

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 120

Topic
**The psalmist finds himself imperiled
by liars and their lies**

Title
**"Gonna Lie Now, Lying Sly Now,
Gonna Lie, Lie, Lie"**

Traveling is better with a playlist:

- 👤 You might create a playlist of your favorite artist or artists.
- 👤 Maybe your favorite songs by various artists.
- 👤 You might put together a playlist based on a theme.
- 👤 Your playlist may be based on your destination, say, if you are going on vacation.

Star Trek fans will recall that before he would embark on the first successful warp flight, Zefram Cochrane insisted on playing *Born to Be Wild*.

When we first meet Starlord in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, he switches on his Walkman to play Awesome Mix Volume 1.

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When we are on our way to the Happiest Place on Earth, we have a playlist of all the ride and attraction theme songs. There's nothing quite like *Grim Grinning Ghosts* to help get you in the mood.

Israel had a national "playlist." They are the Psalms of Ascent - Psalms 120 through 134.

These psalms received this title because the Israelite pilgrims sang them as they traveled from their homes all over the land and ascended to the Temple in Jerusalem for the annual feasts.

If you are in Christ, it should not come as a surprise that **You are a pilgrim:**

- 👤 The apostle Peter twice labels all believers "pilgrims" (First Peter 1:1 & 2:11).
- 👤 The writer to the Hebrew Christians, in chapter eleven, identifies us with previous generations of pilgrims "looking for a [heavenly] city whose builder and maker is God" (v10).

Since we are fellow travelers, the Psalms of Ascent are a great playlist for us, too.

And let's not forget that our Lord, Jesus, sang them many, many times in His incarnation, in His epic journey from Heaven to earth and then back to Heaven.

John Wayne once asked, "Think you can make it, Pilgrim?" The road is not easy. It is fraught with perils. When describing the road, the apostle Paul wrote, "*in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness...*" (First Corinthians 11:26-27).

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Yes, you *can*, and you *will* make it, Pilgrim, because He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it, bringing you all the way home.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Are Imperiled By Liars And Lies, #2 You Can Be Impervious To Liars And Lies.**

#1 - You Are Imperiled By Liars And Lies (v1,2 & 5-7)

The Psalms of Ascent begin with the pilgrim describing a primary peril. It is in verse two: "lying lips, and... a deceitful tongue."

Seriously? Liars and their lies were the peril he was most concerned about? Perhaps this will put it in perspective. In the Gospel of John, Jesus described the Devil as a "liar," and as "the father of" lies" (8:44). It was his lying in the Garden of Eden that tempted Adam and Eve to overthrow the authority of God, thinking they would be like God.

All of the disease, destruction, and death that we experience on the earth are the consequences of a lie telling a lie.

- 👤 In Revelation 12:9, the Devil is called, "the deceiver of the whole world."
- 👤 In the Book of Acts the apostle Peter says to a lying disciple, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit" (5:3).

When the psalmist talks about liars and their deceitful tongues, he isn't only talking about people mistreating you. Sure, that is part of it. He's also talking about something far more sinister: The fact that demonic lies surround you on your pilgrimage.

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Maybe this will connect. If you have conflict in your marriage, it stems from the selfishness of the original lie our parents believed in the Garden of Eden. You remember that Adam blamed Eve - even though he was equally, if not more, responsible.

The help you need for your marriage is biblical truth - not another of the Devil's lies.

Today his lies have undermined biblical marriage. Marriage is heterosexual and monogamous between one biological man and one biological woman. The obliteration of this standard is a major reason why human society is crumbling.

Psalms 120:1 A Song of Ascents. In my distress I cried to the LORD, And He heard me.

The cry that the "LORD" "heard" was verses two through seven. That was the psalmist's prayer.

In our "distress," I'd wager that most of us do go first to the Lord. We cry out to Him.

But it can be difficult to *wait* on the Lord. That is when we might be tempted to seek a worldly solution, or settle for non-biblical help. You need to develop a healthy caution to counsel and advice. Even if it sounds biblical, think hard on it.

The psalmist knew that the Lord "heard" him. Jesus hears you the first time, and every other time you cry out. This is a statement of spiritual contentment. You can be content, and rest, in the fact that God hears you. Any believer always has immediate access to the throne of God, to receive grace and mercy in your time of need.

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I'm glad that the Keep Calm craze is (mostly) over. "Keep Content" doesn't sound as poetic, but it is what the psalmist is saying to us. "Keep Content and Wait for Jesus."

Psalms 120:2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips *And* from a deceitful tongue.

This speaks to us on a few levels:

- 👤 For one thing, we are reminded that, on our pilgrimage, we will be distressed by other people, even by believers. To put it simply, you will be hurt; and some of the wounds may never completely heal. Like Frodo, after he was stabbed by the Witch King of Angmar on Weathertop, it will always hurt.
- 👤 But, for another thing, all of **us** could pray, "Lord, keep **me** from having lying lips and a deceitful tongue." *You will hurt others.*
- 👤 For a third thing, we could interpret these words as the psalmist asking the Lord to shield him from being interfered with, or influenced by, a world ruled by Satan that is full of liars and lies.

Skip to verse five.

Psa 120:5 Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, *That* I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

"Meshech" was to the far north of Jerusalem; "Kedar" was in the south. This was the psalmists way of saying, "from coast to coast." It was a lyrical way of saying that he was surrounded.

