

(Through the Bible) Psalms 120-135

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the significance of the Psalms of Ascents and the importance of Jerusalem as the center of worship, highlighting the Psalmist's experiences of distress, gratitude, and dependence on God's help and protection.

Duration: 1:24:39

Topics: "Worship Focus", "Obedient Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of keeping our focus on the Lord rather than getting caught up in interpersonal conflicts with others. He uses the analogy of a servant watching his master's hand for signals, highlighting the need for attentiveness and obedience. The speaker also discusses the joy and freedom that comes from recognizing and celebrating the great things that God has done for us. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the anticipation and excitement of gathering together as a nation to worship the Lord in Jerusalem.

Transcript

This time let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 120. Begin our Bible study this evening. Now you'll notice these psalms have a heading, the psalm, a song of degrees.

The word literally is ascents, a-s-c-e-n-t-s. And these are sort of the marching songs for the people of Israel as they would come thrice annually to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. There's a lot of things about the nation Israel that excite me.

There are a lot of things that I wish that somehow we could incorporate in our worship of the Lord. This business of all of them gathering together three days out of the... well actually the feast days were seven days, but three times out of the year. At the Feast of Passover, at the Feast of Pentecost and at the Feast of Sukkot or Tabernacles.

This business of everybody gathering together and just having a great worship service and a great feasting time and a time of worshipping the Lord. This to me would be exciting when the nation, the whole nation is gathering to acknowledge that God reigns over the nation and just the worshipping of the Lord together. How exciting that must have been.

Now Jerusalem is situated in a sense in what is known as the Jerusalem Mountains. So no matter where you are coming from, you are ascending towards Jerusalem. Whether you come from the Galilee region or the Jordan region and usually coming from Galilee, they would come down the Jordan River and then from Jericho make their way up the 20 miles to Jerusalem.

Or whether you're coming from the Sharon Valley, the coastal plains, the area of Jaffa or whatever, you're always coming up when you come to Jerusalem. Coming from Beersheba, coming from Samaria, you're always ascending up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is sort of on the mountain and yet it is surrounded by mountains.

Mount Zion, Mount of Olives, Mount Scopus and the mountains that surround the city itself. But yet from anywhere in the country coming to worship, you are ascending to the city. And so these were called the Songs of the Ascends.

These were sung by the pilgrims as they were coming to Jerusalem on these glorious feast days. Coming to worship the Lord. And so the songs that they were singing as they were coming.

Now in the marching and so forth, there are certain cadences that they get into when they're marching. And sometimes they sing songs in cadence to go along with their marching. You know, the count off, one, two, three, four, you know.

And it's always sort of fun, you know. First they hire me, then they fire me, then by golly I left, I left, I left, right, left, you know. And you're going along in cadence, you know.

And so these were those kind of songs that they would sing in sort of a cadence as they were coming to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. Remembering many times the alien areas where they were living, those who were alien towards God and alien towards those who worship God. So remembering the enemies and the areas from which they have come, but that anticipation, and in these next 15 Psalms, there is underneath that anticipation, I'm soon going to be standing there in the assembly worshiping God.

And that glorious anticipation of standing there in Jerusalem, within the gates of Jerusalem, worshiping the Lord with the assembled multitudes. According to Josephus, there were many times well over a million people who would gather for these feasts to worship the Lord together. So, the first of these Psalms of a sense, the psalmist is looking forward to that time.

In my distress, I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips and from the deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto Thee, O? What shall be done unto Thee, Thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper.

Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshach, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. In other words, He is coming now from these antagonistic areas. Meshach, Kedar.

People who hate God. People who have been against those who worship the Lord. I've been dwelling there.

O God, I've cried unto Thee in my distress. My soul hath long dwelt with Him that hates peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

So, the first Psalm expresses that turmoil of living in a world that is antagonistic towards God. Much the kind of a world that you live in. And so many times, living in the world, living amongst the ungodly, we can identify with the soul that is longing for that fellowship with God, the soul that is longing for that peace of God, and yet all of the turmoil, all of the confusion, all of the lying and conniving, and all that is going on in the world around him.

And so, the soul longing for God. And as He is coming towards Jerusalem, because you're always ascending upwards, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. For there is Jerusalem.

Oh, there in the mountains of Jerusalem. There in the hills. There is that city.

There is where I'm going to stand before God. From whence cometh my help? Now, this Psalm is often misquoted. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.

As though my help was coming from the hills. You know, from whence cometh my help. I will lift up my eyes, and the idea of my help is coming from the hills can't help you.

From whence cometh my help is actually a question. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, towards Jerusalem, the place where I'll stand before God. From whence cometh my help? And it is answered in the next verse.

My help cometh from Yahweh, which made the heaven and the earth. It is many times important that we classify God with this kind of a classification. First of all, so that we'll identify the God that we're talking about.

