

Peace on the Journey

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[0 : 0 0] Please join me in Psalm chapter 120, our passage for the night. Thank you ladies for that song. If I was to classify that song in a category, I would put it in a pilgrim song.

In the book of Psalms, we have songs that talk about when they were traveling somewhere. That's the passage of the next 15 chapters. The 15 psalms we're going to be in are like that.

They're songs of ascent or songs of degree, and it speaks about the weariness that they feel when they're traveling. Had a good chance right before the service to speak with Nick. Nick will be getting baptized on Sunday, and he moved here from Arizona.

He's not ready to go back to Arizona or California where he's from. He likes it here quite good, but we're talking about his journey. I love the way he said. He said, it really started for me two years ago when I accepted Christ.

That's when life has really begun for me, and what a great testimony of that. Psalm chapter 20, I appreciate Pastor Bo preached the last portion of Psalm 119.

[1 : 0 1] We spent about 25 sermons in Psalm 119, and we're only one sermon out, and I missed it already, all right? We might just go back to it, but I went back, and I listened to it, and I was helped so much by the message that he preached from God's Word.

And now we're at Psalm 120, and we're going to look at the passage, and I'll read it here to you. I'm here in a moment. I want to help give a little context, as I said, over the next 15 chapters.

Baseball is about to start. You all know that. I don't know how many more days, but I think we're a few days out from the start of baseball season. And I don't know if you're familiar with the term a walk-up song.

How many of you know what a walk-up song is, all right? It's when the batter goes up, they pick what it's going to be. And I know Kyle really wants us to have it for preaching, but I just don't think it would be appropriate.

You know, what would be, and you think, what would be your walk-up song if you're going to go up the bat and that you're going to play? And so you could tell me after service what your walk-up song would be, all right?

[2 : 0 0] But this isn't a walk-up song in that regard, but this would be a walk-up in a literal way that these psalms were written as they were walking to Jerusalem for one of the feasts.

So these are called the step songs or gradual songs, progression songs, the procession from Babylon songs, or the pilgrim festival songs. Some said that they might have been on the 15 steps of the temple, that they would have been sung.

A Levite would have stood on one of the stairs and sung it. But what seemed to be more commonly held would be that it was what they would sing as they were making their way back to the temple, which means that Jesus in Luke chapter number two, when it says that he was after the custom, you know, going to the temple, that very likely him and his family would have sung some of these psalms as they were headed there.

Or now as we've been in Luke, I said Luke two, but as we've been in Luke 22, where Jesus in Luke 21, where he would have been with his disciples, it's very likely he would have sung one of these songs as well, as he goes to the feast of the Passover in the spring or Pentecost in summer, or to the feast of Tabernacles, which takes place at fall.

And as you listen to this one, you can really see how it would be such an encouragement to people that are traveling and being ridiculed along the way and that they are seeing themselves as pilgrims.

[3 : 20] As I said, the song that was just sung is a good song for people who are pilgrims because we speak about this world as a place that we just say isn't enough for us, right? We readily admit that this world is not enough for us because we were made for the world to come.

We don't know who wrote these psalms. A few of them look like David, one of them possibly Solomon 127, but most of them are anonymous. And I just think that's pretty neat because the Bible, having been printed more than any song on a billboard has ever been sung, somebody, God used their gifting, inspired by him to write a song that has been sung and read more than any top 10 song ever, but they did it anonymously and God used them in that way.

I'm fascinated by that. Verse number one of the Song of Degrees, it says in this, it says, Am I distressed? I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me.

Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee and what shall be done unto thee, the thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper.

Woe is me that I sojourn in Masek that I dwell in the tents of Kadar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

[4 : 40] Let's start off with the last two verses here. This might be a good verse. I saw Catherine Rostelli as she was bringing in her boys. She could probably say this, raising little boys, I am for peace, but they are for war, right?

And this, or the verse before, My song has long dwelled with him that hateth peace. Peace, real honest peace, not a dysfunctional conflict avoidance, which we often have.

Conflict avoidance is not the same as peace, you know. It's hard to keep. Real peace is hard to keep. I was watching a documentary about people trying to survive up in the cold Alaska, and these two guys were working as a team, and he said, You brought to the team knowledge, but what I brought to the team was a patience to work with you.

