



GROWING UP IN GOD
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 13 January 2012

Psalm 132 NIV

A song of ascents.

¹ O LORD, remember David and all the hardships he endured.

² He swore an oath to the LORD and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:

³ I will not enter my house or go to my bed—

⁴ I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids,

⁵ till I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.

⁶ We heard it in Ephrathah, we came upon it in the fields of Jaar:

⁷ Let us go to his dwelling-place; let us worship at his footstool—

⁸ arise, O LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

⁹ May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy.

¹⁰ For the sake of David your servant, do not reject your anointed one.

¹¹ The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: One of your own descendants I will place on your throne—

¹² if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons shall sit on your throne forever and ever.

¹³ For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling:

¹⁴ This is my resting place forever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it—

¹⁵ I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food.

¹⁶ I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall ever sing for joy.

¹⁷ Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one.

¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on his head shall be resplendent.

We have much to open in this psalm - from David's desires - to the desires of God Himself, and His eternal plan. There is a great Messianic promise within it...understanding things from God's perspective is part of our growing up process and we will find, dislodges from our minds all things that are petty, puerile (childish) and mediocre...as we become old enough to take meat rather than milk...

'O LORD, remember'

Remember – here David asks God to remember everything that has happened to him on his journey...he wants to keep the Lord 'in remembrance' of these things – the hardships he's been through, the difficulties and the losses...and he reminds himself of God's oaths and promises of what is yet to be because from his line will come the Messiah...

¹⁷Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one.'

David is a worshipper, he has said before that his soul '*longs and yearns*' for the courts of the Lord...no idle words; his **heart** was captivated.

His **mind** constantly dwelt on the things of God...on His word he '*meditated day and night*'...and he expresses his desire to build somewhere for God to dwell and remain, a 'house'– something that has been on God's heart since the garden of Eden – a place where He can dwell in the midst of His people...He is not a God afar off, but a God Who is near, near to all those who call upon Him in Spirit and in truth – He desires to be with His people, He always has – all this is His idea, not ours...

As David recalls the goodness of God '*in the land of the living*' he is both present past and present future - looking back at what God has done, looking forward to what God will do - in remembrance – '*do this*' Jesus said '*in remembrance of Me...*'

Remembrance, actively calls to mind the goodness, the favour, the generosity, the beneficence of God.

It's a good time for us too in our ascent, to take stock...to remember everything Father has done for us and brought us through, His everlasting kindness and faithfulness to us on our journey into His great heart and the promises yet to be fulfilled...

'Ebenezer' –

'hitherto has the Lord helped us'

...and our surety is that He will continue the way He started...

How good it is to **remember**...deliberately to recall God's goodness when we are in a stuck place or even when we are not – '*it is good to give thanks to the Lord and make music to His name...*'Psalm 92:1.

One of the Church Fathers Polycarp, as he was about to be burned at the stake because he would not recant, is said to have spoken these words to his executioners –

'He has not left me these 86 years, should I now desert Him? Do what you will...'

Those of you who know the story, the wind blew the flames away from him and they speared him to death...

He will never leave us nor forsake us, even at the moment of death, however that comes – it is, after all, just a step into eternity with Him and everlasting bliss...

What a reassurance: with what courage we can live our lives - and face our death; knowing that He never leaves nor forsakes us, He is always there, whether we feel it or not...He has promised...

Matthew 28:20 NIVUK

'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Worth the climb, the hardship, the travail, the fear, the loneliness and separation from those who once travelled with us, putting ourselves at the impossible, to reach this place of absolute certainty in Who He is for us...as we near the Secret Place - inside His heart.

That Great Heart of Love.

How much we miss if we don't make the ascent, if we *'ponder at the pool of popularity and meander in the maze of mediocrity...'*

You have heard that one of course, the 'disciple's prayer'?

No?

It is reported thus -

'An African pastor was overwhelmed by rebels who demanded that he renounce his faith. He refused and the night before he died he wrote this –

'I am part of the Fellowship of the Unashamed.

