

The Psalms of Ascents

Subject: Experiencing God's dealing in the church life until we arrive at a mature testimony

The Third Stage: Completely one with God, reaching the maturity of life (Psalms 130 to 134)

Week 1 – Monday

Col. 3:16 – Footnotes 16², 16³, 16⁴, 16⁵, 16⁷

Let us pray: “O Lord Jesus. Lord we thank You for gathering us together this weekend. We gather in Your presence. We look to Your presence; we look to Your speaking. Lord, we want to know You more, to know Your ways, to know Your heart's desire so that we can be with all the brothers and sisters in the church life today. We want to experience all that You are dealing with us today so that we can continue to go forward, so that we can reach the truth to know You more, to reach the oneness, to reach a mature man, to reach the riches of the stature of Your fulness so that the church today on earth can reach a mature testimony. Lord, we thank You and look for Your blessing. May Your word be open to us. We give You the Psalms of Ascents. Bring us onward step by step according to the revelations in these psalms so that our life can grow, so that our experience of life can go upward until we reach oneness with You with maturity of life, so that we can be ones awaiting Your return. Lord Jesus, hear our prayer. Thank You Lord.”

It is a joyful time for us to be here again with all the brothers and sisters. Last year at this time we fellowshiped concerning the first and second stages of the Psalms of Ascents in Psalms 120 to 129. The 15 Psalms of Ascents can be divided into 3 stages of 5 psalms each. This is a marvellous arrangement in the Bible. I believe that this is according to the arrangement of the Holy Spirit. The entire 150 psalms are in 5 sections. These 5 sections describe the 5 stages of our growth in life in our Christian life. One of the sections is the Psalms of Ascents. You can say that this is the cream of the Psalms. Last year we covered 2 stages. The first stage is Psalms 120 to 124. Psalms 125 to 129 is the second stage. This time we come to the third stage, Psalms 130 to 134. The more we enter into the word of God, we find that His word is wonderful.

The Psalms of Ascents

Week 1 – Tuesday

Psa. 120:1 – Footnote 1¹

Psa. 122:1-3

Before we go on to the third stage, let us briefly review the first and second stages starting from Psalm 120. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Book of Psalms. There are 8 verses that begin with each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, making 176 verses in total. After this Psalm, we come to the Psalms of Ascents. The topic of these psalms is experiencing God's dealing in the church life until we arrive at a mature testimony. The whole Psalms of Ascents is to bring us into the church life. Only in the church life can we experience God's dealing to the extent that we arrive at the maturity of life. It is impossible for us to a Christian alone. If we want to be a Christian, we must be together with all the other brothers and sisters. We must live a church life with all the other brothers and sisters. All God's work today is in the church life.

The Psalms of Ascents give us a picture of how someone began to love the Lord and enter into the church life. The first point is that we must leave the world to enter into the church life. Psalm 120:1 says, "In my distress I cried to the LORD, And He heard me." Previously he was in the world; he lived in Meshech and among the tents of Kedar. That environment was filled with tongues of deceit and lying lips. He desired to escape from this world to come to God's presence. Then he was rescued by God and started to go forward.

Psalm 121 shows how he was helped by God. Then in Psalm 122 he enters into the church life: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.' Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together" (vv. 1-3). This is to enter into the church life. Here there is the throne of David. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to enter into the church life.

The Psalms of Ascents

Week 1 – Wednesday

Psa. 124

After entering into the church life the psalmist became a servant serving God: “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God” (123:2). After entering into the church life we need to consecrate ourselves to the Lord so that we can become His servants to serve God.

In Psalm 124 the psalmist experienced the Lord’s help. When we grow in life, we will eventually find out that it was because God helped us. This is like Romans chapters 1 to 8 where Paul described the entire journey of a Christian from being condemned in sin, being justified, growing in life, being sanctified, being transformed, and being glorified. After all these things, Paul concludes with Romans 8:31: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Who can accuse those whom God has chosen? “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies” (v. 33). “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (v. 35). There are many environments and sufferings in this world. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. This is the testimony that Paul gave us in the New Testament.

This is also the testimony of the psalmist in Psalm 124. This is the conclusion of the first stage of the Psalms of Ascents. “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, When men rose up against us, Then they would have swallowed us alive... Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul” (vv. 2-5). All this persecution cannot harm us because God has helped us. In following the Lord, we need to experience that it is God who helps us.