As Francis Schaeffer said, that we should not as Christians just refer to God. Because nobody knows who you're talking about. There are so many gods that people worship and serve.

So we need to define when we say God, we need to say the only true and the living God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth. Now you're defining Him. That's the God that we worship.

There are many who worship the God of pleasure, the God of power, the God of, you know, different things. The intellect. But the God that we worship is the only true eternal God who has created the heaven and the earth, the living God.

So, from whence cometh my help? My help comes from Yahweh, which made the heaven and the earth. Now, in the declaring of God is the Creator of the heaven and the earth. It's not only valuable to identify when we're talking with people, but it's valuable for us to remember the power of the God that we serve.

There are so many times that we become so overpowered by our problems that we neglect to realize the great power of God. I'm so overwhelmed. This problem is so big.

What am I going to do? And I just get overwhelmed by my difficulties until I realize the greatness of the power of the God I serve. In the New Testament, when the disciples had been beaten and told not to witness anymore in the name of Jesus, it said they came to their own company and they told them all of the things that happened when they were standing before the council. How they were beaten and warned not to preach or teach anymore in the name of Jesus.

And so they prayed, and they said, O Lord, Thou art God. Thou hast created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them. Now, it's good to start your prayer that way because many times, if you'll

just start your prayer that way and really think of what you're praying, all of a sudden, your problem comes into the true perspective.

I am seeing now my difficulty in the light of God's greatness. And my difficulty suddenly isn't so difficult. I'm seeing it no longer in my own strength or my own ability.

I'm calling upon the One who has created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. God said to Jeremiah, Behold, I am God. Is there anything too hard for me? And in his next prayer, Jeremiah picked that up and he said, O Lord, you're God.

There's nothing too hard for you. The Lord who made the heaven and the earth, that's where my help comes from. And if God be for me, who can be against me? He will not allow your foot to be moved.

Now, you're walking up a rocky, slippery path. The rockiest place in the world, I think, is Israel. And rocks and gravel on the path can be very slippery.

But He will not allow your foot to be moved. He that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

God is my help. My help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth. And He's always on duty.

He'll never slumber. He'll never sleep. The Lord is thy keeper.

The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. Of course, coming from the Jordan Valley, extremely hot in that burning sun, the Lord becomes the shade. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. What a glorious promise.

If you are looking to the Lord for your help, He will preserve you from all evil. The Lord will preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, thy coming in from this time forth, even forevermore.

Isn't that a glorious promise to us? God will not allow my foot to be moved. He's watching over me night and day. He will preserve me.

Psalms 122 continues. The idea is I'm traveling now towards Jerusalem. I'm with probably a company of 50-100 people.

They always got together for these trips to Jerusalem. That is why actually when Jesus was 12 years old, when His parents left Jerusalem, they left with a big company of people going back up towards Nazareth. And that's why they could get out a whole day's journey without missing Him.

You know, He's probably with His cousins or, you know, with part of the crowd. And it wasn't until dinner time that they began to look around and couldn't find Him. And then is when they had to retrace their steps back to Jerusalem.

Because they would always travel with a big company. And how glorious that must have been. Coming towards Jerusalem with a large company of people.

Of course, let us say that we here, say it was the big conclave was going to be in San Bernardino. And we all decided, you know, well let's go and let's worship the Lord in San Bernardino. Or up to the conference

center, so we get the idea of going up.

But we didn't have cars. We're going to have to walk. So we all have our provisions.

We start out together. We're singing as we're going down the road. The children are throwing rocks and taking sticks and beating trees and this kind of stuff, you know.

And it's a big kind of an occasion going to worship the Lord. I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Someone suggested, well let's go up this year.

Come on, let's go up to the house of the Lord. Alright, I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord. For our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

The anticipation. Now, there's something about Jerusalem. Once your feet have stood within the gates, you always want to go back and stand again.

There's something magnetic about that place. Once having stood there, there's always a yearning to go back. Every year after our visit to Israel, Kay and I come home and we're trying to get over jet lag and we say, well this is our last year.

You know, this will be it. It's just, you know. My, as the time approaches to leave again, we get so excited.

We're all, you know, planning and getting things all set and ready to go and we're eager and raring to go again. There's just something about the place. You just love to go back again and again.

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Glorious anticipation. For Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.

Whether the tribes go up, and that is the people, all the word compact together means that all the people gather together within it in a compact type of a group. Whether the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord. So all of the people gathering together to give thanks to the Lord.

For there are set thrones of judgment. The thrones of the house of David. Jerusalem is the capital.

Jerusalem is the center. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee.

We had a fellow come in this past week who God has given the gift of giving and he said, I like to give where I know that God is going to bless me. And so while back he gave money designated to be distributed to the poor. Because the scripture said, he who lends to the poor lends to the Lord.

