

April 28, 2013 by Steve Brandon



THE Song of Ascents

Psalm 122

1. I Was Glad To Go (verses 1-5).

2. I Will Seek Your Good (verses 6-9).

I want to begin with a question. "What sort of preparations did you make for coming this morning to worship at Rock Valley Bible Church?"

I'm not asking about the mundane. I'm not asking what kids you had to wake in their beds. I'm not asking about the number of diapers you changed. I'm not asking about the breakfast you prepared. I'm not asking you about the route you used to get here.

No, I'm asking more about your spiritual preparations. Did you pray before coming here this morning? Did you read your Bible? Did you review your fighter verses? Did you sing some hymns? Did you listen to praise music?

Maybe you have never even thought about such things. Perhaps you just showed up. Week in and week out, you have merely showed up to the church to do your thing.

I remember years ago a pastor talking about this very thing. In the service, he handed out what he called, a "Pre-Church Checklist." It asks five questions. I took those questions, typed them up, and taped them into the back of my old Bible

1. Is there any unconfessed sin in my life?
2. Have I meditated on Scripture to direct my focus to God?
3. Am I purposing to worship God with my whole heart?
4. Have I asked God to direct me as I worship him in my giving?
5. Am I prepared to hear God's Word and obey it?

For years, I would review these questions before coming to church in an effort to prepare my heart to worship the Lord. Now, these types of things are almost second nature to me as I prepare to worship each Sunday morning. Do you have any sort of routine like this? Perhaps you might want to print these questions out and place them in the back of your Bible to use as you come to worship each Sunday.

This morning, we will begin a new series, which will help us to think about this whole idea of preparing for worship. For the next 15 weeks, taking us through the summer, we will look at the Psalms of Ascent. This morning, we will look at Psalm 122.

If you notice at the beginning of the Psalm, even before verse 1, we read the superscription, which says, "A Song of Ascents, of David." This is one of the 15 Psalms of ascent. They begin in Psalm 120 (which has the superscription, "A Song of Ascents.") They continue until Psalm 134 (which also has the superscription, "A Song of Ascents.") And if you thumb through every Psalm in between, you will notice the same superscription on every single one of the Psalms. Four of them have the additional line, "Of David" (Psalms 122, 124, 131, and 133), probably meaning, "written by David." One of them (Psalm 127) contains the phrase, "of Solomon," again, probably meaning, "written by Solomon."

A good question to ask at this point is this: "What is a Song of Ascents?" In the entire Old Testament, this word, "Ascents," occurs only in these 15 Psalms. However, the word comes from a very common Hebrew verb, *alah*, which is used more than 800 times in the Old Testament. There is no doubt about its meaning. It means "to go up, to ascend, to rise." Thus, the most literal way to translate this is "a song of going up." The KJV translation, "song of degrees" is a poor translation of this term.

Now, there are many thoughts on what exactly this means. Calvin claimed that these Psalms were sung on a higher key with musical notes rising in succession. Others have suggested that these songs move onward towards a climax, each song building upon another. ^[1] Others say that these were travelling songs of those returning from Exile (i.e. "Songs of the Pilgrim caravans" or 'of the homeward marches.") ^[2] Some would say that these songs were sung while ascending the 15 steps from the court of women to the court of men. ^[3] Probably the best suggestion is that these were travelling songs of those journeying to Jerusalem for worship at the three great feasts. This is the view of the majority of commentators today.

These were the Psalms that Israel sang as they travelled up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. In other words, they were the Psalms that helped prepare the hearts of the Israelites for worship.

Hold your finger right here in the Psalms and turn back to Exodus, chapter 23. I want for us to look at verses 14-17. These words occur in the context of the first giving of the law. The LORD says, ...

Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

When God established the law with the people of Israel, He placed corporate worship as a high priority. Three times a year, all the males should come and worship the Lord together. A similar command was given in Deuteronomy 16:16. Only there, Moses adds, "Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, [at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed]."

Long before Jerusalem was ever established as the place where God would dwell, the principle of corporate gathering was established. In Moses' day, the men would certainly gather in and around the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was in Shiloh, there the men would gather there for worship (1 Samuel 1:3). After the temple was built, Jewish men would make the pilgrimage to meet with the LORD in the temple in Jerusalem.

The law required that they would do so three times a year. They would make the pilgrimage to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (i.e. the week following Passover), at the Feast of the Harvest (i.e. the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), and at the Feast of the Ingathering (i.e. the Feast of Booths).

