



GROWING UP IN GOD
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 6 June 2011
Psalm 125 Amplified Bible
A Psalm of Ascent

¹THOSE WHO trust in, lean on, and confidently hope in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides and stands fast forever.

²As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and forever.

³For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the [uncompromisingly] righteous, lest the righteous (God's people) stretch forth their hands to iniquity and apostasy.

⁴Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are right [with You and all people] in their hearts.

⁵As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways [of indifference to God], the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel!

Here we are then, on the sixth of our sessions which are looking at the Psalms of Ascent.

We are getting to know one another quite well now as we travel together; pressure of circumstances either fuses us together or splits us apart, depending on how we deal with it and we have been in close proximity now for nearly six months...

I understand that in the Himalayas when Sherpas are preparing to guide climbers up Mount Everest, they test them first by taking them up lesser mountains to see how they respond to the privation, altitude and general difficulties – they don't want to find themselves roped to someone who will panic at a strategic moment and pull everyone down...they are looking for people who are tried and tested, established, strong, resilient and emotionally stable...Sherpas themselves are renowned in the international climbing and mountaineering community for their hardiness, expertise, and experience at high altitudes...

This psalm is about being **established** in God; being solid, rooted and grounded - this is something Father wants to accomplish in each one of us – He does not want us living on our emotions, unstable, tossed around like a ship at sea, so part of what He does in us is to establish us, **unmoveable** in Him.

All these things are true, yet...I will trust and not be afraid.

Much as we do not like it, we need the circumstances we are currently in for our growth and maturity...ouch!

We can say 'I'm in faith for this...' 'I believe, I believe', 'I believe God for such and such' but it is just **mental** gymnastics most of the time – we are speaking from our minds – and our heart is saying 'Liar!' If you try to do something with your mind beloved, you will find your heart out of agreement...

God knows how we really feel and more importantly, where we really are and it is no disgrace – it's all about growth.

There comes a time when we have to get honest with ourselves and stop the play acting – when we cannot say we have 'faith' and we cannot say 'I believe' **then** we can trust...trust is a passive thing, it **rests** on the nature of God, the Sovereignty of God.

Both faith and belief are active they require our participation; trust...just trusts...and rests...it has come to the end of itself; exhausted all efforts at both faith and believing, now it resigns itself to the will of God alone...it has stopped trying to move God's hand in the situation, stopped fasting and praying, stopped 'believing' for something He hasn't promised - all the efforts we put in when we are hard up against it - it has stopped listening to its own heart and is listening to His...

It has no idea of the outcome, but it **rests** on Who He is.

'I don't understand Lord; I can't see the next step ahead, but...I will trust.'

⁴THOSE WHO trust...'

The psalms are David's journal - if you don't keep a journal, I really would recommend that you start one – reviewing how God has delivered us, led us, loved us, taught us, guided us, through the tests and trials of life causes us to be encouraged when the ground gets a little slippery and starts to disappear from under our feet...I'm slipping...*whoa*...

In this psalm we find David encouraging himself in the Lord –

*'Things are a bit uncertain at the moment Lord, it's a bit slippery under foot, so I'm going to declare some things and by the time I get to the end, I'll be encouraged in You, because I **know** You.'*

Paul would say the same thing somewhat later –

*‘All these things are true, but **nothing moves me...**’*

Acts 20:22 – 24 NKJV

‘²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.’

When you have set your heart on pilgrimage, when you have set your heart to **trust** the Lord, no matter what; when you can’t ‘believe’, or muster up the ‘faith’ - then whatever comes, you will say with Paul, *‘All these things are true, but nothing moves me...’*

Simply trusting, that is all.

Proverbs 3: 5 AMP

‘⁵Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.’

When you can’t believe, you can still trust – I don’t understand Father, I haven’t a clue what is happening, I can’t figure it out, but I’m trusting...because I know **You**, so I am going to rejoice and give thanks because You are with me.

