

PSALM 122

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David's time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this, among other means, was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe,

- I.** The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem (v. 1, 2).
- II.** The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem (v. 3-5).
- III.** The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare (v. 6-9). In singing this psalm we must have an eye to the gospel church, which is called the "Jerusalem that is from above."

PSALM 122:1-5

THE PLEASURES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

A song of degrees of David.

Here we have,

- I.** The pleasure which David and other pious Israelites took in approaching to and attending upon God in public ordinances, v. 1, 2.
 - 1.** The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he *was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord*. Note,
 - (1.)** It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough; we must *go into the house of the Lord*, to pay our homage to him there, and *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together*.

(2.) We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. *Let us go*; not, “Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home;” but, *We will go also*, ^{<382>}Zechariah 8:21. Not, “Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure;” or, “We will go first, and you shall come after us;” but, “*Let us go together*, for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement.” We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron.

(3.) Those that rejoice in God will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront that he was glad of it as a kindness when he was called upon to *go up to the house of the Lord* with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us and take us along with them.

2. The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph (v. 2): *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!* Those that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their journey. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be *among those that stand by* (^{<382>}Zechariah 3:7), though it be the door keeper's place, ^{<382>}Psalms 84:10. We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

II. The praises of Jerusalem, as ^{<382>}Psalms 48:12.

1. It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building. It is built into *a city*, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, *compact together*, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the gospel-church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

2. It is the holy city, v. 4. It is the place where all Israel meet one another: *Thither the tribes go up*, from all parts of the country, as one man, under

the character of *the tribes of the Lord*, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together,

(1.) To receive instruction from God; they come *to the testimony of Israel*, to hear what God has to say to them and to consult his oracle.

(2.) To ascribe the glory to God, *to give thanks to the name of the Lord*, which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, *to give thanks*.

3. It is the royal city (v. 5): *There are set thrones of judgment. Therefore* the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interests of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster Hall. Observe, What a goodly sight it was to see *the testimony of Israel* and the *thrones of judgment* such near neighbours, and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

PSALM 122:6-9

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Here,

I. David calls upon others to which well to Jerusalem, v. 6, 7. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be enquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem can pray for it, which is something more than showing their good-will; it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us. Now,

1. We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: *Those shall prosper that love thee.* We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, nor for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man and man's worship of God; and, in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own, for so well does God *love the gates of Zion* that he will love all those that do love them, and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

2. We are here directed in our prayers for it and words are put into our mouths (v. 7): *Peace be within thy walls.* He teaches us to pray,

(1.) For all the inhabitants in general, all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications; let them never be attacked, or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city.

(2.) For the princes and rulers especially: Let *prosperity be in the palaces* of the great men that sit at the helm and have the direction of public affairs; for, if they prosper, it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

II. He resolves that whatever others do he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem,

1. In his prayers: *"I will now say, now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, Peace be within thee."* He did not say, "Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people, that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it and rule for it." No; "I will pray for it too."

2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers: *"I will, to the utmost of my power, seek thy good."* Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it. Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem; it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. This is true; yet he professes that this was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem, but it proceeded from the warm regard he had,

(1.) To the communion of saints: It is *for my brethren and companions' sakes*, that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren (so he called them, ~~138E~~1 Chronicles 28:2) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which has knit my heart to them.

(2.) To the ordinances of God: He had *set his affections to the house of his God* (~~138B~~1 Chronicles 29:3); he took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. *Then* our concern for the public welfare is right when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.