

# Distress & Peace

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[ 0 : 01 ] Let's turn again to the book of Psalms, reading in Psalm 120. Psalm 120. In my distress I called to the Lord and he answered me.

Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior sharp arrows with glowing coals of the broom tree.

Well, that's a juniper tree. Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar. Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace.

I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war. Now, this is the first of 15 psalms that are labeled song, as we see here, a song of ascent or a song of decrees.

And these psalms, Psalm 120 through including Psalm 134, were penned by different authors, by David, by Solomon, and by others. And these psalms were collected together.

[ 1 : 20 ] For instance, Psalm 126 is very obviously a post-exile psalm, which was hundreds of years later than the time of David.

But these psalms were put together, they were collected together for a particular reason. Because there's a kind of a common theme running through all these psalms.

Psalms are talk of pilgrimage, they talk of God's house, they talk of journeying, they talk of the prosperity of Zion, and they talk about the family. And these psalms were sung by the Jews as they made their way to the feasts in Jerusalem.

And that's why they're called songs of decrees or ascent, that as the Jews would make their way from all the different parts of the land up to Jerusalem, they sang these songs.

Beginning with Psalm 120 and moving on through to Psalm 134. Jesus himself would have sung these psalms as he made his way up to Jerusalem at the time of the feasts.

[ 2 : 30 ] And Psalm 120 is a very good starting point because it expresses the whole idea of homesickness, of longing, of a person being away from the people of God and wanting to be with the people of God.

Wanting to get back away from where they are. And as you move through the psalms, for instance, Psalm 122 is a psalm that talks about the joy of going to God's house.

And it moves on in such a way until we come to Psalm 134. Come bless the Lord all you servants of the Lord who stand by night in the house of the Lord.

Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth. So that's just the background to these psalms.

As we say, they're a collection of psalms penned by different authors that have been put together. And the Jews sang these psalms as they made their way up to the feasts.

[ 3 : 37 ] But we see here when we home in on this particular psalm, the first thing we notice is that the psalmist here is in distress. And he does what every person ought to do when they are in distress.

He calls to the Lord. He calls upon the name of the Lord. He prays. He brings the matter to the Lord. In my distress, I called to the Lord and he answered me.

And it doesn't matter what the distress is. That is what we should do as well. And I hope you're in the habit of bringing everything to the Lord in prayer. That's what we're told in the Bible.

Sometimes people think, oh, well, I only bring the big issues to the Lord. No, we bring everything. Because often the big issues hinge on the little issues.

We're told in Scripture, take everything to the Lord. Bring everything. In everything. By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

[ 4 : 36 ] Let your requests be made known unto God. So we've got to remember that. That's the directive. That's the command. In everything. And I love when God says everything.

That's exactly what he means. There are no limits in everything. You go through the Bible and you will find the pattern of God's people has been just this very thing.

Whether it's Moses. There were loads of times. You look at the life of Moses. There was one time when Moses couldn't cope anymore. And no wonder. When he had this huge number of people who were always grumbling and restless.

And sometimes wanted to stone him. And you find him going to the Lord and he's saying to the Lord, Lord, I can't cope anymore. I can't deal with this anymore. Then you find Hannah.

She was in distress because she was childless. And she was being taunted in her own home because of her childlessness. And she reached a point where she couldn't take it anymore.

[ 5 : 39 ] And she goes to the Lord. David. He was a man who couldn't take it anymore. With the suffering that he was going through. As he was being hounded by Saul all over the land.

And you find him pouring out his heart to the Lord. And so it goes on. You find Samuel in the same way. Daniel. All throughout the Bible. People who, because of different circumstances, have reached a point of distress.

And they're going to the Lord and saying, Lord, help. And the Lord wants us to do that very thing. Because do you know what the Lord does as we come?

Do you know what the Lord says to us? Jesus, call upon me in a day of trouble. And then he says something else. He says, I will deliver you.

And you will glorify me. Isn't that wonderful? Here you are in trouble. What do you do? You call upon the name of the Lord. You come by faith. You come believing.

[ 6 : 39 ] He is a great deliverer. That's one of the themes that runs all the way through the Bible. God is a deliverer. And when he delivers you, he will glorify his own name in your deliverance.

