

Quiet Time - 1

God has graciously revealed himself to us in the Bible. And His Word is full of His rich and precious promises. As Christians, we know that the path of life involves actively trusting those promises. But as Christians we often experience things in life that challenge our faith in those promises. In these times, the promises seem distant and less real. It is encouraging to know that the writers of the Psalms understood the challenges of life. They put down in words the tension between what was promised to them in the Covenant and what they were actually experiencing in daily life. So, even though they lived on this planet between 2 and 3 thousand years ago, what they wrote down can help us as we struggle to know our God in a very challenging world.

One of the first challenges whenever we attempt to spend focused time in God's presence is, well... focus. It is natural to be distracted. You must not be too hard on yourself for being distracted. But at the same time, you must not abandon the effort to focus your attention on the Psalm before you. I have designed these Quiet Times to be an aid in focusing your thoughts on the Word. But, nothing will help you unless you have a desire to know God through His Word. Take a moment and ask God to pour out His Holy Spirit in your heart and give you a desire to know Him truly. And commit yourself to believing and obeying whatever you discover to be truth in the Word of God. It is in this attitude of humble faith that God loves to meet with his people.

Psalm 120. [Yahweh is my Peace]

Read Psalm 120. Write down any thoughts or questions that strike you.

Now focus on verse 1.

ESV **Psalm 120:1** A SONG OF ASCENTS.

In my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me.

What is a “song of ascent”? (Write down your best guess)

Ascent means to “going up”. This song was written to be used “going up.” But going up to what? The answer is simple: as God’s people were “going up” to worship. Think about your own getting ready to engage God in worship. Do you think of yourself as “going up” to worship?

The psalmist is going up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city that God had chosen as the place where He would dwell with his people on earth. Jerusalem was built on several hills so it is true that geographically, you would be “going up” whenever you traveled there to worship. But the idea of ascending was more than simply walking up hill. Why might God want his people to think of worshipping Him as “ascending”?

Anyway, even though we no longer must go up to Jerusalem to worship, every time that we approach God it is good to think of ourselves as ascending out of the valleys of our own lives up to the mountain top to be with God. The very heart of a life of faith, is to trust God’s promises even when we are not experiencing the blessings of those promises yet.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Hebrews 11:39 ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

What promises has God made to you that you have not yet experienced?

What is the present “experience” of the psalmist?

The psalmist speaks of his distress.

hr'c' (*f¹râ*) **straits, distress.**

- *f¹rar* may refer to anything which is narrow or confining.

This psalm implies that the psalmist has experienced trouble in the past. And it also assumes that as he is going up to worship, he is experiencing distress.

Think about your own life. Can you relate to the psalmist? Have you experienced distress or trouble in the past? When you come to worship God, are your thoughts sometimes filled with the troubles of your daily life?

What is the cause of the psalmist’s distress?

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Fact that we do not initially know anything about the cause of the distress helps us to know that we do not have to be enduring the exact same sort of distress for the psalm to apply to us.

To whom does the psalmist take his distress?

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And does the psalmist know that the LORD has answered his prayer?

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How does the psalmist know that the LORD has answered him?

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We are not told how he knows that his prayer has been answered, but the most likely explanation is that the psalmist is actually reflecting upon past troubles.

- “When I was experiencing distress, I called to the LORD, and he answered me.”

The psalmist is likely reflecting upon the times in his past when he has had problems and has taken those problems to the LORD. In one way or another, God has answered those prayers. In one way or another the issues that caused the previous distress are now gone.

God has been faithful to carry the psalmist through past trials.

It is God’s past faithfulness that now encourages the psalmist to take his current “trial” to Yahweh, believing he will answer again, as he has in the past.

Can you think of specific troubles in your past that in answer to prayer God has delivered you?

Write down one situation in which God has answered your prayers for help:

But even though God has delivered you from past trials, more trials keep popping up.

As the psalmist is going to the Temple, he has new problems.

And so he takes these new problems to the LORD. Look at verse 2.

2 Deliver me, O LORD,
 from lying lips,
 from a deceitful tongue.

Does the psalmist define who the “lying lips and deceitful tongue” belong to?

Again, the psalmist wants his words to be general enough that you can relate to them, even if your situation is not exactly the same.

It seems that the psalmist has experienced people spreading falsehood about him. At first, it seems that the psalmist might have bigger problems than the lies that other people speak about him.

