

BIBLE STUDY

The Psalms of Ascent

A Journey of Worship from Earthly Trouble to Heavenly Joy

Psalm 120: A Cry for Help from a Land of Deceit and Hostility

PSALM 120 • NIV	PSALM 120 • STUDY TEXT
1 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.	1 I took my troubles to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer.
2 Save me, LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.	2 Rescue me, O LORD, from liars and from all deceitful people.
3 What will he do to you, and what more besides, you deceitful tongue?	3 O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you? How will he increase your punishment?
4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom bush.	4 You will be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals.
5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar!	5 How I suffer in far-off Meshech. It pains me to live in distant Kedar.
6 Too long have I lived among those who hate peace.	6 I am tired of living among people who hate peace.
7 I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.	7 I search for peace; but when I speak of peace, they want war!

SELF-EVALUATION

If you rated your level of Christian maturity, what would your rating be?

1. very bad 2. not good 3. need much improvement 4. areas to grow
5. good 6. pretty good 7. very good

Beginning the Upward Journey

Psalm 120:1-2

I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me. Save me, LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.

The first of the ascent psalms begins with a cry for help. The Psalms of Ascent first teach us to reach out to God in prayer in times of distress.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

1. The Distress of Slander

How should the saints of God respond to slander?

Slander is the most distressing kind of grief. Those who have been victimized by slander and felt the edge of a cruel tongue know that it is sharper than the sword. And yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defense. We could ward off the strokes of a fist, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. Mainly because we cannot be sure who is father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to shut down its effect upon our character and personhood. It touches us in the most tender point, cuts to the quick, and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract, causing bitterness, hatred and revenge. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power of "slander, the foulest whelp of sin."

Should we confront the lie/liar?

Responding to Slander with Faith

Romans 12:19 (NASB)

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

The believer's defense is not retaliation but trust in God's justice.

Romans 8:31

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

1 Peter 3:16 (NASB)

Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who disparage your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Peter here acknowledges that slander will come, but he emphasizes integrity—living so faithfully that lies cannot stick.

What is the unspoken principle in this verse?

Matthew 5:44

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute (lie on) you.

Following the Example of Christ

1 Peter 2:23

When they hurled their insults at him (Jesus), he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

John 15:20

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Psalm 120:3-4

O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you? How will he increase your punishment? You will be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals.

2. God's Defense for His Children Against Lying Tongues

Matthew 12:36

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

Guarding the Heart, Mind, and Tongue

Matthew 7:1-2

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Revelation 21:8

...All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

Psalm 120:5-7

How I suffer in far-off Meshech. It pains me to live in distant Kedar. I am tired of living among people who hate peace. I search for peace; but when I speak of peace, they want war!

The closing of this song ends with the problem of being in the wrong place, hanging with the wrong crowd.

Meshech: A Gentile world surrounding Israel

Kedar (Kedarites): described as traders and nomads; wonderers

Do you have friends, associates or kindreds who are Gentiles and Kedarites?

How much do they influence your way of life?

Examining Our Relationships

Do they bring value to your life?

If so, in what way?

Do you think it is the Will of God that you stay connected?

Explain

Listed below are some scriptures that explain why you should leave Meshech places and Kadar people.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:33 - “Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.””

2. Proverbs 13:20 - “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

3. 2 Corinthians 6:14 - “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

4. Proverbs 22:24-25 - “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.”

5. Romans 16:17 - “I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

6. Titus 3:10 - “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.”

Wisdom for Separation and Discernment

7. 1 Corinthians 5:11 - “But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”

8. Proverbs 14:7 - “Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips.”

9. 1 Timothy 6:5 - “And constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. From such people withdraw yourself.”

10. Ephesians 5:11 - “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”

NOTE

The beginning of our upward journey should begin with self-evaluation. To see what God sees. Ref 139

Have you been True/Honest with Yourself?

Do you cause yourself to be distressed because you refuse to acknowledge the Truth, therefore you pretend?

Closing: Moving Upward

THE PSALM OF ASCENT / PILGRIM PSALMS

The Psalm of Ascent / Pilgrim Psalms are psalms/songs of upward mobility. They signify the movement of God's people from a sinful and degraded state of humanity to a lofty state of relationship with God. Each psalm moves us in upward direction.

Psalm 120 begins with separation, not only from people and places that negatively impact your spiritual growth, but from attitudes, philosophies, dispositions, thoughts and feelings that hinder your growth.

To get to the next level (like a ladder) we must leave the step we are on.

What do I do?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.” — Psalm 120:1