He said, I like to just lend some money to the Lord. So he said, just distribute this to the poor. He said, because I know God's interested in the poor and God's going to bless me.

Well, he came back and he said, well, God has blessed me because I distributed to the poor. He said, now I want to give again where I know that God will bless. And God said that he would bless those that bless Israel.

And so he said, I want to give a gift just for the nation of Israel. Let it come from the church. And I want you to take it over with you when you go.

So we'll be taking a gift to Israel when we go over in January. We're going to give it to Prime Minister Begin and just tell him it's from the Christians at Calvary Chapel because we're praying for the peace of Jerusalem and we love them for preserving the Bible for us and for bringing us our Savior. And we're just going to give it in the name of the Lord to the nation.

And if you'd like to contribute to that fund, you can just designate it. They shall prosper, it says, that love thee. He said, God has so blessed me for giving to the poor, loaning to him for the poor.

Now I want to give into something else that God has declared himself for. So he gave me a check for \$450,000 that I'll be taking over. My accountant said this is what I need to write off for the end of the year.

So loaning to the poor pays pretty good interest. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee.

He tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and then he offers sort of a prayer. Peace be within thy walls. For the companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee.

Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good. Still in the anticipation of gathering in Jerusalem to worship the Lord, Psalm 123, unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden look unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until that He have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. That is, the people around us are just contemptuous towards us.

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease and with the contempt of the proud. So, Lord, we're going to lift up our eyes to You who dwell in heaven. Our eyes are going to be fixed on Thee, not upon those around us who are giving us such a hard time.

How important it is when we're going through trials to fix our eyes upon the Lord. So many times we get our eyes upon people and we get in these interpersonal conflicts with people and we're watching to see what He's going to do next. Just waiting.

Best to just get your eyes fixed on the Lord. And so He said, as a servant watches his master's hand. Now, the servant was constantly watching, especially at a dinner or whatever when the guests were there.

The servant the whole time would watch his master's hand. For the master would give certain signals with his hand, expecting the servant to pick up on those signals. It was the duty of the servant.

If things are getting out of order, if the wine is getting low or something, the master would just, you know, give a signal with his hand. And the servant knew exactly what he was saying. And thus, the whole time the servant's eyes would be glued upon the master's hands waiting for a signal.

Because if the master should signal and the servant is, you know, off someplace else in his mind, someplace else, and he's not on his toes, then he's really in trouble. Constantly watching. And the same with the maid servants watching the mistress.

Watching the hand continually because it was with the hand that they gave their beckons, their signals. Not wanting to speak to their servant, their directions were given to them by hand movements. And so

even as a servant keeps his eye on his master's hand, Lord, I'm going to keep my eyes glued on You.

That's a good policy. Just keep your eyes glued on the Lord. The junk that you don't see is not going to hurt you.

Psalm 124, If it had not been the Lord who was on our side. And of course, I think we could all write our own psalm from this point on. If God hadn't been with me, let me tell you, you know.

If it had not been that the Lord was on our side. Now may Israel say, If it had not been that the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up quickly when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us and the stream had gone over our soul.

And the proud waters would have gone over our soul. Oh, if it hadn't been for God's help. If it hadn't been for God's strength.

If it hadn't been for God's sustaining power. How many times we would have gone under. We would have never made it this far.

If it had not been, Paul the Apostle said, Who hath delivered us from so great a death. Who doth now deliver us and I am confident He shall yet deliver us. You see, the past help of God is a prophecy of the future.

The fact that God has helped me. The fact that God is helping me is my assurance that He's going to help me. And if it had not been that God was helping me, I wouldn't be here now.

And so he breaks forth into the blessing, Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken.

We're escaped. Our help is in the name of Yahweh who made heaven and earth. Again, the idea God has made the heaven and the earth.

The name of Yahweh. The name of our God, Yahweh. The maker of heaven and earth.

And our help is in the name of the Lord. There's tremendous power in the name of Jesus. Peter was walking into the temple at the hour of prayer.

And there was a man who was lame and begging. And you go to Israel today, and you'll find out that severely handicapped people, blind, lame, and all the lepers, they still are around the gates begging. A lot of beggars.

And here was a man, born lame, begging. And Peter said, Hey, fellow, look over here. And he turned, held out his hand, expecting to receive something.

Peter said, I don't have any silver or gold, but I'll be glad to share what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Stand up and walk.

Power in the name of Jesus. And the man stood. He walked.

He leaped. He ran through the temple, walking, leaping, praising God because of the power of the name of Jesus. There is a proverb that says, the name of Yahweh is a strong tower.

The righteous runneth into it and is safe. How many times I have retreated into the safety of the name of Jesus. When threatened.

When in danger. Just the breathing out, Oh Jesus. In the name of Jesus.

Jesus said, Henceforth you've asked nothing in my name. Ask that you might receive, that your joy might be full. You shall ask anything in my name.