But the psalms, and all of Scripture, place a high importance on the evil of speaking lies. Read the following verses and write down some truth from each about the evil of lying.

Psalm 5:8-9 ⁸ Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. ⁹ For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

Psalm 10:7 ⁷ His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

Psalm 34:13 ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

Psalm 52:4 ⁴ You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.

Psalm 140:1-3 Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, ² who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually. ³ They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps. Selah

Proverbs 26:28 ²⁸ A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

James 3:5-10 ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among

our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

1 Peter 3:10-11 ¹⁰ For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

Can you think of a situation in your life when someone has told a lie about you?

Or maybe they told a lie to you? You trusted them and they purposely misled you?

What are some ways that lying, deceit and slander can truly injure someone else?

It seems clear that the psalmist was the victim of lies from other people. But I think it is helpful to know that we can also be terribly affected by lies and deceit that come from other sources:

- Satan is the great deceiver, the father of lies. He is constantly working to deceive God's people into believing lies.
 - o God is not really good.
 - o God is harsh.
 - o God cannot be trusted.
 - o God's promises will not come true.
 - o I am worthless.
 - o I have failed God too many times and cannot ever be pleasing to God.
 - o I cannot overcome a particular sin with which I am struggling.
 - o I must disobey God to find happiness.
 - o Add any more lies that you can think of:

- We also struggle within our own hearts, deceiving ourselves. These lies come from our old sinful heart.
 - You are NOT really a new creation in Christ.
 - You are still dead in your sins.
 - You must follow the sinful desires within you.
 - You cannot truly love God.
 - These lies and those of Satan are often one and the same.

- We also struggle with the lies and deception of the world – the culture around us.
 - Outward beauty is more important than inner beauty of character.
 - Life and happiness flow from the pleasures that the world offers.
 - Live for yourself. Do what you want.
 - Do what comes easy.
 - Name more lies that the culture has taught you:

God is truth. He does not lie. His promises can always be trusted.

The more that we think about the evil of lies, the more that we understand that those who are full of lies and deceit deserve God’s judgment.

Read v. 3 again.

3 What shall be given to you,
 and
 what more shall be done to you,
 you deceitful tongue?

The psalmist in verse 2 was addressing the LORD. Now, he is addressing, probably still in prayer, the one who has deceived him. And he asks the question, “What will you get for your deceit?”

The answer is implied: Liars and slanderers will be judged.

Proverbs 6:16-19 ¹⁶ There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

The psalmist is very helpful here because it is so easy when we have been hurt to want to take revenge. But rather than taking revenge himself, the psalmist trusts in the “perfect judgment” of his God against all liars. (Of course, it is implied: those who continue in the way of lying and do not repent.)

Verse 4 describes the judgment that God will give:

⁴ A warrior's sharp arrows,
with glowing coals of the broom tree!

The judgment of Yahweh is just. The punishment fits the crime. In this case, deceit has pierced the heart of the psalmist with searing pain. So, the punishment that is given to the deceiver correlates.

Psalm 57:4 ⁴ My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts—the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

The “glowing coals of the broom tree” is challenging. Most of us do not even know what a broom tree is.

“The broom tree, because of the hardness of its stem, was used for making charcoal.” (Kraus)

It was particularly good for making arrows that were hard and could be dipped in the fire and made hot to then rip into the flesh when they hit their mark.

God will use arrows from the broom tree, heated with fire, to pierce the flesh and heart of the deceiver.

When someone hurts you, the natural tendency is to want to hurt them in return. But instead of taking action, the psalmist looks to the just judgment of his Covenant Lord.

It is not necessary to perfectly understand the imagery to know that God will be perfectly just in his judgment of all who have lied to his people. But even though Yahweh's just judgment will be poured out on all unrepentant liars, that judgment will not always be immediate. And many times not even in this life. So, now that the psalmist has assured himself of God's just judgment, he now returns to his current struggle. What is that struggle?

He is not yet living with Yahweh in his eternal home.

5 Woe to me,
 that I sojourn in Meshech,
 that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

What does it mean that the psalmist would tell himself, "Woe to me"?

Is it right for a believer to ever be down or discouraged or distressed or frustrated?

Whether or not it is right in the end to feel this way, or to feel this way all the time, it is refreshing to know that the psalmist is honest with the feelings of his heart.

What is it that makes him so sad?