We have some Biblical examples of this taking place. Perhaps you remember the time when Jesus went up to Jerusalem with his family. They were coming up to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of the Passover.

Luke 2:41-42

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

And when [Jesus] became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast.

Perhaps you remember how Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. So large was the caravan that traveled from Nazareth to Jerusalem, that it was only after an entire day of travel back home that Mary and Joseph realized that Jesus wasn't with their relatives and acquaintances (Luke 2:44). And so, they traveled back to Jerusalem and found Jesus in the temple. It is highly likely that these songs would have been sung during their journey on the way to Jerusalem to worship.

Another Biblical example is recorded in John 7. It was the Feast of Booths (John 7:2). The brothers of Jesus "went up" to Jerusalem for the feast (John 7:10). Jesus also went up to the feast, but He did so secretly, because the Jews in Jerusalem were seeking to kill Him (John 7:10, 1)

Again, a Biblical example is recorded for us in Acts 2. Perhaps you remember what Jerusalem was like on the day of Pentecost and Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. Jews from all over the world descended upon Jerusalem. "Parthians and Medes and Elamites" came to worship (Acts 2:9). "Residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Bithynia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene and ... from Rome" all came to worship the LORD (Acts 2:9-10). Why did they descend upon Jerusalem? It was the Feast of the Harvest. It was Pentecost.

And what did they do as they travelled to Jerusalem? I believe that many of them sang the Songs of Ascents -- Psalms 120-134.

Whenever someone traveled to Jerusalem, they always traveled "up." Jerusalem was situated in the mountains, some 3800 feet above sea level. If you came from the north, you "went up" to Jerusalem. If you came from the south, you "went up" to Jerusalem. If you came from the east, you "went up" to Jerusalem. If you came from the west, you "went up" to Jerusalem. Thus, the Songs of Ascents. The songs of "going up."

As Israel sang and meditated upon these inspired Psalms as they prepared their hearts for worship in Jerusalem. So, likewise, they have a thing or two to teach us about worship, as we prepare to worship in church each Sunday.

Let's back to Psalm 122. At this point, you might be wondering why we are starting in Psalm 122. Why not begin in Psalm 120, the first Song of Ascents? The reason has to do with the special nature of Psalm 122. Of all of the Songs of Ascent, Psalm 122 seems to describe what's taking place, in terms of travelling to worship in Jerusalem. Indeed, in some regards, this is THE Psalm of Ascent! Let's read it together.

Psalm 122

A Song of Ascents, of David.

I was glad when they said to me,

"Let us go to the house of the LORD."

Our feet are standing

Within your gates, O Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, that is built

As a city that is compact together;

To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD—

An ordinance for Israel—

To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

For there thrones were set for judgment,

The thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

"May they prosper who love you.

"May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."

For the sake of my brothers and my friends,

I will now say, "May peace be within you."

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,

I will seek your good.

My message this morning is entitled, "THE Song of Ascents." In verse 1, we see the call to go and worship in the house of the LORD. In verse 2, we see that David has arrived in Jerusalem. In verse 4, we see God's command for all of the tribes to go to Jerusalem to give thanks to the LORD. (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16).

In fact, it is from this verse that I have derived a name for this series. I have titled the series, "Going up." The tribes are "going up" to Jerusalem to worship.

So, I feel like this is the best place for us to begin our study of the Psalms of Ascent. I think that there is some freedom to do so. After all, these Psalms are like hymn books. And we don't sing our hymns straight through. Rather, we sing one and then we skip ahead and sing another. And then we skip back and sing another. We sing the songs that fit the occasion. And so we will do with the Psalms of Ascent.

We will begin here in Psalm 122 this Sunday. Coming up on May 12th, Mother's day, I think that Psalm 127 will be appropriate, as it deals with the blessing that children are. On Father's Day, June 16th, I think that Psalm 128 will be appropriate, as it deals with the blessings of being a family man. On other weeks, we will fill in the other Psalms as is appropriate.

Before we dig into Psalm 122, I want for us to spend a few moments considering the structure of these Psalms as well as the themes we see in them. There definitely is a progression of the Psalms. They begin with the Psalmist in trouble in a far away land.

Psalm 120

In my trouble I cried to the Lord,

And He answered me.

Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips,

From a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you,

You deceitful tongue?

Sharp arrows of the warrior,

With the burning coals of the broom tree.

Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, [modern-day Turkey]

For I dwell among the tents of Kedar! [modern-day Saudi Arabia]

Too long has my soul had its dwelling

With those who hate peace.

I am for peace, but when I speak,

They are for war.

And by the end, they are standing and blessing the LORD in the sanctuary.

Psalm 134

Behold, bless the Lord, all servants of the Lord,

Who serve by night in the house of the Lord!

Lift up your hands to the sanctuary

And bless the Lord.

May the Lord bless you from Zion,

He who made heaven and earth.

Just before that, in Psalm 133, we see the blessing of unity among the brethren.

Psalm 133

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brothers to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Coming down upon the beard,

Even Aaron's beard,

Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon

Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the Lord commanded the blessing -- life forever.

So, we begin in trouble and far away from Jerusalem. We end with great blessing and worship within the temple itself!

We get a sense of travel in Psalm 121, when they are looking up to the mountains as they travel up to Jerusalem.

Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.
The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.

By Psalm 122 (our text this morning), David is in the house of God.

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."
Our feet are standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem,
Jerusalem, that is built
As a city that is compact together;
To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord—
An ordinance for Israel—
To give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there thrones were set for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
"May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."
For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
I will now say, "May peace be within you."
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

In between these Psalms, there are a few themes. I have yet to find any sort of progression in them.

The first theme is the promise of grace to those who cry out to the LORD. Psalm 123 has a cry for grace.

Psalm 123

To You I lift up my eyes,
O You who are enthroned in the heavens!
Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes look to the Lord our God,
Until He is gracious to us.

Be gracious to us, O Lord, be gracious to us,
For we are greatly filled with contempt.
Our soul is greatly filled
With the scoffing of those who are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 125 contains the promise to those who trust in the LORD.

Psalm 125

Those who trust in the Lord
Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the Lord surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.
For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous,
So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong.

Do good, O Lord, to those who are good
And to those who are upright in their hearts.
But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways,
The Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity.
Peace be upon Israel.

Psalm 130 is the pure gospel of grace, ...

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let Your ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.
If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.
My soul waits for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord;
For with the Lord there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.
And He will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

Psalm 131 is a demonstration of humility, and a trust and rest in the LORD.

Psalm 131

O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.
Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
From this time forth and forever.

Another theme in all of these Psalms is the blessing of the family. Right in the middle of these Psalms are two family Psalms: 127 and 128.

Psalm 127

Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the Lord guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.
It is vain for you to rise up early,
To retire late,
To eat the bread of painful labors;
For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,

So are the children of one's youth.
How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;
They will not be ashamed
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
Who walks in His ways.
When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,
You will be happy and it will be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants
Around your table.
Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the Lord.

The Lord bless you from Zion,
And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
Indeed, may you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

Three of the Psalms are a reflection of God's faithfulness and care for the nation of Israel -- to sustain them during times of crisis.

Psalm 124

"Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,"
Let Israel now say,
"Had it not been the Lord who was on our side
When men rose up against us,
Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their anger was kindled against us;
Then the waters would have engulfed us,
The stream would have swept over our soul;
Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul."

Blessed be the Lord,
Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.
Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper;
The snare is broken and we have escaped.
Our help is in the name of the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 129

"Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,"
Let Israel now say,
"Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up;
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
"The plowers plowed upon my back;
They lengthened their furrows."
The Lord is righteous;
He has cut in two the cords of the wicked.

May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward;
Let them be like grass upon the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up;
With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Or the binder of sheaves his bosom;
Nor do those who pass by say,
"The blessing of the Lord be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the Lord."

Psalm 126

When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter

And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us;
We are glad.

Restore our captivity, O Lord,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.
He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed,
Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 132 brings up a final theme that is flows throughout all of these Psalms: The glories of Zion! The greatness of Jerusalem. [\[4\]](#)

Psalm 132
Remember, O Lord, on David's behalf,
All his affliction;
How he swore to the Lord
And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
"Surely I will not enter my house,
Nor lie on my bed;
I will not give sleep to my eyes
Or slumber to my eyelids,
Until I find a place for the Lord,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah,
We found it in the field of Jaar.
Let us go into His dwelling place;
Let us worship at His footstool.
Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your godly ones sing for joy.

For the sake of David Your servant,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.
The Lord has sworn to David
A truth from which He will not turn back:
"Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.
"If your sons will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I will teach them,
Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever."

