

# **Psalms of Ascent**

## **Message 4**

### **2nd Stage: God's Deeper Perfecting in the Church Life (Psalms 125 – 129)**

#### **Monday**

In this section the psalmist not only has a deeper revelation of God's will, but also a deeper realization of himself. He sees that in himself, that is, in his flesh, there is no righteousness whatsoever. All the actions of the flesh are utterly despised and rejected before God. He has further realized that a Christian living on this earth should not be a living based on emotions, but a living based on faith. Now, he can live by faith no matter what his circumstances, because he really knows God. Therefore, he can continue going on by faith.

In the first section, his perfecting was more on the outside. However, in the second section, his perfecting before God is no longer on the outside, but on the inside. This perfecting of the cross is much deeper, it touches the inner being. The actions of his flesh, his thoughts, his emotions, his plans—all of this has been exposed by the light of God and has been dealt with.

#### **I. Those Who Trust in the LORD Cannot be Moved**

Those who trust in the LORD Are like Mount Zion, Which cannot be moved, but abides forever (Psa. 125:1).

#### **A. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved—overcoming and stable.**

1. When a person trusts himself to the Lord, he will see two things: First, his state will be like Mount Zion, forever unmoved. This is an eternal stability. Second, as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. This is eternal safety.
2. In this world, everything is changing, everything is moving. People will change, environments will change, even countries can change. But the mountains don't change; in the past, this

mountain was in a particular place, today, this mountain remains in the same place. So mountains give us a feeling of stability, safety and permanence.

3. A person who truly trusts in the Lord is truly stable; even if a strong wind blows, that person is still unmoved like Mount Zion. He is not like a reed, seemingly very high and straight, but yielding to the slightest breeze.
4. In the New Testament, Mount Zion is the place where David's throne is established. Therefore, Mount Zion is the place where kings reside. When the Lord's throne is established within us, we become Mount Zion. Under the sovereign of the Lord, under the authority of the Lord, we are forever stable.
5. Paul testified: "For I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." When you give yourself fully to God, He will keep you until the day He comes again. So only a person who trusts in Jehovah can gain eternal stability.

Someone who desires to follow the Lord experience the Lord's presence. God's keeps us for the sake of the church, so we also consecrate ourselves for the sake of the church. We put ourselves into the Lord's hands so that He can work on us. Psalm 125 speaks of the testimony of the church and how God will help us when people rise up to attack us. God will protect us from all the attacks of the enemy. The enemy cannot defeat us. Romans 8 tells us that nothing, including suffering, can separate us from the love of God. If God is helping us, who can oppose us? This is the thought in Psalm 125. No one can accuse us or separate us from the love of Christ. He will make us more than conquerors and give us all things, things present and things to come.

Psalm 125 is a new beginning. We must come to experience God's working more in the church. We can testify that we cannot be moved in the church; no one can destroy us or move us causing our heart to shake. We are unshakeable in living the church life. This is a sweet experience; this is the testimony of an overcomer. Revelation tells us that the overcomers will become the pillars in the church; a pillar cannot be moved. If you come to the meeting only when you

feel like it, then you are not a pillar. A pillar is stable and trustworthy. You need to desire to be an overcomer in the church. We are placed among the brothers and sisters in the church. Do others see us as stable and trustworthy? A person who is like this is like Mount Zion. This is where the Lord reigns. The overcomers can reign with Christ so Mount Zion also represents the overcomers. We rely on and trust in the Lord; then we can become overcomers who cannot be moved just like Mount Zion.

## **Tuesday**

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this time forth and forever (Psa. 125:2).

### **B. Like surrounding mountains, the Lord protects the church:**

“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.”

