

Songs of Ascents (Tracks 4, 5, 6) Psalms 123, 124, 125

Main Idea: These three Songs of Ascents express various desires of the community of faith, helping us to express our pleas and praise to God together.

- I. The Pilgrims' Longing Look (Psalm 123)**
 - A. The Problem: Enduring Contempt (123:3b-4)
 - B. The Solution: Looking in the Right Direction (123:1-3)
 - i. Let's lift your eyes to the Majestic One (1)
 - ii. Let's look to the hand of the Merciful One (2-3)
- II. The Pilgrims' Empowering History (Psalm 124)**
 - A. Marvel at What God Has Done (124:1-5)
 - B. Praise God for What He Has Done (124:6-7)
 - C. Apply What God Has Done (124:8)
- III. The Pilgrims' God-Centered Confidence (Psalm 125)**
 - A. Those who trust in the Lord know His stability (125:1)
 - B. Those who trust in the Lord know His security (125:2-3)
 - C. Those who trust in the Lord know His goodness (125:4)
 - D. Those who trust in the Lord know His holiness (125:5)

One finds practically every human emotion in the book of Psalms – highs and lows, joys and sorrows, laments and celebrations, and more. We find both individual and communal emotions. John Calvin called the Psalms “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul” (*Psalms*, xxxvii). That’s a terrific description. He continues, “[T]he Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated” (Ibid). Saints love the Psalms because they can identify with these various emotions.

Sometimes we don’t know how or what to pray in particular seasons of life. But the Psalms help us. They give voice to our deep cries. We shouldn’t read the Psalms merely to study doctrine. The Psalms are poems/songs. They help us express our hearts to God. In the words of Eugene Peterson, paraphrasing Athanasius, “Most of Scripture speaks *to us*; the Psalms speak *for us*” (Peterson, in *Working the Angles*, 55). What a gift this book is to us, helping us cry out to God.

In Psalms 123-125, we find various pleas, with an emphasis on the community of faith. Psalm 123 is mainly a *community lament* (verse 1 begins with a individual lament but moves to a communal prayer in verses 2-4). Psalm 124 is a *communal thanksgiving song*. Psalm 125 is a *communal psalm of confidence* (Van Gemeren, 787, though some call 125 a *communal lament*). Here, then, we’re reminded of the importance of the *community*. As believers in Jesus, we should lament *together*, give thanks *together*, and express our *confidence* in the Lord together. Let’s learn from our pilgrim family about looking to God for mercy, about the need to remember what God has done, and about resting in the Lord’s protection.

The Pilgrims' Longing Look (Psalm 123)

The Psalm begins with an anonymous individual expressing his personal dependence on God (123:1), before shifting to plural, expressing a corporate dependence on God (2-4). The shift from

of “I” to “we” may indicate that a king or a leader, such as Nehemiah or a worship leader like a Levite, could have originally written this psalm (Goldingay, 470). It also fits various times of Israel’s history, such as the of Hezekiah’s reign (Ibid.). Regardless, it’s clearly a prayer of the community of faith.

Because we aren’t given specifics concerning the context, we can easily apply it. We’re not told about the context of this scorn and contempt (123:3-4), which creates the lament. We don’t know when it happened, or how it happened. Contempt may have been coming from unfaithful Israel or unbelieving Gentiles, or a combination of both. All we know is that this pilgrim, and his fellow pilgrims, are suffering contempt and are in need of mercy. Christians can identify with this struggle.

The Psalmists solution is actually stated in verse 1, and the problem isn’t mentioned until to the end of the Psalm (3b-4). So let’s begin with the problem first, and then consider the solution in 1-3a, in order to better understand and identify with the community’s prayer.

The Problem: Enduring Contempt (123:3b-4). Throughout history, God’s people have been the object of contempt, oppression and persecution. The Psalmist is weary of this experience, and so he writes:

Show us favor, LORD, show us favor,
for we’ve had *more than enough contempt*.
We’ve had *more than enough*
scorn from the arrogant
and *contempt* from the proud. (123:3-4, my emphasis)

You can feel the Psalmists’ frustration. Twice we read of “contempt,” and once “scorn.”

