

### **392 “ - my songs in the house of my pilgrimage”**

In Psalm 119.54 we read, “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (KJV).

We see first from these few words that the “statutes” are from the Lord rather than from Man, this word being one of a family of similar words throughout this, the longest of the Psalms, including, in the KJV, “testimonies”, “precepts”, “judgments”, “commandments”, “law”, “word” and “ways”. By such words God’s wishes for the one human race are thus made very plain for us. He entrusted these truths - “the oracles of God” (Romans 3.2) - initially to His covenant people the children of Israel, who were to live these out among the heathen nations in which they were set. But the advent of the Jews’ Messiah saw His wilful rejection at the hands of Jew and Gentile, with Jesus truly becoming the prophesied “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53.3).

In the mercy of God the Father, and by Jesus’ loving obedience to His Father’s will in undergoing that foul, utterly undeserved death, there then opened the new covenant of grace, rather than of law, between God our Creator and fallen mankind, a covenant confirmed by Jesus’ glorious resurrection from the dead (eg., John 20.17).

So those “statutes” of Psalm 119 are now greatly enhanced, with salvation - the regaining of our peace with God that was shattered in Eden (Genesis 3) - being freely granted by God our Father to any and all who put their faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (eg., John 1.29 / Romans 5.1 / I Corinthians 7.15b / Colossians 1.14,20 / ...). Truly, there is “none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4.12). Here is the Good News indeed for today’s wayward world.

Psalm 119.54 then continues, that God’s statutes - “have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage”. The Psalmist SINGS God’s statutes, no doubt in the night-time too (verse 55). Whatever the hour of day or night, what a blessing it is to rehearse aloud in word and song, by memory or by reading, the great “statutes” of the Christian Faith in the presence of Almighty God, who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121.3-4); to wait on Him to hear His voice; to lift our petitions quietly and gratefully before His “throne of grace” (Philippians 4.4-9 / Hebrews 4.16); and to commend ourselves and those in our prayers afresh into His merciful hand (Luke 23.46).

Then we come in verse 54 to the telling phrase “in the house of my pilgrimage”. The word “pilgrimage” reminds us that in this phase of our lives, until we reach “our heavenly home” by faith in Christ, we are always to be pilgrims, “sojourners”, “strangers” (eg., Leviticus 25.23 / Hebrews 11.13 / I Peter 2.11). We are in the world, but are not quite “of” it (Romans 12.2 / I John 2.15), for our citizenship (“conversation”, KJV) is in heaven (Philippians 3.20a). This stage of our lives has great value, with real responsibilities and many blessings, yet we are only passing through, being prepared all the while for the greater glories that are yet to be seen in Christ (eg., Hebrews 12.22-24 / I John 3.1-3).

But there is also the word “house” – “the house of my pilgrimage” - showing that, while we are pilgrims, yet also for most of us we dwell in houses rather than in tents or camper vans! Depending on our understanding of God’s calling upon us, one part of our Christian responsibilities is to be settled and active within our local communities, serving as faithful Christ-lights and ambassadors for Christ. For this reason some criticise John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress”, fairly or unfairly, that Christian never actually does much for anyone else while on his travels!

We are called to hold these two truths in tension in our daily lives – an interweaving of a settledness in a house with a moving-on in a pilgrimage. Jesus Himself was always deeply involved in His surroundings, with the blessings of fellowship and hospitality from friends who were settled in their own houses (eg., Luke 10.38 / John 11.1 / Luke 19.5). Yet the Son of Man also had “nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9.58), being a true Pilgrim “tabernacling” with us only for a time (John 1.14, KJV, “dwelt” in the Greek implying only “a tent”).

So in just those twelve words of Psalm 119.54 the Lord God teaches us so much: the centrality of His “statutes”, of then and now; the blessing of singing; the role of our houses; and the reality of our pilgrimage.

Truly, “thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119.105).