I will do it, that the Father might be glorified in the Son. The power of the name of Jesus. The maker of heaven and earth.

Jesus, of course you know, is Yahweh, Shua, or Yahshua. It is that name of God compounded with the Hebrew word salvation. And thus you get, Jehovah or Yahweh is salvation.

Psalms 125, we're still ascending towards Jerusalem. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, the mount upon which Jerusalem was built, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. Now the Mount of Olives won't abide forever.

Zion will. But the Mount of Olives is soon going to be split by a tremendous earthquake. Right in the middle, a new valley will be formed out of Jerusalem.

Now you have the Valley of Hinnom, in which the Valley of Kidron and the Taropian and the Hinnom Valley merge and the Valley of Hinnom goes on out of Jerusalem. But there's going to be a new valley going out of Jerusalem when the Mount of Olives splits right in the middle and a new valley formed out of the city. This of course will take place when Jesus returns and puts his foot upon the top of the Mount of Olives.

The geologists have discovered a major earth fault right through the center of the Mount of Olives. Doesn't really mean anything to me. The Lord can split it without an earth fault.

It shall be split. Actually it will open up a whole, it'll open up an underground river and a new river will come gushing forth out of Jerusalem flowing into this valley and going clear on down to the Dead Sea. And the fresh waters of this new river that is formed will actually heal the waters of the Dead Sea so that they'll be able to have fish living in the Dead Sea and it will become a center of the fishing industry.

The Mount of Zion abides. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about his people. So you stand there in Jerusalem.

You look and you see the Mount Zion on the south. You see Scopus over towards the north. You see the Mount of Olives on towards the east.

Golgotha Calvary towards the west. As the mountains surround the little city of Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds his people from henceforth even forever. Surrounded by God.

Paul the Apostle, when he was talking to the Epicurean philosophers there at the Areopagus on Mars Hill in Greece, in Athens He said, I perceive you men are very spiritual. He said, as I've been going through your city I've observed the number of idols that you have. Your places of worship.

All of the different gods. For the Greeks had deified everything they could think of. You know, the sun, the moon, the planets.

They were all deities. And then having run out of stars and planets and constellations to deify they began to deify even emotions. So they had the God of love, the God of hate, the God of fear, the God of joy, the God of sorrow, the God of grief and the various gods.

They had deified just about anything you could think of. Now, one fellow got an idea, maybe we're missing a god. Maybe we haven't thought of him.

So he built an altar and he put the inscription over to the unknown god. Whoever you may be and wherever you might be we don't want you to feel offended and that you've been slighted so here we've got an altar to worship the unknown god. So Paul said, I perceive you're very religious.

I've seen all of your altars as I've walked through your city. He said, and one caught my attention for it was inscribed to the unknown god. He said, I'd like to tell you about this god.

He's the one who made the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. And in him we live and move and have our being. In other words, I am surrounded by him.

I am living in his midst. I live, I move, I have my being in him. When Daniel was brought before Belshazzar at this feast after the writing appeared on the walls he said, Belshazzar, God gave to your grandfather this glorious kingdom of Babylon but he was lifted up with pride and so God allowed him a period of madness until he realized that it was God who ruled and reigned.

And he said, but this god, the very god in whose hand your breath is, you have not glorified. Surrounded by God. My very breath depended upon him.

So as the mountains are around about Jerusalem, so God is around about his people. You're surrounded by God. He encompasses us.

As the 139th Psalm said, O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. You know every time I sit down, every time I stand up. He said, you have gone before me, you're behind me, and your hand is upon me.

Thou hast beset me before and behind and thine hand is upon me. I'm surrounded by God. I never come to any place in my life but God has not preceded me there.

I can look back and see the hand of God as he was on my life even in the past, even when I wasn't interested. Surrounded by God. Your life is encompassed by him.

For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, but peace shall be upon Israel.

So again, the remembrance of the troubles from the cities from whence they were coming. Looking forward again to that time of coming into the consciousness of God's presence. Psalm 126 When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, or when the Lord actually freed Zion from her captivity, we were like those who dream.

How many times when we see the glorious work of God, it's just like a dream. It's just hard to comprehend. As the children were singing tonight, I was like one who was dreaming.

I pastored little churches for so many years. When you dreamed of having a children's choir, and all of the efforts and time and all that we've put in in trying to develop something, and then to just see God do it. You're just sitting there.

You're like one who's dreaming. I look at what God has done here, and it's like a dream. There's something that the reality has not yet sunk in.

It's funny how that so often in my dreams, I dream that I'm back pastoring one of the churches that I pastored in years gone by, and still struggling, and that whole struggle. And I dream, and man when I wake up, oh no, this is the dream. This can't be real.

God's glorious work that we see. And so the psalmist, when God worked, delivered Zion, we were just like those that dream. So excited in what God was doing.

It just, the reality of it just hardly seemed to register. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them.

