

Title:    **ASCENDING TO THE HOUSE OF GOD**

Text:    Psalms 120-134

Subject: *The Psalms of Degrees*

Introduction:

What a great privilege it is to worship the triune God with you! How blessed we are to be gathered in the name of Christ in the house of God!

Psalm 84 expresses every believer's attitude toward the house of God and the great privilege of gathering with the people of God to worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Psalm 84:1-4) “**To the chief Musician upon Gittith,**” — The word “Gittith” appears in the titles given to several of the psalms. It means “A stringed instrument.” But the word “gittith” comes from a word that means “winepresses” and is translated that way in some ancient translations. This is a psalm that speaks of local churches, the assemblies of God's saints in public worship, where Christ the true Vine causes his people to drink the sweet wine of his grace.

“**A Psalm for the sons of Korah.**” — That is to say, a psalm for singers in the house of God, a psalm to be sung in the house of God.

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Danville — (Sunday Evening — 10/11/09)

Tape: #73b

Readings: *Merle Hart and Ron Wood*

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“How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! (2) My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. (3) Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. (4) Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.”

Psalms 120-134 form a section of the Psalms called “Psalms of Degrees,” or “Ascension Psalms.” These psalms were commonly chanted by the children of Israel in their pilgrimages to Jerusalem to observe the annual feasts required under the law. They were psalms of pilgrims going up to the house of God. Some suggest that the priests in Israel chanted one of these fifteen psalms on each of the fifteen steps ascending up to the temple on those holy days.

**These are psalms written and recorded by divine inspiration to show us three things:**

1. **The attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he made his pilgrimage through this world of woe as Jehovah’s righteous Servant.** — Our Savior’s heart was set upon the glory of God, the will of God and the house of God above.

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2. **The attitude of God's saints as we make our pilgrimage through this world to our Father's house above.** — May God give us grace to set our affection upon things above, to mind not earthly things but heavenly things, to look not at the things which are seen but at those things which are not seen, ever to set our hearts upon the glory of God, the will of God and eternity!
3. **The attitude we ought to cultivate as we come to the house of God to worship him.**

As we scan these fifteen psalms, I want to specifically apply them in this way. I want to encourage you and to encourage myself to come to the house of God with the attitude reflected in these psalms. I have titled this message — **ASCENDING TO THE HOUSE OF GOD.**

**Proposition:** Whenever we have the privilege of coming up out of this distressing world of darkness and woe to gather with God's saints, worshipping in his house, at his footstool, before his throne, with his people, we ought to be filled with joyful hope and anticipation.

### **THE HOUSE OF GOD**

**When we come to the house of God in public worship,** we come to a physical place, usually a building like this.

- What a privilege!

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- What a blessing!
- We ought to treat the physical building in which we meet as the house of God. No, this building is not the house of God; but this is where the house of God meets.

**If the Lord will allow us this hour to worship him**, if we have indeed come into this place in the name of Christ, if we have (just two or three of us) come here in the name of Christ...

- Gathered by his Spirit,
- Trusting him — His Blood — His Righteousness — His Intercession — His Grace — His Power — His Goodness,
- Seeking his honor,
- Seeking his will,
- Seeking his glory,
- To worship him,

**We have come into the house and temple of God. The Lord Jesus is in our midst** (Matthew 18:20). The Holy Spirit is here (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17) “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (17) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.”

Indeed, if we have come here to worship our God, if he grants us the privilege and honor of doing so, coming

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into this place, **we have come to the very throne of God in heaven.** Yes, there is a very real since in which we gather around God's throne in heaven every time we gather in God's house to worship him (Hebrews 12:18-25).

(Hebrews 12:18-25) “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, (19) And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (20) (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: (21) And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) (22) **But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. (25) **See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.** For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:”

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### THE PSALMS OF DEGREES

These Psalms of Degrees begin (Psalm 120) with the pilgrim in Zion leaving his home, leaving behind him a world of distress and woe, because he dwells among deceitful, self-serving men who are in constant strife with one another. In Psalm 134, as he returns from the house of God, going back to his home, going back to face a world that hates God, his soul is refreshed. He seems to be leaping and dancing in his soul, giving praise to God.

Oh, may that be the case with each of us when we leave this place! As I prepare to preach the gospel, I try to bear in mind that I come here to preach to eternity bound men and women who live in a distressing world of woe. I want to send you away leaping and rejoicing, giving praise to God our Savior, for all his wonderful works of redemption and grace.

