

Psalm 120
A Sheep Among Wolves
The Difficulty of Worshiping God Amidst Opposition

Introduction:

This psalm is in the fifth book of Psalms (107-150), which focuses on the *Conquest of the Future Davidic King*. James Hamilton outlines this book as follows:

 Psalms 107–112, Davidic King

 Psalms 113–118, Hallelujah

 Psalm 119, Torah

Psalms 120–137, Let Him Go Up

 Psalms 138–145, Davidic King

 Psalms 146–150, Final Hallel

Hamilton identifies this psalm (the first in *The Songs of Ascent*; Pss. 120-134) as *Exilic Distress*.

Allan Harman points out that the fifteen psalms in this collection seem to be divided into two sections of seven psalms each, with Psalm 127 (attributed to Solomon) forming the central pivot. Each of the two groups contains God's name 24x.

It was Charles Spurgeon who wrote: a lie can go around the world while truth is putting its boots on.

Superscription: *A Song of Ascents.*

Probably referring to a combination of the ideas of ascending the steps in the temple, ascending to Jerusalem, and/or returning from Exile in Babylon.

1) Trusting Yahweh for deliverance—120:1-4

- a) Gratitude for previous positive answers to prayer—120:1 ¹ *In my distress (narrow place) I called to Yahweh (emphatic), and He answered me.*
 - i) This aligns with Ps. 119:169-176.
 - ii) This positively answered prayer breeds confidence to pray again.
- b) Current prayer for justice in general—120:2 ² *O Yahweh, deliver my soul from a lying lip, from a deceitful tongue.*
 - i) Perhaps Sanballat and Tobiah in Nehemiah 4 & 6.
 - ii) He was the object of false and hurtful statements. This was his distress (cf. 120:1). A time of personal attack and soul agony.

- iii) As Spurgeon points out: Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword.
- c) Yahweh's justice demonstrated in a specific situation—120:3-4
 - i) An oath for a specific liar is in mind: ³ *What shall He give to you, and what shall He add to you, O deceitful tongue?*—120:3
 - Reflects Prov. 20:22 & Rom. 12:19
 - ii) Two-fold justice from Yahweh—120:4 (answers the question of v. 3)
 - (1) **Skillful, severe** justice: ⁴ *Sharp arrows of the warrior,*
 - (2) **Enduring, intense** justice: *with the burning coals of the broom tree.*
 - (a) Broom tree (hardwood) root coals were known to stay hot for a long time.
 - (3) The combination of these two things may indicate the desire for complete victory over one's enemies and the burning of the garbage left behind.

2) The reality of suffering abuse—120:5-7

- a) **Desperation and misery:** ⁵ *Woe is me,*
 - i) To the **north by the Black Sea, close to modern Ukraine:** *for I sojourn in Meshech,*
 - (1) Descendants of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). Considered to be savage and uncivilized people.
 - (2) Hostile to the things of God even in the future under the authority of Gog or Magog. (Ezek. 38-39)
 - (3) They will be destroyed at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. (Rev. 20:7-10)
 - ii) To the **east-southeast in the Arabian Desert, modern Saudi Arabia:** *for I dwell among the tents of Kedar!*
 - (1) Descendants of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13). Considered to be cruel and merciless.
 - (2) Modern Muslim genealogists trace Mohammed's descent from Ishmael through Kedar.
 - (3) In the future, there will be believers from Kedar who will praise Yahweh. (Is. 42:11-12)
 - iii) An illustration of hostile locations far apart from each other.
- b) **Desire for peace:**
 - i) Present circumstances: ⁶ *Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace [shalom].*
 - ii) Desire for peace: ⁷ *I am for peace [shalom] (lit. "I, peace"), but when I speak, they are for war.*

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Pastor Spurgeon (no stranger to being slandered) wrote: It is better to be the victim of slander than to be the author of it.
- b) Believers will sometimes have to patiently endure those who refuse to be at peace with them.
- c) Walter Kaiser reminds us: All of us have been victims of such misrepresentation. We tend to cower when attacked with lies. We are often left dispirited and feeling as if we have been ineffective and useless in what we have attempted to do.
 - i) Don't let the lie of the enemy be what defines you.
- d) Warren Wiersbe wrote: After over fifty years of ministry, I am convinced that most of the problems in families and churches are caused by professed Christians who do not have a real and vital relationship to Jesus Christ.