- sojourning in _____
- dwelling in _____

My guess is that you are not familiar with either of these places. But before we explain their significance, it is helpful to see that both of these statements refer to the present experience of the psalmist. He is dwelling somewhere. This means that he is currently living there. The fact that he is sojourning means that the

place in which he is living is not his “true” home. The psalmist is not living in the land of his permanent and promised home.

Where is he dwelling?

Meshech is mentioned in Ezekiel 38. Read these verses and write down anything you learn about Meshech.

Ezekiel 38:1-4 The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³ and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. ⁴ And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords.

Meshech: refers to a land and a people who lived far north of Israel, in the mountains to the SE of the Black Sea. It was a land belonging to unbelievers. It was not Israel, the true home of the Psalmist – the place promised to him in the Covenant.

Kedar is also mentioned in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 27:21 ²¹ Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you.

Kedar: refers to a nomadic people who lived between Egypt and Edom. Kedar represents unbelievers as well. The psalmist is living in the midst of people who do not love and serve Yahweh.

Both are far from Jerusalem, in opposite directions.

How can the psalmist live in both places at once?

- He cannot.

The psalmist uses well known geography and people to express the reality that he is living among ungodly people and far from his true home: the presence of Yahweh.

As Christians, we yearn for our home. Our home is the New Heavens and the New Earth that God will give us when Jesus returns. Many of us have grown up in good homes with godly parents. But these are still not perfect. And many others have experienced terrible homes. And as we move out into the world we soon realize that the world is full of people who do not love and obey God. Sometimes, we may be tempted to follow those who do not love God. But when we determine to continue following Jesus, it is frustrating and distressing to live in a world that is opposed to God. This is the psalmist's struggle. And it is one that every believer can relate to in one way or another.

Every believer must also struggle with the reality that this world is not their home. As much as the believer may and must call upon God and walk through this world in fellowship with him, he is not living in the place of his eternal rest. And that will cause him sadness and grief.

Woe to me...

We all feel this at one time or another.

It is not necessary that we limit the troubles that the psalmist experiences to those outside of the Church. It is possible that lying tongues can exist among God's people as well.

Jesus, himself, experienced the pain of the betrayal and lies of Judas.

It is not just that the psalmist lives in a far off place. More than this, it is that he has lived there far longer than he thought possible.

⁶ Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace.

The world in which we live has a lot to offer. Sometimes we like this world too much. But when we experience the lies and the hatred of the people around us, a yearning for our eternal home awakens within us.

The people around the psalmist are not just liars. They are those who “hate peace.”

How can the psalmist describe all unbelievers as “those who hate peace”?

Peace is more than the absence of war.

Peace refers to the state of wholeness that occurs when everything is as it should be.

And peace is only found in submission to God’s covenant king.

The people surrounding the psalmist do not love peace. They hate Yahweh and they hate the life that He brings. Peace comes from submission to the will of Yahweh. These men have no intention of submitting to Yahweh. And so, they are said to hate peace.

Romans 8:6-7 ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

In contrast to the unbelievers around him, what is it that the psalmist is for?

⁷ I am for peace,
but
when I speak,
they are for war!

It is not that the unbelievers are for a particular war. They are for “war” in general. This can only be referring to the rebellion within all human hearts to the Rule of God over them.

The psalmist speaks about his allegiance to Yahweh, his submission to his will, and in response he is opposed. If he would keep quiet, their rebellion would not be as evident. But now that he has declared his loyalty to God, they make their opposition clear.

The psalmist desires peace, but those around him will give him no peace. This has been his condition for a long time... too long.

“The longing for peace goes hand in hand with the longing for the saving presence of God. And in and through the presence of God, we will experience peace, and strife will end.” Futato

Are you for peace?

Do you want Jesus to rule over you?

Do you expect that people will think this foolish?

The psalmist knew the challenge of living among unbelievers.

In your English translations, you read, “I am for peace!”

This is the meaning. But literally the Hebrew reads: I am peace!

Every follower of Jesus Christ is “for peace.” They are “for” his rule over them. They are “for” the harmony that comes from his ordering of his kingdom.

Romans 14:17-19 ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness **and peace** and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then **let us pursue what makes for peace** and for mutual upbuilding.

But this little sentence was also sung by the King himself: Jesus Christ.

And Jesus is not simply “for peace.” Jesus is “peace”!

John 14:27 ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Read through the entire psalm again and think about how it relates to Jesus.
Write down your thoughts:

True peace is only found in a living relationship with Jesus.
It is in Jesus Christ that we find true peace. Peace with God. And the peace of our eternal home.