We begin to discover, on this climb, that we need to make decisions in advance about how we will respond in any given circumstance or situation – in this case, when we feel we are on slippery ground...suddenly everything we knew is on the slide and we are holding on with everything we have...

We must have our response ready, not have to get ready – so that we are not flung into situations, take a few spins, and **then** decide trust, thanksgiving and praising God is the only option...

So here David is drawing on past experience again... *‘if the Lord hadn’t been on our side’*, he said in our last study, what then?

He had already settled it in his heart that God was **for** him, not against him and it was to Him and Him alone that he, David, would turn...

So he starts this psalm with an exuberant declaration – *‘those who **trust** are like...’*

David looks back and from that backward glance he can say of a certainty –

¹THOSE WHO trust in, lean on, and confidently hope in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides and stands fast forever.

This, he says, is my **declaration** – my statement, assertion, and pronouncement - on the situation I'm in right now – I **know Him**, He is **establishing** something in me...I'm not going to fear, I'm trusting, simply trusting.

*'This is not head knowledge, this has been forged in me through life...through circumstances, people, things, situations...I **know**, that trusting, leaning on and confidently hoping in the Lord – I am immovable and I know it – from experience, not book learning.'*

David was a man grounded in the **knowledge** of Who God was **and** specifically Who He was for David himself and he spent time recording his journey which we know as the psalms.

Knowledge **and** experience – we looked at this team last time. God just loves to make our knowledge certain through experience, so we can say, I know, what I know, what I know about Him...He is GOOD – all the time.

For David this **knowledge** was gained through his **experience** of God in tight spots...he was a man with an experience who was beyond reason...and as he looks back over his journal he knows that if he can only set his heart to trust, everything will be all right.

An act of the will; he will not be moved.

So he begins to declare, hearing himself speaking out the words with confidence –

²As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and forever.'

³For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the [uncompromisingly] righteous, lest the righteous (God's people) stretch forth their hands to iniquity and apostasy.

⁴Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are right [with You and all people] in their hearts.

Proclamation and declaration – **this** is Who God is, and **this** is what He is going to do...as he hears his own voice proclaiming and declaring words of trust and faith in God, his heart is strengthened, he is encouraging himself in God – something is establishing itself in his heart...**trust**...when you can't believe, when you can't find faith – **trust**.

Perhaps he **was** in a slippery place – many times in the psalms we hear him say '*I thought, my foot slips...*' but the Lord...

'Many are those who rise up against me' but...heart open, mouth shut.

Psalm 3

A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom

⁴ LORD, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!
² Many are saying of me,
“God will not deliver him.”
³ But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.
⁴ I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.
⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.
⁶ I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side.
⁷ Arise, LORD!
Deliver me, my God!
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.
⁸ From the LORD comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people.’

David the grief of it, harassed by his own son, betrayed by his own flesh, his son Absalom, knows where to go...even my own family are against me, nevertheless You **will** hear me, You **will** answer me...

He will experience this again in Psalm 38, here his family and friends are standing off from him – he’s so way out they think he’ll never get back – and he’s sick physically too – people are against him, tongues wag, people seek his life and want to pull him down, the enemy of his soul is on his case...sickness, traps, snares, injury, enemies, treachery the full bag - but he keeps his mouth shut and his heart open to God –

⁴⁵‘I hope in You, O Lord...’ he sets his heart to **trust** like an oven...Gas mark 5...

Psalm 38: NASB

¹¹My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.
¹²Those who seek my life lay snares for me;
And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,
And they devise treachery all day long.
¹³But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;
And I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth.
¹⁴Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.
¹⁵For I hope in You, O LORD;
You will answer, O Lord my God.
¹⁶For I said, “May they not rejoice over me,

Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me."

¹⁷For I am ready to fall,

And my sorrow is continually before me.

¹⁸For I confess my iniquity;

I am full of anxiety because of my sin.

¹⁹But my enemies are vigorous and strong,

And many are those who hate me wrongfully.