Contempt is anger directed at a person you feel is at a lower status. It involves disrespect. It usually includes cutting words (eg., condescending words, name-calling, damaging words, etc.) that can break a person’s spirit. It could involve an attitude of disgust, or an attitude of cool dismissal to go along with those words. Jesus had strong words about those who have contempt for their neighbor, ranking it as “more murderous than anger” (Kidner, 435-36; Matt 5:22).

To be looked on with contempt means to be the object of ridicule, to become a laughingstock. Rebyurn and Bratcher comment, “Treated with contempt” may be rendered sometimes as “treated us as if we were nothing” or “treated us as if we were not people” (*Psalms*, 1060). Eugene Peter translates these verses even more descriptively:

Mercy, God, mercy!
We’ve been kicked around long enough,
Kicked in the teeth by complacent rich men,
kicked when we’re down by arrogant brutes. (123:3-4)

Indeed, throughout history, God’s people have been kicked around, ridiculed, disrespected, mocked, and treated as nothing by proud and powerful oppressors.

In the New Testament, we find many texts that highlight the reality of such opposition. In the early chapters of Acts, the church faced intimidation (4:1-4), threats (4:17-22), physical suffering (Acts 5:40), and eventually martyrdom (7:54-60). How did they endure it? They endured with prayer (Acts 4:29-31), and remarkably, *with Spirit-enabled joy*. Luke writes, “Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name” (5:41, my emphasis). Later, Peter told the saints not to be “surprised” by “insults” and “sufferings,” but to rejoice in the opportunity share in Christ’s sufferings, to glorify

God, to take the long view, and to entrust one's life to God during the trial (1 Pet 5:12-19). Of course, Jesus told the church that if the world hated him they would also hate His people (Jn 15:18-25).

Ridicule and expressions of contempt for God's people are present today. It stems from pride, as this text indicates (Ps 123:4). Let me mention three groups of arrogant people who may dislike you, mock you, speak condescendingly to you, and/or persecute you.

For starters, the "intellectually superior" ridicules the church for our view on certain issues, like marriage. This attitude is manifested in the media and in universities daily. They see the church as primitive, uncultured, and naive. Consequently, they often dismiss the Christian's point of view without serious consideration. They may mock believers, or in some places, physically assault them.

Next, if not from the "intellectually superior," contempt may come from the "immorally comfortable." Many are at ease in their ungodly lifestyle (123:4) and hate the idea of a moral standard, and so they mock Christians for presenting one. Often, students in middle school and high school are mocked for not going along with the crowd, for being unwilling to cave into the pressure of doing ungodly things. Later in life, adults who don't want to be confronted for their rebellion will reject the counsel of caring Christians because they prefer to stay in their sin. When pressed, they may speak disrespectfully and show aggression toward the believer.

A final group that comes to mind last involves the "spiritually hostile" crowd. For various reasons, many people hate the gospel and Christians. In rage, they slander, assault and kill believers. They may be hostile for some of the previous reasons just mentioned; they may be hostile because they're convicted by their own need for Christ; they may be hostile because they're under the attack of the evil one; and/or they may be hostile because they embrace a different god, or believe in no god at all. The fact is many would like to wipe the Christian religion off the face of the earth.

So *let's not be surprised* when we aren't part of the majority culture. God's people have faced the assault of unbelievers for years.

Further, *let's must not be intimidated* by the culture's attitude toward Christians. While we should live with respect and gentleness before a watching world, we must not shirk back from engaging the world boldly. The author of Hebrews exhorted the saints: "Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp *and bear the reproach he endured*. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek that city that is to come" (Heb 13:13-14, ESV, my emphasis). Jesus is outside the camp; the mission is outside the camp. Engage! Remember, we aren't home on this earth. We're headed to another city. Until we arrive, we will face opposition. That's the normal Christian life.

The Solution: Looking in the Right Direction (123:1-3a). How do we endure contempt and persecution? The Psalmist gives us the solution: "I lift my eyes to You, the One enthroned in heaven" (123:1). Notice the emphasis, "to You." The solution involves looking to the LORD! In Psalm 121, the Psalmist essentially did the same thing. He started with the hills, but continued lifting his eyes to the LORD. In 123, the Psalmist begins with a look in the right direction. He also tells us about our God, and two actions we should take.