As the psalmist is “going up” to Jerusalem, his thoughts are turning to “peace.”
In the Covenant God has promised him peace. This promise was spoken over the people by the high priest in their worship.

Numbers 6:23-27 ²³ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, ²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. ²⁷ "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

It is possible, and to be expected, for the godly to be deeply distressed by the troubles surrounding them, particularly those who hate the Kingdom of God. As believers, we are given the “assurance of peace” even before we have the full experience of the peace that we will have in our eternal home.

John 16:33 ³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not

put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Every time that you approach God in private worship you are ascending from your present problems up to the presence of God and his promises of peace. This is also what we do as we prepare for our corporate worship every Lord's Day.

You have not yet reached your home. You must live in a world full of lies and deceit. But peace has been promised to you. That is your destiny. You will one day arrive at your home, your true home. But through worship, you can experiencing something of the eternal blessing here and now.

Romans 15:33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Quiet Time - 2

Psalm 121 [Yahweh is my Helper]

Read Psalm 121 and write down any initial thoughts or questions:

Look at verse 1.

ESV **Psalm 121:1** A SONG OF ASCENTS.

I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?

This is the second of the Psalms of Ascent and the psalmist again finds himself in some sort of trouble. He is in need of help. Again, we do not know the nature of the trouble so as to have the widest possible appeal to those in need.

When you have needs arise, where do you go for help?
Is it your practice to “lift your eyes” to Yahweh?
Is he only a last resort? Or do you look to him first?
One quality of the godly is that they “look to Yahweh” for help.

The psalmist asks the question: From where does my help come?

This is helpful because it is as if he must remind himself: My help comes from Yahweh. Yahweh is the true source of help.

We learned already that all of the psalms of ascent are a going up to God.

The same concept is expressed here in “I lift up my eyes.”

Every time we come to Yahweh in worship, we are lifting our attention out of the problems around us and fixing them upon the God who controls all things, and who is our Helper.

What hills is he referring to?

Most commentators answer this in one of two ways:

- The hills represent false religion. The hills are not any particular hills. They simply refer to hills generally. Most pagan religions believed that one had to climb to the highest points to get closer to God. The Tower of Babel comes to mind.
 - If the psalmist is looking around at the hills around him, then he is only referring to these hills as the option not to take. The hills represent the “other” possible helps. But rather than look to other sources of help, the psalmist rejects them. Instead, the psalmist affirms in verse 2 – “My help comes from the LORD...”
- But it is also possible, and I think likely, that the psalmist is not looking to hills in general. He is looking to the hills upon which the City of Jerusalem is built. He is walking up to Jerusalem and going to the place where Yahweh dwells with men. He is doing so because he believes that it is from Yahweh that he will find true help. The hills are those upon which God has made his dwelling with his people.

Either option makes sense and they are not contradictory to one another. Calvin captures the thrust of the meaning well.

“The meaning of the prophet is abundantly obvious, which is, that although all the helps of the world, even the mightiest, should offer themselves to us, yet we ought not to seek safety anywhere but in God.” Calvin

² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

It is a matter of faith that “help” comes from the LORD.
In the same way that it is a matter of faith that Yahweh created the world.

Hebrews 11:3 ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Why does the psalmist remind himself that his “Helper” is the One who made heaven and earth?

Yahweh’s being Creator means that he has the power to handle the needs that are facing us.

But simply being powerful is not enough. It is also necessary that the God of the Universe be our caring Covenant Keeping God. This is what “LORD = Yahweh” implies. The psalmist knows the name of God. He is not trusting in some far-off, unknown God. He is trusting in Yahweh. The God of his fathers. And his God.

It is important to understand that it is as your covenant Lord, that Yahweh assumes the responsibility to you of being your Helper. Helping is not simply something that God does on occasion, but it is bound up in his character and in his covenant loyalty to his people.

God is your Helper. Take some time to reflect upon these verses.

Hebrew = Help yr|)z>[, Ezer.

Psalm 30:10 ¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!"

Psalm 54:4 ⁴ Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Psalm 72:12-13 ¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

Psalm 118:7-9 ⁷ The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. ⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD

than to trust in man. ⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

ESV **Deuteronomy 33:26** "There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty.

ESV **1 Samuel 7:12** Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, "Till now the LORD has helped us."

Psalm 20:1-2 May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! ² May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!

