

KEEP YOUR EYE ON HIS HAND!

PSALM 123

Introduction:

The situation of the Psalmist—he has reached his limit in enduring the scorn and contempt of the world. He is at the point of despair. But he has joined a group of pilgrims to go to the temple in Jerusalem for one of the three annual festivals. This hymn is one of the prayer hymns that the pilgrims will sing as they make their way up to Jerusalem. It may be that this one was sung as they drew near to the city.

These pilgrims, particularly in the period following the rebuilding of the temple under Nehemiah and Ezra, were living in very difficult circumstances. They faced contempt in every way they turned. They never even began to regain the respect that they had known during the period before the exile when they ruled over that part of the world. How will they recover respect and be restored?

His solution—he will remember who he is. He is the servant of the One who is enthroned in the heavens. Like a trusting slave, he will keep his eye on the hand of the Master.

Did you notice the repetition of the eye and the hand? It is our eyes and His hand. You may be like the Psalmist this morning; you have come to the

house of God beaten down by the world in which you live. You may not have heard an encouraging word all week. And you are even coming to a church that lacks a pastoral leader. Is there any help for you? You can do what the Psalmist did--You can lift your eyes to His hand.

Philip Ryken wrote in his exposition of Ecclesiastes this about the hand of God.

"The Bible uses the image of "the hand of God" to express God's power, love, supervision, and control. Here the metaphor expresses his sovereign supervision of his people and their actions. God really does have "the whole world in his hands," as the old gospel song says. "Each one of us," writes T. M. Moore, "without regard for what we've done in life, or whom we know, or what place we might occupy in our society—each one is in the hand of God, and he decides for each of us just what will be for us throughout our lives."

For the faithful believer in Jesus Christ, the hand of God is an image of comfort and assurance. We know that the hand of God is a hand of love. We know this because we know that the hands of Jesus were pierced for our transgressions when he was nailed to the tree. This gives us the hope and the faith to leave everything in God's hands—all our burdens, all our trials, and all our cares. The Savior who loves us and died for us will also care for us.

This is not the Preacher's perspective, however. He is writing before the cross, of course, but he is also writing out of his struggle to understand what God is doing in the world. His uncertainty comes out very clearly in the second half of Ecclesiastes 9:1: "Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him."¹

I. LIFT YOUR EYES TO THE LORD.

Don't look to self. Not within.

Don't look to the world. Not around.

Don't look to the past. Not back.

But UP! Your help must come from the Lord, so lift your eyes to Him.

1. Because of WHERE He is.

Psalm 123:1 (NKJV)

Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens.

He is in the heavens.

He on the throne.

This reminds both of His sovereignty and His sufficiency.

2. Because of Who He is.

He the LORD our God.

This speaks of His love, His covenant, His faithfulness, and His power.

¹ Ryken, P. G. (2010). *Ecclesiastes: Why everything matters*. Preaching the Word (204). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

3.. Because of Who we are.

Psalm 123:2 (NKJV)

²Behold, 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.

We are beneath Him as a creature is beneath its creator.

We are beneath Him as a slave is beneath his or her Master.

So we are completely depending on Him and Him alone.

II. FOCUS ON HIS HAND.

The Psalmist looks into everyday life for an example of what it means. We are to look to His hand like the servant and the maid look to the hand of their master and mistress.

The great expositor Matthew Henry helped me with this passage. Several have noted through the years how Henry saw the hand of the Lord in relation to our need. Let me review some of them with you.

1. You look to His Hand for direction.

So often the Master can provide direction by a simple gesture.

The servant keeps his eyes on His hands lest he miss a cue, a signal. By looking we acknowledge that our mission in life is to know and to do His will.

2. You look to His Hand for supply.

Every supply comes from his hand. He opens His hands and our needs are met. O how rich our Master is! There are no limitations to the resources available to His hand.

3. You look to His Hand for correction.

With a finger on the lips.

With the wagging of a finger.

Or with chastisement from His hand.

It is our heart to please Him, so we want His correction when we are not pleasing Him.

4. You look to His Hand for protection.

Mighty is He! He has all power in His hands.

This world is never a safe place for the child of God, but we are safe as long as we are under the care of His hand.

5. You look to His Hand for reward.

Not to the world, but to the Lord above. We serve Him alone.

III. LOOK TO HIM WITH BELIEVING PRAYER.

In fact this explains the nature of the look. We look with the eyes of our heart with expectancy. Our hope is in the Lord.

³ Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

1. Persistent prayer.

"Until"

2. Specific prayer.

"Mercy"! Gracious 13 times, almost as often as mercy. It means to bestow His favor. The contempt of the world will not matter, if we know that we have the favor of the Lord.