

We live in a world that is increasingly hostile to biblical faith and values and which scorns those who hold them. The psalmist indicates the proper stance which is needed throughout life to withstand the pressures which a scornful world will put upon us. He applies it particularly to this challenge of being scorned as an obedient child of God. He advises to look up to God, when others look down upon you.

**I. *We look to a Sovereign Master (123:1–2).***

The psalmist understood his covenant God, Jehovah, to be his Master, ruling from heaven. As a servant under the hand of an earthly master would expect direction, provision, protection, and blessing from the master, so also the psalmist with others keeps his eyes on the hand of his heavenly Master for the same. This stance will prepare to respond to the scorn that is the particular problem of the psalmist.

1. *We look for divine instruction.* Being under the hand of a master points to the rule which the master has over the servant. The master tells the servant what to do. This is evident in various biblical examples (e.g., Matthew 8:5–13; cf. Luke 7:1–10). This is how you prepare for anything the world might throw at you, look to God's Word for instruction for living.
2. *We look for divine provision.* In the master-servant culture, the master took responsibility to care for the servants (cf. Matthew 24:45). Servants of the living God also look to Him for provision. Having not spared His own Son, He will graciously give all things (Romans 8:32; cf. Matthew 6:32–33). Look to the hand of your heavenly Master to provide your needs.
3. *We look for divine protection.* The master took the responsibility to protect his servants. This is similar to the medieval vassal relationship and can be observed in the protection of the second servant in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21–34). So also we may look to our heavenly Master for protection from all that would cause spiritual harm (John 10:11–12, 28–29).
4. *We look for divine affirmation.* The master's approval was most important to the servant, as is illustrated in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30). We, too, want to hear the "well-done" from our heavenly Master.

This is the stance of the faithful servant, looking up to the Master, to His hand to direct, provide, protect, and affirm. In his immediate need amidst scorn and contempt, the psalmist pleads for his Master's mercy.

**II. *We plead for mercy in the face of contempt and ridicule (123:3–4).***

Mercy is a response from the heart of someone who has something that the other person needs. We plead out of need in the face of scorn because we cannot of ourselves cope. The proud and self-secure heaped scorn on the psalmist to overflowing, but he knew to turn to his heavenly Master for mercy.

1. *We need divine mercy to obey God, when scorn tempts us to give up.* We ask for our faith to be strengthened (cf. Mark 9:23), that we continue to obey, even as we look for the day when Christ will return (2 Peter 3:3–12).
2. *We need divine mercy to trust God, when scorn doubts God's provision.* Offering the first-fruits required faith that God would provide a harvest. Taking a righteous path today may require sacrifice which the world scorns. Remember God's promises and the history of His past provision. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.
3. *We need divine mercy to leave vengeance to God, when scorn begs for retaliation.* It is better to hold the tongue and be considered wise. Jesus is the perfect example who entrusted Himself to His Father instead of retaliating (1 Peter 2:23).
4. *We need divine mercy to be assured of God's pleasure, when scorn mocks.* Work as to please the Lord and not people (Col 3:23; cf. 3:17). Being pleasing to the Lord is more important than pleasing people and it is pleasing to Him when we patiently endure suffering for doing what is right (1 Peter 2:20). We can be assured of His pleasure from His Word and from His peace (Philippians 4:4–9). We strive to be shame free when we meet Him (1 John 2:28).

Above all, look to God's hand to be right with Him. Only by faith in Christ alone are we joined to God's people. Look to His hand to be kept by Him. Those who belong to Jesus and follow Him are in His hand and the hand of the Father, and nothing can remove them. Look to His hand when scorn and ridicule are heaped upon you as His follower. He is the Master and will direct, provide, protect, and affirm you.

*For further reflection:* • How have you encountered scorn as a follower of Jesus? (If not, why not?) • How have you responded? • What were your greatest struggles? • How might the psalmist's example help you? • What does entrusting yourself to God look like for you practically, when you face ridicule for being a follower of Jesus?