

## **Ascending by Degree, Step By Step, to the High Places**

The fifteen psalms between Psalm 120 and 135 are called “songs of ascent.” A footnote says they likely written to be sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for annual feasts. perhaps by way of Mt. Zion.

These psalms delight me because of the *high* they create whenever I browse among them – many have beautiful poetic lines, which, when read aloud, create a tangible sense of being close to God.

My first contact with these was my mother’s reading to me from psl 121 when I was ten and suffering from asthma. It often brought relief from that suffocation. So 121 is still my favorite “song of ascent.” It begins: “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help; My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and the earth.” (kjv)

Some translations trade *from whence cometh my help*” for “Where does my help come from?” I feel translating that as a question creates uncertainty not found in the kjv. And “lift up my eyes unto the hills” leads us, *by degree* to keep looking higher “unto the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Another *degree* psalm I’ve experienced is #126: “When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were as those that dream. Then were our

mouths filled with laughter and our tongues with singing.” That song was a “sign and wonder” loosed among our congregation by evangelist Rodney Howard Brown in 1991, when he introduced the “holy laughter.”

Howard Brown read directly psl 126, and people began falling out of their seats, laughing uncontrollably. He then passed among them saying, “drink some more, sister; brother this is Holy Ghost wine.” Then he quoted Peter’s lines from Acts ch. 2: (17-21). “These are not drunken as you suppose ... but this is that prophesied by the prophet Joel: In the last days I shall pour out my spirit upon all flesh ... and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.” Joel 2:28.)

I got less than a minute of that hilarity, which rolled up from my belly in waves, cleansing me from the anxiety oppressing my soul. It was an amazing, timeless moment.

Some of the rationalists, who scoffed at the whole spectacle, left convinced it was mere emotionalism, but they will never convince me the Holy Ghost is merely a concept. He’s real, and He’ll make His home in any listening heart hungry for His wisdom and loving guidance.

He will also assure us of Christ's steadfast love. We'll then discover that "the joy of the Lord Jesus truly is our strength;" since the spirit is in constant contact with Jesus. The peace Jesus lived in allowed him to sleep even in a tempest-tossed boat. He only awoke when the disciples called on Him. The good shepherd *always* hears the cry of His sheep: "I cried out unto the Lord, *and he heard me*, and delivered me from all my fear."

I have only touched on two of the *songs of ascent*. Each is filled with enough wonder to inspire many essays. Discover for yourself these lovely troves of priceless treasure.

Gene Pinkney 04-29-2024 for The Daily News