritual greatness born out of a will firmly set to do the will of God...they did not try to float to heaven on a perfumed cloud, but cheerfully accepted the fact that with purpose of heart, they must cleave to the Lord.'*

Cleaving only unto Him.

We can never run ahead thinking that we know the way and what we should be doing...it isn't how we start that matters, but how we finish...cleaving, abiding isn't an option, it's a necessity.

*'The first great fact that emerges from our civilisation is that today everything has become 'means'. There is no longer an 'end'; we do not know where we are going. We have forgotten our collective ends, and we possess great means: we set huge machines in motion in order to arrive - nowhere.'*

*Jaques Ellul 1912 – 1994 source Wikipedia.*

Sounds somewhat like Solomon himself at the end of his life – what, he is asking is it all about?

Why are we doing what we are doing, where are we going, what are we here for...?

In a desert or a wilderness, or climbing a mountain, the loss of a compass bearing can be disastrous...

It seems that two cultures are set on a collision course and many think we must choose between them – if God only can build, we had better sit down and do nothing but watch...

*'The world is in chaos, motion is evil, so stop doing anything...and gaze at your own navel...'* the philosophy of the Buddhist...

But there is another option – it doesn't glorify work but it doesn't condemn it either.

The psalmist tells us that the premise for all work is that **if** God doesn't build the house, **if** God doesn't guard the city, but He does. God works unceasingly – our quest is to find out where He is working and join Him, because except we are engaged in **His** building project, we build and guard what we have built - in vain – and we stand in constant risk of losing it all...

It is perfectly possible to build a £3m church and end up without God.

Don't ever dig a hole to build a church unless God tells you to, you may find that hole will be the one they bury you in...If He doesn't build the house He is under no obligation to fill it...He will **not** pay for what He has not ordered...

*'Father, forgive us, we so quickly forget that you are the initiator, we are the responders. You are the Creator, we are the created. We have nothing, possess nothing, are nothing, except You are our very breath and life...'*

How quickly we become again masters of our own destiny, thinking that our puny ideas of are of use to Him who set the universe in place, who continues to create galaxies so far out they are outside of our 'known universe'...

*'Forgive us Father, draw us back to you...grant us to see how Great Thou art and how small, but infinitely precious we are to You who created us in Your great wisdom, for Your great purposes...Grant us Father, a pure fear of the Lord which is but the beginning of wisdom...'*

Wisdom, the perfect partner for any life –

Jesus, upon Whom rested –

**Isaiah 11: 2 – 3 NKJV**

<sup>2</sup> *The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*  
<sup>3</sup> *His delight is in the fear of the LORD,*

If His delight was in the fear of the Lord, how much more should it also be our delight?

Except the Lord build the house, we labour in vain.

Why not take a few moments just to check if what you are building is in accordance with His building regulations? And if it isn't, ask Him where He is working and request that you join Him there.