



Approaching God

Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passage.

Psalm 120

Passage Introduction:

“A person has to be thoroughly disgusted with the way things are to find the motivation to set out on the Christian way. As long as we think the next election might eliminate crime and establish justice or another scientific breakthrough might save the environment or another pay raise might push us over the edge of anxiety into a life of tranquillity, we are not likely to risk the arduous uncertainties of the life of faith. A person has to get fed up with the ways of the world before he, before she, acquires an appetite for the world of grace. Psalm 120 is the song of such a person, sick with the lies and crippled with the hate, a person doubled up in pain over what is going on in the world. But it is not a mere outcry, it is pain that penetrates through despair and stimulates a new beginning—a journey to God that becomes a life of peace.”

Eugene Peterson - *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Read the passage slowly 2 or 3x's.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Psalm 120 - A Song of Ascents (NLT) - **1** I took my troubles to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer. **2** Rescue me, O LORD, from liars and from all deceitful people. **3** O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you? How will he increase your punishment? **4** You will be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals. **5** How I suffer in far-off Meshech. It pains me to live in distant Kedar. **6** I am tired of living among people who hate peace. **7** I search for peace; but when I speak of peace, they want war!

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- How would you describe the state of mind and heart of the Psalmist after reading this passage? In your own words, how would you describe what the Psalmist is longing for?
- What do you think Meshech and Kedar represent in this passage? (Grab a study bible or online commentary to help you answer this question. The *ESV Study Bible* is a great resource.)
- Where in life right now can you identify with the Psalmist and his troubles? What are your longings as it relates to life in this world?

Psalm 120

Passage Summary - (From The ESV Transformation Bible)

Psalm 120 begins by recalling prior distresses and God's faithfulness and deliverance. Evidently, the psalmist has been exiled and is living with pagan peoples who do not worship the God of Israel (see vv. 5-7). Furthermore, these foreigners promote war instead of peace, and the psalmist has cried out to the God of peace to frustrate their plans for war and oppression. Due to God's past faithfulness in answering when called upon (v. 1), the psalmist now is emboldened to cry out for deliverance once again. That God alone is Savior, and faithful, and powerful gives the psalmist confidence over the deception of his opponents. God's power and grace, in the end, are what will bring victory to God's people; God can be relied upon to bring the lasting and permanent peace the psalmist longs to experience.

Jesus himself is the supreme instance of a man who came in peace but who experienced undeserved hostility. And yet in a marvel of God's providence and grace, the act of hostility that put Christ to death is the very means by which sinners, naturally hostile to God, can be reconciled to God and receive undeserved peace.

Key Takeaway:

As you read today's passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down that you want to take with you? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

Close in Prayer:

Close by turning today's Psalm into your own prayer. For example, vs. 1 says, "***I took my troubles to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer.***" So you could simply start praying by saying, "Lord, here is where I feel troubled," and begin talking to Him about those places in your life. Verse 2 says, "***Rescue me, O LORD, from liars and from all deceitful people.***" Ask God to rescue you from any places in life where you are tempted to believe a lie or live deceitfully. Try to spend a few minutes going line by line through or focusing on a particular theme that jumps out to you. This will be our practice each day, to close our bible reading time by using our daily Psalm to guide our individualized prayers.