First, let's lift your eyes to the Majestic One (123:1). The Psalmist reminds us that the Lord is "enthroned in heaven." He's not just enthroned on earth, but He's enthroned in heaven. You can't get higher than this! This verse speaks of God's absolute reign over all things. Even though it may not look like He's reigning, especially when you are enduring contempt, He is still exalted over all (Ps 115:3). Sometimes the Lord allows us to bear contempt in order to sanctify us (cf., Lam 3:25-33; 1 Pet 1:6-7).

This prayer in 123:1 is similar to how Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father *in heaven...*” (Matt 6:9, my emphasis). In our daily struggles as pilgrims, we need to lift our eyes to our enthroned God. When Stephen was persecuted, it’s interesting that he lifted up his eyes and saw the risen, reigning Jesus, standing (Acts 7:56)! Just one lift of the head, makes all the difference. Look up when others look down on you! When you do, you may be able to not merely tolerate your enemies, but like Stephen and our Lord Jesus, even show mercy to them (Acts 7:60, Lk 23:34; also Matt 5:43-44).

Second, let’s look to the hand of the Merciful One (123:2-3a). In verses 2-3, the Psalmist continues to look, but this time to the hand of God. We see that God is not only majestic, but also merciful. The community express their need for the LORD’s mercy saying:

Like a servant’s eyes on his master’s hand,
like a servant girl’s eyes on her mistress’s hand,
so our eyes are on the LORD our God
until He shows us favor. (123:2-3)

Our relationship to God is a servant-Master relationship. God is in the position of exaltation and power, and we’re in the position of submission and need. However, we should not read this text in an oppressive light. God isn’t an abusive Master. Our Master, the Lord Jesus, had His hands nailed to the cross for sinners.

Our Master does give us directions, and He is in charge, but we look to His hand for directions because they’re for our good. His directions are acts of mercy.

Further, we look to the hand of our Master because – in His mercy – He also *provides* and *protects* us. His hand keeps us from harm, and so we should look to God in times of fear. Like a father who opens up his hand to give his children some money, we look to our merciful God to give us wisdom, strength, and provision in times of suffering. In case you doubt that He can or will, look again to the cross, where God’s mercy was put on full display (Rom 8:32).

The Psalm further instructs God’s people to look to the hand of the Merciful One *patiently* (123:2c). How long must we look? The text says, “until He shows us favor” (2c). In other words, we must persist in prayer. We must keep asking God for mercy. Keep asking for His wisdom and grace for your trials.

In verse 3a, the Psalmist repeats his need for mercy, this time expressing it in a direct prayer, saying, “Show us favor, LORD, show us favor” (3a), or as the ESV renders it, “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.” So look to God for mercy in patient *prayer*.

We can have confidence that the Lord hears our prayers for mercy. In Luke 18, Jesus taught on prayer. He said that the Pharisee who sounded self-righteous in his praying didn’t understand himself, God, or prayer. But the lowly tax collector who prayed, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Lk 18:14, ESV) truly understood God’s mercy and grace and the nature of salvation. The desperate cry for mercy is the type of prayer God hears. If you’re not a Christian, realize your need for mercy, and the provision made by Jesus Christ, our sin-bearing substitute. Cry out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” as you look to Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. He forgives rebels, who cry out to Him for mercy. Richard Sibbes once said, “There’s more mercy in Christ than sin in us” (*A Bruised Reed*, 13). Claim that hope and cry out to the Lord for salvation. If you are a Christian, and are in great need today – perhaps enduring contempt or some other weight – you too should cry out to the God who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps 103:8, ESV). In and through Jesus Christ, we have access to the

Father. Take advantage of it personally. May we take advantage of this access corporately. O Lord, have mercy upon us.

The Pilgrims' Empowering History (Psalm 124)

In C.S. Lewis' *Reflections on the Psalms* he writes, "A man can't be always defending the truth; there must be time to feed on it" (*Reflections*, 5). Indeed, the Psalms nourish our inner man. In Psalm 124, we have the opportunity to feast on the Lord's salvation. Often, we find ourselves defending and proclaiming His salvation, but here we should delight in it, and praise Him for it.

We see that as the community of faith reflects on the Lord's deliverance in history, they burst forth with thanksgiving. The singers articulate how God delivered His people in the past, in order to provide strength for present trials.