1. Jerusalem was built on the mountains; there are mountains surrounding the city. Likewise, when you enter into the local church life, you know that the living is high, the testimony is high; you realize that the Lord Himself surrounds the church life; like surrounding mountains, He protects the church life.
2. In the church life, in the Lord’s testimony, you begin to understand what a Christ you have; this Christ surrounds you for the sake of Jerusalem; He protects you because you are in Jerusalem. The more you enjoy the church life, the more you become part of the church life, the more you put yourself in the church life, and the more you will understand what a Christ you have!
3. Before, your experience of Christ was very limited. When you arrive in the church life, you start to understand: Christ, He is my Christ, He is also your Christ, He is everyone’s Christ. Before, what you knew and what you experienced of Christ, was what you looked up to; you raised your eyes to the “mountain”. Now your heart is enlightened; you recognize this “mountain” has become the “mountains” surrounding Jerusalem. When brothers and sisters come together to become the reality of Jerusalem, the protection that we gain

corporately is such a wonderful, rich, heavenly, glorious Christ!

4. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Christ surrounds his people — what a wonderful Christ! What a rich Christ! What a heavenly Christ! What a full Christ! What a glorious Christ! We have such a Christ because we are part of the church life, we are in the church life!

## **Wednesday**

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).

The Lord is like the mountains that surround Jerusalem; He surrounds His people. First, we must be those who are stable and trustworthy in the church life. Perhaps there are some who are like this, remaining in the church life to fight for God's testimony, becoming a pillar in God's temple. This is very precious. Paul testified that he knew whom he believed and believed that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to Him until that day. Those who trust the Lord will be stable until eternity, until the Lord comes again. Brothers and sisters like this uphold the testimony of the church. We want to be such overcomers who know whom we believe and are willing to give ourselves completely to Him for Him to guard us until that day.

Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains; the mountains represent our God. When we trust in the Lord, we find out that the Lord is like mountains surrounding the church. This is not because of us; the church can be God's testimony on earth because God is keeping us. How do you feel when God surrounds you? You feel very safe; the enemy cannot damage us; no one can come and damage the church because the Lord is surrounding His people. The more we live the church life and give ourselves to the church life, the more we can experience the Lord's surrounding. He is surrounding His testimony, the church, so we must put ourselves in the church life and become

an overcomer in the church.

The Lord looks after us in many aspects; together we experience such a Christ. When you trust the Lord, you find out that He is like Mount Zion, but more than that, He is like the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. Christ is much richer than what we think or our personal experience. What we can experience of the Lord personally is limited, but when we experience the Lord together we can enjoy the dimensions of Christ. Together we experience Christ and express His riches. We should treasure the experiences of Christ that we have together with all the saints. The riches of Christ are beyond the dimensions of the universe. We cannot comprehend how long, wide, high or deep they are. The many mountains are like all the saints surrounding us keeping us safe. This is something that you can only experience in the church life. If your experience of the Lord is only what you can experience by yourself, your experience will be poor, weak and limited. If you leave the church life for a few weeks, you will find out that you cannot sustain a good spiritual condition. Your prayer becomes less and less, you stop reading the Bible. No one can be a proper Christian by themselves. The real overcomers must dwell among the believers; we must be in the church life; we must enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ in His breadth, length, height and depth.

## **Thursday**

For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest On the land allotted to the righteous, Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity (Psa. 125:3).

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

### **C. The scepter of wickedness and the allotment of the righteous**

1. After a person gives himself to the Lord, he will enter into another conflict, this conflict is not on the outside, but within. You will find that inside, you have two persons. One is a righteous person, one is a wicked person. The scepter of the wicked one will often land on the allotment of the righteous one.

2. Adam's life is within you, the life of the flesh. This life controls you and compels you to reject God, to disobey God. At the same time, Christ's life is also in you. This life strives to love God, to obey God. So inside you, the Spirit is often fighting with the flesh.
3. There is a conflict within you: when you obey the Spirit, you have peace and life; when you follow the flesh, you enter into death. At the beginning of your experience, you will feel that the scepter of the wicked is so long and so hard.
4. You feel the sin within your flesh is always there to control you, harass you, causing you to suffer. This experience is Paul's experience in Romans 7. "Wretched man that I am! For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:18, 24).
5. The reason why God allows us to have this conflict within us is for us to know our flesh. Just like in the Old Testament, God led the Israelites to walk the path in the wilderness because he wanted to test them in the wilderness, to let them know themselves, to see that there is no good within themselves, and to see that they cannot depend on themselves to enter into Canaan.
6. Although for a while, the scepter of the wicked was on the allotment of the righteous, causing us to be weak and causing us to stumble, the Lord promised us here, "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous", He only wants us to learn some lessons. When we see that within us, that is, within our flesh, there is no righteousness, we will cease to struggle while depending on ourselves. We will see that our being is "crucified with Christ, now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). At this time, the righteous person will reign in life, rise up to rule and gain inner peace.

