



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Week One: Rise -

Psalms 120-122

1. This week we began a new sermon series on the Psalms of Ascent. The Psalms of Ascents is a title given to fifteen of the Psalms, 120–134 each starting with a superscription that means “Song of Ascents”.

Many scholars believe the title indicates that these psalms were sung by worshippers as they ascended the road to Jerusalem to attend Jewish religious festivals on the Temple Mount. This week, we focused on Psalms 120-122. Psalm 122 is a good example of a song you would sing when traveling to Jerusalem.

Psalm 122 A song of ascents. Of David. ¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”² Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem. ³ Jerusalem is a well built city. ⁴ That is where the tribes go up — the tribes of the Lord — to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel. ⁵ There stand the thrones for judgment the thrones of the house of David. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. ⁷ May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” ⁸ For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.” ⁹ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

What stands out to you from this Psalm? What do you think it would be like walking with thousands of other people traveling to Jerusalem and singing this song as you enter the gates of the city? What emotions and feelings might you have?

2. One of the great reminders in these “traveling” psalms is that life and faith are best understood as a journey — a journey that is progressing toward a destination. Our faith and our lives should never be stagnant or stuck. For those who follow Christ, we have been commanded to grow in our relationship with him and eventually become mature in our faith. There should always be forward movement.

What is the advantage in seeing life and faith as a journey? Are you growing and maturing, or do you feel sluggish and stuck?

3. One of the themes of the Psalms and especially the Psalms of Ascent is our need for peace and well-being. Consider this section of **Psalm 120:6 "I am tired of living among people who hate peace. ⁷ I search for peace; but when I speak of peace, they want war!"** Those who follow Christ are called to peace, but many in our world don't want peace, they want to stir up division and anger. The media and many social media feeds are full of divisive anger and an appeal to fear. Do you connect with these words of Psalm 120:6... you want peace but the world around you (including even your own hectic schedule) produces everything but peace? How important is inner peace in your life? What tangible steps do you need to commit to have more peace?

4. Psalm 121 reminds us where REAL peace comes from.

Psalm 121 A song of ascents. ¹ "I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The Lord watches over you - the Lord is your shade at your right hand; ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; ⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

What immediately catches your eye from this Psalm?

Consider Psalm 119:165, Isaiah 32:16-17, John 14:27 as you think about the source of real inner peace.

One commentator noted "Psalm 121 provides strong words of assurance that if one fixes their eyes squarely on the source of their help, then the Lord will watch over and protect them." The word watches is used five times, emphasizing that God is with us watching over our lives. Is it difficult for you to remember that God is present with you throughout all the moments of your day? How might it impact your faith journey to remember that God is with you no matter where you go or what you do?

5. One of the great lessons we can take from Psalm 120 is what to do when we feel distress in our lives. All of us, in this life, experience stress, distress, and suffering. Tell the story of a time in your life that was deeply distressing.

Psalm 120 provides instruction for what we should do when we are distressed. **"I call on the Lord in my distress, and he answers me.** I believe this verse gives us the answer to how we access God's peace even when we're deeply struggling. This verse calls us to pour out our heart before Him. I find that many of who are in Christ seem reluctant to pour out their heart to God, giving to Him their deepest sorrows and hurts. They often seek every other solution possible before bringing it to God. Do you find a reluctance within yourself to bring to God your distress and sorrow? Where do you believe this tendency comes from?

Notice Psalm 120:1 is written in the present tense. The takeaway for us is that we should be continually calling on the Lord with any distress that we have, knowing that He will answer us. What parallels do you see in this famous New Testament passage? **Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**