David originally penned the Psalm. But the context is vague. This fact makes the Psalm easily applicable for saints across the ages. Kidner points to the events the attacks of the Philistines in David's day as a possible context (436, cf., 2 Sam 5:17ff). Goldingay says one can see this Psalm being sung during Hezekiah's day, during exile, or during Nehemiah's day (478). Again, we aren't given specifics, and it's therefore a very relevant Psalm for God's people who suffer in any situation in any age.

The writer includes word pictures for the LORD's deliverance, noting the forces that sought to destroy Israel: a devouring beast (124:3); a torrential flood (124:4); another devouring beast (124:6); and a fowler's snare (124:7). These images of salvation should stimulate gratitude and praise.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been delivered from the threat of death and hell. We have come to know this great salvation in an even fuller sense. We have also enjoyed "smaller deliverances" throughout our Christian pilgrimage. We should, then, reflect on what God has done for us, and then apply the past to present experiences. In fact, one of the ways you get through your present trials is by reflecting on the fact that your greatest problem has already been solved through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Marvel at What God Has Done (124:1-5). David begins by acknowledging the people's absolute need for the Lord's deliverance in redemptive history. He doesn't want the people to misinterpret the events. The victory wasn't owing to the people's strength and strategy, but to the Lord's salvation. The people couldn't save themselves. Observe the focus on the "LORD." The Psalm begins, "If *the LORD* had not been on our side— let Israel say" (1a), and again for emphasis, "If the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us" (1b). He's leading the community saying, "Come on, say it with me! It was the LORD who was on our side!" One can hear an echo of this type of declaration in Paul's words to the Romans, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31, ESV). We need to remind one another of the Lord's grace.

Notice also the "if/then" pattern that flows through the Psalm. The writer wants the people to know how desperate they are for the Lord's deliverance. So he says, "If the Lord had not been on our side..."

then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
then over us would have gone

the raging waters. (124:3-5, ESV, my emphasis)

Clearly, the Psalmist knows that apart from the Lord's gracious activity, the people who have been destroyed. The LORD protected them from all sorts of dangers and enemies. The "anger" (3) of these enemies posed a real threat, but the Lord protected them from devouring beasts and the torrential flood.

Historians have pointed to a powerful moment when a group of saints sang Psalm 124. In 1582, a Scottish minister named John Durie was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. When he was later released from prison, a few hundred of his congregants met him at the gates of the prison, and began walking up the street in Edinburgh. That group of people began singing Psalm 124. Soon, about 2,000 people joined in the song. One of his persecutors witnessed this moment, and said he was more alarmed by that sight and song than anything he had ever witnessed in Scotland" (in Ligon Duncan, "Our Help Is in the Name of the Lord"). This song has given strength to saints for years. It should give us strength as well. It's our story. The Lord has delivered us from our greatest imprisonment, and he also delivers through other smaller trials on this earth. Marvel at what He has done. Let the marvel lead you to praise.

Praise God for What He Has Done (124:6-7). Verse 6 transitions into praise for the Lord's deliverance, as the writer magnifies the danger:

*Blessed be the LORD,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!
We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped!* (124:6-7, ESV, my emphasis)

As the Psalmist ponders the Lord's rescuing work, he bursts forth into praise, "Blessed be the Lord" and confesses His confidence in the Lord (6b-7). Apart from the Lord's grace, the people would have drowned, been swallowed up and trapped. And the snare has also *been broken!*

It's fitting to move from marveling at God's saving work in Christ to praising Him. We should give expression to our delight and awe at God's grace. C.S. Lewis said, "The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance" (*Reflections*, 23). Yes! Deliverance should make us dance with joy! Allow this Psalm to feed your delight in the Redeemer.

To help us feel this joy, the writer mentions how the Lord kept the people from being devoured by wild beasts (6b). The writer also mentions "escaping" twice (7). The Lord didn't let them get caught like a bird by a trapper. Verse 7 also includes a note of triumph, "the snare is broken, and we have escaped!" (7b). Because they have escaped, they should praise the Lord!

Are you aware of particular events in which the Lord delivered you – from dangers, concerns, fears? What do you make of these deliverances? They should feed your faith. They should build your faith. They should stimulate great joy. They should give us confidence for today's trials. Do you need to be delivered from some danger, threat, or problem? Seek the Lord's deliverance now.

