

The Highways to Zion
By Sharon W. Betters

Today's Treasure

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
Psalm 84:5a ESV

You may have noticed Today's Treasure is the same today as yesterday. However, there is one small difference. In the NIV we read, "...whose heart is on pilgrimage". In today's version from the ESV it reads, "...in whose hearts are the highways to Zion". Both are correct, but the ESV words explain the mental state of those who travel with confidence that their strength is in the Lord.

Those whose hearts are fixed on pilgrimage need a map. We need to know we are on the right highway to Home. Even with such a map, we will take side roads or lose our way because just as "darkness covered the face of the deep" before God brought light and order to the earth, the darkness tries to cover our souls with confusion. Each one of these times is an opportunity to lean into the Lord and conclude it's only in His strength we can continue. God's children are headed Home and the more time we study His Word, the more confidence we have that He has given us a brilliant flashlight for those dark days in the wilderness:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:6

As I write, I am sitting on a deck, listening to the morning concert of beautiful birds as ocean waves crash against the sand. The glorious sunrise arrives right on time, not one minute later than predicted by scientists. Hydrangeas put on a show of multiple shades of blue, pink and lavender. This is common grace and we embrace it. But it was not always so. Right from the beginning was impenetrable darkness and chaos. God's grace brought order:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
Genesis 1:1-5

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

There are few things that will not change, but just as God brought order to chaos and light into the darkness on the earth, He brings order and light to our hearts. Even the darkness has a purpose. The darker the day or the world, the darker our hearts, the more desperate the need for light. When we recognize the darkness of our own hearts, repent of our sins, and experience Jesus, we, too, experience order and purpose. We now have a “way in the wilderness”, a highway we know will take us to our ultimate destination, just as the Lord promised:

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.
Isaiah 40:3-4 NIV

John the Baptist’s message of repentance rings true down through the ages:

He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”
John 1:23

Repentance makes way for the highway of the Lord in our hearts.

Trials, disappointments, betrayals, and shattered dreams reveal how incapable we are to walk this pathway with any sense of joy. But Jesus, He plants eternity in our hearts and we learn with each loss that our strength is in Him. Each time we sin is an opportunity to experience forgiveness and acknowledge we need Him to show us how to navigate such a dark world.

Acknowledging sin brings hope because there is a highway through the darkness:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
John 1:1-5

As you go about your day, remember with the Psalmist:

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you in whose hearts are the highways to Zion.
Psalm 84:5a*

PRAYER

Oh Lord, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who creates a highway to Zion in our hearts. When we are confused about which way to turn or we take a side road into a dark place or when darkness falls through no fault of our own, may we remember, there is a highway in our hearts that leads to You.