It is important to know that the Psalmist is looking to Yahweh as his Helper while he is experiencing the difficulties and frustrations of life. He is not walking on sunshine and smiling to all that he sees, "God is my helper!" He is experiencing disappointments and difficulties that make him question whether God is a helper at all. But rather than keep his eyes down on the frustrations, he lifts them up and sets his attention upon the promises of blessing made to him by his covenant Lord.

This is what the Psalmist is encouraging you to do. Take your problems to Yahweh. Lift your eyes to him. Your help will come from him.

Take time to pray to your Helper!

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

Why is it important that Yahweh does not slumber?

Yahweh is not limited by human weakness.
He has no need for sleep and therefore is ready to help at all times.

What will Yahweh, as your Helper, not let happen to the one who trusts in him?

Letting one's foot be moved = lose your footing; to slip and fall.
God's care extends to the prevention of letting his people fall.

Think about the times when your foot has slipped. How quickly did it happen?
When you slipped and fell, did you have even any time to think about it?
Have you ever watched another person slip and fall and felt helpless to do anything about it?

Yahweh is quick enough. He knows the danger of slipping even before it happens.
And he is able to help – not let you slip.

The true slipping is that of turning from God.
Why have we not turned from the truth?
- Yahweh has kept us.

The ground of our confidence is found in the doctrine of who God is.

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

This statement is very similar to the statement in verse 3. What is different?

This statement makes clear that God helps his covenant people: Israel.
The LORD does not help anyone.
The LORD helps Israel.
He will help you because you belong to Israel.

Israel is the name given to God's people. But today, we should not think of the current unbelieving state of Israel. Those who have been born again, by the Spirit of God are God's New Creation, the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:15-16 ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

If we belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ, then we are the Israel of God. And God is our Helper.

Romans 8:28 ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Read the following verses again.

- 5 The LORD is your keeper;
 the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
- 6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
- 7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;
 he will keep your life.
- 8 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
 from this time forth and forevermore.

What word is repeated multiple times referring to Yahweh?

Yahweh keeps (guards and protects are good synonyms)

What things does Yahweh keep?

First, Yahweh keeps you. As a member of his people through faith in Jesus Christ, you are precious to God. He keeps you for himself.

John 10:27-29 ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

The psalmist repeats the same idea a second time: Yahweh will keep your life. This loving care is expressed by Paul in the book of Colossians.

Colossians 3:3-4 ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Secondly, God keeps you from trials and from all evil.

Yahweh is our shade from the harsh rays of the sun.

The moon is not really so harsh, but when the psalmist couples this with the harsh rays of the sun, the effect is that God will protect you from the troubles that come in the day or at night. Remember, he does not slumber or sleep. He is always on the alert for you.

The psalmist then speaks plainly and says, “Yahweh will keep you from ALL evil.” I find this ironic because the psalmist is currently experiencing some sort of evil, or he would not be crying out to God for help. And if you connect this psalm with the previous psalm, you know that the experience of God’s people in this world is full of trials.

If it is accepted that trial, and heartache, and pain are our constant companions in this life, how is it that the promise can be, he will guard you from every evil? The psalmist states that this work occurs both now and forevermore. Write out your own thoughts.

This is difficult question and not one to be handled lightly. But it is the struggle that every true believer must engage. God does not simply promise to help us “most of the time.” He does not only promise to help us in trials. He promises to keep us from every evil.

My thoughts:

1. It would be a terrible smudge on God's character if he could only save us from some of our problems. The very nature of Him being our Perfect Helper means that He must be able to keep us from all evil.
2. The temporal evils of this world apart from faith are foreshadows of God's judgment and wrath. But for those who are trusting in Jesus, God's covenant promise, the evils lose their blackness. Instead, the trials of life are the means by which God moves us closer to himself and closer to eternity.
 - a. **1 Peter 1:6-7** ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
3. The sufferings of Jesus Christ changes the way that we think about suffering. It is redemptive. The psalmist did not understand this as clearly as we do, but the absoluteness of the promise pushed him to cling Yahweh as he Helper even though he might not understand how it could be true.
 - a. **1 Peter 4:1-2** Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.
4. In the New Heavens and New Earth, there will be no evil. The promise of God's keeping us from all evil will not be perfectly realized until we are dwelling there, in our eternal home. But this loving care begins even in this fallen world.

It is the experiencing of every Christian to live in the tension of the absolute nature of the promises of God to keep us from all evil, and the depth of the trials and struggles of our current experience.

