



GROWING UP IN GOD
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 5 May 2011
Psalm 124 NIV 2010
A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ *If the LORD had not been on our side—
let Israel say—*

² *if the LORD had not been on our side
when people attacked us,*

³ *they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us;*

⁴ *the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,*

⁵ *the raging waters
would have swept us away.*

⁶ *Praise be to the LORD,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.*

⁷ *We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.*

⁸ *Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

We are beginning to feel the effects of the ascent now and experiencing a higher altitude – our breathing becomes shorter and more laboured, our steps smaller, our concentration greater, we are focussed and intentional, the road narrows, we watch where we place our feet more carefully...we are going both deeper and higher in our journey into the heart of God...

David exults in the Lord.

Tongues have been raised against him, but his reaction is to exult in God.

Have you ever had people attack you and kept your heart open to God and your mouth shut?

It's just a test - and it has to do with altitude...

¹Fenelon said this –

'Don't allow yourself to be upset by what people are saying about you. Let the world talk. All you need to be concerned about is doing the will of God. As for what people want, you can't please everybody, and it isn't worth the effort.'

Knowledge without experience is not truth.

A true knowledge of God must lead us into a direct, physical, encounter with the Lord.

David had had such an encounter many times...therefore -

David **exults** in the Lord.

'If He had not been on our side, if He had not been with us, when their voices raged against us, they wanted to tear us with their teeth, we would have gone down'...

One with God is surely a majority he says – *'our help is in the name of the Lord – Maker of heaven and earth'*.

David was a man grounded in the **knowledge** of Who God is **and** Who He was for David...

Knowledge **and** experience -

This **knowledge** was gained through his **experience** of God in tight spots...he was a man with an experience who was beyond reason...

Many times when protecting his sheep from 'the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear', his God had been with him and now on his way up to worship in Jerusalem, he again extols the God of Jeshurun who rides on the clouds...

Deuteronomy 33:26

²⁶*"There is none like the God of Jeshurun,
Who rides the heavens to your help,
And through the skies in His majesty.'*

When I first started looking at this psalm I thought David was calling for help, but as I looked again I

saw that he was praising the Lord.

Isn't it strange that you can read something over and over again and miss the main point of what is being said?

It is probably the human condition - having seen something in one light, we cannot see it from a different perspective...

Unlearning - I am discovering on my journey with God is as important as learning – probably more so in fact...

Let me explain – for years I have understood things in a certain way, much like a child, and then God moves upon me and I see from a totally different perspective what He is saying – I have an 'Ahaah' moment...

Many of us stay locked into a childhood perception of God, particularly if we were saved as a youngster; we seem to cease to grow up in the things of God; Jesus is always the baby in the manger, gentle Jesus meek and mild...

But the King whom David describes here, and of Whom he has firsthand knowledge, is a Mighty Warrior – who '*rides on the clouds*' to save and deliver His people, someone who is coming again in exactly the same way as He departed...

Mark 13:26 NASB

²⁶"Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory."

This is a psalm of both hazard and help.

*'Through many dangers toils and snares we have already come'...*Jesus Himself said this would be the way of it -

John 16:33

³³"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

And tribulation, Paul tells us, works something in us - patience...

Romans 5:3 NASB

³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

Exulting in tribulation, worshipping in trials and in the face of trouble and difficulty...growing up in God, seeing His hand, His good hand behind everything: turning everything into an opportunity for thanksgiving and growth - for this is the will of God...

Romans 5:4

⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

We can measure our growth by the way we **react** or **respond** to our trials and tribulations...thermostat or thermometer, you get to choose...

Is our first thought - 'Thank You Father you are with me in this...I know You have the answer...' or is it something less than faith filled?

Do we press the panic button or the praise button?

Whenever there is a problem, there is provision; we just have to stand still long enough to see it.

All along the way marks of our lives God has placed provision for just that problem; nothing takes Him by surprise, even though it takes us by surprise...what a confidence we have, that He knows everything, is in control of everything and therefore everything will be all right...

'All will be well and all will be well and all manner of things – **will** be well.' Julian of Norwich.²

So whatever you are facing right now, however difficult your current situation or circumstance seems to be, look up, thank Him for being there with you, right in the 'same boat' as you are –

Matthew 8:23 – 25 NIV

²³When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"

Some versions have the words 'do you not **care** we are perishing...?'

Of course He cares, and actually you are not perishing, He is just testing where you are...have you learned anything from previous tests and trials, or are you still in the same place.

Is your heart open and your mouth shut, or is it the opposite – your mouth is open and your heart is closed against what He is working in you right now?

Are you amongst the grumblers and complainers or amongst those who are extolling Him with their praise for the circumstances in which they find themselves?

He never leaves us or forsakes us, but He does test our reactions because He wants us to grow up in Him...so the occasional tests are necessary.

He knows where you are, but you don't...you may just need to go around this one again...

And Satan is allowed to sift us...

Luke 22:31 NKJV

³¹ And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Hey, fancy being good enough to attract the attention of the enemy; being good enough for the enemy to **ask** if he can sift you...something to aim at...and a comforting thought, Satan can do nothing unless He has the Father's permission...ask Job.

And God doesn't measure time, He measures growth...

The whole of our time here on this planet, we will have trouble because it produces something – patience and patience given its fullness, brings hope and hope, as the KJV puts it, '*maketh not ashamed.*'

Romans 5:4 – 5 KJV

⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope: ⁵And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.'

Aaah *experience*...all knowledge will be either accompanied by an experience, or an experience will have to follow it...

Logical, cerebral 'faith' and appreciation of scripture do not change a mindset.

Check it out – how many sermons have you listened to over the years?

How many notes have you made?

How many times have you vowed to change because of what you have heard?