The Psalms of Ascents

Week 1 – Thursday

Psalm 125

Psalm 125 tells us that we need to trust in the Lord. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. This means that when we trust in the Lord we can be strengthened and overcome. We not only face the outward environment, we also experience the old man within us. Within us is both the scepter of wickedness and the allotment of the righteous. In the process of our growth in life, we discover that the real difficulties are not outward things, they are within our person. Within us is something called the scepter of wickedness. This is the life of Adam, the life of our flesh. After we are saved, a new life enters us, the Holy Spirit enters into us; but our original natural man, our natural life, the life of our flesh, is still within. These two lives are always at war so we cannot do what we desire to do. As Paul said, to will is up to me, but it is not up to me when I want to do it. If we Christians do not recognize what is within us, it is difficult for us to grow in life. We desire to pursue the Lord and serve the Lord, but when we try to, we find a difficulty. The difficulty is our flesh, our natural life; it becomes our most difficult limitation. So Galatians says that the Spirit wars against our flesh and our flesh wars against the Spirit. The two war against each other. In Romans chapter 7, Paul said that when I desire to do good, evil is within me and even captures me so that I follow the law of sin. Where is salvation? Paul asked, “Who can save me from this sinful flesh?” Praise the Lord, Romans chapter 8 is the answer. The answer is that the law of the Spirit of life within us can overcome the law of sin and of death. This is what Psalm 125 is referring to when it says that the scepter of wickedness will not rest on the allotment of the righteous. Even though the life of the flesh is within us, the life of Christ is also within us. The life in our flesh cannot overcome the life in our spirit. Therefore, God wants us to experience the life within us that can overcome the law of sin and of death, that can release us from the bondage of our flesh.

The Psalms of Ascents

Week 1 – Friday

Psa. 126

Matt. 13:8 – Footnote 8¹

Psalm 126 says that those who sow in tears will reap with a ringing shout. This means that we can enjoy a life of harvesting and reaping. This psalm again brings us higher. It begins with returning from captivity and ends with reaping with a ringing shout. These 2 verses are speaking of the same thing. Returning from captivity and sowing in tears are put together in the Bible. On one hand, those who were in captivity now return. On the other hand, those who sowed are now reaping. It is a suffering to be in captivity, but to return from captivity is a joy. Their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with a ringing shout. Those who sow in tears reap with a ringing shout. We need to sow ourselves. When we sow ourselves by dying the result is resurrection. We need to die with the Lord and rise with the Lord. Then we will reap the riches of life. How many grains can one seed produce? In the past, sowing was done manually but now with machines. When you sow rice, you must put the seed in ground to grow into a small shoot, then transplant it into a field. The Lord said that the good earth produced 30 fold, sixty fold or a hundred fold. This is very conservative. The sowing in tears is a matter of death but the reaping in life is in resurrection. The more we experience death with Christ, the more we can experience the riches of life.

The Psalms of Ascents

Week 1 – Saturday

Psa. 127

Psalm 127 says that we cannot do anything for the Lord in our natural strength. Our soul life and our natural life are worthless in God's building work. What can we do? The psalm mentions four things that are in vain, but the Lord gives His beloved sleep. Everything that we do is worthless, but verse 3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward." The word *heritage* refers to something given by God. There is nothing that you need to do; God is the one who gives the heritage. Children are the result of growth in life. They are the heritage completely from God. That is why Paul said that the One who gives the growth. Paul planted and Apollos watered but only God can give the increase. Growth is up to God. However, Psalm 127:3 also says that the fruit of the womb is a reward. A reward comes from something that you do; you will gain a reward only if your work is good. On one hand, the increase is given by God. On the other hand, we must cooperate. We must have a heart to love the Lord; we must pursue the Lord; we must desire to grow in life. This psalm shows us that everything that man does by himself is worthless. However, God is going to give us children, to increase the number in our family, to fill our house. The house that you build is also your family. God's house is God's family. The members of the family are the children. That is why this psalm puts the building of the house and bearing children together. The Bible is very meaningful. The house equals the family. When we talk about the family, we also talk about the children. To build the house is to increase the members in the house; it is the increase of life. Therefore, building is a matter of growth in life. This is the concept in the Bible. When Paul mentioned building in Ephesians chapter 2, he says that the building needs to be joined together in Christ until it grows into the dwelling place of God. He says that we must build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets and that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The whole building is being joined together in Christ and then gradually grows until it becomes the temple of God. What is growth? How do you build? We need to grow in life. Initially, growth is up to God; God is the One who causes us to grow. This is one aspect, but the other aspect is the reward. This means that there is also the aspect of man's responsibility. We need to love the Lord with a pure heart and pursue the Lord. This is our responsibility.