“By trusting that the Lord is watching over us every step of the way and every moment of the day, we can turn potential stumbling blocks into stepping-stones. As we walk by faith in him, the mountains of life are not barriers to his presence but places where we experience his watchful care until we arrive in the new Jerusalem, where we will enjoy him forever.” Futato

The reality of Yahweh being our Helper is most fully revealed in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-17 ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 14:26-27 ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Hebrews 13:6 ⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Read the following two passages and reflect upon absolute promises of God to you to "keep you" and to "rescue you from every evil."

1 Peter 1:3-7 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:18 ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Renew your faith in Yahweh as your Helper.

Quiet Time – 3

Psalm 122 – The Joy of Being in God’s House

Read Psalm 122. Write out your first thoughts and questions.

Are you happy when you wake up on Sunday morning and you have the first thought that today is the day to go to church?

What do you like about church?

What do you not like about church?

What is it about church that is supposed to make you happy?

Going up to God’s house made the psalmist happy. Our present day church buildings are not exactly the same thing as going up to the temple in Jerusalem. But there are significant similarities as we will see. And, as Christians, we should be glad with the thought of gathering with God’s people to worship our Triune God.

^{ESV} **Psalm 122:1** A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF DAVID.

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

David is the writer of this psalm. The context is one of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, probably for one of the three yearly feasts. The imagery of this psalm is of the city. In David's life, the permanent temple was not yet built. So, the entire city is called, "the house of the LORD." Certainly, David yearned for the temple to be built and later worshippers would have sung this psalm with the temple in mind.

Why was Jerusalem considered to be "the house of the LORD"?

Jerusalem was the place where God's people gathered together to worship Yahweh. It was the city where God would meet with his people. Even though David yearns for the temple to be built in the city, this psalm also anticipates the New Heavens and New Earth where there will be no temple because the presence of Jesus will permeate the entire city.

Revelation 21:22 ²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

The writers of Scripture use the imagery of Jerusalem in at least two ways. In the above verse, the city of Jerusalem is fulfilled in Jesus himself. He is the perfect expression of Jerusalem.

But in addition to this, Jerusalem is also a picture of the entirety of God's people gathered together for all eternity as the Bride of Christ.

Revelation 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

In both cases, it would be very important that Jerusalem be a beautifully, well-built city. David sees the beauty and purpose of Jerusalem, and he is full of gladness.

As Christians, we can certainly apply this sense of beauty to the person of Jesus Christ.

And, I believe that God wants us as believers to think of the Church, his Bride, as beautiful and well-built as well.

Read over the entire psalm thinking about Jerusalem as referring to Jesus. Write your thoughts.

Read over the entire psalm thinking about Jerusalem as referring to the Church. Write out your thoughts.

As Christians, we do not have one determined location in which to worship. Christians worship in all sorts of buildings all over the world. And yet, we can relate to this psalm because whatever the building, it is the place where God's people gather to worship our Triune God.

Read Paul's statement in Acts and explain why we do not usually think of our church buildings as God's houses:

Acts 17:24-25 ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Recognizing that no earthly building could ever truly be God's home, Jerusalem, eventually with its temple, was the place on earth where God chose to abide. It

was the place on earth where God chose to come near to his people. We do believe that in one sense God is everywhere present all the time. We call this His Omnipresence. But omnipresence is not the same thing as “drawing near” to someone personally. And Jerusalem was the city where God “drew near” to his people to express his holy love to them.

Once the temple was built by Solomon, it would have been impossible to think about going up to Jerusalem without also thinking of the city as the home of the temple. In the same way, after the coming of Christ, and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Christians can no longer think of the physical city of Jerusalem as “the house of the Lord.” Instead, we, as the Church, fulfill what Jerusalem foreshadowed.

Read the following verses. What is it that Paul calls a temple in each?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Ephesians 1:22 - 2:1 ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ponder for a moment on this truth: There is no place or time in your week that has the capacity to impart to you the presence of God in more profound way than the gathering together with the rest of the congregation in the corporate worship of God. This is the way that Old Testament believers would have felt as they thought of going up to the temple, and it is the way that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, ought to feel as we prepare to come to church.

Write your thoughts:

Mr. Futado captures the sentiment well:

“... to arrive at the house of the Lord was to arrive at the destiny for which we were created: the presence of God.” Futado

But even though these things are true, it is also true that we desire more out of our church experience. There are countless reasons why this might be, some of them our fault, others are simply due to factors outside our control. But, the fact that our experience is not all that we want it to be, is precisely the point of this psalm. The psalmist's joy as he is walking up to Jerusalem to go to the temple challenges each one of us.