How many times have you tried?

How much change has actually taken place?

But when you have the **experience**...aaah there is a lesson we do not forget.

Experience is our teacher to bring us into a knowledge of God which causes us to live at increasingly different levels with Him – we ascend the stairway...

We do not become a new person by behaviour modification.

We become a new person by discovering the person we already are, Who God really is and aligning ourselves with that...knowledge **must** become real in our **experience** or we are not changed...so the key to knowledge – is experience.

'You've got to feel it to heal it' as we used to say in the healing ministry...

David's **experience**, of God led to him **knowing** who God was and Who He was **for** him.

He knew exactly how God would turn up for him every single time, and he knew it from experience -

1 Samuel 17:37 NKJV

³⁷ Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

Move over Goliath or lose your head or at least some teeth!

Experiencing the knowledge of truth is what will set you free.

Knowing Who God is **for you** - is the truth that sets you free.

And the truth is a Person.

So it all comes back to intimacy, relationship, you and Him...

Knowledge without experience is just true, 'yes' I can say, that is true...

But it will not be **truth** for me until I, personally, experience it. I will not know Jesus heals until I have been healed, I have the experience, it is mine and no-one can take it away from me – I **know** He heals, because it happened to me.

I will not **know** He supplies all my needs, until I have been hard up against it **experienced** His provision...

I will not **know** He is my peace, until I feel it, taste it, touch it, experience it – and then I will fight to keep it in every single circumstance in my life – Jesus and me. His peace, He gives it; He allows it to be contested so I fight to keep it -

I will push away fear, doubt and insecurity...this is **my** peace it's mine, I'm having it and I'm keeping it...and sometimes we **do** have to fight for it –

2 Samuel 23: 11 – 12 NIV

¹¹ Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. ¹² But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory.'

'These are my lentils, I planted them, I watered them, and I'm eating them...' the Lord being my helper...if the Lord hadn't been on our side...

I cannot take the truth and apply it to myself that is self-help. But as I surrender to the life of Jesus within me, I am wonderfully impacted by His Presence, spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally.

If I only give mental assent to the truth, I miss the **experience** of the transformation His indwelling me brings – nothing changes.

We have been granted great and precious promises, all ours, as we appropriate and experience them for ourselves – this experience is so revelatory, it changes our whole character and personality...we become transformed.

So, true knowledge of God is based on a **relationship** with Him that has **proved** God's intention towards me in the normal, natural, physical events of everyday life – God is for **ME** -

'If the Lord had not been on our side...'

Whew!

Where would we have ended up?

But He is on our side –

Romans 8:31 NKJV

God's Everlasting Love

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?'

Don't waste those trials; **everything** turns for your profit if you have the right attitude - true knowledge of God leads to an experience of God and an encounter with God...

So all this has a purpose...that we might grow.

Grow up in all things, in Christ, that we might **know** the hope we have and be able to tell others about it.

'God has stuck with me through thick and thin' – unless we have these difficulties, how would we know His faithfulness, His mercy, His loving kindnesses which are new every morning...

So we **exult** in hope – we rejoice.

We are hilarious in difficulties...because we know; our God is for us -

Just like David.

We can back up what we say with **experience** – *'let me tell you who God has been for me, what He has done for me, how He has delivered me...from the paw of the lion, the wagging tongues...which rose up against me...'* real for me because He has walked with me through these experiences...let me tell you how He has hidden me in the *'secret place of His pavilion'* from the strife of tongues...David again –

Psalm 31: 19 – 20 NKJV

¹⁹ *Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!*
²⁰ *You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence
From the plots of man;
You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.*

Knowledge and experience – in the time of trouble -

Psalm 27: 5 – 6 NKJV

⁵ *For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.*
⁶ *And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me;
therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.*

It is good to be hidden in the secret place, in His pavilion, from the strife of tongues... *when their anger flares against us...*

² if the LORD had not been on our side when people attacked us, ³ they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us;

People are there to grow you in grace; the enemy is there to grow you spiritually. Win: win – heads we win, tails we win...everything is for our profit...

And God is good, all the time, I know because I can tell you – let me tell you my **experience** of Him...which has become true and truth for me, David is saying.

Consider Polycarp who, when tied to the stake in preparation to be burnt, would not recant and said *'He has walked with me these 80 years and has never let me down, should I now renounce Him?'*

Despite the soldiers' attempts to light the fire they could not – the wind changed and blew away from this old saint – so they untied him and put him to death by the spear...

His witness lives on...

Witness and testimony.

Your testimony is **not** your history of how you got saved; your testimony as you grow on and go on in God, is **Who He is** for you right here, right now...

Who you know Him to be for you personally.

So why not stop right there and think about just Who He is for you right now, or indeed, Who He wants to be for you in your particular situation or difficulty – what do you need Him to be for you right now that He couldn't be at any other time?

Let's pray shall we?

Where else would we go?

Father,

Thank You, You want to be something for me right now that You couldn't be in any other circumstance or at any other time. Father, I'm up to my eyes in it, I don't know what to or who to believe, I am frightened and I am confused, I want to lash out, please come to me however You want, but be to me what You know I need right now.

In Jesus Name.

Amen.

And you can be sure He will...and if He doesn't answer your prayer immediately, be sure He will eventually and you will exult with David –

*If the LORD had not been on my side—
if the LORD had not been on my side
I would have gone under
My help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

Why not take a few moment to write your own psalm of thanksgiving – though all these things are true, yet, will I give thanks and praise You...if you can do this, you will know you are indeed 'Growing up in God.'

He is faithful.

Amen and amen.

¹Let Go' by Fenelon, available from Amazon.co.uk

²Revelations of Divine Love' Julian of Norwich M L De Mastro available from Amazon.co.uk