And remember that, my friend, when you pray, always seek the glory of God, even in the answer to your problem. Because it isn't just about you.

We are so self-centered. We often think, Lord, as long as I'm delivered, that's all that matters. God says, no, that's not all that matters. Yes, I'm going to deliver you. But what's of even greater significance and importance is, I'm going to glorify my own name in your deliverance.

And so we must always remember that as we seek the deliverance of the Lord. However, we find here that the psalmist becomes more specific about his problems and his trials.

In my distress, I called to the Lord, and he answered me, deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

[ 7 : 44 ] This man was surrounded by deceit and lies. It would appear that he was the victim of a personal attack.

But it would also appear that it was the kind of the society that he was living in. It was a society that was governed by deceit and by lies.

And, you know, it's a sad thing whenever our society will plunge into the depth where deceit and lies are the order of the day.

We have to just stand back for a moment and ask ourselves this question. Is that where we are today? Do we live in a society where deceit and lies are the order of the day?

And I think we have to say we do. You will often find people saying, will those in authority please tell us the truth?

[ 8 : 46 ] Because so often you will hear people say, I don't know what to believe. Whether it is from politicians, from rulers, from financiers. So many people.

And they are saying, just tell us the truth. We hear so often for years the phrase, a spin doctor. A spin doctor is a liar.

Because that is really what spin is. It is a lie. It is something that is not very good. So let's make it good. Let's try and make it more attractive.

We dare and we mustn't tell the truth. So let's twist it around a wee bit to make it more palatable. Let's deceive the people a wee bit so that they don't really grasp what's happening here.

And that my friends is the society that we live in. That's the society the psalmist lived in. And he's saying to the Lord, deliver me from this.

[ 9 : 44 ] And there is within people's heart a desire. You will find it nationally today. People are so often saying, I want to know the truth. What, where are we? How are we?

What is happening? It's unnatural desire within people's heart. So it's a bad reflection on society. And society plunges into deceit and lies.

Because what is happening? That means that the father of lies, who is Satan, is the one who is influencing the very spiritual culture and fabric of the society.

Remember, that's who Satan is, the father of lies. So if our program is governed by spin, which is lies or deceit, whatever, then we have fallen far away.

And our warning to the church is always, never, ever, ever go down the road of what we would turn spin. We must never be in the business of trying to deceive people.

[10:49] Jesus never, ever, ever deceived people. He told the truth. Sometimes people couldn't tolerate the truth. They couldn't stand it. At the end of the day, they put him away.

They couldn't tolerate what he was saying. But he always told the truth because he was truth personified. He said, I am the way. I am the truth.

And that's one of the things when we come to the Bible, we come to the truth. And again, just as when Jesus was saying, it might not always be palatable. It might not be what people always want to hear.

Because the truth hurts. But the truth must be given. But it must be given in love. And we must believe what God is saying. Because he always speaks the truth.

So the church must be careful. That we do not follow the way of the world. And think a wee bit of spin here. A wee bit of spin there. No. But then we find the psalmist moves.

[11:49] Or the psalm moves to a certain extent. And it's like the psalmist now addressing those who are causing the trouble. What shall be given to you? And what more shall be done to you?

You deceitful tongue. A warrior sharp arrows with glowing coals of the broom tree. Now, really what is being asked here, or what we see here, is that the arrows that are going to be, it's like God, verse 4 is speaking about the Lord.

A warrior sharp arrows. That this is where God is coming with sharp, deep, penetrating arrows with the glowing coals of the broom tree.

And the broom tree, apparently, is a tree that once it begins to burn, burns for a long, long time. It's a juniper tree and it carries on. It's one of the features. It just burns and burns and burns.

And it's talking about a lasting, a lasting kind of distress coming upon a person. But what is very interesting here is that it's as if the psalmist is saying here, look, Lord, deliver me.

[13:00] But this is not, I'm going to step aside, Lord, and I'm going to let you deal with the matter. And you know, we often find that in the Bible.

And it's a feature, often, that we find in the lives of God's people. Where they step aside and let God intervene. And my friend, that is what the Bible teaches us.

Particularly when we've been wronged. The natural reaction when we are wronged is revenge. Somebody does something to you. Well, I'm going to get even.

I might even get even a little more. I might do something. My retaliation is going to be a little bit worse. It's a natural instinct from the time that we're we.