Oh, how neat it is to just have that kind of joy and freedom, to just be able to laugh over the good things that God does. The Lord has done great things for us. Whereof we are glad.

Then the prayer. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams and the sound. For they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. I think that herein is speaking of really the ministry in a sense. Jesus, when He spoke of this sower going forth, planting the seed, some fell on the wayside, some among the rocks, and some among the thorns, others on good ground.

Jesus likened the field that was being sown as the world. The seed was the word of God. And I think that the reference here is much the same as similitude.

As the seed being the word of God and they that go forth weeping, bearing the precious seed shall doubtless come again. Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy. I think that the attitude with which we go forth is so important.

Paul the Apostle said, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the glory may be to God and not of us. The glorious treasure of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the glorious treasure of the word of God, it's in this earthen vessel. Jesus Christ dwelling in me, the most valuable thing in the universe in this cheap, common clay pot.

Earthen vessel is a clay pot. It's a pot made out of earth, out of clay. So God has taken the glorious treasure and he's put it in this common old clay pot.

Now anytime I think that this pot is important, then I'm a crack pot. God did the ridiculous in order that we would not glory in the pot, in the vessel, but that we would glory in the contents. Now, God wants me to pour forth His love to the needy world around me in such a way that they are captivated by Him, not by me.

That they're drawn to Him, not to me. So my attitude in going forth is so important. For if I go forth in a haughty attitude, well, here I am, you lucky people, you know.

And you go forth with this haughty air, God will put you down. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, but he that exalteth himself shall be abased. And God has interesting ways of abasing a person.

Just really letting you fall right on your face in front of everybody. You know, just when you're trying to show how graceful and marvelous you are, God will put you down, Boom! Right on your nose. In going forth, it should always be with that sense of awe.

Oh God, I am nothing, but what a glorious treasure I have to share with the world. What a privilege to be a servant of God and to be the instrument through which God works. Never, oh God, I understand why you chose me.

You made a good deal when you got me, Lord, you know. I heard of this church that had just called a new minister fresh out of seminary. And he had graduated magna cum laude.

And he really thought that he had it all together. And so, his first Sunday morning, he came in dressed impeccably. Cuff at the right length.

And his sermon was just homiletically perfect. And, you know, just everything was just... I mean, he was the epitome of perfection. Came in with that folks, I've got it together kind of an attitude, you know.

And how fortunate you are that you've called me to be the pastor of your church. But as he tried to deliver his message, he got confused. He got mixed up.

He lost his place. He couldn't get it together. The thing just fell apart and was in shambles.

And finally, he just stood there and he was just so confused, he couldn't say anything. And he just broke down and he started to weep. And he turned and left just broken.

When a dear little saint down towards the front turned to her friend and said, if he had come in like he went out, he would have gone out like he came in. That's pretty much what this psalm says. He who sows in tears will reap in joy.

Going forth, weeping, bearing the precious fruit, you'll doubtless come again, bringing the harvest, the sheaves with you. Our attitudes. So important.

Psalms 127 is a psalm that is important for all of us to really get implanted deep in our hearts. Except the Lord build the house. They labor in vain that build it.

I spent far too many years laboring in vain. Trying to build the Lord's house. Trying to build the Lord's church.

I used every gimmick that came down the pike. And there's a lot of them. There's people that are cranking out programs every day, sending them out to churches.

And you can buy all kinds of programs. Church growth programs and financial programs. And we get letters all the time of some new program that they devised for church growth or whatever.

They'll come out for a fee and do a demographic on your community and determine just what kind of a program you should enter into to attract the community that you're in. And these sociological demographics, they've got everything all figured out. It's just like if you're trying to merchandise peanuts in

an area, they'll come out and they'll take a survey of the people and find out just how to package the peanuts to sell them best.

Will they go best in a little cellophane wrap or a little box? Or do you need a can? And the colors and everything else. They've got the whole thing doped out. Well, they've got them doped out for churches too.

And I worked every program that I could trying to build the church of Jesus Christ. All to no avail. I was laboring in vain.

Except the Lord built the house. You're spinning your wheels. It's just a lot of futile effort.

Except the Lord keep the city. The watchman wakes up in vain. Unless God keeps our house.

Unless the Lord builds our house. You're just worrying in vain. You can't do anything.

We've got to just trust the Lord. It is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late to eat the bread of sorrows. Now, not to rise up early to work.

But to eat the bread of sorrows. For so He giveth His beloved sleep. You know, a lot of people pound the pillow all night long worried about things.

It's vain to spend the night worrying. Now, the psalmist begins to talk about the family and the family ties. And the strength of the nation is in the strength of the family and recognizing that this principle is true.

He turns now his attention towards the family and declares, Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord. And the fruit of the womb is His reward. Years ago, we were living in Tucson, Arizona.