That which relieved, comforted, and rejoiced the hearts of God's saints in those ancient times was what they heard and saw in the house of God. And that which relieves, comforts, and rejoices the hearts of God's saints today is exactly the same, that which we hear and see in the house of God.

- The Sacrifice — Christ
- The Word — The Revelation of God

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- The Blessing — God’s Goodness and Grace in Christ (Numbers 6:24-27)

(Numbers 6:24-27) “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: (25) The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: (26) The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (27) And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”

Now, let me give you a sketch of these fifteen psalms.

### PSALM 120 — OUR DISTRESS

In Psalm 120 the pilgrim leaves his home in distress, calling upon the Lord to deliver his soul from the trouble and heartache he experienced from slandering tongues and a world of strife.

Added to that God’s pilgrim was constantly aware that he dwelt in Meshech. Meshech was the son of Japheth. His descendants were the people to the north of Israel. They were commonly associated with Magog, the enemies of God and his people. Meshech here represents all false, antichrist, freewill, works religion.

(Psalms 120) “A Song of degrees. — In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. (2) Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,

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*and* from a deceitful tongue. (3) What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? (4) Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. (5) **Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!** (6) My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. (7) I *am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are for* war.”

**PSALM 121 — OUR HELP**

**Turning his eyes, his heart and his mind away from all that troubled him, Zion’s pilgrim looks away to God on his throne in Psalm 121.** He is our Help. He is our Keeper. He will preserve us from all evil. He will preserve our souls!

(Psalms 121) “A Song of degrees. — **I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.** (2) **My help cometh** from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: **he that keepeth thee will not slumber.** (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* **thy shade** upon thy right hand. (6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. (7) **The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.** (8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy



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coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

**PSALM 122 — OUR ANTICIPATION**

Next, in Psalm 122, Zion’s weary pilgrim turns his mind toward God’s house and the assembly of God’s saints around his throne (the mercy-seat), anticipating the prospect with gladness.

(Psalms 122) “A Song of degrees of David. — **I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.** (2) **Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.** (3) Jerusalem is **buildd** as a city that is **compact together**: (4) **Whither the tribes go up**, the tribes of the LORD (*All God’s Elect — The 144,00 Revelation 7:4-9*), **unto the testimony of Israel** (*The Ark of the Covenant — The Mercy-Seat*), **to give thanks** unto the name of the LORD. (5) For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. (6) **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.** (7) **Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.** (8) **For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.** (9) **Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.**”

**PSALM 123 — OUR FAITH**

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In Psalm 123 the pilgrim sings about our faith, the faith of all those who worship the Lord God in spirit and in truth, the faith that expresses itself in worship and is encouraged and strengthened in the house of God.

(Psalms 123) “A Song of degrees. — **Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.** (2) Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; **so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God,** until that he have mercy upon us. (3) **Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:** for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. (4) Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.”

**PSALM 124 — OUR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In Psalm 124 the tried, tempted, slandered pilgrim acknowledges, “God my Savior, is my Keeper.” — “*By the grace of God I am what I am.*”

(Psalms 124) “A Song of degrees of David. — **If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,** now may Israel say; (2) **If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,** when men rose up against us: (3) Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: (4)

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Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: (5) Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. (6) **Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.** (7) Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. (8) Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

**PSALM 125 — OUR CONFIDENCE**

With each of these psalms, there seems to be a continual rising of thought.

- 120 — Our Distress
- 121 — Our Help
- 122 — Our Anticipation
- 123 — Our Faith
- 124 — Our Acknowledgement

**Here, in Psalm 125, the pilgrim describes our confidence in our God. Let us come to the house of God in confidence, confidence in him and his goodness.**

(Psalms 125) “A Song of degrees. — **They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.** (2) **As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.** (3) For

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**the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous**; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. (4) Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* (5) As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: **but peace shall be upon Israel.**”

**PSALM 126 — OUR JOY**

In Psalm 126 the song moves up another scale. Here is our joy.

