

Psalm 120

Longing for the World of Well-Used Mouths

Tuesday, October 22, 2024 • Read Psalm 120

Questions from the Scripture text: What is this Psalm called (superscript)? What had been the psalmist's condition (v1)? What did he do? To Whom? And what did YHWH do? From what is the psalmist now asking deliverance (v2)? What has he concluded/discovered that liars deserve (v3-4)? Where has this distress come upon him (which is a further part of the distress, v5-6a)? What are the people there like (v6b, 7b)? As opposed to whom (v7a)?

What does slander do? Psalm 120 looks forward to opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **slander hurts brethren and provokes God's wrath**.

This is the first of the songs of ascent, which Israel would sing as they approached Jerusalem for feast. It starts far away, but ends in the worship of the congregation of God's people at the temple (Ps 133-134).

Past performance is indicative of future results, v1. Why is to YHWH that the psalmist now resorts? Among other things, it is because YHWH has heard his prayers before. We should learn to be strengthened to make present prayer by the Lord's answering of past prayer. And, knowing that we shall need encouragement in prayer in the future, let us pray much in the present, so that the Lord's answers may strengthen us unto that future praying.

The present crisis: the false tongue, v2-4. The psalmist is now, again, asking for deliverance. This time, it is from some distress brought about by someone's slandering him. For emphasis, he describes this three different ways ("lying lips," "deceitful tongue," "false tongue"). What harm we can do to others with our words! Death ("mighty sharp arrows") and hell ("coals of the broom tree," cf. Rev 21:8) are what all liars have to look forward to (v4).

What slander does, v5-7. Without knowing more about the context, it is difficult to determine whether the psalmist was actually at some intersection of Japhethites (v5a, cf. Gen 10:2) and Ishmaelites (v5b, cf. Gen 25:13). Either such foreigners are displaying the fruit of their unbelief, or this is a way for him to talk about Israelites whose conduct has made the godly as a stranger even among the covenant people. For, they are not reciprocating his love of peace and peacemaking (cf. Mt 5:9), but rather they indulge enmity (v6-7). But the psalmist continues to be for peace (v7a), which he is enabled to be by leaving vengeance to God by prayer. Let us not act as enemies to God or brother, but guard our lips and hearts for peace.

About/with whom do you need to guard your tongue more? Toward whom do you need grace to incline you to peace?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You and praise You who hear prayer. Deliver us from every trouble! Grant that our lips would be used in Your worship to praise you, and then in other circumstances to do good to the brethren. We thank You that we may leave all vengeance to You by prayer, so that we can seek peace with our lips. Now be praised by these same lips we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP120 "I Cried in Trouble to the LORD" or TPH464 "The Beatitudes"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 120. These are the words of God. A song of a sense in my distress. I cried to Yahweh. And he heard me deliver my soul o. Yahweh from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given to you or what shall be done to you. You false tongue. Sharp arrows of the warrior with coals of the broom tree. Whoa, is me that I dwell in Meshach That I dwell among the tents of Qdar. My soul has dwelt too long. With one who hates peace.

I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war. So far. The reading of God's inspired and And they're interrupt. This is the first of the song of ascents, which moved to their climax in Psalm 134. You can probably remember, Psalm 133 is the psalm of Christian Unity behold how good a thing it is.

And especially The Fellowship of Believers gathered with one mind under their high priests. So the idea is that the Believers have come together in the great feast or one of the three great feasts at the time of David. Or later. Or earlier, of course, back to Moses but especially When David establishes Jerusalem, as the central place, where God puts his name, puts his worship, And eventually Solomon builds the temple there and these songs of ascent then would be sung as they went up to Jerusalem because the geographical elevation was higher and you would go up.

To worship God. And that's why, you know, they're called songs of ascent. And so you'd have the climax. In one of these great feasts, these three times a year. The people of God would go up to Jerusalem. We, of course, Ascend not just to Jerusalem, but to heaven, and not just three times a year, but every Lord's day and not just with Aaron and oil dripping down.

The head or beard, or of whoever is the high priest du jour since the last one died and until this one dies, but we have a great high priest who is risen and descended and seated in glory and who shall never die, and his priesthood continues forever. And he is Anointed with the oil of gladness above all of his companions.

The scripture says of our Lord Jesus, And these songs of ascent, go there 133 and then 134 is that song for the evening service. A special song that God put in his word for the evening, service in the Holy assembly of his people, bless the Lord, you Servants of the Lord, you Minister by night.