And we had a captain in the Air Force that was living next door to us. And they were a very friendly couple. Jim and Jan and their three daughters.

And because our driveways were adjacent to each other, according to the sociological books, you have a... If your driveway is adjacent to your neighbor's driveway, then you'll get acquainted with that neighbor. It's sociologically compatible homes. And it's interesting in the demographics, sociological demographics, according to where your driveway is and where your house is in the block and so forth, they can show you which houses you'll be friends of the neighbors and so forth around.

It's some crazy deal and they've worked it all out. But we had sociological compatible driveways and so we got acquainted with them. And through our acquaintance, Jan came to receive Jesus Christ.

And ultimately, Jim accepted the Lord. Shortly after Jim accepted the Lord, he was transferred to Alaska. He was a pilot in the B-29s.

And I got a letter from Jim, which I will treasure and prize as long as I live. Jim had been a professor at Cornell University prior to being recalled into the Air Force. And he wrote in his letter of his agnosticism that he had had, of his attitudes towards his three daughters.

He said, I used to say that children were the scourge of the earth. And he said, I hated being tied down in marriage. And I hated being tied down by my girls.

And he said, I couldn't wait to get away. I loved the missions where I would fly off overseas and I could just get away from them for a while. He said, but since receiving Jesus Christ, since you're sharing His love

with me and my finding out how glorious it is to know the Lord and follow Him, he said, you know, I'm so lonely for my family, I can hardly wait for them to get things packed and get up here with me.

He said, I have such a love for my little girls. He said, they're such a blessing. They're such a heritage, you know.

And all the way the Lord can turn things around in a person's life, giving us the true sense of value for children are a heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of his youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.

So, the quiver full of children. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. Continuing to deal with the family and all the next psalm.

Blessed is everyone that feareth or reverences the Lord and walks in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of your hands. Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Who is that? The man who reverences the Lord and walks in the ways of the Lord. You'll eat the fruit of your own labor. You'll be happy.

It will be well with you. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house, and your children like olive plants round about the table. So, all these little olive-skinned kids sitting around the table.

Ah, I love it. Tan little faces, big smiles. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that reverences the Lord.

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion. Now, we're still coming towards Jerusalem, and we're still looking forward to getting there. And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel. So you get to see your grandkids. And that's neat.

Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me. So, here is Israel.

And look how many times they are being afflicted. Even still, 2,700, 800 years later after this psalm was written. Still Israel being afflicted.

Yet, hey, they haven't prevailed against her. She's still there. She's still a nation.

She still stands up to the world. The plowers plowed upon my back. They made long their furrows.

But the Lord is righteous. He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turn back that hate Zion.

Let them be as the grass upon the housetop which withers before it grows up. Wherewith the mower cannot fill his hand, nor he that bindeth the sheaves of his bosom. Now on the roof, of course, dust will blow up on the roof and sometimes grass seeds and you'll have little sprouts of grass, but never enough to harvest.

So let them be like the grass that just grows up on the roof. Neither do they which go by say the blessing of the Lord be upon you. We bless you in the name of the Lord.

This is in a negative sense, but putting it in a positive sense, how glorious it would be to go by your neighbor and say, I bless you in the name of the Lord. Blessings be upon thee. I bless you in the name of the Lord.

I think it's another good phrase to pick up on. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my prayers or supplications. For if you, Lord, should start making a list, marking iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that you may be revered. I wait for the Lord.

My soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. I say more than they that watch for the morning.

Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. He shall redeem Israel from all His iniquities. So, if the Lord should begin to keep an account of iniquities, none of us would make it.

Oh, how thankful we are that with God there is mercy, there is forgiveness. Oh, how happy is the man whose sins are forgiven. With the Lord there is mercy, and plenteous redemption.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I exercise myself in great matters or in things that are too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother.

My soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever. Lord, I'm just a simple person.

I'm not complex. I don't try to deal with those matters that are above me or beyond my capacities in order that I might look sophisticated or wise or whatever. God, You know I'm just a simple person.

My heart isn't haughty. I don't look loftily at people as though I am something. I know the truth about myself.

I know I am nothing. I'm just like a child, Lord, like a nursing child. My hope is in You forever.

Lord, remember David and all his afflictions. How he swore unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Surely, I will not come into the tabernacle of my house nor go up into my bed.

I will not give sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. David had determined that he was going to build a house for God. He said, I'm not going to rest until I build a house for God.

It's not fair. I'm living in this beautiful palace and we still are worshiping God in a tent. God should have a temple, a beautiful house to worship Him in.

So, it's not right. I'm not going to rest until I build a house for God. Great zeal.

Lord, remember David, all of his afflictions and how he had determined to build a house. Lo, we heard of it at Euphrata. We found it at the fields of the wood.

We will go into his tents. We will worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.

Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Thy saints shout for joy. For Thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of Thine anointed. The Lord has sworn in truth unto David.

