

Words of Life

(June 14, 2007)

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.

Psalm 84:5

In this verse, the Psalmist connects three thoughts that are very relevant to us as Christians. He speaks of the man whose strength is in the Lord and the man whose heart is set on pilgrimage. The third thought is that the man who is like that is the blessed man. As I read this verse, the first part makes perfect sense. As Christians, we know that our strength must be in the Lord. We know that we are weak and He is strong. We know that the trials of this life are too much for us and without Him we are not able to make it through. It is a constant battle to place our trust in Him and rely on His strength, but as we do, we find Him always faithful.

However, the second part of this verse is not as easy for some of us to grasp. We are told that the man blessed by God is also the man whose heart is set on pilgrimage. This statement makes me think of what it means to be a pilgrim. For those of us who have been raised in this country we remember learning about the pilgrims in school. They were the pioneers who made their way to this country in search of a land in which they could worship freely. You may recall having special celebrations, usually around the Thanksgiving Holiday, where you made paper turkeys by tracing your hand on a sheet of paper and colored in pictures of pilgrims having their thanksgiving meal. The pictures always showed the men in their black coats and tall hats and the women in their long dresses and collared blouses. Then in the background the native Indians were pictured clothed in their animal skins and colorful headdresses of beads and feathers. It was a stark contrast between the two groups. There was no question who the pilgrims were and who the natives were.

This is the image being conveyed in this Psalm. As Christians, we are pilgrims. We are different than this world. We should be as noticeably different as the pioneering pilgrims were to this land when they came here. We should not blend in nor become too familiar with the ways of this world. We should not take on the form of this world as time goes by. If you have ever moved to a different country, you know what it is like to be a pilgrim. You don't know where all the stores are, where the transportation is, what the particular characteristics of the people are. You stick out like a sore thumb! When we first moved to London, the local people could spot us a mile away. Somehow they just knew we were "pilgrims". We were unfamiliar with the City and the customs, and weird things like never knowing which way to look when you crossed the street because the cars were all on the wrong side of the street. We also learned very quickly that pedestrians DO NOT have the right of way when crossing the street. There were several near death experiences just getting from one side of the street to the other. It was pretty funny. One woman approached me once while we were in Covent Gardens and asked where I was from. I couldn't figure out how in the world she knew I was not a Londoner. But it was pretty evident to her.

The difference between the Christian and other pilgrims, is found in this verse. Our aim is NOT to eventually settle down in an area. Our aim is to remain a pilgrim until we end up in our home, which is heaven. In setting our heart on Pilgrimage, we will be living the life God had intended for us. It will be different and stay different and it will be blessed by Him. God bless you as you set YOUR heart on pilgrimage.

Pastor Ted.

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63