

Psalms 84:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

Analysis

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. This second beatitude pronounces blessing on those whose source of strength is God rather than self or circumstances. The Hebrew adam (אָדָם, "man") is generic, referring to humanity generally—this blessing is available to all who meet the condition. "Whose strength is in thee" (oz lo bak, עֹז לֹא בָךְ) identifies God Himself as the person's power source, security, and confidence.

The phrase contrasts with trusting in human strength, wealth, or wisdom. Jeremiah declared: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" (Jeremiah 17:5, 7). When strength resides "in thee" (God), the believer accesses infinite resources. Circumstances may weaken personal capacity, but God's strength never diminishes. Paul learned: "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10)—divine strength operates best through human weakness.

"In whose heart are the ways of them" (mesillot bilvavam, מְסִלּוֹת בִּלְוָאָם) is somewhat cryptic. Mesillot (מְסִלּוֹת) means "highways, roads, paths"—possibly referring to pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem. The phrase suggests people whose hearts contain the paths to God's dwelling, meaning they're internally oriented toward God's presence. Their deepest desires and habitual thoughts naturally turn toward Him. Geography may prevent physical pilgrimage, but spiritual pilgrimage occurs in the heart.

Alternatively, "the ways" may refer to God's ways—His commandments and character. Those who internalize God's ways, making them heart-level commitments rather than external compliance, experience blessing. They don't merely know about God's paths; they walk them habitually because those paths are written on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 8:10).

Historical Context

Pilgrimage as Spiritual Metaphor and New Testament Fulfillment

For ancient Jews, pilgrimage to Jerusalem was both physical journey and spiritual discipline. The roads to Jerusalem were called "ways of them" (pilgrimage paths), and Jews sang songs of ascent while traveling. These journeys required faith—leaving home's security, facing travel dangers, trusting God's provision. Yet the destination made all hardship worthwhile: encountering God's presence in His temple.

Psalm 84:5-7 develops pilgrimage imagery: "passing through the valley of Baca" (v. 6) represents hardship along the journey, yet pilgrims transform it into a place of springs—suffering becomes source of blessing. "They go from strength to strength" (v. 7) describes gaining rather than losing energy as they approach God's presence. This paradox characterizes spiritual life: drawing near to God renews strength despite life's draining challenges.

The New Testament uses pilgrimage as metaphor for Christian life. Hebrews 11 describes Old Testament saints as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (v. 13) seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (v. 16). Peter calls believers "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). Christians journey through this world toward heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22), facing trials that test and strengthen faith. The pilgrimage motif emphasizes that earth isn't our final home—we're traveling toward eternal presence with God.

Christ fulfills both pilgrimage's purpose and process. He is "the way" (John 14:6)—not merely showing the path but being the path to the Father. His strength

sustains pilgrims who would otherwise fail. He walks with us through valleys, transforms suffering into blessing, and guarantees arrival at our destination. The pilgrim whose strength is in Christ and whose heart contains His ways will infallibly reach the heavenly Jerusalem.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to have your strength "in God" rather than in yourself, and how is this different from passivity?
2. How can believers internalize "the ways" (God's paths) in their hearts so that obedience becomes natural rather than forced?
3. In what ways is Christian life like pilgrimage, and how does viewing it this way affect how we handle hardships and disappointments?
4. How does Christ function as both the way (path) and the strength (power) for believers on their spiritual pilgrimage?
5. What practices or disciplines help cultivate hearts that naturally turn toward God's presence (have "the ways of them" internally)?

Interlinear Text

בְּלִבָּךְ
אֲשֶׁר יְ
אֵדָם
עוֹז
לִי
בְּךָ
וְסֵלֹת
H835 H120 H5797 H0 H0 H4546
Blessed is the man whose strength are the ways

בְּלִבָּךְ
is in thee in whose heart
H3824

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 12:9 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Zechariah 10:12 (Parallel theme): And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Micah 4:2 (Parallel theme): And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Psalms 40:8 (Parallel theme): I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Psalms 55:14 (Parallel theme): We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

Jeremiah 31:33 (Parallel theme): But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Psalms 42:4 (Parallel theme): When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

Isaiah 26:9 (Parallel theme): With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Psalms 122:1 (Parallel theme): I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

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