We want to get even with people. You want to get revenge. Well, you know what the Bible says is that actually vengeance or avenging ourselves, it's not our domain.

[14:03] It's not our territory. It's God's specific territory. We're told that in the epistles. It says very clearly. Beloved, never avenge yourselves.

But leave to God the wrath. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. Isn't that interesting? Beloved, never avenge yourselves.

Don't take the revenge yourselves. Don't you deal with it. That is my territory. God who is just and the ruler of all.

He will, in his own time and in his own way, he will work. Very interesting. David was a classic example of following that principle.

There was many a time. Saul hounded David. Saul tried to kill David at every turn. He turned the whole nation against David, who had done nothing but good.

[15:09] And there were times when David could have killed Saul. There was one time, remember, David was hiding in this cave. Saul, with an army, was chasing David.

And Saul went. He was tired. And he went into a cave to rest for a wee while, away from the troops. The very cave David was sleeping in. David was hiding in. David, who, just like on other occasions, was prompted by somebody who was with him.

They are. God has handed Saul to you. All you do while he's sleeping, plunge the sword into his chest.

David said, no. That is not my domain. That is not what I do. I will leave him to the Lord.

And that's one of the reasons why David has been termed a man after God's own heart. When you go through the life of David, it's absolutely God-honoring. Sadly, so often we hum in on David's sin.

[16:17] And that says more about ourselves than anything else. David's life is a classic example of a man who lived to and for the glory of God. And so let us remember that vengeance is God's domain.

And then the psalmist moves from there and turns to verse 5. And he says, Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar. Now these two places, Meshech and Kedar, were about as far apart as you could get.

Meshech would be in what is today's Turkey and Kedar would have been down in Saudi. So they're two points way, way apart. And just expressing this being so, so far from home.

Far from the worship of God. Far from the people of God. And he felt so alone, so isolated. And so long. There was this feeling of homesickness.

And you know, that is part of what the Christian experiences in this world. Homesickness. Why?

Because we don't belong to this world.

[17:28] We're in it. We're involved in it. There are many things we enjoy. Much of life. It's good God given to us. However, we don't belong here.

We're only pilgrims. We're sojourning. We're on a journey. We're going somewhere else. We belong to another kingdom. To another king. And we're all journeying home.

And we've got to remember that. And there are times like Lot. Who lingered in Sodom. And had to be prompted and pushed to get out of Sodom.

That there are times we linger. And we become too bogged down. And too caught up in this world. But the Lord will always come and shake us. And remind us. That this is not our home.

You know, sometimes when you read the Old Testament. And you look at, for instance, the life of Lot. And you say to yourself, you know. Lot was quite a sad character. And you sometimes wonder. Was he a man of God at all?

[18:32] Well, the New Testament makes it very clear. New Testament. That's a wonderful thing of the Bible. One part of the Bible shines light on the other. And the New Testament tells us that Lot was a just man.

And that he was often grieved in his heart by the lifestyle in Sodom. It doesn't tell us that in the Old Testament. It tells us that in the New Testament. That's how Lot felt.

But we also know that there were times he was sucked in, as it were. And became too grounded in the place. But we know how the Lord enabled him to get out.

There are times we, as we say, get a wee bit too bogged down in this world. But the Lord won't leave us there. There are other times we are homesick for heaven.

And it's not a good sign for a Christian. A professing Christian who's never homesick for heaven. Because you want to be with the Lord.

[19:34] There are times we get weary in this world. And there are times the world is weary of the Christian. Why is the world weary of the Christian? Because the world was weary of Christ.

The world couldn't bear Christ. Jesus was barely born into this world. When the attack was made to get rid of him. He was only three years in a public ministry.

Where he went around doing nothing but good. The son of God in human nature. The only perfect man. Since the fall.

To walk this world. And the world couldn't bear him. Couldn't tolerate him. They couldn't tolerate his righteousness. His goodness. His uprightness.

His truth. They couldn't bear it. And within three years of public ministry. They had to get rid of him. And Jesus is saying. Just as the world hated me.

[20:32] It will hate you as well. And there are times. That's how it is. If we stand. If we align ourselves to Christ. In some times.

