

19/2/17

Exhort: Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God

Reading: Psalm 87

Now as we come brethren and sisters around these emblems of bread and wine. Which speak too each one of us, of our Master's sacrifice. Of the loving provision of our gracious God's in that covering of righteousness in Christ Jesus for us.

We find in our middle reading in that eighty-seventh psalm a vision of comfort and consoling hope. We see also the result of that hope fulfilled, in the establishment of Zion and her godly citizens in the age to come. Now all of that only becomes possible, because of the foundational event we shall shortly remember today around this table of our Heavenly Fathers love.

Importantly this psalm provides then for us direction and pertinent exhortation, as we journey Zionwards and await the imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 87: A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.

*“His foundation is in the holy mountains. Yahweh loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. **Selah.***

*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: **behold** Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. Yahweh shall count when he writeth up the people that this man was born there. **Selah.***

As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee”.

Rooted in the sovereignty and providence of the Eternal Spirit is this eighty-seventh psalm. Bringing before us our Father's steadfast love for Zion. The Father's plan to populate Zion with a generation of people out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, for his great and holy name. The psalm concludes abruptly with a hint at the redeemed' joy of these glorious things finally realised.

So then this is a psalm for all those who desire to be mentally, morally and spiritually exercised by the spiritual realities, which are from above.

Even these great and precious promises and eternal truths, which represent the hidden period of the glories of the age to come.

Now this psalm is a hymn of praise to be sung in the worship services of the temple by the levitical sons of Korah, who made up a significant portion of the choir.

Composed by one of the sons of Korah to draw and elevate the minds of the faithful around the place, importance and glorious future of Zion in the purpose of their God.

As a lyric poem, it is designed to engage both our minds and our hearts by its expressed majestic truths, as we **read**, **meditate** and **pray** from its imagery. Marrying together those two aspects of heart and mind, in order to direct our will. That we might focus our attention, our affections and our energies upon divine matters.

Therefore to orient our lives towards the vision of the kingdom and the glorious hope contained therein. The initial word for psalm in the title, speaks of striking an instrument, but it came to indicate the engagement of the heart in worship, as the Spirit makes clear in Ephesians:

Ephesians 5 and verse 19

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

That final clause from Ephesians “*making melody in your hearts to the Lord*”, is quite literally **plucking the strings of our hearts**. Rotherham renders Ephesians here – “*singing and striking the strings, with your heart unto the Lord*”. Thus our hearts are the musical accompaniment to our voices when we sing praise to our awesome God.

The key to everything is our hearts, for our Heavenly Father knows, that if he truly has our hearts, then he has us! For, as the proverb declares, “*keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*”.

Now the root for this Hebrew word “*mizmor*” carries the idea of trimming and pruning the vine. Indeed this is one of the key purposes of the word of God to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts brethren and sisters. To penetrate through the flesh with its deadly carnal thinking. Also to move beyond the often-overwhelming weight of the cares of this life that we might effect, real enduring change. That our inner man be spiritually strengthened, being renewed through the word day by day.

We brethren and sisters are to be engaged rooted and grounded in the word, meditation and prayer that we might in these last days come each one to emulate the faithful sons of Korah.

*Scriptural put off / put on principle

Now the name “*korah*” means “*to be bald and carries the idea to make smooth*”. Here we discern that through the exercising of our minds, our heart and our will in the lofty theme of the psalm. *Negatively it will act to cleanse and aid in the removal of the thinking and actions associated with the flesh that offends our Heavenly Father. Then *positively, it will exhort, moulding and renewing our thinking and our affections, whilst buttressing our will.

For like the sons of Korah those of old who in the mercy of our Heavenly Father were granted to be gatekeepers and choir masters in the sanctuary of our God. We are called upon to perform our typical levitical service, as part of a “*holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*”.