He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of Thy body will I set upon Thy throne. God has sworn to David by an oath that from the fruit of his body, there would sit one upon the throne forever.

Going back to the prophecy of Isaiah that we studied this morning, Isaiah 6, Isaiah 9, 6, and 7, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it in judgment and in justice from henceforth even forever. It's going to happen. God has sworn to David that from the fruit of David's loins, there would be one who would sit upon the throne.

From the fruit of Thy body, I will set one upon the throne. Jesus came from David as the angel said unto Mary, he shall be great, he shall be called the son of the highest, and he shall sit upon the throne of his father David, because Mary was a direct descendant of David. And the promise that Jesus would sit upon the throne of David is yet to be fulfilled and will be fulfilled when he returns again and establishes the kingdom age.

He will sit then upon the throne of David and God's oath will be fulfilled. If Thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon Thy throne forevermore. Jesus gave the promise actually to the church.

Unto him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my throne in my kingdom even as I have overcome and have sat down with my father on his throne. So to the faithful is the promise made. For the Lord hath chosen Zion, he's desired it for his dwelling place.

God chose Jerusalem. God desires it. And it is interesting, I don't think that Jerusalem is that beautiful a city.

You know, you go to some cities, Seattle and all, beautiful city. Some cities on the lakes, shores or on, you know, the ocean. Jerusalem is just in a rocky crag.

So many rocks you can't grow too many trees. And yet God has chosen it. Why he chose it? I don't know.

But it is his choice. He chose it when he dwells upon the earth. That's where he's going to dwell.

That's where he's going to reign. All the places on the earth. I probably would have chosen somewhere in Kauai or somewhere, you know.

Hanalei Bay. But he's chosen Jerusalem. And because he has chosen it, it becomes special.

Not because it is special. It's only because he chose it, that it's special. He didn't choose it because it was special, but because he chose it, it has become special.

See, it all lies in his choice. That's what's made it special. Now, God answers at this point, verse 14, God now is talking.

And God declares, this is my rest forever. Talking about Jerusalem. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

There will I make the horn of David to bud, I have ordained a lamp for my anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall his crown flourish. Now, here is God speaking, and in the last two verses, he's referring, actually, his anointed is his Messiah, or his Jesus.

There will I make the horn of David to bud, as Jesus sits upon the throne of David. I have ordained a lamp for my anointed, or my Messiah, and his enemies will be clothed with shame, but his crown, his reign will flourish. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.

How sad and tragic it is for brothers to dwell together in disunity. Oh, how we need to strive to maintain the unity of the body of Christ. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.

Now, the anointing with oil. In the Old Testament, when they sanctified Aaron towards the priesthood, they took oil and they poured it over him. And as they poured it over him, it ran down him, ran down his beard, dripped on down and on his skirts.

The anointing with oil was just taking a jar and dumping it out. Now, in the New Testament it says, is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And now, if we did it like they did in Bible days, we'd just come out with a pitcher of oil and pour it over the head of the sick.

You'd really get then the implication of the anointing with oil. The oil in here is kicking back to the precious ointment that was upon the head, poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down on his beard, even down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life, forevermore.

What is so good? I mean, what is, you know, all of these pictures, it's just picturesque of the goodness of men who dwell together in unity. How glorious it is to be able to gather together in love and in unity and just, all part of the family. What a beautiful experience.

It's incomparable. It's fresh. It's anointed.

It's alive. Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord.

The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion. So twofold. Bless the Lord and then may you receive the blessing of the Lord.

Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. One of the glorious ministries of Calvary Chapel is the men's prayer ministry. Where men gather by night in the house of the Lord.

Where men are here all night long standing before the Lord, bringing before the Lord the prayer requests, the needs of the body. Men volunteer on three-hour shifts, maybe every second week or so to just come in, just to stand before the Lord in His sanctuary. Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand by night in the house of the Lord.

What a privilege, what a blessing, just to come down and stand before the Lord for the needs of the body. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord. How glorious it is, how beautiful it is.

May God bless you. Out of Zion. Psalm 135 is one of those psalms that begins and ends with the word Hallelujah.

Praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah. Praise the name of Yahweh.

Praise Him, O ye servants of Yahweh. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, praise the Lord. So, this exhortation of praising God, repeated, emphasized, and repeated for emphasis.

Praise the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord. Praise Him, O ye servants.

Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, praise the Lord. And now He's going to tell you why you should praise Him. For the Lord is good.

How are you to praise Him? Sing praises unto His name, for it's pleasant. And again, why? For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself and Israel as His peculiar treasure. Now, we are told in the New Testament that you have become His peculiar people, which we told you Thursday night, was His people of possession.

The word peculiar is the word possess. So, you are the people that God has claimed as His possession is what it is. Now, Israel was God possessed, they were His treasure.

He possessed them as His treasure. He claimed them. I possess you as My treasure.