²⁰And those who repay evil for good,

They oppose me, because I follow what is good.

²¹Do not forsake me, O LORD;

O my God, do not be far from me!

²²Make haste to help me,

O Lord, my salvation!

Slippery ground – when you are mountain climbing sometimes you come to a place where there is scree underfoot, loose crumbly stuff which disappears under your feet, taking you with it; it can send you cascading down, sometimes hundreds of feet - before you know where you are you are slipping backwards; keeping a grip and continuing to ascend is next to impossible, one foot forward, two back, slippery ground...

David is experiencing this again, but he knows that God will hear him, answer Him, rescue him, save him, because He **delights** in him...of that he is certain. David is secure in who he is, he has learnt to give thanks and rejoice in everything, he knows God has delivered him and will deliver him, not necessarily in the way he wants or in his timescale, but God is for him and with him.

This is the journey we are all on; finding out that God is for us, He's with us, He will hear us, and will answer us – how only He knows; so for now, I'll trust and not be afraid...pushing fear away, it's a constant...I **will** trust and not be afraid, particularly when I don't **feel** like it.

So we find David in psalm 18, pursued by Saul who is breathing out threats and trying to kill him, saying -

Psalm 18: 36 NKJV

³⁶ You enlarged my path under me,

So my feet did not slip.'

So when he comes to this stage in his journey in Psalm 125, he looks back at his journal and he can say with confidence and from experience -

Psalm 125:1 AMP

⁴THOSE WHO trust in, lean on, and confidently hope in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides and stands fast forever.'

He who turns to the Lord will never be forsaken, even though they may be shaken...sometimes it is just about being the last one left standing...

Jesus' disciples would later say the same thing – *'to whom else would we go? You have the words of eternal life.'*

It's not about getting everything right, all your ducks in a row. David made many mistakes, was led by his own lust on many occasions, but he knew God's forgiveness and his heart God says, is like His own...he is a man after My own heart...

God looks on the heart not the head.

Mistakes are a necessary part of life...we just can't avoid them, it's the way we learn, if we are wise. We allow those trips and slips, when we have to just hang on to God with teeth gritted and trust Him, to cause us to grow – to grow up, it's what we do at those times, where we turn and Who we turn to...

We **learn** to trust in God alone.

No condemnation – process.

Not run to the 'phone, but the Throne...

So David exhorts us, not look for people to agree with us - he says elsewhere *'don't put your trust in princes'*, in men, *'they will let you down'*, can't help it - but cast yourself on His mercy, His loving-kindness, His - **'chesed'**...beautiful word in the Hebrew pronounced 'hesed' – it encompasses all the tenderness, mercy, grace, covenantal faithfulness, love, steadfastness and loyalty, compassion, understanding, and righteousness of God...His loving-kindness that endures forever and it is **ours** to appropriate at such a time if we will cast ourselves on Him, no excuses, just – let ourselves go and trust Him to sort us out...His unfailing **LOVE**.

To come before Him and say, *'I've messed up big time...'*

And He lovingly says *'I know and I'm big enough'*.

Eternal security.

What mess are you in right now?

Or are you in a place of peace and tranquillity, nothing disturbing your horizon?

Wonderful if it is the latter, but sooner or later Jesus will say – *'let's take a boat ride...'* just to test your vessel just to see how seaworthy it really is when a storm blows up suddenly, on the lake – He did it to those closest to Him in Galilee...we've seen it before -

Mark 4:35 - 40 NASB

³⁵On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. ³⁷And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. ⁴⁰And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Sometimes God orchestrates the storms and slippery places in your life – does that surprise you? The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested...would He do anything different with you do you think?

The author and finisher – of your faith...but faith isn't faith until it is tested...and when we haven't got faith, we will trust.

So when He says, 'let's take a boat ride, let's go to the other side' He isn't suggesting that you are going to drown in the middle of the lake...