## Friday

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:21-24).

The experiences of Christ's riches in the church life are so sweet and precious, but Psalm 125 does not stop here. Suddenly there is a turn to talk about the scepter of wickedness not resting on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity. What does this mean? When we start to enjoy Christ and His safe keeping, we are peaceful but we find out that there are problems in ourselves. These are not problems from the world or from others. The problems begin with us; the Lord needs to go further to work in us. Inside of each of us is a righteous man and also a wicked man. The wicked man here does not refer to other people; the wicked man is inside you. This is what Paul experienced in Romans chapter 7 where he says that there are two people in him. When he wants to do good, sin captures him. He wants to do good but the law of sin captures him. He could not overcome the sin within him. His conclusion was that nothing good dwells in him. He could wish to do good, but he could not actually do it. The life of the flesh within him made him captive to the law of sin. Is this your experience?

The wickedness in Psalm 125 is the life of Adam in the flesh that makes us captive. There is a war within us. Galatians 5 tells us that the Spirit wars against the flesh within us and the flesh wars against the Spirit so that we cannot do what we desire to do. In this war between the flesh and the Spirit, we have the key. Outwardly we have the flesh; inwardly we have the Spirit. The flesh wants us to do things against God; the Spirit wants us to obey God and live for His purpose and desire. Our person, our soul, our mind, emotion and will, is in the middle. This is the situation of believers; we are a battleground. Whichever side we take will win the battle. If we stand with the Lord, the Spirit will win.

Romans 8 tells us that if we set our mind on the spirit, the result

is life and peace. If we set our mind on the flesh, the result is death. If your mind is leaning toward the flesh, it will win the battle, you will follow the members of your body into sin, and the result will be death. If you set your mind on the Spirit, He will lead you to life and peace. The key is our choice. Our mind, emotion and will are very important in your spiritual experience. Don't think that there is nothing that you can do. You cannot do anything by yourself but you can choose which side you are on. Turn to the spirit, then Christ will overcome in you; as the righteous you will not have the scepter of wickedness resting on you to take you to follow the law of sin.

We not only enjoy all the aspects and riches of Christ in the church life, we also need to realize that the flesh within us will hinder us from going forward with the Lord. The apostle Paul was the most absolute among the believers. His experience of the Lord was very good from the time he was saved. From the book of Romans you can tell that he was very clear about God's salvation, but even so, he still needed the experience of Romans chapter 7. Paul wrote that chapter in the first person; he described his own experience. He found out how powerful the flesh within him was. When he tried to fulfill the Lord's requirements and please God by his own efforts, he failed. At the end he cried out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" But praise the Lord, he didn't stay there too long because the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land of the righteous.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ we can be rescued from being captive to the law of sin and death. This is not according to us but to Christ who can save and rescue us. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ because the Spirit of life saves and releases us. What a wonderful salvation! The law of the Spirit of life can save us.



## Saturday

Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, And to those who are upright in their hearts (Psa. 125:4).

...the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom. 8:4-6).

### **D. A prayer — Oh God, let the part of us that belongs to You be manifested; likewise expose our evil part**

1. From the time the author of this psalm realized this, he began to pray before God. He says, “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts! But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers. Peace be upon Israel!”
2. Let us also have a similar prayer before God. Look to Him and say, “May the Lord strengthen us in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, that we may be grounded in love” (Eph. 3:16-17). Let our outer being be broken day by day, so that we may find favour before God. When that time comes, the Lord’s peace will be inside us, controlling us.