And I thought, That's really good. You know, I need to start saying that to somebody. You know, like, You may be right, that's what you bring to the table, but what I bring to the table is a patience to work with you because you know everything, all right?

And maybe, I shouldn't have said that now, Stephanie's going to bring that up, all right? What she has brought to this marriage is I have brought a patience to working with you, a peace. The world wants it.

[5 : 57] They do. I mean, I'm just, I've shared with you, God gives me the opportunity on Wednesdays to sit with Stephanie's Uncle Ken as he's in the last possibly year of his life for whatever God has for him, but I just see something in him that I just, I just envy and love.

It's just a peace, you know, and I'm grateful for this time with him and he demonstrates he has something about him that is admirable and is there. And so, we all have this desire for peace along our journey.

That's what we want. None of us say, hop in the car and say, I really hope traffic is backed up in 400 and I lose my testimony today. I just hope that's what, I really hope that's what happens. None of us say that in the small areas of life or in the big areas of life.

What we hope for and desire is peace. My soul have dwelt with him that hateth peace and we know what it's like. And so, keeping peace is grouped with some other things. If you want to turn over to Hebrews 12, I'm going to show you a few verses, but it's got a list in Hebrews 12 of things that are difficult and pursuing or following pieces is one of those.

At the beginning of this chapter, it says, it talks about how it's very natural for a person to overestimate the severity of their trials. That's why our grandfathers told us they walked uphill both ways to school, right?

[7 : 11] That's how they remember it. That's how we all do. We always overestimate the difficulties and the Christians in Hebrews 3 were told, for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest he be wearied and faint in your minds.

When you're overestimating the severity of your trials and how difficult life is, we are told that we are to look unto Jesus who endured contradiction of sinners, that he was ascribed to him, sin, even though he was not a sinner.

We should look to him and if we don't, we become weary in fate and mind. Then in verse number 12 of that same passage, it talks about drooping hands and the strengthening weak knees when you're tired and discouraged.

Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. It talks about the challenge of this walk that we're in. Jeff, when people tell us enjoy it while you're young, we thought they were talking about our kids, but they were talking about our knees and our back and all those things, right?

And so, on this journey of weak knees and feebleness, then we have to verse 14, but follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. So, we're encouraged to renew our strength and to follow after peace and to pursue it.

[8 : 22] Jack Dawson entered a painting contest. I don't know much about painting, but I'd heard this story before and that you could show the picture, but they were commissioned to draw a picture of peace. And so, this man, he drew this picture and this is in the middle of a storm and water is coming over the edge of this cliff and right in the middle of it, the next picture will show it a little bit more, is this little bird that's sitting there in the midst of all that is going on.

And so, he won the contest for demonstrating what peace is, that it isn't the absence of problems around you, but it's found in a refuge, like with the bird that we would see there.

The psalmist, Psalm 84, the psalmist often describe a place that they want to be at. They talk about Psalm 84, 1 and 2, how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. My heart and my flesh, they cry out for the living God.

The psalms say that often. That's where they want to be. The psalmist often cries out for that place like where that bird was at that says, I gotta get back to it.

[9 : 37] And so, the pilgrims, those that are all over the land and scattered, when they would be headed back to Jerusalem, they would be singing songs that would sound like the song that Anna and Jordan and Abby sung tonight, which is to say, I long for something different than this.

Right? And we understand that. We understand that a song like that is not a mellow or a sad song, but it's one that's just based in reality that we're made for something, which is worship.

And we're made to worship Him and we will never feel at home outside of doing that. So, here are these pilgrims and they're traveling, they feel like they're in distress, they cry out to the Lord and they're gonna talk about the troubles that they have on the way, but they just long for the day where they're around people that just love peace, where they're around people that aren't for war, that just love the things of God.

Verse 7 said, I am for peace when I speak they are for war. I am for peace. Let's say this one together. Psalm 120, Verse 7, I am for peace, but when I speak they are for war.

You know, the people that I find that seem to like conflict the most are the ones who tell me, I really don't like conflict. All right? You notice that? People that say that the most are usually the ones that are finding conflict the most.

[10 : 52] None of us in here would say, I really like conflict, but are we being honest when we say that we are for peace? And I would like to now look at the rest of this portion of scripture here and we see kind of the description of a person when they say that I am for peace.

Because here in a moment I am going to pray this passage of scripture. I will make these words my words just like Ben told us. I am a duck even if I bark sometimes, right?