Isaiah 43: 2 NASB

²"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you when you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.'

There is **grace** for us to grow in our situation, the issue isn't the issue, it's what of Himself does He want you to receive right now, what of His nature and beauty does He want to reveal to you?

God will allow in His wisdom what He could easily prevent by His power - things to bring us from one place to another – we say 'I could do without this right now!' God says – 'It's exactly what you need right now!'

Grace is the greenhouse, circumstances are the compost.

Grace gives you room to grow **and** get it wrong – no condemnation, no judgement – Jesus has already been judged for everything...

Brilliant.

Peace, joy, righteousness, pushing us out in trust, faith and knowledge, deeper level, deep, deeper, deepest, not a joy ride but there is joy to be had. High, higher, highest...my utmost for His highest...trusting, simply trusting, 'til the way made clear may be...

He **will** use people – eyes off them and on to Him.

He **will** use circumstances – eyes off them and on to Him.

All this is not about the outcome, it's about your journey; it's about what part of His nature He wants to bestow on you right now – He **always** wants to give you something of Himself. It is all He is really interested in - the relationship between Father and His child...you.

You **become** peace because He Himself is your peace; you **become** patient, because He himself is patience.

Joy is yours because in Him is **fullness** of joy.

Fruitfulness is the result of this journey, the journey of **desire** into God's heart – everything in your heart which seeks after Him; He has already placed there –

Psalm 37 NKJV

³ *Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
⁴ Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.'*

Beloved of God, do not fret, **He** is the author and **He** is the finisher of your faith – He will place desire in your heart and then, He delights to give it to you...so you cry with David -

Psalm 27:4 – 5 NIV

⁴ *One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.
⁵ For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.'*

That's our destination His temple, His dwelling place in order that we may gaze and gaze on His beauty.

The ascent...the upward path...He initiates, you respond, never changes, the way you came into salvation is the way you go on; and when discipline (which is your part) and desire (which is His part) get married, they produce an offspring whose name is - **delight**...

⁴ *Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.'*

What if every situation or circumstance was primarily about discovering how much **He** delights in **you** and loves **you**; He likes you beloved, He **likes** you.

Sometimes we say to our children, *'I love you but I don't like what you are doing right now...'* where do you think we get that from? We don't **dislike** our children, this is a behavioural issue, we don't withhold our love from them, we are training them, but we don't always **like** what they do...**correction** is not rejection and correction is a necessary part of growing up understanding the separation between the person and the act.

Whom the Lord loves, He corrects...

Proverbs 3: 11 – 12 The Message

'But don't, dear friend, resent God's discipline; don't sulk under his loving correction. It's the child he loves that God corrects; a father's delight is behind all this.'

What if there is something right now that God wants you to see – something about Him; His nature towards you, His unconditional acceptance of you which is not based on your performance but could be a behavioural issue?

Perhaps you are doing something and you know it, that isn't good but you are running in fear from the correction...why not just stop right here and ask Him to help you, stop running away, face it head on – He won't scold you, He will give you the answer, He will help you. You will get to find out something more about Him – about His hesed – His loving-kindness.

'This is what God wants to be for me, this is how He sees me' – pardon a colloquialism, so stuff what everybody else thinks!

It is **His** opinion of you which matters and He thinks you are the greatest and His correction is **not** rejection.

What if **that** is what it is all about?

David had so learned this lesson – it wasn't about what he was currently experiencing, but about Who God was for him in that situation. He had messed up big time, but he knew God's forgiveness and steadfast love, he was totally secure in who he was and Who God wanted to be for him in any given situation.

Take a look at Psalm 51 some time.

And, David was learning that **people** are not his enemy, the Enemy is.

The battle was not his, but the Lord's, so he confidently asserts -

³For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the [uncompromisingly] righteous'

That which God has given to the righteous, will not remain in the power of the wicked one. This is not our righteousness here, but that which is 'imputed' to us through our position in the Christ. It is His righteousness that covers us whilst God deals with us under the blanket! Brilliant – it becomes imparted, He works it in, through the situations and circumstances in which we find ourselves and day by day we become more Christ like...bearing His image as He intends us to.