We should ask the question, “Do I have such joy and gladness in my heart?”

The truth is this: Saved people love to be in God's presence, with God's people. Any time that you discover in your heart something that you are lacking, it is a good opportunity to remember the Gospel. To not fully love to be with God and with his people is sin. But it is sin that Jesus Christ has shed his blood to forgive. But rather than making excuses for our lack of gladness, we ought to admit that we don't often truly hunger and thirst for God's presence. We are far too content with the things of this world. If we are truly grieving that we do not love God's presence as we should, and hungering for God to fix us such that we would delight in his presence, God meets us in our weakness. The blood of Christ will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And the Spirit of Christ will renew within us a deeper love of God's presence. We do not work up within ourselves a love of God. We acknowledge our lack of love and plead with God for Christ's sake to graciously work within us a love that comes from him.

Take a moment to seek both forgiveness and renewal from your Savior – Jesus Christ:

Now, let's look at the rest of the Psalm and reflect upon what has stirred up gladness in the heart of the writer – David.

2 Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

David is either “now” standing in Jerusalem or he is reflecting upon previous times when he has been to Jerusalem.

We can see a certain progression in Psalms 120, 121, and 122:

- In Psalm 120, the writer was “In Meshech and Kedar” – far away.
- In Psalm 121, the writer is “Approaching the city” – looking at her hills.
- In Psalm 122, the writer is “Standing inside the gates of the city.”

In this way, the psalms help those who sing them to progress in our anticipation of being in God’s presence. This is important for us. It is easy, because the Spirit of Christ always dwells within us, to never consider that going to meet with God is necessary and valuable. The issue is not so much that we truly have to go somewhere to meet with God, but that in our hearts there is value in separating ourselves from the daily duties of life to approach God with a holy sense of reverence.

By reverence, we should not think of an attitude that is devoid of joy. How wonderful that David is not simply “somber” as he is going to the temple. He is glad! But it is the gladness that comes from his reverence for God and his purposely leaving the trials of his normal life to “linger in God’s house, before the throne of the One whom he loves and serves.”

Do you take time before coming to church to “go up to God”?

Do you take time to intentionally leave the problems of your life?

Do you, in your heart, fix your eyes on Jesus, who is sitting on his royal throne at the right hand of the Father?

Or do you think of worship as nothing more than an earthly experience?

3 Jerusalem- built as a city that is bound firmly together,
4 to which the tribes go up,
 the tribes of the LORD,
 as was decreed for Israel,
 to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

David is standing inside one of the city gates. He is looking at the physical appearance of the city. What does he see?

How would David have recognized that the city was “bound firmly together”?

Jerusalem was a walled city with many gates connecting the wall into one unit. Why would the presence of a well-built wall, completely surrounding the city, have meant so much to David?

The walls of the city would have communicated to David several things:

- strength and security
- permanence and unity

David looks at the structure of the city and he believes that the city is the appropriate place where God’s people should come to worship the Lord.

Who are the “tribes”?

Each individual tribe would have had its own identity and personality, but as they journeyed up to the temple they would have blended to become one people of God.

What does it mean that their going up to Jerusalem was decreed?

Corporate worship is the duty of every follower of Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 12:1-7 "These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. ² You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green

tree. ³ You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. ⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. ⁵ But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, ⁶ and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. ⁷ And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

God has chosen a people for himself, and formed them, for the purpose of their giving praise to Himself. The primary purpose of God's people is to worship God and give him praise. Certainly, all of life can be thought of as worship.

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

But this psalm helps us to see the importance of "going up" to the city as one people to worship God. All of the tribes gathering together.

There may be various tribes, but they are all going up to Jerusalem as one people. And all of the tribes belong to God.

And the praise that they are giving to God has been decreed by God to be given. Jerusalem is a place of praise.

David's thoughts move from the city as a place of gathered praise to something else that is very important. What is it in verse 5?

⁵ There thrones for judgment were set,
the thrones of the house of David.

We do not often go from thoughts of worship to thoughts of judgment. They seem to be entirely separate ideas. They are very much connected in David's thinking. And they should be in ours as well.

Read I Kings 7:1-7.

