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August memory verse: **John 5:39-40 (NKJV)**

³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

**Commentary on Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123 and 124 by,
Chuck Smith, Aug. 23, 2020**

This time let's turn in our Bibles to [Psalm 120](#) to begin our Bible study this evening. Now you'll notice these psalms have a heading. The psalm, "A song of degrees." The word literally is *ascents*, A-S-C-E-N-T-S. And these are sort of the marching songs for the people of Israel as they would come thrice annually to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

There's a lot of things about the nation Israel that excite me. There are a lot of things that I wish that somehow we could incorporate in our worship of the Lord. This business of all of them gathering together three times out of the year. At the Feast of Passover, at the Feast of Pentecost, and at the Feast of Succoth or Tabernacles. This business of everybody gathering together and just having a great worship service and a great feasting time and a time of worshipping the Lord. This, to me, would be exciting when the nation, the whole nation, is gathering to acknowledge that God reigns over the nation. And just the worshipping of the Lord together. How exciting that must have been.

Now Jerusalem is situated, in a sense, in what is known as the Jerusalem Mountains. So no matter where you are coming from, you are ascending towards Jerusalem. Whether you come from the Galilee region or the Jordan region, and usually coming from Galilee they would come down the Jordan River and then from Jericho make their way up the twenty miles to Jerusalem. Or whether you're coming from the Sharon valley, the coastal plains, the area of Joppa or whatever, you're always coming up when you come to Jerusalem. You're coming from Beersheba, coming from Samaria, you're always ascending up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is sort of on the mountain, and yet, it is surrounded by mountains. Mount Zion, Mount of Olives, Mount Scopus, and the mountains that surround the city itself, but yet from anywhere in the country, coming to worship you are ascending to the city, and so these were called the songs of the ascents.

These were sung by the pilgrims as they were coming to Jerusalem on these glorious feast days. Coming to worship the Lord. And so the songs that they were singing as they were coming. Now in the marching and so forth, there are certain cadences that they get into when they're marching, and sometimes they sing songs in cadence to go along with their marching. You know, the count off, one, two, three, four, you know. And it's always sort of fun, you know. "First they hire me, then they fire me, then by golly I left! I left. I left, right, left." You know, and going along in cadence. And so these were those kind of songs that they would sing in sort of a cadence as they were coming to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. Remembering many times the alien areas where they were living, those who were alien towards God and alien towards those who worship God. So remembering the enemies and the areas from which they have come, but they had anticipation. And in these next fifteen psalms, there is underneath that anticipation, I'm soon going to be standing there in the assembly, worshipping God. And that glorious anticipation of standing there in Jerusalem, within the gates of Jerusalem, worshipping the Lord with the assembled multitude.

According to Josephus there were, many times, well over a million people who would gather for these feasts to worship the Lord together. So the first of these psalms of ascents, the psalmist is looking forward to that time.

In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from the deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! ([Psa 120:1-5](#))

In other words, he's coming now from these antagonistic areas, Mesech, Kedar, people who hate God. People who have been against those who worship the Lord. "I've been dwelling there, O God, I've cried unto Thee in my distress."

My soul hath long dwelt with him that hates peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war ([Psa 120:6-7](#)).

So the first psalm expresses that turmoil of living in a world that is antagonistic towards God. Much the kind of a world that you live in. And so many times living in the world, living amongst the ungodly, we can identify with the soul that is longing for that fellowship with God. The soul that is longing for that peace of God, and yet, all of the turmoil, all of the confusion, all of the lying and conniving and all that is going on in the world around him. And so the soul longing for God. And as he is coming towards Jerusalem, because you're always ascending upwards,

[Psalm 121](#)

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills ([Psa 121:1](#)),

For there is Jerusalem, there in the mountains of Jerusalem, up there in the hills. There is that city. There is where I'm going to stand before God.

from whence cometh my help ([Psa 121:1](#)).

Now this psalm is often misquoted. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," as though my help was coming from the hills. You know, "From whence cometh my help. I will lift up my eyes." And the idea, my help is coming from... the hills can't help you. "From whence cometh my help" is actually a question. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." Towards Jerusalem, the place where I will stand before God. "From whence cometh my help?" and it is answered in the next verse.

My help cometh from Yahweh, which made the heaven and the earth ([Psa 121:2](#)).

It is many times important that we classify God with this kind of a classification, first of all, so that we will identify the God that we are talking about. As Francis Schaeffer said that we should not as Christians just refer to "God" because nobody knows who you are talking about. There are so many gods that people worship and serve. So we need to define when we say, "God," we need to say, "The only true and the living God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth." Now you're defining Him. That's the God that we worship.

There are many who worship the god of pleasure, the god of power, the god of different things. The intellect. But the God that we worship is the only true, eternal God who has created the heaven and the earth, the living God. So, "From whence cometh my help? My help comes from Yahweh which made the heaven and the earth."

