



GROWING UP IN GOD
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 15 March 2012

Psalm 134 NASB

*¹ Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD,
Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!*

*² Lift up your hands to the sanctuary
And bless the LORD.*

*³ May the LORD bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth.*

At the very beginning of our pilgrimage we saw that God seeks both our attention and our hearts, He wants us to turn away from seeking our satisfaction in anything or anyone else and find all our 'springs' in Him...

At a cross roads, we chose the upward path, the upward climb into His great heart...

Now we have got where we are going, we have made it...

So what happens next?

The life of a disciple begins with repentance, joy and thanksgiving at our salvation.

Repentance, a turning, change of heart and mind - and it ends with the same thing!

How we came in is the way we go on...

Repentance - continuously changing our minds to be renewed in the 'spirit' of our thinking, together with thanksgiving, adoration, praise and blessing towards God - which increase as our understanding of the enormity of what Jesus did on the cross grows in us...

As we come into alignment with the things He has purposed for our lives - lives He intends to be fruitful in every good work - we grow up to understand what it means to be both a servant and a son...a child and a warrior...meek but not weak.

One of the things which mark out a disciple from a follower or a believer, is that he or she isn't in the same place this year as they were last year...their life is incremental...it is not incidental, it is intentional – a disciple **plans** to upgrade both their experience of God and their worship of Him on a regular basis...they live their lives *intentionally* before God.

So our lives consist of repentance and praise – book ends holding everything else in place.

What we believed last week, we don't believe this week, we are on a journey into the heart of God whose thoughts are higher than ours –

Isaiah 55:8 – 9 NASB

⁸ *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.* ⁹ *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”*

So we track with -

Romans 12:2 NASB

²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.’*

We are in the process of being transformed by the renewing of our minds...

In his book ‘A long obedience in the same direction’¹ Eugene Peterson says this –

‘Because God blesses us, we bless God. We respond with that which we have received. We participate in the process that God has initiated, and continues. We who are blessed, bless.’

Same message, He initiates, we respond.

So, here we are, in the sanctuary, the Secret Place of His heart, worshipping Him, blessing Him, and others; what a climb, but what a view – a panorama laid out below us as we are seated in heavenly places, in Christ.

What a change has been wrought in our hearts through the journey – we started out raw recruits and we have finished up on our way to being huioi, fully mature sons; worth everything to gain this perspective, seeing things the way He sees them...

‘My thoughts are not your thoughts’

We will be developing the art of thinking brilliantly, about God, ourselves and others...

Hard won but we have made a start; we will have to fight to keep ourselves here because *‘the world, the flesh and the devil’* will be allowed to contest...but God!

We have seen Him as our keeper, our shade upon our right hand; He will not suffer our foot to be moved from this place of abundance and blessing - as we shower the world with the blessings we have received -

*'Bless the LORD,
All you servants of the LORD,'*

First, first, we bless God, *'bless the Lord all you servants of the Lord'*, we lift up our hands to bless Him - always vertical before horizontal, keeping the main thing the main thing - then we turn to bless others from Zion, the City of our God...

We do, don't we?

Well don't we?

Bless Him and others, that is?

We are sure Who we are worshipping aren't we?

Ooops perhaps we're not quite there yet; one more vital question we need to ask ourselves before we can describe ourselves as 'servants' of the Lord, lifting up our hands and voices in the sanctuary, with hearts turned towards Him alone.

That question is –

'Just who or what am I worshipping?'

'God, of course, always do - on a Sunday.'

Are you sure, absolutely sure – that **He** is the One on the throne of your life, that you worship day in day out?

It is true that you are worshipping *something, someone*, all the time, but is it really God Himself...?

You **are** a worshipper, all day every day...

If you stop for a moment and really examine your heart, you will find that deep in there is an altar at which you –

Worship.

Continually.

And you worship because that is what you were created for.

So how can you be sure who or what it is that you worship?

Just follow the trail of your thoughts, your time, your money, your energy, and your allegiance, your loyalties...

At the end of that trail you will find an altar...and whatever, or whoever is on that throne – that beloved, is what you worship, day in day out, 24/7, because worship isn't just a Sunday thing...it's an all-the-time thing.

Does that surprise you?

Have you just found something out about yourself?

Worship is your response to what you value most, worship is the **activity** of the human soul...so if you value your family, your house, your car, your job, your football team...you name it, more than God, you can see not only what you worship, but also that it isn't God – you have a god of your own making...

Do you find that hard to believe?

Try dropping in on the local football team on a Saturday fixture and see the adulation, the roaring crowd...or even better, go to a pop or rock concert and see hands reaching out to touch their –

Idols.

The objects they – worship...

As they 'worship', you will see something amazing – much, much, more amazing than anything you see at your local church on a Sunday morning; they have queued all day – possibly all night - and now they are lost in admiration, adulation, screaming, reaching, fainting, grasping...You will see some of the most intense worship you have ever seen - including tears – full on.

Phenomenal.

We call them – 'fans' – football fans, fans of singers or a pop group...

The word 'fan' comes from the word 'fanatic' which originally meant zeal for religion...excessive enthusiasm inspired by a god...

Not surprising, worship is in our DNA, it is our God-given capacity for adoration of something or someone...and don't misunderstand me, I am not criticizing, I am using this as an example to make a point...about worship.

What we worship, and how we do it...