God possesses you as His people. And so, Israel is His possessed treasure or the treasure that He possesses. For I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is above all gods.

Now, there are many gods that people worship and serve, but they are not living, they are not true. There is one true and living God, the Maker of the heaven and the earth. And our Lord is above all of the gods that men have made.

Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in the deep places. God's pleasure, God's will, whatever He pleases. Who can say unto the Lord, why have you done thus? He does what He pleases to do.

I have no right to challenge Him. I have no power to resist Him. In the book of Revelation chapter 4, when the elders fall down and cast their golden crowns before the throne of God, they say, O Lord, Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor, for Thou has created all things, and for Thy good pleasure they are and were created.

Now, like it or not, God made you for His own pleasure. He didn't make me for my pleasure. Nor will my life ever be fulfilled if I seek only my pleasure.

That can be a very empty, futile, frustrating life, seeking my own pleasure. I can only find fulfillment when I bring God pleasure, because that's why He made me. And to answer to the reason for my being, I must bring pleasure to God.

He has done whatever He pleased. He causes the vapors, and of course, praise the Lord, because of His power over the universe, His creation of the universe. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth, and He makes the lightning for the rain.

He brings the wind out of His treasures. He smote the firstborn of Egypt, both the man and beast. He sent His tokens and wonders into the midst of the old Egypt, upon Pharaoh, upon all of His servants.

He smote the great nations. He slew the mighty kings. In other words, Israel, praise the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord and all. Why? Because He delivered you out of Egypt. He delivered the land into your hand.

He smote the kings of Sihon, the Amorites, Og, the king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan. And He gave their land for a heritage, a heritage unto Israel and His people. Thy name, O Yahweh, endures forever, and thy memorial, O Yahweh, throughout all the generations.

For the Lord, or Yahweh, will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants. Now, in contrast, here is God, has done all of these marvelous mighty things, demonstrating His power, His authority, His love. But the idols of the heathen... You see, He is the Lord over all the gods.

The gods of the heathen, the idols that they have made, are silver and gold. They are the work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not.

Eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. Neither is there any breath in their mouths.

They that make them are likened to them, and so is everyone that trusteth in them. Now, we had this same concept given to us in the 115th Psalm, where He said much the same thing in talking about the idols of the heathen. He makes these philosophical observations.

Number one, men often make their own gods. They'll carve them out of silver, gold, wood, stone. When a man makes his own god, he makes his god like himself.

Eyes, ears, nose, mouth, feet. Because I have eyes, ears, nose, mouth, feet. But he makes his god, in reality, the god that he has made, he makes his god, but the god that he has made is less than he is.

For though he put eyes on the god, the eyes can't see. Though he put feet on him, they can't walk. Though he put ears on him, they can't hear.

So the god is less than the man who has made it. But the damning aspect of the philosophy is that a man becomes like his god. They that have made them have become like the gods that they have made.

They that make them are like unto them and so is everyone that trusts in them. In other words, a man becomes like his god. Thus, if you've made your own god, you've made a god that is really less than you are and thus in worshipping that god, the projection of yourself, you are worshipping something really that is less than you.

And then you become like it. Therefore, it is degrading. It's downhill.

It's a degrading experience to worship your own gods, of your own concepts, your own ideas and all. It is a degrading experience because your god is always too small and he is even less than you and you're becoming like him. And so it is always degrading for any society or any man to worship anything other than the true and the living god that made the heavens and the earth.

To worship any other god is degrading. You see men in the process of being degraded as they worship other gods. They that worship them have become like unto them.

So is everyone that trusts in them. A man becomes like his god. That can be a damning philosophy or it can be a blessed philosophy.

It all depends on who your god is. Beloved, now are we the sons of god. It does not yet appear what we're going to be.

We know that when he appears we will be like him. Why? Because a man becomes like his god. That's blessed.

That's glorious. I'm thrilled because I'm serving the true and the living god. If I wasn't serving the true and the living god that would terrify me to think that I was becoming like my god.

As I see men worshipping pleasure, living after sex, living after pleasure, becoming like their gods, being obsessed by lust. As I see men who are living after power, that driving ambition, destroying others, climbing to the top, scratching, clawing, crawling over others, disregarding others, obsessed by power and becoming like their god. How tragic.

But we with open face beholding the glory of the lord are being changed from glory to glory into the same image. A man becomes like his god. It surely places a high priority and an importance upon worshipping the true and the living god.

Bless the lord, O house of Israel. Bless the lord, O house of Aaron. Bless the lord, O house of Levi.

And ye that reverence the lord, bless the lord. So that should include all of you. Blessed be the lord out of Zion, which dwells at Jerusalem.

Hallelujah. So, the last of the Psalms, we get to Psalm 145 on through to the end. They all begin and end with Hallelujah.

It's just one of those favorite words of exhortation unto praise.

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