David therefore, is surrounded, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, by the '**chesed**' of God who is absolutely taking care of everything.

So it really doesn't matter whether you are in the wilderness by design (God's) or default (yours), He is there with you **all the time** – someone gave me a postcard once, three little monks, rosy cheeks, increasing in size as they got closer to me – the caption -

'The nearer I get to Jesus the less I have to shout!'

Beloved of God, the nearer you get to Him, the less you have to shout, the less you have to try to defend yourself, vindicate yourself – the battle is the Lord's, let Him vindicate you – if He chooses to do so...

He is there, your next breath...He will never leave you nor forsake you.

You are eternally secure.

Eternally.

Secure.

No-one can snatch you out of His hand no matter how much you mess up.

How do I know that?

By experience...I've messed up so many times I have lost count...but He is my next breath, I can run towards Him, not away from Him, He is my hiding place in the day of trouble He will hide me...and **not** because I get it right...

Whew!

What a relief!

Grace.

All grace.

All hesed...loving-kindness...

Trust – in the Lord with all your heart...He really, really is, big enough – **none** of us present Him with a problem.

Brilliant God, wonderful Father, my heart begins to sing, even when I think I am slipping, this time I've really missed it...joy is my portion – God is for **me**, He surrounds me with songs of deliverance, He will lift me up, He will keep my foot from falling...

Eternal security.

He is unceasingly –

M. A. G. N. I. F. I. C. E. N. T.

And if you don't know that, He will make sure you find out...unceasingly, **MAGNIFICENT!**

He's got you covered.

There is nothing you can do to make Him love you more and there is nothing you can do to make Him love you less...accepted...the beloved in the Beloved.

Eternal...security.

This is our God – can you feel your spirits rising, can you feel confidence, faith, trust, security, identity, belonging, growing in your heart.

'You be you, I'll be Me and that will be enough.'

Permission granted to be who He created you to be.

Freedom.

Granted.

Go free in the name of Jesus.

Beloved, it's not about us, but about **Him**, about Who He is...

We are the sheep of His pasture – hear King David again –

Psalm 100 NASB –

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

¹Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.

²Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before Him with joyful singing.

³Know that the LORD Himself is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving

And His courts with praise

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

⁵For the LORD is good;

His loving-kindness is everlasting

And His faithfulness to all generations.'

Aaah. Rest, relax in His care...

²As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and forever.'

And the authority of the wicked (one) will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous –

Psalm 125 Good News Version

³ *The wicked will not always rule over the land of the righteous; if they did, the righteous themselves might do evil.*

⁴ *Lord, do good to those who are good, to those who obey your commands.*

⁵ *But when you punish the wicked, punish also those who abandon your ways.'*

God is establishing us through trials, so we let those tests and trials do their work.

The Lord will not let our foot slip, He's told us so – all we need to do is **T.R.U.S.T.** then we will be like Mount Zion, we won't be moved.

We can safely leave our battles in His hands, He will judge between the righteous and the wicked, that's His job, not ours...we can...go in peace.

'Peace be with Israel'

Who is Israel?

You are.

Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is the 'Israel of God' – you haven't suddenly become Jewish, Oh no, but you are of Abraham's seed – a believer **by faith** in Jehovah –

YHWH, the Self-Existent One;

El Shaddai, the breasted nurturer, provider and sustainer;

Elohim, the Most Powerful of all the powerful ones;

El Elyon, the Possessor of Heaven and earth...

Established and secure you can be at peace, knowing that He is working **everything** for good – everything, the good, the bad and the ugly, the firm places, the smooth places, the rocky and the slippery places, the high places...

He has you – in His hand.

Nothing can separate you from His love...

²*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and forever.'*

Amen

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