No one can keep the righteous life required by the law. Not one is righteous (Rom. 3:10-12). There were so many holy men of God in the Old Testament who were used by the Lord but not one was righteous because none could satisfy the demand of the law. That is why God gave them the tabernacle with the offerings to come to God’s presence. According to the law, none of them could approach God. All the offerings and items of the tabernacle signify Christ; through them they could come to God. Christ has come; He has overcome, sin has been forgiven, our old man has been crucified, and the work of redemption has been completed. Hallelujah, it is all done.

Not only so, the Lord has become the life-giving Spirit in resurrection who dwells in us. We need to turn to Him, setting our

mind on the spirit. “The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4). “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (v. 5). When we set our mind on the flesh the result is death; when we set our mind on the spirit the result is life and peace. This is the secret of an overcoming life. Our mind must be set on the spirit. The spirit here is the mingled spirit of both our spirit and the Spirit of Christ. Our spirit was enlightened and regenerated by the Spirit entering into us.

The Spirit will never leave us; He will dwell in us even if we tell Him to leave us alone. We may fail and stumble but the Lord will not leave us. This is the assurance of salvation. Do not doubt your salvation even when you realize how weak and poor you are. The difference is whether we know how to apply our salvation, how to set your mind on the spirit to experience life and peace. We must leave Romans 7 to enter into Romans 8. Then the righteous person inside us will overcome and the wicked one will be judged. We must put to death the works of our flesh through the Spirit (Rom. 8:13) to be the overcomers who trust the Lord. Christ is in our spirit; we can touch Him by turning to Him to continually have sweet fellowship with Him.

## Sunday

As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, The LORD shall lead them away With the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel! (Psa. 125:5).

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thes. 5:16-18).

### **E. After exposing, having peace to come to the church life**

1. So we see on the one hand, inside us, that is in our flesh, there is no righteousness; on the other hand, our old man has already been crucified with Christ. We accept the cross by faith and by declaring, “No longer I, but Christ!” In this way, the Lord’s peace will control us.
2. Israel typifies God’s testimony which is today’s church, which is us. It is only when our flesh, our soul life has been exposed and has been dealt with, that the church life will have the reality of peace. The more we are exposed, the more the church life has peace; the more we know ourselves, the more the church life has peace; the more our self is dealt with by the Lord, the more the church life has peace.

Paul gave us the secret of overcoming the flesh in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.” Being joyful is a testimony that we are joined to the Lord. How can we be joyful without the Lord? There are too many worries. But in the Lord we can be joyful because He lives within us. We have the Lord! “Pray without ceasing.” How can we do this? How many things can we pray for? This does not mean that we have so many things to ask the Lord. It means that we can turn to Him at any time. There are so many distractions in a modern city; everywhere you look are things designed to stir up the lust of the eyes. So we need to turn our eyes to the Lord: “Lord I need You. Lord save me from looking at all these things.” We need to pray unceasingly and turn to the Lord in all things. “In everything give thanks.” Do not murmur or argue because that will cause you to depart from the Lord and lose the Lord’s presence. You can always say, “Lord, thank You” no matter what happens. When you do this from the bottom of your

heart, you will be turning to the spirit.

In the end, the psalmist prayed, “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, And to those who are upright in their hearts.” This refers to the righteous person within us. The righteous person within us needs to be strengthened. In Ephesians 3 Paul prayed for us to be strengthened in our inner man. Then we can overcome the wicked man and Christ can expand within us. In the end we will be filled by God; we can attain this high experience. At that time, the flesh will have been dealt with. Those who are of the Lord Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh and all the lusts of the flesh. This is the experience that we should have as a Christian. God allows us to have experiences of failure so that we know our flesh and the wickedness within us. This should help us to come to the point that we no longer live by our old man but live by Christ within us. We are being brought to the point where we can say with Paul, “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. My old man has been crucified on the cross. Sin no longer has power over me because Christ lives in me.” We need to declare this always and let God continue His work in us.