Now in the declaring of God as the creator of the heaven and the earth, it's not only valuable to identify when we're talking with people, but it's valuable for us to remember the power of the God that we serve. There are so many times that we become so overpowered by our problems that we neglect to realize the great power of God. I'm so overwhelmed. This problem is so big. What am I going to do? And I just get overwhelmed by my difficulties. Until I realize the greatness of the power of the God I serve.

In the New Testament when the disciples had been beaten and told not to witness anymore in the name of Jesus, it said, "They came to their own company and they told them all of the things that happened when they were standing before the council." How they were beaten and warned not to preach or teach anymore in the name of Jesus. And so they prayed and they said, "O Lord, Thou art God. Thou hast created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them" ([Acts 4:23-24](#)). Now it's good to start your prayer that way because many times if you'll just start your prayer that way and really think of what you're praying, all of a sudden your problem comes into the true perspective. I am seeing now my difficulty in the light of God's greatness and my difficulty suddenly isn't so difficult. I'm seeing it no longer in my own strength, in my own ability. I'm calling upon the One who has created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. God said to Jeremiah, "Behold, I am God. Is there anything too hard for Me?" ([Jeremiah 32:27](#)) In his next prayer, Jeremiah picked that up and he said, "O Lord, You're God. There's nothing too hard for You." The Lord who made the

heaven and the earth. That's where my help comes from. And if God be for me, who can be against me?

He will not allow your foot to be moved ([Psa 121:3](#)):

Now you're walking up a rocky, slippery path. The rockiest place in the world, I think, is Israel. And rocks and gravel on the path can be very slippery. But, "He will not allow your foot to be moved."

he that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep ([Psa 121:3-4](#)).

God is my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth. And He's always on duty. He'll never slumber; He'll never sleep.

The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand ([Psa 121:5](#)).

Of course, coming from the Jordan Valley, extremely hot in that burning sun. The Lord becomes the shade.

The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul ([Psa 121:6-7](#)).

What a glorious promise. If you are looking to the Lord for your help, He will preserve you from all evil. The Lord will preserve your soul.

The LORD shall preserve thy going out, thy coming in from this time forth, even for evermore ([Psa 121:8](#)).

Isn't that a glorious promise to us? God will not allow my foot to be moved. He's watching over me night and day. He will preserve me.

[Psalm 122](#)

[Psalm 122](#) continues. The idea is I'm traveling now towards Jerusalem. I'm with probably a company of fifty, a hundred people. They always got together for these trips to Jerusalem. That is why, actually, when Jesus was twelve years old, when his parents left Jerusalem, they left with a big company of people going back up towards Nazareth. And that's why they could get out a whole day's journey without missing Him. You know, He's probably with His cousins or you know, with part of the crowd. And it wasn't until dinnertime that they began to look around and couldn't find Him. And then is when they had to retrace their steps back to Jerusalem, because they would always travel with a big company.

And how glorious that must have been, coming towards Jerusalem with a large company of people. Of course, let us say that we here... say it was the big conclave

that's going to be in San Bernardino. And we all decided you know, "Well, let's go and let's worship the Lord in San Bernardino. Or up at the conference center." So we get the idea of going up, but we didn't have cars. We're going to have to walk. So we all have our provisions. We start out together. We're singing as we're going down the road. The children are throwing rocks and taking sticks and beating trees and this kind of stuff, you know. And it's a big kind of an occasion going to worship the Lord.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go to the house of the LORD ([Psa 122:1](#)).

Someone suggested, "Well, let's go up this year. Come on, let's go up to the house of the Lord." All right. "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

For our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem ([Psa 122:2](#)).

The anticipation. Now there is something about Jerusalem, once your feet have stood within the gates, you always want to go back and stand again. There's something magnetic about that place. Once having stood there, there's always a yearning to go back.

Every year after our visit to Israel, Kay and I come home and we're trying to get over jet lag and we'll say, "Well, this is our last year. You know, this will be it. It's just, you know." But my, as the time approaches to leave again, we get so excited. We're all planning and getting things all set and ready to go, and we're eager and raring to go again. There's just something about the place; you just love to go back again and again. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Glorious anticipation.

For Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up ([Psa 122:3-4](#)),

And that is, the people. All the word *compact* together means that all the people gather together within it in a compact type of a group. "Whither the tribes go up."

the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD ([Psa 122:4](#)).

So all of the people gathering together to give thanks to the Lord.

For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David ([Psa 122:5](#)).

Jerusalem is the capital. Jerusalem is the center.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee ([Psa 122:6](#)).

We had a fellow come in this past week who God has given the gift of giving. And he said, "I like to give where I know that God is going to bless me." And so a while back, he

gave money designated to be distributed to the poor. Because the scriptures said, "He who lends to the poor lends to the Lord" ([Proverbs 19:17](#)). He said, "I like to just lend some money to the Lord." So he said, "Just distribute this to the poor, because I know God's interested in the poor and God's going to bless me."

Well, he came back and he said, "Well, God has blessed me because I distributed to the poor." He said, "Now I want to give again where I know that God will bless. And God said that He would bless those that bless Israel. And so I want to give a gift just for the nation of Israel. Let it come from the church and I want you to take it over with you when you go." So we'll be taking a gift to Israel when we go over in January. We're going to give it to Prime Minister Begin and just tell him it's from the Christians at Calvary Chapel because we're praying for the peace of Jerusalem and we love them for preserving the Bible for us and for bringing us our Savior. And we're just going to give it in the name of the Lord to the nation. And if you'd like to contribute to that fund, you can just designate it. "They shall prosper," it says, "that love thee."

He said, "God has so blessed me for giving to the poor, loaning to Him for the poor. Now I want to give into something else that God has declared Himself for." So he gave me a check for \$450,000 that I'll be taking over. So loaning to the poor pays pretty good interest.

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee ([Psa 122:7-8](#)).

He tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and then he offers sort of a prayer, "Peace be within thy walls. For the companions' sake, I will now say, 'Peace be within thee.'"

Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good ([Psa 122:9](#)).

Still in the anticipation of gathering in Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

[Psalm 123](#)

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt ([Psa 123:1-3](#)).

That is, the people around are just contemptuous towards us.

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud ([Psa 123:4](#)).

So Lord, we're going to lift up our eyes to You who dwell in heaven. Our eyes are going to be fixed on Thee, not upon those around us who are giving us such a hard time.

How important it is when we're going through trials to fix our eyes upon the Lord. So many times we get our eyes upon people and we get in these interpersonal conflicts with people and we're watching to see what he's going to do next. Just waiting. Best to just get your eyes fixed on the Lord. And so he said, "As the servant watches his master's hand."

Now the servant was constantly watching, especially at a dinner or whatever, when the guests were there, the servant the whole time would watch his master's hand. For the master would give certain signals with his hand, expecting the servant to pick up on those signals. It was the duty of the servant if things are getting out of order, if the wine is getting low or something, the master would just give a signal with his hand and the servant knew exactly what he was saying. And thus, the whole time the servant's eyes would be glued upon the master's hands waiting for a signal. Because if the master should signal and the servant is off someplace else and his mind someplace else, and he's not on his toes, then he's really in trouble. Constantly watching.

And the same with the maidservants. Watching the mistress, watching the hand continually, because it was with the hand that they gave their beckons, their signals. Not wanting to speak to the servants or directions were given to them by hand movements. And so, "Even as a servant keeps his eye on his master's hand, Lord, I'm going to keep my eyes glued on You." That's a good policy. Just keep your eyes glued on the Lord. The junk that you don't see is not going to hurt you.

[Psalm 124](#)

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side ([Psa 124:1](#)),

And, of course, I think we could all write our own psalm from this point on. If God hadn't been with me, let me tell you, you know. "If it had not been that the LORD was on our side,"

now may Israel say; If it had not been that the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they would have swallowed us up quickly, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, and the stream had gone over our soul: and the proud waters would have gone over our soul ([Psa 124:1-5](#)).

Oh, if it hadn't been for God's help. If it hadn't been for God's strength. If it hadn't been for God's sustaining power, how many times we would have gone under. We'd have never made it this far if it had not been.

Paul the apostle said, "Who hath delivered us from so great a death, who doth now deliver us, and I am confident He shall yet deliver us" ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)). You see, the past help of God is a prophecy of the future. The fact that God has helped me, the fact

that God is helping me is my assurance that He's going to help me. And if it had not been that God was helping me, I wouldn't be here now.

And so he breaks forth into the blessing.

Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, we are escaped. Our help is in the name of Yahweh, who made heaven and earth ([Psa 124:6-8](#)).

And again, the idea, God has made the heaven and the earth. The name of Yahweh, the name of our God, Yahweh, the maker of heaven and earth. And our help is in the name of the Lord. There's tremendous power in the name of Jesus.

Peter was walking into the temple, the hour of prayer. And there was a man who was lame and begging. And you go to Israel today and you find out that severely handicapped people: blind, lame, and all, the lepers; they still are around the gates begging. A lot of beggars. And here was a man born lame, begging. And Peter said, "Hey fellow, look over here." And he turned, held out his hand expecting to receive something. Peter said, "I don't have any silver and gold, but I'll be glad to share what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk" ([Acts 3:6](#)). Power in the name of Jesus. And the man stood, he walked, he leaped. He ran through the temple, walking, leaping, praising God, because of the power of the name of Jesus.

There is a proverb that says, "The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" ([Proverbs 18:10](#)). How many times I have retreated into the safety of the name of Jesus. When threatened, when in danger, just the breathing out, "Oh Jesus." In the name of Jesus. Jesus said, "Henceforth you've asked nothing in My name. Ask, that you might receive, that your joy might be full" ([John 16:24](#)). "You shall ask anything in My name, I will do it, that the Father might be glorified in the Son" ([John 14:13](#)). The power of the name of Jesus, maker of heaven and earth.

Jesus, of course, you know, is Yahweh Shua or Yashua. It is that name of God compounded with the Hebrew word *salvation*. And thus you get, Jehovah or Yahweh is salvation.