I am a duck and so these are my words. This is who I am in Christ. I am a person that is for peace. He has made peace in my heart and so that is who I truly am regardless of how many times I bark instead of quack like a duck.

That's really good Ben. We won't forget that. And that's who I am now in Christ Jesus. But here the psalmist says it and he's sincere and when we pray we should be sincere as well.

So what is it a person that says they are for peace? What is also true about them? Verse number one. Am I distressed? I cried unto the Lord and you heard me. A person that is truly for peace is a person that would be desired to be heard by the Lord.

[12 : 02] Though we not only pray to God in times of distress we certainly always ought to pray the hymn in times of distress. Some of the greatest testimonies that you've ever heard started with this.

All we could do is pray. What a wonderful starting point to something that God could do. And so the Lord often puts circumstances where only the things we can do is pray.

It allows things into our lives that bring us to a point where we would cry out the hymn. And so we look at the afflictions of the words. And so he's a person that desires to be heard of the Lord.

I cried out to the Lord and he heard me. That's a powerful statement. I told you earlier that sentence by that pastor it was theologically rich. There's so much being said there. Well none of it holds anything to the words of God but that ability that I will cry out to God and he will hear me that is the starting point of all truth.

Because there is no of all peace right? There's absolutely no peace in your life if you don't believe that the creator and the God of the universe hears you when you pray or that he will know you he's revealed himself.

[13 : 04] Then we're told what the problem is. It isn't a military conflict. You know if David's writing this you would think that there's all kinds of things that could be causing a lack of peace in the land but he's dealing with something that all of us deal with.

Deliver my soul verse 2 O Lord from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue. Deliver my soul from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue. So this is the particular trial that David is dealing with or the psalmist I should say is dealing with here is that lying lips and the deceitful tongue could have been so we're picturing people that are living in a place where they're pilgrims and strangers and they're the outcasts right now they're going home and they're going to the temple but they're living among people that don't appreciate their customs that don't appreciate their lifestyle they don't understand why do you need to take off work to go and do this thing or whatever the scenario is or as they're traveling through to this place don't know what the circumstances are but people are hurting them with lying lips and a deceitful tongue.

I've shared with you before how my mom used to tell me sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me and I would say but mom did you hear the words they say because it seems like that hurts and so then I learned sticks and stones may break my bones but they will also break theirs right but that was not the right answer she told me alright sticks and stones may break my bones but words should never they should never hurt me but they do and so these intense words of the enemy should lead us to earnest prayers our prayers should be earnest we would never say that Jesus was insincere in anything right most certainly we never would and so when you can't measure you can't say that he ever had a prayer that was insincere and then a prayer that was sincere but in Luke chapter number 22 verse 44 which we'll see on Sunday morning Lord willing he says and being in agony he prayed more earnestly and so we know we're not comparing bad and good in Jesus right but there is through conflict and through trials we can pray more earnestly which means that your prayers during good times when you're praying for tacos de biste con queso from the Mexican restaurant alright when you're praying for that that's a real prayer too alright it's just but there's an earnestness about the prayers that you have during these times of affliction that are coming to you which takes you to the Lord

I'm sure if you've ever spent any time in a Baptist church you've heard this sermon illustration alright we only have one book alright we have two books this one and one book of illustrations that are given to us but it's a story of a man who really loved a lady and he kept sending her letters four or five times a week he would write her a letter and then she wasn't responding to her so he wrote even more and now he's writing a letter to her every day and he sends letters to her over 700 letters to her and never gets a response but then he comes home and he goes to see her and she finds out that she had married the mailman because she had spent so much time seeing him right because those letters gave occasion you had to know this story right oh you did it almost stopped halfway through and just numbered them illustration 147 just you know laugh among yourselves and but that constantly coming to him gave this mailman the opportunity to see that person and I know that's comical but there's times in life where you don't have to set an alarm to remind yourself to pray you're just going there to the Lord all the time daily several times a day and that developing that relationship that isn't developed in times of where that conflict isn't there so Jesus is praying more earnestly cannot mean that he prayed without sincerity but he prayed we can pray more earnestly as we should commentary says this