Only question for us is, is the object of our worship worthy of it?

Is it worthy of the worship we bestow upon it?

The time and attention we lavish upon it?

Maybe, even the money we spend on it?

God wants us to have a **right** view of **Him**, the God *alone* who is **worthy** of worship – because only then will we live lives which are both full and satisfying.

'All my springs are in You' – Psalm 87:7.

This wonderful Father of ours is a jealous God, a God whose **name** is Jealous, in fact.

He is jealous over you, He is jealous for your love; He is jealous for your time and for your talents because they are all gifts from Him – to you, and some day He is going to ask what you did with them...because He wants desperately to reward you, to bestow a crown upon you, to **reward** you for a life lived well in the **service** of the King...

'All you servants of the LORD'

So even though we are standing in that place, our pilgrimage to Mt Zion complete, He is still after our hearts, our time, our talents...

Each of us has been given life in order to praise **Him**...only He is **worthy** of all honour, praise and glory. He's not on an ego trip – He doesn't ask for our worship to make Himself feel good about Himself – He perfectly loves Himself...and you...

He seeks your worship because He seeks your heart; He created you for relationship, fellowship with Himself and out of **that** union flows the rest of your life, which by His **inclusion**, He enriches; *'without Him we can do nothing'* – nothing of eternal, lasting value that is...gold, silver, precious jewels...service that will stand the test on that day...

Revelation 5: 2 – 9 NCV

²And I saw a powerful angel calling in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"³ But there was no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth who could open the scroll or look inside it. ⁴ I cried bitterly because there was no one who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not cry! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, David's descendant, has won the victory so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb standing in the centre of the throne and in the middle of the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb looked as if he had been killed. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that were sent into all the world.⁷ The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne.⁸ When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders bowed down before the Lamb. Each one of them had a harp

and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's holy people.⁹ And they all sang a new song to the Lamb:

*"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were killed,
and with the blood of your death you bought people for God
from every tribe, language, people, and nation."*

He alone is **worthy** to receive adulation, adoration, worship...

Just make sure that what you are worshipping is **worthy** of that worship.

Louie Giglio in his little book 'The air I breathe'² recommends praying like this –

'Father, I am here for You: show Me who you are...'

God always answers a prayer which centres on His Majesty...

He will take you into places you have never dreamed when you centre your thoughts and affections on Him because He **alone** is worthy; when you magnify Him; worship Him – when you seek to serve Him, alone...

Colossians 3:1 – 3 NKJV

¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'

Set your mind beloved – on Him – because your life is hidden with Christ, in God...

Worship Him, for Who He is, what He has done and what He is going to do.

Worship – HIM.

Bless – HIM.

Lift up your hands to HIM.

Honour – HIM.

Magnify – HIM.

I will magnify:

'I will magnify.

I will magnify that quarrel with my friend; every rolled eye and exasperated groan, I will dwell upon until I can no longer stand to look upon her; I will hold her errors ever before me, and will view her henceforth with suspicion and mistrust.

I will magnify, I will magnify, I will magnify my worries and my cares. As a dog gnaws upon a bone so I will gnaw upon my anxieties; so will my forehead crease with a multitude of lines as a ploughed field and thus, the molehills will be transformed into mountains; so shall I be cast into the uttermost depths of despair...

I will magnify, I will magnify, I will magnify. I will magnify the things that cause me to fear: shudders will fill my inward parts as I cringe along life's paths. Surely my limbs shall turn to water as I meditate upon them. I shall imagine calamity and disaster at every turn and my dwelling place shall be...under the blanket for evermore...I will magnify I will magnify, I will magnify my failures as a Christian, shame shall fill me in the watches of the night and guilt shall come in the morning. Every trivial loss of call will seem enormous in my sight, surely disgust and remorse shall follow me all the days of my life. I will magnify.'

We laugh at that, but truly, we will always **magnify** something –

We will always make something bigger than it is – so, is what you are currently magnifying empowering you or reducing you?

Is it introducing doubt and unbelief?

Is it good or bad for you?

Simple questions, what are we currently worshipping, what are we magnifying, needful to answer right now if we are to go on to 'perfection' which is maturity, not sinless perfection, no-one will reach that, but going on growing up in God where we reach the place where not only do we trust Him, but He can trust us...

Arriving at this place then is just the start of our journey, not the end.

The great promise is that we will join in Temple worship –

1 Corinthians 6:19 NASB

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?'

Hey, nowhere to get to then, we are already there, our very bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit; worship **can** be a way of life for us, 24/7, all day every day, praising God and blessing Him...He has put us in that one place where we can get all our prayers answered and our needs met – in His precious Son.

Bless God!

What else could we do?

We are here because He blessed us first, He blessed us now our part is to bless Him.

Bless God.

Do that for which you were created.

Redeemed.

Will do for eternity.

Bless God.

Lift your voice and your hands in praise and thanksgiving, worship and adoration, to the King of Kings, God of Gods, Lord of Lords.

What is the chief end of man?

'To glorify God and enjoy Him – forever.'

Amen to that.

There is one more section to these psalms which I want to explore – if you are still with me, perhaps you will join me once again for the last one in April, looking again at Psalm 84. Until then, be blessed as you live under the brightness of His smile, as the redeemed of the Lord.

Beryl M

¹ 'A long obedience in the same direction' Eugene Peterson

² 'The air I breathe' Louie Giglio

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