

Hearts Set On Pilgrimage

Communion Message by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-04-4

I would like to give you eight minutes worth of exhortations from Psalm 84:5. The text says, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.”

I’ll start with the first word, “Blessed.” I don’t think there is anyone here who doesn’t want a blessing from the Lord. “Blessed is the man whose...” and then it gives the conditions for blessing. We love blessings. We want God to prosper the work of our hands, don’t we? And we would love for the Lord to richly prosper the work of our church. But if that is our desire, then we need to make sure that the work of our hands is worth blessing. And this verse gives two characteristics of people whom God delights to bless. It’s worth it for Him to bless these kinds of people.

First of all, they are people who refuse to trust in their own strength and who are not content with their own abilities, but rather they long for more from the Lord than what they can do on their own. The text says, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You.” And it is a capital “You,” referring to the Lord. There are two things encouraging about that phrase.

The first is that there is strength available to those who feel weak. The second encouraging part is that this strength comes from the Lord; it resides in the Lord. He is not calling upon us to develop our own strength, but to trust in His strength to be sufficient for our every need.

Now here is the irony, God blesses us for having a strength that He has provided in the first place. In other words, God first blesses us with strength to do the things that He has called us to do, and as we walk in that strength, He further blesses us for using His strength. Talk about grace upon grace! I love it! And yet how few Christians are willing to walk in a strength that is not theirs. They find that scary because that is trusting something we cannot control. It’s stepping into uncomfortable territory - the territory of the supernatural.

But that’s exactly what the Sermon on the Mount calls for. It is a manifesto of the Kingdom; a manifesto of the supernatural. If our Christianity is to look even remotely like the Sermon on the Mount, then this phrase must capture our hearts. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ said that He wasn’t calling us to love simply our families and friends – even pagans can do that. Instead, He calls us to do things that no pagan can do. He calls us to demonstrate the reality of our supernatural strength by loving our enemies; doing good to those who use us; blessing those who curse us; praying for those who hate us. And Jesus gives other assignments by which we can be trained in His school to walk by grace. Only God’s grace flowing through you can enable you to walk an authentic Christianity. Only His strength can cause you to enter into the ever increasing blessing of the Lord. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You.” That’s walking in the supernatural; that’s walking in grace. It is also walking in humility since we realize we are not sufficient unto ourselves.

The second characteristics of the person whom God loves to bless is that this person is never satisfied with the status quo. Having tasted of the Lord's strength, he keeps coming back to the Lord for more strength, and more grace, and more communion, and for a deeper walk with God and for greater challenges of service. How do I know that? Well, the second part of the verse says, "whose heart is set on pilgrimage." A pilgrim is a person who is traveling, and who has not yet arrived, right? If Dominion Covenant Church ever thinks that it has finally arrived and can coast, it will at that point lose the blessing of the Lord. Our hearts must always be set on pilgrimage. There needs to be this heart's desire to keep pressing forward – yes, even pressing into the realm of the impossible. Our vision for what can be done in our families, in the church and in the world should be constantly stretching us. And so I am talking here about a holy discontentment; an itch for pilgrimage that is in your blood. And God forbid that any of us should spend our last days just looking back and basking in our past accomplishments. No. Like Caleb, we should always be asking, "Lord, do you have another mountain for me to conquer?" Let me read you the words of a hymn that I think captures this pilgrimage attitude: "More about Jesus would I know, more of His grace to others show, more of his saving fullness see; more of his love who died for me." And it goes on to talk about all kinds of things that we should be striving after. A holy discontentment; a heart set on pilgrimage.

Now, I will hasten to say that there is a kind of contentment that Scripture commands us to have. In fact, if we don't have that contentment, we will never have our hearts set on pilgrimage. God says that we need to learn to be content with the physical provisions that He has placed in our hands. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says,

Now godliness [and we are always striving for more of that, right. Now godliness] with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

If God could take everything away from you except food and clothing, and if you could have contentment in those circumstances, then you would be able to be content and be a good steward of far more physical blessings. And remember we said that the Lord loves to bless His people. But if our heart is set on riches, then it cannot be set on holy pilgrimage because where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If your treasure is to please and seek first His kingdom, God can trust you with the utility of riches. But if your treasure is set on riches, you've got it backwards and as much as you try, you will never have that itch for pilgrimage. God can't trust you with blessings if your heart is not set on pilgrimage. Always be striving to press toward the mark of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. And when you do, Proverbs 10:22 says, "The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

So to conclude, I urge you as a church to step further into the realm of the supernatural that requires you to walk in God's strength because that is the place of God's blessing. And have a vision for Dominion Covenant Church that is worthy of the greatness of your God – set your heart on pilgrimage, traveling further into the possibilities of how you could impact this city and this world for King Jesus. And may He receive all the glory. God bless you. Amen.