Trapp says the stress added wings to our devotions our savior being in agony prayed more earnestly in Luke 22 44 so do all his members especially when they lie under the lash of a lying tongue as here and he would say heavenly father I don't thank you for the circumstances that bring us to this point but I'm thankful that that has caused me to be a person that is coming to you what Psalm 120 tells us by the way a testimony James 5:13 tells us an instruction there's a testimony here that says what James 5:13 says is any among you afflicted then let him pray is any merry let him sing songs if you're afflicted then you need to pray and so you can thank God for the afflictions that have led you to prayer and so a battle that we're all going to face all throughout scriptures we're told those that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution Jesus tells us in Luke 21 that for his namesake we will suffer and Jude we're told to earnestly contend for the faith and Matthew we see

[17 : 51] Jesus rebuking sinful religious leaders Paul even rebukes a fellow brother Peter in Galatians chapter number two Peter rebukes Simon the sorcerer John has to confront the atrophies in third John there will be conflict and that cannot be avoided in James we talk about this warring inside of us even the lust that war in our members and for not yielding the sin there could be a conflict that is there there's envy and strife and confusion and every evil work it tells us where it's going to come from that every time that there's conflict confusion at the root of it is going to be somebody wrestling with sin and pride most often times it's two people wrestling with sin and pride and we understand that as long as the process of sanctification is not finished in my life I'm going to wrestle with things which means those in my life are going to have to deal with conflict because of that and the same thing is true in their lives as well but we can have confidence that God's word is true so sometimes it's as if you're being the enemy is coming from the outside as the pilgrims would be making their way sometimes it would be an internal fight sometimes it can be those close to you let's look at verses 3 and 4 where he tells us to have confidence in God's judgments what shall be given unto thee and what shall be done unto thee thou false tongue sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper that fourth verse there sharp arrows of the mighty

I misread this I applied it to the words that were being said to them when people were speaking about them his tongue may shoot arrows that hurt but God's arrows or judgment are coming are going to be much greater I believe that verse number 4 applies to the words of our Lord the ones that will vindicate God's coals are hotter and God's arrows are sharper than those who afflict God's people with the sins of their tongue little study I found that a broom tree is about 12 feet in height that would make quite the broom wouldn't it and it's known for how exceptionally hard the wood is which produces extremely hard charcoal so it's speaking about a fire that is hotter than normal and it speaks about the arrows and so God's word will one day be the answer to all the words that have come against this his truth is greater than anything that the enemy would ever say to you and that's what we should remember it's a comparison here God's words should be louder in your life than the words of the enemy because they will last for all eternity and they're stronger and they're more powerful and so when we're looking and all we see is the attack that's here and the negative we can be reminded that our father has the last word and the eternal word and his words and arrows are stronger than all of them and so then we get some references to two different cities

Messick and Qadar and I find that they are too far away for a person to be a resident of both of them this isn't alphabet and coming but it's a place in the north and a place in the south and it's representing places that pilgrims would be coming from maybe they're coming from Detroit and New York City and that is to say that we're citizens of another place that these people have come they sojourn in Messick and they dwell in the tents of Qadar as that you're leaving this place and you're sojourning through it that we are pilgrims as you know as I've shared with you before the funeral for my father was on the morning I graduated high school and I gave the speech that night I can't believe I gave the I don't believe I was valedictorian if there's any place I would have been in a small school in Kentucky but for some reason I was giving a speech that night I don't remember anything that I said that night except for these words which were given to me through music which was the world is not my home

I'm just passing through my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue the angels beckoned me from heaven's open door I can't feel at home in this world anymore because music helps take something into the heart that even when you're forgetting everything it's still there for you and I just that brought comfort to me that Murray Kentucky wasn't my final destination Alpharetta's not my final destination but I'm just the person that's passing through I'm sojourning I'm sojourning through Alpharetta I'm sojourning into this world and the Bible would tell us that that's what makes us different than the world that we are in that we are salt and we are light one of the men in the church I want to embarrass him was sharing testimony how they said I don't have any problem sharing an invitation to Easter because they have no invitation sharing an invitation to sin with me right some of his co-workers are just pretty blatant about what they do and they'll say whatever they want and do whatever they want and he said if they're just going to say whatever they want and they're going to talk however they want then I'm going to have no shame in talking about the things that I care about because that person is a duck all right that person is been changed and somebody who goes back and listen to the sermon in the future going to wonder what kind of heresy