For the Lord has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His habitation.
"This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
"I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her needy with bread.
"Her priests also I will clothe with salvation,
And her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.
"There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth;
I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed.
"His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon himself his crown shall shine."

Well, with that as a long introduction, let us quickly move to Psalm 122. I have two points this morning. They both express the heart of David. The application question, of course, will be to you, "Do they express your heart as well?"

First of all, David says, ...

1. I Was Glad To Go (verses 1-5).

Again, we read verse 1, ...

Psalm 122:1
I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."

I trust that you see what was happening here in this verse. David was in his palace, going about doing his administrative duties. And then, from the other room, he hears a call: "Hey, David! It's time to go! It's time to go to the house of the Lord!"

And the first emotion that entered his heart was joy. He was glad. He was glad to go!

In verse 2, we see that David is already there.

Psalm 122:2
Our feet are standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem,

It is here when he writes. He is in the gates. He is in Jerusalem. He is in the midst of worship.

Verse 1 is a reflection upon his thoughts of going. And when he thought of going, he was glad! And the obvious question to you is this: When you were at home this morning, and someone said, "It's time to go! It's time to go to church!" What was your emotion?

Was your response one of gladness? Does your heart resonate with David's heart? Or was your heart filled with dread. "Here we go again. Gotta gather all of the children together. Gotta go do my religious duty. Gotta put on my best face. Gotta go and sing some songs that I don't like. Gotta go listen to the little guy up front speak at me for an hour. Gotta talk with a bunch of people I don't really like. I'd rather roll over again in my bed. I'd rather stay home."

In all likelihood, you are somewhere in between. David may be on one extreme -- utter joy at entering the house of God. Ebenezer Scrooge may be on another extreme -- "Bah, Humbug" to the church. But, you are probably somewhere in the middle.

May I encourage you to do everything that you can to foster David's attitude in coming. Not only will it help you; it will bring greater glory to the Lord!

The phrase that John Piper has made popular applies here. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." In other words, when we find our satisfaction in God, He is glorified. When we delight in God, He is magnified.

See, God doesn't receive glory when people are forced into submission. God receives no praise when people are compelled to say great things about Him. No, God is glorified when we are so enraptured by God that we find our joy in serving Him.

And the greater the joy in serving Him, the greater glory God receives. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." In other words, the greater your satisfaction in God, the greater is the glory of God.

In terms of Psalm 122, we see David delighting in God's presence! We see David delighting to be with God's people! "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'"

So you say, "Steve, how do I get such a delight?" Well, let's look at how David got such a delight. He reflected upon the greatness of Jerusalem.

Psalm 122:3
Jerusalem, that is built
As a city that is compact together;

If you know anything about the archeology of Jerusalem, you know what David is talking about here. As with any city in the ancient world, the city was contained within the city walls. And the walls in David's time encompassed an area of about 100x300 yards, or about six acres. To give you some perspective, our church property sits on about three acres.

Now, we don't know how many people were living within the city walls at that time, but there were a bunch. David says that they were "compact together." If you walk today in the Old City of Jerusalem, it is still packed together. And David sees this as a blessing. He sees people living closely together in harmony.

Verse 4 speaks of this place. It is in this place, ...

Psalm 122:4
To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD—
An ordinance for Israel—
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

This is the whole idea of the Song of Ascents. People traveled to Jerusalem to give thanks to the LORD. This also made Jerusalem special. It was the focal gathering place for the people of God. Where is God at work? God is at work where His people gather. And they gathered in Jerusalem!

And with all of the tribes assembling together, it was like a festal gathering. You would see your cousins there! You would see your friends

there! You would enjoy your time in Jerusalem! How lovely were the feasts! Furthermore, their gathering wasn't merely social, it was spiritual as well. In Jerusalem they "gave thanks to the name of the LORD." Jerusalem was the place of worship!

People brought their offerings! People sang His praise! People enjoyed the feasts! Beyond that, Jerusalem was also the civic place.

Psalm 122:5
For there thrones were set for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

Jerusalem was a place of safety, where justice reigned. And for those who lived out in the country, this was refreshing. They could come to Jerusalem and get their legal matters resolved!

Why was David so excited about coming to Jerusalem? He reflected upon the greatness of Jerusalem. And what Jerusalem was to David, the church is to us!

By way of application, the question can rightly be asked, "How will you get excited about coming to church?" Reflect upon the greatness of the church.