I have Holy Spirit power...

I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tame vision, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotion, plaudits or popularity. I don't have to be first, best, right, recognised, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by Presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labour by power...

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, nor meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up or burn up till I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus, I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know and work till He stops...'

I am a disciple of Jesus.

Had King David lived now, he might well have written something similar to that – his heart was fixed too and there was something he desperately wanted to do...he says –

³ *I will not enter my house or go to my bed—*
⁴ *I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids,*
⁵ *till I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.*

He would not rest himself until he had built a house for His God – but when it came to it, God said, ‘No, David, you are a man of blood, My house will not be built by you, but by your son...’

Something which marked David out was his wholeheartedness towards God... He was passionate about God – David’s passion was to build something lasting for God...

If you read on you will see that David didn’t get upset about not building the temple, but did everything he could to facilitate Solomon’s building it...everything David did, he did with all his heart.

Caleb too, was a man of a different spirit, a different heart; throughout the bible we see the reward of those whose hearts are fully towards Him...

2 Chronicles 16:9 NIV

⁹*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.’*

Strength is God’s promise to them, **His strength**.

God invests Himself in you and **becomes** your strength...

What is it **you** need Him to be for you right now?

He isn’t going to give you something, He is going to **become** something for you...

We pursue God for Who He is...not for what we can get and He, well, He must be true to Himself, He gives us something - Himself.

‘I will be your strength...’

‘If you are fully committed to Me, I won’t strengthen you because I want you weak, but I will be all you are ever going to need...I promise to be your all sufficiency.’

The All Sufficient One, El Shaddai, promises to give you – Himself.

What a beautiful thought.

Paul put it this way –

2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV

⁹*...My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.’*

That is something worth stopping and thinking about just there...to be absolutely weak and dependent as a baby, gives you the power of Christ resting upon you...' *'Without Me, you can do nothing...but **with Me** all things are possible for you...'*

Wholeheartedness – it's the way of the pilgrim, it's the way of passion. If we are going to enter into the fullness of God's presence and power, passion is going to be required...

I wish that you were hot or cold...

Revelation 3:15 – 16 NKJV

¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm— neither hot nor cold— I am about to spit you out of my mouth.'

God loves us to be passionate about Him, simply because He is passionate about us...He loves us with an uncontainable passion...David wasn't a perfect man, we all know his major failings, but he loved God with all he had and he didn't care who knew it...he danced and revealed himself, his wife scorned him for it and as a result went childless. He humbled himself before God, he refused to be at ease himself until he had a house for God to dwell...he was passionately involved with God and God was passionately involved with him...

God **will** dwell with man – David got it right because we have that everlasting promise –

Revelation 21: 1 – 3 NIV UK

The New Jerusalem

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'

Psalms 132 not only has a present application but future **implications**; not only in what **has been** with King David, and Jesus' first coming, but what will be when Jesus comes again at the Second Advent...crowned King of kings and Lord of lords...then we shall see Him face to face and know as we are known...

We shall live in His Presence for eternity...He's said so...

Something else this psalm reveals is that David *'swore an oath'* – he's made a vow before God – never a light thing to do.

'God, if you get me out of this I will serve you forever...'

Ever said something like that in a moment of desperation? I know I did before I was born again.

God has a way of calling in what we have said in a rash moment...

Ecclesiastes 5:4 – 5 NIV

⁴When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow. ⁵It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it.'

But David wasn't one for loose talk – when he made a vow, he meant it; it was God who said 'No' to David -

¹¹The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: One of your own descendants I will place on your throne—

¹²if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons shall sit on your throne forever and ever.

¹³For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling:

¹⁴This is my resting place forever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it—

Instead God makes a promise, a vow to David – that there will always be someone to sit upon his throne , He swore an oath, that from the fruit of David's loins would come the Messiah and not only that on this hill Messiah would die, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. His blood would saturate the ground and satisfy the justice of God for all men...same hill as Abraham ascended all those years before to make the sacrifice of his son...his only son –

Genesis 22:2 NIV

²Then God said, Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'

Moriah – the very same mountain where David bought the threshing floor of Araunah...