For as the songs of the sons of Korah repeatedly direct us towards the city and the holy place that is Zion. Seeking to direct and bring us into the very presence of our Heavenly Father. So too must we exhort one another: and so much the more, as we see that day approaching. Showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

* See Numbers 24:5 & Psalm
78:67 - 68

The psalm begins abruptly:

*“His foundation is in the holy mountains. Yahweh loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of *Jacob”.*

Yahweh has and will establish and permanently dwell in these holy mountains. That area yet to be topographically changed in the great earthquake. This locality around Jerusalem, which he has set apart for himself, as we read, “*for Yahweh hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it*”. This is confirmed for us in the second verse of our psalm in that it records, “*Yahweh loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*”.

What of us brethren and sisters have we chosen Zion? Are we like Abraham looking in eager and expectant anticipation, for the city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?

Because for those who do desire that better, that heavenly country, our merciful God has “*prepared for them a city*”, we read in Hebrews.

But we **therefore** need to likewise **choose**; we must make that settled decision for the future promises of our glorious God. We ought to cultivate our desire and our love for Zion, which our Heavenly Father loveth. We need to brethren and sisters see with the eye of faith the glorious things spoken concerning Zion, as our rest and eternal habitation.

For if we so let Jerusalem come into our minds and to meditate upon the set time to favour Zion then we shall be moved to pray for that coming day. As the Eternal Spirit through the prophet Isaiah exhorts us, “*give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*”.

Is this our practice? So how often does the city enter our thinking and how often does it become the focus or have a place in our personal and our collective prayer’ brethren and sisters?

May I suggest over the coming week that you **therefore** exercise your self in making it a matter of meditation and prayer? Taking a few minutes each day to select a Zion related passage. **Read** it, **meditate** upon it and **pray**, out of the passage, as a result of that considered meditation.

Brethren and sisters if we give our attention to these spiritual truths and concepts then the following blessing will be true for us in the loving kindness of our faithful Heavenly Father.

Psalm 125 and verses 1 – 2

*“They that **trust** in Yahweh shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Yahweh is round about his people from henceforth even for ever”.*

That key active verb “*trust*” within that quotation, indicates for us brethren and sisters again that settled conviction, which must be ours. A secure confidant and boldly entrusting faith in our Heavenly Father and his provision for us in Christ Jesus.

Now that Hebrew verb “*trust*” is an active participle, so a settled principal of daily life for the faithful. We manifest our trust by actively loving the things that our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ love.

For loving the things of Zion is for us today an act of faith, when we think about it. The word “*Zion*” indicates a parched place, desolate, today its little more than a bump on the landscape. But of course, that is not how it shall remain, rather it is to be a praise in the earth, even the joy of the whole earth. It shall be the site of the house of prayer for all nations and the city of the great king, the capital and centre of his world wide kingdom.

Zion will resemble Eden, which is its historical root and be beautiful both in its elevation and in its situation. Zion will be overshadowed with the divine presence like the tabernacle of old in the cloud of glory by day and a pillar of fire by night, as Isaiah proclaims.

But none of this is evident today brethren and sisters. Yet we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, as the Eternal Spirit through the Apostle continues

1st Peter 2 and verses 6 –8:

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed”.

The one we are here to remember in these emblems of bread and wine, is the “*his foundation*” in the opening words of our psalm. *But is the Master precious to us, do we hold him in the honour and place he should have in our lives? Or have we began to stumble at him and to disobediently turn from him, no longer seeing him, who is altogether lovely as valuable?*

Our psalm is broken up into three sections, by the two uses of “*selah*” at the end of verses three and six. They provide for us points at which to pause and consider the spiritual and practical value of what has been immediately presented to us. So we read then in verse three: “*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah*”.

Some of those honourable things we have already alluded too brethren and sisters. But the Hebrew indicates a continual focus of conversation (*Hebrew participle*) among the saints.

We are reminded of these words in **Malachi three and verses 16 – 17**:

*“Then they that feared Yahweh **spake often one to another**: and Yahweh hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith Yahweh of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”.*

If we brethren and sisters are to be in the mercy of our Heavenly Father citizens of Zion in that day, we need to be speaking often **one to another** of these glorious realities. This is reciprocal responsibility we all have to keep our hearts in the right perspective. Brethren and sisters a few hours at the meeting won't be sufficient to give our biblical worldview depth and durability if we soak in popular culture for the rest of the week.