1 Kings 7:1-7 Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house. ² He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Its length was a hundred cubits and its breadth fifty cubits and its height thirty cubits, and it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. ³ And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. ⁴ There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers. ⁵ All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers. ⁶ And he made the Hall of Pillars; its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them. ⁷ And he made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the Hall of Judgment. It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.

Again, like the temple which was not built until after his life, it is interesting that David is writing the Psalm, but the King's royal house was not built until Solomon. It is almost as if David is dreaming of what Jerusalem would be. He is standing in the city looking around at what the city is. But he is also thinking about what it will be. Is this not what we must do as well? The Church is beautiful. But she is not really all that she will be. We must see her as she will become. We must look at the present Church with a view to what she will be in that final day.

Do you ever dream about what the Church will be? Or do you only think about what she is not? God wants you to find beauty in what the Church is now, because you know the future that God has in store for her. Give thanks to God that he has made you a member of his people.

So, in Jerusalem God has ordained both a Temple and a Hall of Justice. One cannot exist without the other. So, in our own minds we should connect worship with righteousness.

The blessings that God pours out upon his people assume that there is righteousness among the people. Apart from righteousness, there can be no blessing, only cursing from God. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for praise and righteousness to go together. It was the responsibility of the king to rule with righteousness. Psalm 72 speaks of the king's responsibility to rule with justice, with the result being blessing and prosperity for the people.

ESV **Psalm 72:1** OF SOLOMON. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ² May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! ³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor! ⁵ May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! ⁹ May desert tribes bow down before him and his enemies lick the dust! ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him! ¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight. ¹⁵ Long may he live; may gold of Sheba be given to him! May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day! ¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field! ¹⁷ May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed! ¹⁸ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. ¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen! ²⁰ The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

As Christians, our King Jesus is the One who has provided righteousness for us. It is his blood alone that can cleanse us from our sins and win us entrance through the gates into the city. It is God's just judgment that declares us righteous. And it is this just judgment that enables us to enter his presence to offer him praise.

But it is also true that when we come to worship, we are coming to a righteous king who sees everything about us. He knows our hearts. When we come to him, we must judge ourselves, freely confessing the remaining sin of our hearts. And we must seek grace from our King to rule over us in righteousness. He graciously pours out his Spirit into our hearts such that our minds are transformed and our behaviors changed more and more into conformity with his will.

Surely, this process is not complete in this life, but it is the end for which we strive. Worship is false and empty, if it does not include the yearning for righteousness. And before we will experience the perfection of worship in God's presence, His power and grace must make us perfectly righteous. That is our hope. That is the end for which we yearn and strive.

Philippians 3:12-14 ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

It is the perfect rule of the King that brings true Peace.

ESV **Isaiah 9:7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Therefore, when we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we are praying for the harmony of perfect righteousness.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
"May they be secure who love you!"

The very name Jerusalem means "city of peace."
Salem or shalom = peace

What does it mean for us as Christians to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem”?

We are praying for the perfect fulfillment of all God’s promises to Israel.

We are praying for God’s will to be done among his people here on earth like it is done in heaven.

And we are praying that God will rescue his people from every external enemy.

7 Peace be within your walls
 and
 security within your towers!"

What has just been decreed is not sought for in prayer.

“The psalmist prays that the promise may become fulfillment and that token may become reality.” Longman

The perfect work of Jesus Christ has purchased peace for all of God’s people. But this truth does not keep David from beseeching God for this peace. We too, should pray regularly that God would work in such a way that even now we experience a portion of his peace in the visible church.

Jerusalem was a place of protection. So also, the followers of Jesus Christ, should look for protection in Jesus Christ, and in the Church.

But even though the Church is a place of security, David does not deny that there is not always harmony even within the walls of the Church. And so, he prays for peace within the walls.

8 For my brothers and companions' sake I will say,
 "Peace be within you!"
9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
 I will seek your good.

What does it mean to seek the good of Jerusalem?

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It is natural for people to yearn for peace. It is not natural for anyone to be concerned for the peace of Jerusalem. That means we need to be concerned for God's house and not just our own. We often have to step outside of ourselves and care for God's house. We must desire her to be well-built and beautiful. Of course, the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and of Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone. But it is right for Christians to seek the good of the Church.

You are not called to fix all of the wrongs of the Church. But you are called to care for the Church. And you are called to pray for the Church. And you are called to ask God to give you some way in which you can serve the Church to make it a better place.

Take some time to do this right now, remembering that your peace is joined together with the peace of Jerusalem.