(Psalms 126) “A Song of degrees. — **When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.** (2) **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.** (3) **The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.** (4) Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. (5) They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. (6) He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*”

**PSALM 127 — OUR SECURITY**

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In Psalm 127 the pilgrim in Zion meditates upon the security of God's house, as he ascends to it. **Here is our security.** — **The building of God's house is his work.** — **The security of it is his work.** — **The children he gives are his heritage.** — Knowing these things, we read, "*so he giveth his beloved sleep.*"

(Psalms 127) "A Song of degrees for Solomon. — Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. (2) *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.* (3) Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. (4) As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; *so are* children of the youth. (5) Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

- The house and city spoken of here is the church of God. He builds his house and keeps his city. That gives us sleep (peace).
- The children are the children of God, his gift to Christ, brought forth from Zion's womb. They are arrows in the hands of Christ, our Mighty Man of War, the Captain of our Salvation.
- The happy man, whose quiver is full, is Christ.
- His children shall never be ashamed, confused, confounded, put to confusion, or make haste.

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**PSALM 128 — OUR WAY**

In Psalm 128 the psalmist speaks of our way, the way in which we walk, the way of faith in Christ and the ways in which divine providence takes us — His Ways! — The Blessed Way!

(Psalms 128) “A Song of degrees. — **Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.** (2) **For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.** (3) Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. (4) **Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.** (5) **The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.** (6) Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, *and* peace upon Israel.”

- This is talking about Christ.
- This is talking about you and me, his church.

**PSALM 129 — OUR FOES**

As we saw in Psalm 120, our foes are many any relentless. The slanderer’s tongue is a sharp arrow that will never cease to pierce and hurt. **But in Psalm 129, as he moves up to the house of God, Zion’s happy**

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**pilgrim bids his foes farewell and commits them to his God. That is exactly what we must do. — That is exactly what we soon shall do!**

(Psalms 129) “A Song of degrees. — Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: (2) Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet **they have not prevailed** against me. (3) The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. (4) **The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.** (5) **Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.** (6) **Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up:** (7) Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. (8) Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.”

- Romans 16:20

**PSALM 130 — OUR HOPE**

Psalm 130 describes our hope. It is the hope of grace and forgiveness through redemption.

(Psalms 130) “A Song of degrees. — **Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.** (2) Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to

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the voice of my supplications. (3) If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (4) But **there is forgiveness with thee**, that thou mayest be feared. (5) I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. (6) My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* (7) **Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.** (8) And **he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.**”

**PSALM 131 — OUR CONTENTMENT**

The pilgrim sings, as he moves toward God’s house, in Psalm 131, of humility and contentment.

(Psalms 131) “A Song of degrees of David. — **LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.** (2) Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: **my soul is even as a weaned child.** (3) Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.”

**PSALM 132 — OUR PRAYER**



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Psalm 132 sets before us that which ought to be our prayer, as we come to the house of God. It is a prayer based upon God's own promise.

(Psalms 132) “A Song of degrees. — LORD, **remember David**, (CHRIST) *and* all his afflictions: (2) How he swore unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob; (3) Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; (4) I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids, (5) Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob. (6) Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. (7) **We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.** (8) **Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.** (9) **Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.** (10) For thy servant David's (CHRIST) sake **turn not away the face of thine anointed.** (11) The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David (CHRIST); he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. (12) If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that **I shall teach them**, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. (13) **For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.** (14) **This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.** (15) **I will abundantly bless her**

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**provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.**  
**(16) I will also clothe her priests with salvation:**  
**and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.** (17)  
**There will I make the horn of David** (CHRIST)  
**to bud:** I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.  
(18) His enemies will I clothe with shame: but  
upon himself shall his crown flourish.”

**PSALM 133 — OUR DELIGHT**

Watch this. — In Psalm 133 we see Zion’s blessed pilgrim’s face begin to beam with joy, just as he approaches the house of God, he sees his and greets his brethren gathering with him.

- “*Behold*” — What a rare sight! — What a good sight!
- “*Brethren*” — What a blessed word!
- “*Unity*” — What strength! — How refreshing!
- “*Zion*” — The Place where God commands his blessing!

(Psalms 133) “A Song of degrees of David. — **Behold**, how good and how pleasant *it is* for **brethren** to dwell together in **unity**! (2) **It is like** the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; (3) As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: **for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.**”

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**PSALM 134 — OUR PRAISE**

In Psalm 134 we see God's pilgrims at the house of the Lord, calling upon one another to worship and praise the Lord God, our Savior. Let it be our determined purpose, as we gather with God's saints, to give our praise, adoration and worship to our God and seek his blessing upon all who come with us into his house.

(Psalms 134) “A Song of degrees. — Behold, **ble**s ye **the** **LORD**, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. (2) **Lift up your hands in the sanctuary**, and bless the LORD. (3) **The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.**”

(Numbers 6:24-26) “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: (25) The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: (26) The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

Amen.