

Message Series: The Whole Counsel of God, Message 25  
Songs for the Journey. Psalm 107-150  
Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church – August 26, 2007

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As a Christian, do you ever feel like you just don't fit in with the rest of the world? There is a good reason why, according to Philippians 3:20 a Christian's citizenship is in heaven. Like the old spiritual says, "*This world is not our home we're just a passing through.*" As Christians we are ***Pilgrims***. My dictionary describes a pilgrim as *a person who journeys a long distance to a sacred place*. And as God's people we are presently on a journey toward heaven.

There's an old story I have heard of a missionary couple who spent their adult life serving the Lord in Africa. Upon their retirement they returned back to New York by ship. It just happened that President Theodore Roosevelt was returning on the same ship from a hunting trip in Africa. Upon arrival there was a band and a large crowd to welcome the President back, but there was no one to welcome back the missionaries. The husband began to complain and his wife admonished him, "*You old fool, we are not home yet.*"

How true that is! We are all pilgrims on a journey, and we are not home yet. To help us keep our hearts right, psalms 107-150, the final collection of psalms, provides four focuses that we must maintain until we reach our destination.

## **I. The Pilgrim's Master**

The first that needs to capture our attention is the Pilgrim's Master. In these final psalms of the book of Psalms, the name LORD (all capital letters) is used 271 times. In the Hebrew it is the name Yahweh or Jehovah, meaning the Ever-existent One; the One who always was, is, and always will be. He is specified throughout these psalms as our Master; the one who controls our destiny. So when we are able to say, as the psalmist does in Psalm 108:1, or 112:7, ***my heart is fixed*** on trusting the LORD then He will see us through to the journey's end.

What is it about our Master that should so capture our attention? Psalm 107 repeatedly provides the answer. Let's look at it together: Verses 1-2, 8-9, 15, 21-22, 31-32, and then the conclusion in verse 43...

The thing that makes us pilgrims is that the LORD has *redeemed* us from the hand of the enemy; He has purchased us from the slave-market of sin, and has set us on a new course, or direction. That makes us pilgrims in this world. We have reason to shout about the Lord's goodness, we have reason to stay focused on Him, because we have experienced first-hand His mercy, His goodness, and His wonderful works. And verse 43 says if anyone is wise enough to observe these things, they too would understand.

Psalm 113:5-8 also emphasizes why we have reason to stay focused on the LORD...

There is a New Testament parallel I also want you to see, Ephesians 2:4-6...

God has reached down, pulled us out of sin, and caused us to sit as princes in heavenly places. Wow! Isn't that exciting! When we think about where we were and where we're going to be how can we not keep our eyes on the Master! If we would do that, how much it would help us on the journey. When we are tempted to be distracted, when we are tempted to be discouraged, staying focused on the Master will see us through.

## **II. The Pilgrim's Guidebook**

Not only should we stay focused on the Master, we also find in these psalms the necessity of remaining focused on the Pilgrim's Guidebook.

Psalm 119 has to be one of the most important psalms of the Bible; it is certainly the longest one with 176 verses. In the Hebrew it is written as an acrostic. Each section begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, making it easy to memorize and meditate upon. And each verse says something different about the value of God's Word, the Pilgrim's Guidebook. From A-Z it provides 176 reasons to keep it before us through the journey.

Although there is far more than we can possibly consider in the time allotted for this message, what I want to do is simply bring your attention to some of the more familiar verses and the valuable encouragement they provide:

Verse 9...

Verse 11...

Verses 50 and 52...

Verse 72...

Verse 105...

Verse 130...

Verse 165...

God's Word does all of this for us and so much more! 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

God has provided everything we need to be thoroughly furnished for the journey, why would we not want to keep it before us!

### **III. The Pilgrim's Destination**

Then we also need to stay focused on the Pilgrim's Destination. Psalms 120-134 all begin with a title, A Song of Degrees. Nobody knows for sure what this title means, but there have been many suggestions, the most popular is that these psalms were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they journeyed up to Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, for annual festivals specified in the book of Leviticus. As you read through them, starting with Psalm 120, they are far away from their destination, but with each psalm they draw closer and you can sense the excitement and enthusiasm building.

I want to read a few parts of them so that you can sense the hope and encouragement they contain:

Psalm 121:1-2...

Psalm 122:1-2...

Psalm 123:1-2...

Psalm 125:1-2...

Psalm 126:1-3...

And then, look with me at the last of these psalms, Psalm 134:1-3...

Clearly, you can sense the hope and encouragement those pilgrim's felt as they sung these psalms along their journey.

You and I are on a different pilgrimage, our destination is not an earthly Jerusalem, it is the heavenly Jerusalem, but certainly our pilgrimage is pictured in them. To see this, look with me at Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16...

Abraham understood that his ultimate destination was not earthly but heavenly, and that is the same pilgrimage you and I are on.

Whenever Sheryl and I are away on a trip, it always feels so good to turn in the direction of home, and the closer we get the better it feels. If that is true concerning an earthly home, a temporary shelter, then how much better it is to fix our hearts on our heavenly home.

#### **IV. The Pilgrim's Song**

And then finally, as God's people, we must stay focused on the Pilgrim's Song.

The final psalms of the book of Psalms are filled with excitement, especially the last five. Each one begins and ends with the pronouncement, "*Praise ye the Lord!*" In the Hebrew it is *Hallelujah!* As a result these psalms have been referred to as ***The Hallelujah Chorus***. Again, we can not read all of them, so I want to simply bring your attention to a few parts of these psalms:

Psalm 146:1-2...

Psalm 147:1...

Psalm 148:1-5...

Psalm 149:1...

And then, follow with me as I read all of Psalm 150...

You and I should shout out, "*Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!*" As we think through all that God has, is, and shall do in our lives, the song of the pilgrim is *Hallelujah!*

Is that your song? Is that my song? It certainly should be!

Instead of, "*Woe is me.*" or, "*The journey is too long!*", if we would fill our mouths with praises to God, what a difference it would make! I remember with joy, when our children were young, being on a trip and singing the chorus, Hallelujah...

Somehow, just my singing that song it made the trip seem shorter and more enjoyable. That is exactly what God wants for us while we continue our journey. By filling our mouths with praise it lightens the way.

Our world can be a difficult place to live; it is filled with heartache, sin, and turmoil, but it is not our home, we really are just passing through. To keep our hearts right, and the journey bright, let's stay focused on our Master, in His Guidebook, with our heavenly Destination before us, filled with Song.