* Hebrew has the definite article ha-Elohim or The God, meaning the True God

Now the word for God in the phrase “*city of God*” in (*verse 3*) is the word *Elohim, indicating “*mighty ones*” (*Galatians 4:26*). Speaking of the constituted immortal inhabitants of the city in the day of its visitation and glory. We have this hope and high-calling brethren and sisters. Our God in Christ Jesus has given each one of us this lofty goal of being made through his redemptive work like unto the angels. Let us **therefore** press towards prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now the second section of the psalm opens (*verse 4*) with a public declaration by our sovereign God, “*I will make mention*”. What follows is of enormous comfort to us who are gentiles by birth, but this formal announcement would have been shocking to the Israelites. As three times for emphasis we are informed that those who were once enemies would in due course be brought into the bonds of the covenant.

This of course is the great work of the millennium for the saints, as Isaiah nineteen proclaims. “*In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom Yahweh of armies shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance*”. These nations are typical for all the nations, that at the end of the thousand-year reign of our Master, there shall only be one nation - Israel of God (*see Psalm 86:9*).

In verse five again we find our Heavenly Father who is the highest, in other words totally sovereign over the creation and nations.

He will establish Zion, as the supreme *one (*interlinear*). No matter how remote it currently seems, this will be a reality.

*He shall establish and elevate Zion as the supreme city in the earth

Indeed if this psalm as some of our brethren think was composed during the exile. It would seem like an implausible concept. Yet because of what we are shortly to do brethren and sisters in remembering the redemptive work of our Lord and his current high priestly role, we know the utter certainty of these glorious things spoken here.

For we remember, as the Eternal spirit through the Apostle teaches, that once we:

“Were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. But more than this we are now no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”.

But then comes the exhortation seeing that in the words of verse six of our psalm that we are so reckoned. “Yahweh shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. *Selah*”.

Bro Thomas “The man, even THE man was developed there”
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Let us brethren and sisters having been made nigh by the blood of the everlasting covenant enable and not hinder the current work of our Master. In our daily and ecclesial lives of being: fitly framed together, our growing spiritually and our being united together as a holy temple and a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Returning to the fourth verse, where we read, “*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me*”. That phrase “*know me*” is of course is speaking of an intimate relationship that should exist between us our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ whom we remember now. In the Hebrew this word “*know*”, like the word “*loveth*”, is a principal by which the saints are to live. This is encapsulated for us in the Masters prayer recorded for us in John seventeen:

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”.

Are we endeavouring to know our God more fully through our continual partaking of the word and prayer? Are we seeking to know the one we remember now by focusing upon his life, death and resurrection, as guides to our daily service and worship?

As we read elsewhere of our incredibly privileged position in the Lord Jesus Christ. In that *“surely Adonai Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”*.

The psalm reveals to us the certainty of our hope in Christ Jesus brethren and sisters. The language from verse three to the end focuses upon the **future reality** of Zion. Drawing us forward into the age to come, rooting our minds, our hearts and our wills in these glorious eternal realities.

The psalm ends, just as tersely, as it began with the imagery of rejoicing singers and players. What is fascinating is that both those words in the Hebrew are again participles or principals the saints will live by in that glorious age to come. Continually we shall be rejoicing before and in our Holy God. Filled with gratitude and thanksgiving for being in Zion, redeemed through the faithful work of the lord Jesus Christ.

Now as we come to the emblems, let us *“consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the stake, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”*. Let us see in the bread then that sacrificial body prepared to bring us nigh. Let us see also in this bread the word made flesh that we might learn to imbibe this word that we too might have joy set before us after his example.

Let us then see in this symbol of the wine the great price that was paid in the pouring out of his precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Let us also see also the love shown and the example given to us that we might be motivated by it to lay down our lives for one another brethren and sisters.

Hebrews 12 and verses 22 – 24

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly (or high festival) and ecclesia of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”.

Bro Wayne Marshall