2 Samuel 24:24 NIV

²⁴But the king replied to Araunah, 'No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.'

Even in this David shows his integrity, he isn't going to give God something that cost him nothing...what a lesson for us.

Do we try to get something 'on the cheap' for God, something that isn't going to cost anything?

The gospel is free but it isn't cheap.

David, longing to build a house for his King, sings to Him on his way up to worship...

Yes, David was a warrior, but warriors are always worshippers too – can't have one without the other...they know the Majesty, the Supremacy of the Master for whom they would lay down their lives – and frequently do -

'He is no fool who gives which he cannot keep for that which he cannot lose...'

Jim Elliot's last journal entry dated October 28 1949: he and his young wife had gone to Ecuador to evangelise the natives. Jim was 28 years old and passionate...he was killed the following morning by the Auca Indians – the ones he had come to save...

David, longs to be face to face, heart to heart with the love of his life...women were his problem in the natural, yes, but his **heart** was fixed, steadfast when it came to God –

Psalm 57:7 NASB

*⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!*

Vertical first, it has to be - God-ward - before it can properly be man-ward.

As we will see over the last few psalms, our focus must be towards the Lord before our hearts can beat in unity with others - and before we can affect the world we must hear from heaven.

And man-made unity never works...

Many have tried –

Sweaty efforts...

No sweat, you know, before the Fall...

'By the sweat of your brow' it's part of the curse, but that's another story...

God won't work with our sweaty efforts...we must do things His way, He won't do things our way...

He initiates, we respond...

God first, vertical before horizontal, **then** your heart will be turned, transformed, to look upon others and see them as He sees them – unity isn't difficult then – can't fulfil the second commandment before we have fulfilled the first –

'Shema, Y'Israel' –

'Hear Israel...'

'Listen Israel'

Y'all listen up – now hear this!

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength and...your neighbour as yourself...'

Jesus Himself said the same thing...the **most important** commandment is this: love Me first, then...

Mark 12: 29 – 31 NIV

²⁹ *The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*

³⁰ *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'* ³¹ *The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* *There is no commandment greater than these.'*

Don't try to get the second commandment first...first things **FIRST**...

Number one - Him.

Numero Uno!

El Supremo.

El Elyon, Possessor of Heaven and Earth.

El Shaddai, the breasted One, the Nurturer, the All Sufficient One.

Elohim – the Most Powerful of all the powerful ones... *'in the beginning God, He created...'* **Elohim**, He, that'll be the One...

First.

Foremost.

Him.

Then...

You can love everyone else.

Easy!

But first-

'Love Me...'

David fulfilled this – the number one requirement -

'I will love you O Lord my God with all my heart...'

Psalm 18:1 NIV

'I love you, O LORD, my strength.'

David spoke out his love for the Lord, praise was continually on his lips...and he **knows** Who is his strength...

David knew.

First things, first.

In this New Year then, as we call to remembrance what God has done - His mighty works on our behalf - let us give thanks to Him for having brought us thus far; let us express our confidence that He will get us where we are going, no matter how hard or long the road; **He** has purposed in His heart to have a people for Himself, **He** has purposed to both deliver us and redeem us, **He** has purposed that we shall live with Him eternally...in His time.

Let's decide now to put **Him** first in our hearts -

*'I **will** love You O Lord with **all** my heart.'*

No matter what.

My heart is fixed.

*"This year I won't let other things get in the way of that most precious of relationships, this year, I will embark on the climb into the Secret Place of Your heart, this year I will put You first before anything else...this year, I **will**...set aside time to be with You."*

One thing of which you can be certain, you are His passion - you are **so** welcome to the Secret Place of His heart...the beloved in the Beloved – in His heart from before the foundation of the world was laid...

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