

**UP – Psalms of Ascent
Perspective
Psalm 120 - 121**

I LOVE the PSALMS! They are literally the SONGS of ancient Israel that were sung every day by those who loved and followed God.

-They address EVERY EMOTION that you will ever have!

*Anger *Peace *Fear *Hope *Frustration *Depression *Joy

-They ought to be your DAILY THERAPY! They will be a great source of comfort and counsel.

The Psalms of Ascent [Psalm 120-134] were written for those who were travelling upwards to Jerusalem to attend the major Jewish festivals. They were the SONGS that were sung by the PILGRIMS who were literally on a PILGRIMAGE! They are meant to give a GODLY CONTEXT to the wonders and the difficulties of daily life.

I want to use them in this series to help each of us MOVE CLOSER to God in every possible way as we walk through this beautiful and confusing thing called life.

Where are you going?

***Pay attention to your PATH**

-Your life is HEADED in some direction! Is God EVIDENTLY PRESENT along your

PATH and in your LIFE? [Decisions, Desires, Commitments, etc.]

In life, EVERYONE is on a journey TOWARD GOD, but not everyone is on a journey WITH GOD.

-ULTIMATELY, God will either be your DIVINE JUDGE and JURY

. . . OR, God will be your SAVIOR and ETERNAL SECURITY.

-This is determined by what you are DOING with God RIGHT NOW!

The Psalms of Ascent are songs about living life IN CONNECTION with God as you move through the difficulties and joys of daily existence.

-Christian, remember that YOU are on a LIFELONG PILGRIMAGE.

-You are NOT “THERE” [Perfection and Heaven] . . . YET!

Where are you NOW? Psalm 120:1 – “A Psalm of Ascents (Degrees)”

***Pay attention to your PROGRESS [A Psalm of DEGREES]**

-This refers to the LITTLE STEPS that bring you closer to the Lord.

-Life is a PROCESS!

-The Psalms of Ascent BEGIN at a most unlikely – yet appropriate – place.

Psalm 120:1-4 NASB

1 **In my trouble** I cried to the LORD, And He answered me. 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. 3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? 4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, with the burning coals of the broom tree.

“IN MY TROUBLE . . . “

-This word means “distress, anguish, a confined and painful place.”

-The SOURCE of this trouble is LIES that have been spread about the Psalmist.

*The word “deceitful” implies being SHOT AT by these words.

[Mention the PICTURE that a child gave me of words as axes and knives.]

*The BEST COUNSEL in this passage is WHAT the Psalmist DOES with his trouble!

-He does not LASH OUT at the offenders in anger or bitterness.

-He does not WHINE and COMPLAIN to friends about his troubles.

-He CRIES OUT . . . PRIVATELY to GOD . . . in PRAYER!

*He longs for his SOUL to be delivered from the impact of these lies.

*He does not want to start ACTING the same way as his offenders.

-Vss. 3-4 is a REMINDER and a WARNING to his OWN soul!

-He acknowledges the difficulty of STAYING PURE in a POISONED world!

Psalm 120:5-7 NASB

5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, for I dwell among the tents of Kedar! 6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace. 7 I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

*Meshech and Kedar are descriptions of BARBARIANS who care nothing about God!

-This is a BROKEN world where people FIGHT for satisfaction apart from God.

-Remember the SOURCE of all war and strife: **James 4:1-4 NASB**

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

-Are YOU truly a PERSON of PEACE [“Shalom”]?

*This Psalm ENDS without a classic RESOLVE. We LIVE in a BROKEN WORLD.

-Psalm 121 helps us to see how we can find HELP in the midst of that broken world. It does not RESOLVE the tension; it simply helps us to live within it!

Where are you LOOKING?

***Pay attention to your PERSPECTIVE**

-Your FOCUS determines your DESTINATION.

*It determines how you will VIEW what you are experiencing in life?

-Is God the SOURCE of your perspective?

Looking TO the Lord – Psalm 121:1-2 NASB

1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? 2 My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

- *We all NEED help! The KEY is: Where are you looking to FIND that help?
 - Some people only FOCUS on and OBSESS over their troubles.
 - This leads to DESPAIR! You have to learn to LIFT your GAZE HIGHER!
 - Many people look to lesser SAVIORS: Money, Pleasure, Escape, or Power.
 - Godly people CHOOSE to LOOK UP to God for the help that he will GLADLY give.
 - *This is a DECLARATION that God IS his help! **[This is WORSHIP!]**
 - *The MOUNTAINS are simply aspects of CREATION that POINT us to God!
 - [Let heaven and earth ELEVATE your perspective to God’s point of view.]**

Looking AT the Lord: Psalm 121:3-5a NASB

3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your keeper.

- *At this point, it is a separate voice that is giving encouragement to the Psalmist!
 - He is being TOLD about what our MAKER and KEEPER can do!
 - It is so POWERFUL to LEAD someone else in the WORSHIP of God! **[Try it!]**

*God is our **KEEPER**. It means, **“guards, protects, preserves, and watches over.”**

- He keeps you from SLIPPING **[Falling headlong and being deserted.]**
 - *Most of the time we have NO IDEA about all that God has protected us from!
- He NEVER sleeps or slumbers.
 - *God never takes a nap.
 - *God is CLOSELY WATCHING you as a loving GUARDIAN.
 - [Watching my kids sleep at night oblivious to all danger!]**
- The SAME GOD that watches over millions watches over me INTIMATELY.

One of the difficulties of trusting God enough to ask him for help is that you cannot see God. That is sometimes why people watch TV rather than pray, or why they go out and party rather than pray, or even why they go and talk to someone else instead of pray. God cannot be seen. But what if he sends word that *he sees you*? That is what happened when God’s people were slaves in Egypt. The Bible tells us that “God saw” their need. The Old Testament priestly blessing, that in some ways this psalm reflects over and over again, emphasizes the same point: “The Lord bless you and *keep* you; the Lord make his *face* to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his *countenance* upon you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26). He’s *looking*. **Josh Moody: Journey to Joy, P. 34.**

*God is our SHELTER. **Psalm 121:5b-8 NASB**

The LORD is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep

your soul. 8 The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.

-His PRESENCE is our SHADE from the heat of day and the cool of night.

*This is a veiled reference to the Wilderness Wanderings and the Cloud.

-God protects his own from ALL EVIL, even though you may sometimes wonder!

-We must accept that God will only and ever give GODLY help.

-Sometimes he delivers us FROM trouble, and sometimes THROUGH it!

*This may not be what we initially WANT! [Do you want HELP, or you WAY?]

*This may INCLUDE the very PAIN that we are seeking to avoid.

*His ULTIMATE GOAL is to STRENGTHEN our SOULS! (Vs. 7b)

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 NIV

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

*God's help is an EVERLASTING help! (Vs. 8)

-He promises to guard us MOMENT BY MOMENT and FOREVER!

So, where are you GOING, where are you RIGHT NOW, and where are you LOOKING?

Let's pray.

Psalm 120 NASB

1 A Song of Ascents. In my trouble I cried to the LORD, And He answered me. 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. 3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? 4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, with the burning coals of the broom tree. 5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, for I dwell among the tents of Kedar! 6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace. 7 I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 121 NASB

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slumber. 4 Behold, He who **keeps** Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your **keeper**; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD will **protect** you from all evil; He will **keep** your soul. 8 The LORD will **guard** your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.