I've created about ducks in here all right if you're watching online you need to watch all of it all right and not just part of it and so what a great testimony be are the salt of the earth you are the light of the world Tinsley my daughter was wanting to make a shirt and to raise and so I had a conversation with her it's like but it's not an imperative we're not told we are the light he made us the light all right we're told to you are the light of the world all right you are the salt of the earth you're telling somebody to be the light you're telling them to be born again because they're not all right and she's like dad it's just a cute shirt would you leave me alone and probably what will happen all right i'll probably be wearing one next week and but we're just talking about the difference and she understood that and same for you as well we are the light of the world and that's what talks about hiding it you know we're not flipping it on and flipping it off you are the light of the world we are distinct we're different and that's what verse seven i'm going to end here and we'll sing a song as we end the night but just the contrast between us and our community i am for peace but when i speak they are for war a contrast between who we are made salt and light and the world in which we live in he sought to speak words of peace and goodness but the response was the hostile characteristics of those who are for war we're told if it possible as much life in you live peaceably with all men but we have to live true to who we are in christ i like to speak about the community in positive terms i like for us to be involved in it and to serve and and do the different things that we do as a church but it's very clear that when you've been made new again that you are made for a different world than the one that we are currently in and it's becoming more and more evident to us every day and we just feel weary don't you don't you feel weary don't you feel like you're sometimes the only people that sometimes are that care for peace but then sometimes you find that they are that the world is we are becoming more like them than we are living up to our duckiness all right last time

[25 : 09] I was saying that all right living up to who we truly have been made the beam in Christ end with this quote by McLaren no correlation to the to the car to the commentator McLaren it says so the psalm ends as with a long drawn sigh it inverts the usual order of similar psalms in which the description of need is want to proceed the prayer for deliverance this is the part that I like so much it thus sets forth most pathetically the sense of discordance between a man and his environment which urges the soul that feels it to seek a better home so this is a true pilgrim psalm it urges the soul to seek for a better home I'm thankful that we're sojourning through this place I'm thankful that that pastor that lost the daughter knows this is not his ultimate destination and that in the resurrection that he will be united with her and that in heaven instantly when he goes there and so we should long for true peace in our lives it should be said of us that we are blessed are the peacemakers and we should long for it we should sing about it and just like the people in this psalm as they were headed to Jerusalem and saying

I'm just passing through this area I want to get back to that amiable place I want to get back to that place of worship that's how we should enter into this place as we're people gathering together we ought to long for it right you've had a long week and I know you do it's Thursday many things that you could have done but you're here because of a longing that was placed inside of you that says I want to get around God's people I want to be around people that desire peace I want to be people that sing songs about Zion I want to be with people that sing about God it's such a wonderful thing that he answers that longing here for us through our times of worship let us pray together and then afterwards we will sing a couple verses before we leave I'm going if you'd like to follow along I'll read and I'm going to pray through our passage together Heavenly Father Lord we come to you tonight and as we do Lord we come into your presence that none of us would ever be able to afford an audience with you Father however through the blood of

Christ you say that we can not only come but we come boldly and so Lord I know that I am being heard Father that's a sobering thought I've been heard by a handful of people in a room tonight but far beyond that I have been heard by you and that you hear me and you hear me when I'm in distress and I cry out to you and I take great comfort in knowing that you are a God who cares Father I pray that you would deliver us from the words of deceitful people that would lie against us Father sometimes we are the people that lie against us we are the people that buy the lies no matter how the lies fashioned Lord it comes from the mouth of a person or if it's advertised to us Lord through media or if it's said to us Lord in any other way however come Lord and that you deliver us from it Lord what should be given unto us but it shall be done Lord with false tongue we know that you have sharp arrows and that you are mighty and you're mightier than all of it we put our trust in you we hide in your refuge

Lord that is here Lord we are people that are just sojourning through this land this is not where we belong and so Lord our souls we long to dwell in a place where there is complete peace Lord we long to dwell in your refuge Father may it be true of us Father I say may it be true of me that when I say that I am for peace and that I'm not for war that there will be a quietness and a silence Lord in my heart because I do not need any things from this world that I look to you as my shepherd and I should not want so that I don't live a life desperate for attention I don't live a life desperate for anything but there's just a peace there where I don't have to be right because you have made me a righteous in your son where I don't have to have the last word because you will have the last word where make us people that love and promote peace in Jesus name I pray amen