Mercy and Contempt

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[0:01] Psalm 123, a song of ascents. To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens.

Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy on us.
Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Have mercy upon us. For we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.
God, we pray that you would give us understanding, that you would speak to us from your word. Give us the humility to cry out for your mercy, to look to your hand for provision, guidance.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So this psalm begins, it's a short psalm that packs a punch. It begins in verse 1 with an individual profession of dependence on God.
[1:20] To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens. The word enthroned, of course, communicates God's security and authority. When the nations rage, when the kingdoms totter, when earth shakes, when pandemics strike, when the church is persecuted, there is one thing that doesn't change, and it's that God is enthroned in the heavens.

He has not been overthrown from his throne. He has not lost his control over the universe. He is ruling from heaven above. And that truth alone, if we really grasp it and live according to it, has so much power to provide peace and comfort to those who look to him.
But all we need to do, we do need to lift up our eyes, as it says here, lift up our eyes, our eyes of faith to the king. And this personal profession in verse 1 becomes a corporate profession for the body of God's people.
In verse 2, you can see the pronouns change from I to we, from me to, or from I to me, I and me to we and are.
And it says, Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a mate servant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God till he has mercy upon us.
[2:40] Verses 1 to 2 have this mirroring A, B, B, A structure. So you can see it says, I lift up my eyes. And then it says, Eyes of servants look to the hand of their master.

And then eyes of a mate servant look to the hand of her mistress. And then again, it says, Our eyes look to the Lord. You can see the structure. And that structure highlights the repetition of the word eyes, looking to the Lord.
And it emphasizes the relationship between our eyes and God's hands. It's teaching us that we should lift up our eyes in faith to the merciful hand of God, our king.
And it's the image that's being drawn here is of a household servant, a domestic slave, that is completely disposed to the provision of his or her master.
Because food comes from his master. Compensation comes from his master. Lodging comes from the hand of his master. So similarly, our eyes look to the merciful hand of God, our king.
[3:41] I was thinking about, I mean, it's obviously not a perfect comparison, but I think about dogs, the way they look to their owners. I mean, they're like, you bring a treat.

It's like, it's pretty amazing. It's like, it has a spellbinding effect on the dog, right? It's like, you can like, and the dog's just looking to the hand of its owner to provide. It knows that it is completely disposed to the will of its master.
And that's the kind of picture that's painting here of how we should be dependent on God and look to him to guide us and provide for us. In his book, Slave of Christ, Marie Harris writes that a slave, biblically speaking, and the slave of Christ is, is slave is someone who, whose person and service belong wholly to another person.

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And he says, as Christ's purchased possession, the Christian is wholly devoted to the person of the master. As Christ's, quote, movable property, the Christian is totally available for the master's use. And, and, and that, and he says, kind of surveying kind of the biblical use of this image of the slave of God, servant of God. He argues that complete devotion to Christ includes three elements.
[5:01] And first is humble submission to the person of Christ, submission to God as Supreme Lord, that he has absolute and exclusive right to our affection and energy now and forever.

Um, and second is unquestioning obedience to the master's will. Uh, and it's, it's a subjection of our will to God's, uh, uh, and, uh, and we are to be obedient in the same way.
The first requirement, uh, of, of a soldier that is enlisted is compliance with commands, right? It's, it's the, for the Christian, uh, there's absolute obedience, unquestioning obedience to the master's will.
Uh, third, uh, third element of being a slave of Christ is that it's an exclusionary, inclusive preoccupation with pleasing Christ, uh, that we, uh, give satisfaction to our master, not only by obeying him, but also, uh, by, uh, I guess, seeking to and devising creative ways to please him. Uh, we make it our ambition to be constantly pleasing him as this is in second Corinthians five, verse nine. Um, and, uh, and that's the kind of picture that's being painted here of our eyes of the servants looking to the hands of their masters.
[6:10] And so if I were to ask you, in which direction are your eyes looking right now? Uh, are your eyes looking around at the circumstances and what's going on?

Are your eyes mostly looking inward at yourself? Are you absorbed with yourself, your own life? Or are you looking up at your master's hand, asking him to provide?
Do you see that God is enthroned above? Uh, and do you know what it's like to be completely dependent and completely disposed to the will of God, our king, our master?
And, uh, do you believe him enough to abandon yourself, to throw yourself with abandon at his feet into his hands, his care? So that's the first part. The first two verses talk about the mercy, uh, mercy of God.
Uh, and the second half talks about the contempt of the proud, verses three and four. Um, this is, this is why our looking to God's mercy, his provision through his hand is all the more necessary because we live in the midst of difficult circumstances.
[7:12] It says in verses three to four, have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.

So verses three to four have this kind of terrace like AABB structure. So it says, have mercy on us, repeats that, have mercy on us. And it says, we have had more than enough contempt, and repeats that again, we have had more than enough scorn and contempt in verse four.
And so the repetition of the word contempt, as well as the phrase more than enough, kind of convey how kind of the people of God had their fill of scorn and content from their enemies, from the enemies of God.
They, they've had it. They've had it up to their nose. They've, it's, they're full. They've, they're, can't stand it anymore because they've been so battered. Uh, they've been derided for their faith in God. They've been persecuted for their good works. They've been ridiculed for their righteousness. And they're often the objects of scorn and contempt. And so they're desperately crying out to God, have mercy upon us, Oh Lord, have mercy upon us.
[8:18] Um, and that's the, uh, and this beautiful Psalm, of course, points to, uh, the great fulfillment of, uh, of all of scripture by Jesus.

And it speaks of the mercy of God, mercy, uh, that is undeserved, uh, pardon, forgiveness, that is undeserved. Uh, and, uh, reminding of Ephesians 2, um, where it says in verses 4 and following, but God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace, you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
Um, it was God's mercy, uh, it was not, uh, God's justice. That saves, uh, because, uh, it, because if it were God's justice, uh, uh, by which he dealt with us, we would perish, uh, but he dealt us in his mercy, uh, in his grace, uh, and, and, and because he loved us, he sent his son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, and, and all those who have the posture that's in the psalm of recognizing our absolute need and dependence on the hand of the master, saying, have mercy on us, uh, provide God.

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Look, we look to you. People who have that humility, people who have that faith, those are the people that are saved, uh, by Jesus, and, and that's what it means to be a Christian. Uh, and as people who have done that, uh, uh, we are to continue to live with this sense of, uh, uh, constant devotion and dependence on God, and, uh, and looking to him, and to, to protect us, and guide us, and provide for us, uh, and this was also exemplified by Christ in his life.
Uh, 1 Peter 2, 21 to 25 say this, for to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
[10:27] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself, to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin, and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed, for you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd, and overseer of your souls.
Jesus didn't, uh, uh, Jesus didn't fight for himself, uh, he was meek, he was humble, he entrusted himself to God, uh, he looked to the hand of his father, um, in faith, uh, and that's the posture we are to have as we live, and, and of course there's always a number of things in our own lives that we can, uh, entrust ourselves to God for, and, uh, whether it's, um, whether it's health, whether it's your family situation, whether it's your work, or any difficulty you might face, um, let's try to cultivate that posture of humility and dependence on God as this passage, uh, calls us to do, as servants looking to the hand of our master for provision.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

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