Applying What God Has Done (124:8). Finally, the writer applies the Lord's past work to present experience. He summarizes Israel's history, "Our help is in the name of Yahweh, the Maker of heaven and earth" (124:8). This declaration was made in Psalm 121:1. It has been said

that Calvin used this verse to open the worship services in Geneva (Duncan, “Our Help”). Like Calvin, we can see its simple, timeless, relevance to the people of God.

Because God is fighting for us (Rom 8:31), and indeed has already won the ultimate victory for us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can trust in God in present trials. David said in a previous Psalm, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God” (Ps 20:7, ESV). Life is war. The battle is the Lord’s. Trust in Him, for that’s where our ultimate help comes from. He has been faithful in the past, and you can trust Him in the present.

The Pilgrims’ God-Centered Confidence (Psalm 125)

This Psalm is all about trusting in God, a central mark of God’s people. It’s a Psalm of confidence, highlighting the fact that God is indeed trustworthy. The chief image of this song of Ascents once again is with *the hills*. The holy city is in view, and the stability and security of God’s people is described with this image. The writer says:

A song of ascents.
Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion.
It cannot be shaken; it remains forever.
Jerusalem—the mountains surround her.
And the Lord surrounds His people,
both now and forever.
The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
so that the righteous will not apply their hands to injustice.
Do what is good, Lord, to the good,
to those whose hearts are upright.
But as for those who turn aside to crooked ways,
the Lord will banish them with the evildoers.
Peace be with Israel. (Ps 125:1-5)

Kidner notes the basic nature of the Psalm saying, “True religion starts at the center, the Lord in whom all things – Mount Zion included – hold together” (437). This Psalm helps us then be reminded of who is at the center of all things, including our lives; namely, the Lord.

Throughout the Scriptures, *trusting God* is emphasized. Abraham, our pilgrim father, “believed God, and it was counted to Him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3; cf., 4:22; Gen 15:6). Likewise, the Christian faith begins here, with faith in Christ alone (cf., Rom 5:1; Eph 2:8-9). But then our Christian life continues as a life of trusting in God (cf., Heb 11). It involves a series of steps of trusting in God as the Lord sanctifies us. We must learn to trust God in all sorts of difficulties and trials (cf., Prov 3:5-6).

Trusting in God implies that we believe God is trustworthy. So, for what do you need to trust God? What challenge are you facing? What fear do you have? What hardship are you experiencing? What frustration are you enduring? This is an opportunity for you to trust God, and for your relationship to God to deepen.

The Psalmist teaches us that those who trust God know His *stability, security, goodness, and holiness*.

First, those who trust in God know His stability (1). He says, “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. It cannot be shaken; it remains forever” (1). We will be like God’s rock

solid, holy mountain: unshakable (cf., Ps 46; 48:2). When trials come, the Psalmist says that you will be immovable. You will be anchored. You will not collapse and panic in hardships. You won't sink.

Specifically, build your life on Jesus Christ you can be stable in the storms of life (cf., Matt 7:24-27). Beware of a false faith. James says even the demons believe and tremble (Jam 2:19). Truly trust in the Savior alone for life and salvation. Commit your life to Him. Cling to Him. Have confidence in Him. All other ground is sinking sand.

Stability doesn't mean that we don't grieve. It doesn't mean we don't weep. It means there's a stability about our lives. Don't freak out in the midst of trials. Trust in the Lord.

Second, those who trust in God know His security (2-3). The figure of speech changes in this verse. Now, God is pictured as the hills that surround Jerusalem. Mountains are not only stable, but also protective. "Jerusalem—the mountains surround her. And the Lord surrounds His people, both now and forever" (2). In a world concerned with security, this Psalm helps remember where our ultimate security rests, namely in the Lord.

Mount Zion wasn't the highest peak of the mountain range around Jerusalem. Other mounts were higher. These surrounding mountains provided protection for the city. The armies would have to march up the mountains, or through the mountain passes (leaving them very vulnerable). Jerusalem was thus very defensible. The hills served as a great wall. The Psalmist is saying that God surrounds His people (cf., Ps 34:7). Nothing will come into our life that isn't permitted by God, for the good of the person trusting in Him, and for the glory of God. He will protect you. The prayer of Saint Patrick comes to mind:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. ("St. Patrick's Breastplate")

When the King of Kings is with you, and is protecting you like this, then you're secure! Peterson says, "Being a Christian is like sitting in the middle of Jerusalem, fortified and secure" (91).