The house of the Lord. bless Yahweh, Ministers of Yahweh minister by night in the House of Yahweh. And the Lord bless you. Yahweh bless you from Zion. He who made the heavens and the Earth. So that's where these songs of the scent are going. But this song of Ascent begins.

maybe among God's people. Dwelling in meshech or the tents of Qdar. Kind of a strange combination in verse 5 meshech was the son of japheth Kadar was a son of Ishmael. And we don't really. no if there was ever a kind of mixture of japhethites and Ishmaelites.

Somewhere. So maybe the psalmist, whichever psalmist. This was perhaps David. Himself. We know that there are Psalms that don't have David's name in the superscript that the New Testament tells us David wrote and many of them have a Dvitic sort of style. So maybe it's talking about David. And he's talking about two different occasions, one where he was off with japhethites and one where he was off with Ishmaelites.

Difficulty there. Becomes that most of the time that he was running. We see him. not with japheth Heights or ishmaelites, but among the Philistines Or just running around in the Hills and caves. Of the Hill Country. And, you know, perhaps some other Prophet of the Lord that the Lord is using to give this to us.

Spent time in both places, it may however be That the sins that this Psalm addresses, Our sins that you simply shouldn't experience. Among the people of God. That when you are encountering lying lips. And deceitful, tongues and false tongues. And, people who are hostile in their hearts. They hate peace.

And they are storing up war in their hearts. That's something you shouldn't find Among the people of God, the Church of God under the priesthood of God's priest in the Gathering of his assembly. And so, the farthest that you can get From being in that Psalm 133. Brothers dwelling together in unity under the priesthood that God provides isn't a geography distance.

Meshech, or qadar. But that the geography here is saying that the farthest that you can get from that brotherly dwelling in unity. Is actually a character and conduct. The way people treat one another. Difference. And so he may be experiencing Japheth like Ishmael like meshech, like kedar like Attack slander gossip.

Even among the people. Of God. So I think as much as we can say about the occasion, Of this Psalm certainly it is dealing with being slandered about and being gossiped about and notice The psalmist turns himself to the Lord. How does he know to turn himself to the Lord?

First of all, the Bible tells you that you ought to turn to the Lord in all things. But in addition to that, he's turned to the Lord before. And the Lord has heard him before. Look, it's verse 1 in my distress. I cried to Yahweh and he heard me deliver my soul o.

Yahweh From lying lips. So there's some past distress. That he has prayed to the Lord and and the Lord. Come near him and helped him. Apparently even. Maybe brought him out of the situation. Doesn't say that the Lord brought him out of that situation. If you look at verse one carefully, it just says he heard me.

Many times in the Psalms we have examples of crying out to the Lord. And the psalmist is in distress at the beginning of the psalm and he cries out to God. And by the end of the psalm, he's overwhelmed with the greatness and the goodness of the character of his God and with the glory of his God, and with his faithfulness.

And just crying out to the Lord, and being heard by the Lord in prayer and being helped by the Lord in prayer. Has been enough to help him, and Even without the situation, changing the, you know many of these Psalms end with Thanksgiving and rejoicing and and comfort. so that He heard me is true even in the midst of the prayer.

So it doesn't necessarily say here that the Lord got him out of the situation in the past but Now, he knows not just from what the Bible teaches us about God, and what you can see about God and the creation as well. But he knows from his own past experience in God's Providence.

He knows from his own past experience in prayer. That when you are in distress, you cry out to the Lord. And the Lord hears. And so now he's in a new distress. What is this new distress? That he is in. You see that in verses two through four. It's this lying lips deceitful tongue.

False tongue. And as he cries out to the Lord, and of course, there are three sets of lips here. One of them isn't really a set of lips. God has no lips. but he has given us lips to learn and know something about how he communicates himself to us, and that he's always truthful, and that his word is always good.

And of course, he has given us lips and the psalmist is using his lips. His tongued to call upon the Lord. The first purpose of our mouths isn't even to speak truly and helpfully and kindly to one another. The first purpose of our mouths is the worship of God and praise of God, part of which is praying to God.

And so you have the god of faithful words and you have the saint the believer? Of who's using his tongue correctly. But then you realize that there are those when I have been gossiped about when I have been slandered about here, is one made in the image of God made for the worship of God.

Who is misusing his mouth? And this is actually a great help. To the psalmist, even as he prays. Because as he cries out to God, to be delivered. From this liar. This slanderer this gossip deliver my solo Yahweh. He starts asking before God what shall be given or done to you you false tongue?

And he remembers. If this one has been created. By God for God's worship. With his mouth. And if this one has been created by God to image God in how he uses his mouth, how he uses his words. Then this one. Shall surely be judged condemned. Punished by God, not just with death.