Ephesians 5:25 tells us that Jesus loves the church. That's why He came. He came to die for the church. He came to give Himself up for the church. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us!

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build His church. "I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). People love rooting for a winner. And the church will win in the end! Jesus will see to it!

The church is the body of Christ. "We are members of His body" (Ephesians 5:30). Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22). Jesus rules the church! Jesus is Lord of the church (Phil. 2:11). Jesus is King of the church (Acts 17:7; Rev. 19:16). Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of the church (1 Peter 5:4). Jesus is Prince of the church (Acts 5:31).

The church is "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). God's Word is taught in the church. This word is the means of our sanctification. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus promised that the "The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Outside the church is relativism and confusion. Inside the church is truth and stability.

The church is where the Holy Spirit has distributed gifts for us to use. "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). The church is the place where God's people are gifted to serve each other. You need help; you come to the church. You want to serve; you come to the church.

Now, it's not that Rock Valley Bible Church is the perfect place on the planet. Neither was Jerusalem. But, it is the closest place of heaven on earth. It is here where the people of God gather for worship. It is here that God's word is proclaimed. It is here where God's love is shown. It is here where God's people are edified. May it be a joyful place! An enjoyable place!

There's no place on the planet that you ought to desire more than the local church. Can you say with David, I Was Glad To Go (verses 1-5)?

If you are lacking, spend some time thinking about the glories of the church. Spend some time thinking about the uniqueness of our assembly!

In our little time remaining, let's look at another expression of David's heart.

2. I Will Seek Your Good (verses 6-9).

Psalm 122:6-9
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
"May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."
For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
I will now say, "May peace be within you."
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

David was actively seeking the good of Jerusalem (verse 9). He was praying for Jerusalem. He was longing for the peace of Jerusalem. He was seeking the welfare of his brothers. He was seeking the welfare of his friends. He was actively working for the good of Jerusalem.

Notice the repetition of the word, "peace." David mentions it three times (verse 6, 7, 8). The call went out to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (verse 6). "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." His own prayer comes in verse 7, "May peace be within your walls." He repeats the prayer in verse 8, "May peace be within you."

In other words, David was praying for Jerusalem to live up to its name. The last part of "Jerusalem" is the same as the word for peace, "Shalom" Jeru-Shalom! He longs for peace in the place.

Now, when we hear the word, "Peace," we often think very narrowly of "no fighting." But, the word, "Shalom" has a much bigger meaning than that. "Shalom" is the customary greeting that Hebrew speakers give. "Shalom lechah" "Shalom lechem" It describes a full-orbed blessing of well-being. It describes being complete or being made whole. It describes a contentment of health. It describes a good welfare.

You can see this here in the parallelism of verses 6-9. It's parallel to the idea of "prosperity"

Psalm 122:6-7

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
"May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."

Or, as the ESV says, "security."

Psalm 122:6-7 (ESV)

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
"May they be secure who love you!
Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!"

This is Shalom. This is the good that David was seeking.

And again, the application comes to you and to me. Are you seeking the good of the church?

Are you serving the church? Are you encouraging others in the church? Are you building up the church? Are you quick to volunteer? Are you actively using your gifts? Are you laboring to build the church? Are you making a priority to be involved in the church? Are you reaching out in the name of the church? Are you spreading a good reputation? Are you giving to the church? Are you praying for the church? Are you supporting the leadership of the church? We need all the help we can get! Are you seeking peace with those within the church?

Can you say with David, I Will Seek Your Good (verses 6-9)?

Let me close with the hymn written by Timothy Dwight. He happens to be the grandson of Jonathan Edwards. He wrote the hymn, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord." It is hymn # 405 in our hymnal. This hymn does a great job at capturing the heart of Psalm 122: I Was Glad To Go (verses 1-5) and I Will Seek Your Good (verses 6-9). You see both of these elements in the song.

I love thy kingdom, Lord,
the house of thine abode,
the church our blest Redeemer saved
with his own precious blood.

I love thy church, O God!
Her walls before thee stand
dear as the apple of thine eye,
and graven on thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
for her my prayers ascend,
to her my cares and toils be given,
till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows,
her hymns of love and praise.

Sure as thy truth shall last,
to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield,
and brighter bliss of heaven.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 28, 2013 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Gesenius

[2] Ewald

[3] The Mishnah alludes to this

[4] Ps. 122:6-9; 125:1, 5; 126:1; 128:5, 6; 129:5; 130:8; 133:3; 134:3