

Pillar Passages – Psalm 120
Jed Brown
June 30, 2021

Welcome to your first installment of looking at the Bible together. We're looking at Psalm 120 today. It is, it says, a song of Ascents (ascent) meaning going up. This was a psalm that people would sing as they went up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem sat on a high hill. So, this song was sung as pilgrims would go on their way to the great city—to the homeland, to their home.

The psalmist begins by crying out to the Lord. He has distress. And in his distress, he calls out to the Lord, and the Lord answers him. We'll find out how in a moment. He asks the Lord to deliver him. Deliver him not from a physical treat but from lying lips and a deceitful tongue.

He first expresses his displeasure—his distress—to God, vertically. Then he expresses it horizontally to those who are lying to him. "What shall be give to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue?" We aren't sure who this is and what it was all about, but we do know to him it felt like "a warrior's sharp arrows," verse 4. "With glowing coals of the broom tree." Sometime even lies and slander can be even more harsh and painful than even a physical arrow going into one.

Then he cries out again, "Woe to me." Woe "that I sojourn in Meschech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar," that he dwells among the Gentiles. Why? Because too long in his life has he dwelled among those who hate peace. The word here is shalom. For too long he as dwelled among those who hate shalom. He says, " I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

So that's the psalm, a brief psalm. I think if you think about our culture today you can understand where this person is coming from. He lives among people who constantly live in lies. That seems to be a huge feature of our culture today that we live among lies. We are all too happy to absorb propoganda and to take is "the truth."

Now, as we think about what the psalmist has done here, we may very well find ourselves exposed because what the psalmist does *first* is, he cry out to the Lord. Is that you? Is that me? Too often, I think, we cry out horizontally. We cry out on Twitter or Facebook about the deceitful tongue. And we seek to show the deceitful tongue where they are wrong. We seek to say how they are hypocritical, how painful they are, how destructive they are. Which is not wrong. But what the psalmist does first, is he cries out to the Lord, to the one who is the Lord of all truth. Who is the deliverer, the bringer of shalom. The one who love shalom and is the bringer of all shalom. So, he cries out to Him first asking for deliverance from lying lips. Is that you? Is that me? That's a good question to ask.

Now, it is also helpful, as we think about this, it is not wrong to cry out horizontally and to call out the deceitfulness of others. That is *not* wrong. We should be people who are about the truth. We're on no one's side but on the side of the truth—that is a Christian. Therefore, on God's side. But it is also normal in this life to feel exhausted by it all. To long for Heaven. To long for a different place to dwell, as the psalmist does. That very well may mean you're doing life *right* when you feel that. When you feel a longing for home. A longing for a place where peace is always the case. Where peace is eternal, and where peace is total. Where there is no lies, therefore. Where everything is about the truth. Where everything is about God. It is a good thing, while we sojourn among liars, to long for heaven. To long for the new Jerusalem—the new heaven and the new earth that are to come. So, the psalmist points us in the right direction. And the psalmist—if you feel this way today—would say to you, “You're doing it right. Keep going. The reason why you feel that way is because you're longing for the right thing.”

So, press on dear Christian.

Now, we ought also to think about how? How ought we to think about this as Christians—as people who live on the other side of the cross? On the other side of the cross, what do we do now as Christians? How do we live in a world of liars as people who are about the truth, and who have been saved by the truth, and who have bet their very lives and eternal destiny on the

truth? How should we respond? The one massive truth we need to remember—we who live on the other side of the cross—is with the cross something profound changed. In the Old Testament the thing that was communicable, the thing that was contagious, was the impurity of the nations. Impurity was what was contagious and therefore, your average Israelite in the Old Testament wanted to get away from the Gentiles. He wanted to get away from those he sojourned among and to the great city—which is not wrong. But something changed with Christ. And with Christ, what happened is that something else became contagious. That is the holiness of God. Now that the truth has come it is the holiness of God that is contagious.

While we long for heaven, while we long for home, the reaction that every Christian must have, the pursuit every Christian must take is not only to point out the deceit of the world, but to say here's the truth. Here's the Gospel. Here's the truth and truth has become incarnate in a man. A man who not only was crucified to a Roman cross, who died for all of our lying, all of our willful ignorance of the truth—he died for that—but more than that He was raised for the dead. By being raised from the dead, He proved to all that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus.

So now while we live here with liars, we can live with a great hope and a great mission. We possess the truth. A truth that will set everyone free from the bondages, the slavery of sin—the slavery of the lies of the king of this world. We possess the truth so we want that truth the thing that is contagious. The holiness of God, the glories of God, the truth of God that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel.