

*“Lifting Humble Eyes Toward Heaven” Psalm 123
Another Psalm of Ascents*

Psalm 123 (NKJV)

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ Unto You I lift up my eyes,
O You who dwell in the heavens.
- ² Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our
God,
Until He has mercy on us.
- ³ Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us!
For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
- ⁴ Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorn of those who are at ease,
With the contempt of the proud.

There is a lot of humility in this Psalm!

It is the Psalm of servants. Servants of God!

*Servants of God, who are suffering! At the hand of God, but also, at the hand
of the proud!*

I. Our need to lift our eyes to God in Heaven -

¹ Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Psalm 123:1 (NKJV)

1. This Psalm is a Prayer, therefore it aims its eyes to Heaven, to God in Heaven –

2. This is similar to how our Lord Jesus instructs us to pray –

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Matthew 6:9 (NKJV)

A. *We pray to our Father in Heaven; we should seek good and ultimate welfare from no one less, and no lower place –*

3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:1–4 (NKJV)

Verse 1.—“*O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*” “*That sittest.*” The Lord is here contemplated as enthroned in heaven, where he administers the affairs of the universe executes judgment, and hears prayer.—*James G. Murphy.*

B. *They would not yet pray “our Father” because Jesus had not come yet, He had not died yet for their sins, or raised to give them new life, we will see though, they aim their eyes to God as happy servants –*

¹⁰ For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84:10 (NKJV)

II. They look to God, as would humble, and yet well cared for servants -

² Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes *look* to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us. Psalm 123:2

Whenever you see the words “servants” and “master” in a Bible verse, you can be sure there will be someone who will accuse the Bible, Christianity or God (the God of the Bible) of cruel slavery!

1. *Yet, Biblical slavery was never meant to be cruel –*

A. *man stealing, making a person a slave against his will was never allowed and was punishable by death –*

¹⁶ “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. Exodus 21:16 (NKJV)

From my understanding most of the slavery of black people in our country was this cruel kind and would be condemned Biblically –

If people use the Bible to defend such things; they are wrong!

B. Slavery in Israel was meant to be a help to people in extreme debt –

After six years every debt was consider PAID in FULL -

21 “Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: ² If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. Exodus 21:1–2 (NKJV)

2. Some slaves loved their “masters” and provision was made for them to continue with their masters for life –

⁵ But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. Exodus 21:5–6 (NKJV)

A. Note this had to be the plain, clear, unmistakable desire of the servant - :5

B. Note “judges” were involved to confirm and certify this was REALLY the desire of the servant - :6

C. This is the kind of service Christ’s servants / slaves rejoice in –

1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, ... Philippians 1:1 (NKJV)

3. Here is Psalm 123, God is compared to the Best of Kind, compassionate “masters” “mistresses” –

² Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us. Psalm 123:2

A. These are eyes that trust

B. These are eyes that expect provision / mercy -

... Until He has mercy on us. Psalm 123:2

Mercy is needed because the servant knows he has sinned -

Verse 2.—“*As the eyes of servants,*” etc. The true explanation, I should apprehend, is this: As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till that motion of the hand appears that puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are up to thee, our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure.
—*Thomas Harmer.*

III. See in this Psalm a double cry for needed “mercy” - **³ Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us! Psalm 123:3 A (NKJV)**

1. *The repetition of the word mercy in this prayer / psalm is for emphasis -*

“The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist’s spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately.” C. H. Spurgeon

2. *Looking forward to verses :3 & :4, show us the cries for “mercy” are because of the scorn and contempt those **at ease** and the **proud** ...*

A. *Now, while they may ask for justice in regard to those who wrong them –*

B. *They know they can only ask for “**mercy**” from God, because while some may do them wrong God is always just in all He allows, knowing what our secret sins deserve even better than we might know -*

³⁹ Why should a living man complain, A man for the punishment of his sins? ⁴⁰ Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD; ⁴¹ Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven. Lamentations 3:39–41 (NKJV)

IV. Beware of ease and pride when all seems well -

³ Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. ⁴ Our soul is exceedingly filled With the scorn of those who are at ease, With the contempt of the proud. Psalm 123:3-4 (NKJV)

What if all is going well for us? Is it because we are BETTER than those who suffer? Probably NOT -

12 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;* ⁶ *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*” ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:1–11 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV)

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