But with wrath, And you have the idea of death in the first part. Of verse 4, sharp arrows of the warrior. Sharp Almighty. Arrows or powerful. errors, arrows, first part of verse four. And of course these sharp arrows are a Word picture for the sureness and the swiftness and the effectiveness of God killing The one who has these lying lips, deceitful tongue, false tongue, but it's not just death that God

Ordained and with which God will respond. To those who are sinful with their mouth. it's also And second part to verse 4, with coals of the broom tree. A tree whose wood burned. It was very dense and the wood would burn. Especially. Especially hot and especially long very intense fire.

The again this is a word picture. For the wrath of God, the fury of God. Hell itself which God describes sometimes as flame that shall not be quenched and other times as a lake of fire and other times as fire and brimstone like that which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah and here in this word picture the wrath of God as coals of the broom tree and this is comforting You're crying out to God and you're remembering that we are not to avenge ourselves.

Do not Revenge yourself upon others. God says. Leave room for the wrath of God for. He says vengeance is mine. I will repay says the Lord, so it's helpful in that way. But it's also a reminder to us of the danger of misusing our own tongue. How?

Much God, hates. The misuse of the tongue and how he opposes it with death, and he opposes the misuse of the tongue, with his Fury with hell, and would we want to gossip about one? Speak out of turn about someone. Speak deceitfully lie about them. Exaggerate things or twist them to accomplish our purposes?

Would we use our tongue in that way when God hates it, when God will kill for it? When God will pour out fire forever for such a thing. Literally God forbid. That we would use our mouths or our tongues that way and so I hope that you will be very careful in how you use your mouths with one another and about one another.

And with, and about, Others in the church or others at all that you will consider your mouth, your tongue, your lips made, especially for the worship of God, then not just use them. Well, when we are worshipping God, but remembering what the Book of James says about the one whose mouth is made for the praise of God better not use it.

To attack to curse. His. Hhere. The present crisis of the deceitful tongue. And of course we've already mentioned then that in his present crisis, he realizes how far away he is. From being gathered with the people of God, in the way that the people of God should conduct himself, and he Longs to be delivered from that condition.

Woe is me that I dwell in meshech that I dwell among the tents of qadar. My soul has dwelt too long. With one who hates peace. We were created to be part of a Humanity that Praises God and loves one another well, And thanks be to God for his grace in the Lord Jesus.

We have been redeemed. To be a part of a Humanity. That worships God rightly and loves one another well. And this was one of the things that They were supposed to be. Experiencing when the people gathered for feast. And one of the things we should be experiencing when we Are gathered with his people in the Lord's day.

But ultimately this Gathering is in glory. And not just the souls of the just made perfect although we will enter that sinless assembly there and there will be peace. There, there won't be anyone. There who hates peace. There won't be anyone there who if you were to speak to them, they are for war.

But this is especially looking forward to the last day. When the sharp arrows of the warrior have been shot and the coals of the broom tree have been kindled and the wicked are put away. And even all of our sin is gone and in a new heavens and a new Earth forever, we dwell in peace and speak in, praise to God.

And in true, peace with one another And that is what this almost is longing for. As he cries out to the Lord. He cried out to the Lord before in distress and Yahweh heard him. And now he's crying out again. Deliver my soul o. Yahweh from lying lips. And one day, we will be delivered both from our last lie.

And from every last lie of anyone, no one will be permitted to lie or slander or gossip about us again. And we will no longer be in danger of doing that about anyone again. When we have come into the final worship assembly, the final Gathering of God's people forever.

And so this Psalm looks forward to that and it gives us something. To pray and to sing, and to cry out. As we look forward. to that, especially When we find ourselves in situations. Where this has been done. About us. It gives us something that we can sing unto God.

Pray unto God. To respond rightly. To such a circumstance. So, let's pray to God now and ask For his help to make good application of it. Our Father in Heaven. We pray that you would have pity on us that you'd have compassion on us. For, we are still in the age.

And the place of gossiping and deception and manipulation. And we are in danger of using our mouths like this, And we pray that you would keep us from using our mouths, like this, And we often Lord are wounded. By one or another. Who uses his or her mouth like this about us?

And so we cry out to you. That you would deliver our soul. We do pray that you would help us and help others. So that those mouths that were created for your worship and our edifying, one another would be used the way that they were created to be used.

And That they were redeemed to be used. And recommit our hearts to you, and we pray that you would finish your work in gathering all your Saints and bring us at last into that Everlasting assembly. Your people. Who worship you, right? And to treat one another right in every way.

And especially with our mouths. So help us, Lord we ask by your spirit in Jesus name. Amen.