In some positions. You know. When you see the persecution of the Christian. That goes on throughout the world. You say to yourself. This is irrational. So it is. But what it is speaking about. Is the deep rooted hatred and enmity. In the heart of man. Towards God. People will say. Oh the natural man. Is not at enmity with God. Of course he is.

And it is displayed in many ways. And it is displayed in that way. Surely most of all. Is the hatred of Christ. Trying to get rid of everything. That belongs to Jesus.

So here. We find the psalmist. Saying woe to me. I'm longing to get back. Longing to get back. And part of his problem. We see in verses 6 and 7. In conclusion.

[ 21 : 29 ] Is that he's living with those. Who hate peace. But he says. I am for peace. And every believer. Is for peace. Are you for peace today my friend.

Is this what you want. You want peace in your own life. You want peace in your home. You want peace in the community. You want to promote peace. A Christian. A Christian. Is a peace promoter. If a Christian. A professing Christian. Is somebody who causes. Continued strife. You have to say to yourself. I'm sorry. But your profession.

Does not match up. With what the word of God says. It's totally inconsistent. You cannot have somebody. Who professes. To follow the Lord.

And is saying. I am a Christian. And I live for Christ. And at the same time. All was causing strife and division. It's a total inconsistency.

[ 22 : 27 ] It's a denial of the faith. A person confesses and professes. Jesus Christ is the prince of peace. Those who follow Christ. Are promoting peace.

And that's the problem with this man. This is what he wanted. But he lived amongst a people. Who weren't for peace. But they were for war. My friend.

This man. He sojourned. In Meshe. And he dwelt among the tents of Kedar. But you know. That's where God had him.

For a time. Let's remember this. Wherever you are just now. God has put you there. I hope. Wherever you are. That you are promoting peace.

As a follower of Christ. Because God. Wants you to work where you are. And you look back at your own life. And think about those.

[ 23 : 23 ] When you were a rebel. And an enemy of Christ. Who spoke to you. Who prayed for you. Who said a little word. Whose lives touched you. And influenced you for good.

And you thank the Lord for them. You look back now. And you thank the Lord. That they did speak to you. You thank the Lord. That they said a wee word here.

You thank the Lord. That they loved you. You thank the Lord. That they prayed for you. Maybe at the time you didn't. But you do today. I hope you have the same spirit.

Toward others. As these people had to you. Because remember. There is going to come a day. When we are going to have to give an account. For everything. And we are going to have to give an account.

For what we did. For Christ. In this world. Because Jesus has sent us out. To serve. We were saved to serve.

[ 24 : 19 ] Not saved to live to ourselves. We were saved to serve. Where he has put us. And we are responsible. And one day we are going to have to give an account.

For what we have done. It is a solemn. It is a sobering thought. But one last thing I will say here. Is as.

The journeying through Meshach. And living in amongst people who are for war. And all the struggles. It is all part of the preparation for glory. Because one day the war will be over.

The battle. The last battle will have been fought. And we will be brought into the place of rest. Into the place of refuge. Into the place that was won for us. By who?

Who won it? Jesus. How did he win it? Because he came down to sojourn. In Meshach. He came down to dwell. In the tents of Kedar.

[ 25 : 18 ] If he hadn't. There would have been no peace. No future. For us. So let us thank the Lord. That Jesus knows all about the sojourning.

In Meshach. He knows all about dwelling. In the tents of Kedar. He's been there. And he's been there. For you. I hope today my dear friend.

That your life. Is in Jesus. That you've trusted. Your life to him. You've committed your life to him. And that you know the freedom. And the liberty.

And the peace. That Jesus. Has won. For his people. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Lord our God. We give thanks.

For the way the word. Reminds us. And tells us. Of what it is. To be a Christian. And what this. What has been won for us.

[ 26 : 18 ] There are struggles in life. And we have to confess Lord. That it's not just the world. That is in opposition to us. But our own heart. And that there is a war.

Within our own heart. Lord. Grace says. I am for peace. Our natural heart says. I am for war. And the believer knows.

That conflict that goes on. Between war and peace. But we give thanks. Oh Lord. That the peace. That has been won in Christ. Is the peace.

That ultimately wins. Lord help us. Then we pray. Take each one of us. Home in safety. Help us to rejoice. In the Lord. And forgive us. Our sin. In Jesus name.

Amen.