Further, the writer says in verse 3 that if the people will trust in God then they will be protected from wicked leaders. He says, "The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, so that the righteous will not apply their hands to injustice" (3). A scepter of wickedness represents an evil king (eg., Sennacherib). The Psalm is saying that no evil leader power will be allowed to come against in Jerusalem – if the people will trust in God. But if they put their trust in horses and chariots, destruction will result – which is what you read about in Israel's history. Many would "stretch out their hands to do wrong" (3a). It proved to be disastrous.

While Israel did have to endure godless rulers, the Psalmist is instilling the ideal principle. God will not allow the unrighteous to rule His people forever. In the New Testament, we know that the King of Kings as come, and will come again to set up His eternal kingdom forever. With that hope, we are secure. And the New Testament also teaches that we should pray for leaders in churches and nations that their leadership would exemplify righteousness.

Third, those who trust in God know His goodness (4). The Psalmist says that those who trust in the Lord learn of God's goodness, and seek His provision for all their needs. The Psalm shifts to a prayer: "Do what is good, Lord, to the good, to those whose hearts are upright" (4). Those who "do good" and those who are "upright" are those who "trust in the Lord" (125:1). Trusting precedes doing good works and practicing righteousness (cf., Eph 2:8-10). Having said that, let's not minimize the implied call to godliness here. God's people should reflect God's character.

The Psalmist is asking God to bless those who walk in God's ways. He knows God is good, and so He asks for God's blessing and favor. James says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 5:6). So humble yourself before Him, walk in holiness, and seek Him for His grace. For the Lord is good and does good (cf., Ps 34:8).

Finally, those who trust in God know His holiness (5). If one refuses to humble himself or herself before God, and walk in His ways, then the Psalmist explains the dreadful consequences. He writes, "But as for those who turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord will banish them with the evildoers" (5). This is one freighting verse. If you turn away from God, He will give them a "push in that direction" (Lawson, "Trusting God").

So the option in this chapter is either *blessing* or *banishment*. Trust in God and receive blessing (especially eternal blessing), or reject God and perish. Those who know trust God know that He is holy and must to be trifled with.

The writer concludes fittingly with this word: "Peace be with Israel. (Ps 125:1-5). This is really the theme of the Psalm. If you trust God, you can know His peace. If you trust in the Lord, you will know God's peace. If you don't trust in Him, you will freak out and worry. You will be restless. But you can rest, when you rest in Him. As believers, we rest in God until we experience total shalom, total well-being. In the New Testament, Paul says:

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

Bring your petitions to God! Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything, and you can know the peace of God that will guard your heart.

How does one come to know this supernatural peace of God? It comes through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Paul writes to the Romans: "Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). You can have *peace with God*, through Jesus, who forgives sins, and grants eternal life. And you can know the *peace of God*, through daily resting in Him.

Let's trust God and experience His stability in the midst of chaos. Let's trust God and experience His security in the midst of fear. Let's trust God and experience His goodness in time of need. As we trust Him, we can know His peace in times of anxiety.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is it important to recognize the "community" nature of these three Psalms?
2. Have you ever been looked down upon or disrespected (even been physically persecuted) for being a Christian? Explain how Psalm 123 applies to such experiences.
3. What does Psalm 123 teaches us about persistent prayer?

4. What does Psalm 123 teach us about the Lord's sovereignty? How does this attribute of God encourage you?
5. In light of Psalm 124, explain how looking back on God's grace can encourage us for present day trials?
6. Do you need to be delivered from some danger, threat, or problem? Explain. Seek the Lord's help.
7. In what ways do you need the Lord's help (Ps 124:8)? Explain.
8. What does Psalm 125 teach us about the believers' stability and security?
9. What does Psalm 125 teach us about the Lord's goodness and justice?
10. Since each of these Psalms emphasize *community*, take some time to pray through these Psalms with other believers, or perhaps sing some songs in community – expressing your need for mercy, expressing thanksgiving, and expressing confidence.