We are on the earth, in unredeemed bodies which still have propensities to sin. The world system, as a whole, is ruled by the god of this world. His lies, the

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doctrines of demons, assail us on every side, seeking nothing less than our destruction on the road homeward.

The assaults may be pleasant. By that I mean, the Devil may offer us wealth, or power, or popularity. All we need to do is disobey Jesus - but just a little, and He will forgive us anyway - won't he?

He may instead launch a Job-like assault, robbing us of family, or health.

While we are on the topic of his liars, we could name the founders of every religion. Zoroaster, Siddhartha, Confucius, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, L. Ron Hubbard, Sun Myung Moon, and Ajunta Pall (the first Dark Lord of the Sith).

All godless philosophies are lies propounded by liars: Nihilism, Existentialism, Stoicism, Hedonism, Marxism, Taoism, Rationalism, Humanism, Relativism, Atheism, and any "isms" that are not biblical Christianity.

There is a seemingly endless list of lying psychotherapies: Gestalt, Freudian, Behaviorism, Maslovian, Psychodynamic, Cognitive, *etc., etc.* They were proposed by godless men like Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Sigmund Freud, and Abraham Maslow.

- 👤 Following these liars and lies will lead a person not to spiritual contentment, but to a greater selfishness.
- 👤 Following these liars and lies will lead a person not to the heavenly city, but to eternal, conscious punishment.

The apostle Paul insisted that, "... The weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds..." (Second Corinthians 10:4). Our thoughts go to spiritual warfare against the Devil and his allies. But Paul

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clarified what he meant, saying, "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ..." (Second Corinthians 10:5).

Liars and their lies are what we are casting down. It is the *doctrine* of demons we need be fighting - not the demons.

Psa 120:6 My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace.

In Psalm 35:20 we are informed that the world around us is inhabited by nonbelievers who "do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land."

Today this idea illustrates itself. Or maybe I should say that it is being illustrated all around us. Violence is rampant. No matter what stand you take on the current turmoil in the world, Psalm 35:20 summarizes it.

Psa 120:7 I *am for* peace; But when I speak, they *are* for war.

I want to preface my next remarks with this statement. Being a Christian does not mean you must always ignore wrongs, and always surrender your rights.

Having said that - Being a Christian *does* invite you to "speak" "peace" to the world at war. It starts with promoting, and supporting, the Gospel.

In our natural state... In our first birth... We are hostile enemies of God. While we were yet in this natural state, in our sins, He came as a man in order to offer us a second birth, a spiritual birth.

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Only if we are at peace with God, through Jesus, can there be peace in the world. It's old; it's worn; but it's a true saying: *There is no peace apart from the Prince of Peace.*

The mythological Sirens sang to passing ships. Their song mesmerized the sailors, drawing them into the rocks upon which they would be dashed and destroyed.

Liar's lies are a siren call, seeking to shipwreck your faith. In our case, the sirens aren't confined to one location. Their songs surround us. Their songs are a worldly playlist, playing on a continuous loop.

Ulysses had his men tie him to the mast, then put wax in their ears. That way he could enjoy the Siren's songs, but the ship and crew would be saved.

Are you tied to some mast? Indulging in something, thinking you are safe from shipwreck?

#2 - You Can Be Impervious To Liars And Lies (v3-4)

You have been tripped-up by lies. You have lied. You are *not* impervious to liars and lies; **but you can be**, to the extent you yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

As we teach or read God's Word, we should concentrate more on *who* and *what* we already are. Too much of evangelical Christianity sounds like self-help steps so we can achieve God's goals for us.

Peruse the shelves of a Christian bookstore and it seems like you are on an expedition to summit a spiritual Everest.

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The apostle Paul insisted, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, **and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus**" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

He also noted, "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly *places* in Christ" (1:3).

Listen to this insightful paraphrase of Romans 6:11 from the Message Bible:

"From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did. "

Psa 120:3 What shall be given to you, Or what shall be done to you, You false tongue?

Psa 120:4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With coals of the broom tree!

The title of epic finale to the Avengers saga came from something Dr. Strange said in *Infinity War*. He said, "We're in the endgame now."

He saw what was going to happen over the next few years, and the only scenario in which humanity would ultimately triumph.

In order to get to that victory, humanity must wait. Half of the population of the universe was turned to dust by the snap. Much suffering ensued until our relentless surviving heroes found the one way to reverse the snap.

Beloved, **We** are in the endgame now. We know, in quite a bit of detail, what is going to happen in the future: The resurrection and rapture of the church... The Seven-Year Great Tribulation... The Second Coming of Jesus... The

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Millennial Kingdom of God on earth... The Great White Throne Judgment of God... The creation of a new earth and new heavens... Eternity with Jesus in the New Jerusalem.

It is God's endgame, but as we wait, it is preceded by much suffering.

I'm going to go off on a slight tangent. Many Bible teachers, and pastors, are telling their people the prophecies of the endgame are spiritual; that they are allegorical; or that they have mostly been fulfilled in the first century. Especially under attack is the Pre-Tribulation rapture of the church.

One argument I keep hearing is that no one ever spoke of the rapture of the church until a guy named John Darby in the 1800's. One critic said, "Rapture doctrine did not exist before John Darby invented it in 1830AD. Before it "popped into John Darby's head" no one had ever heard of a secret rapture doctrine."

Also this: "The fact that John Nelson Darby invented the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine around 1830AD is unquestionably true. All attempts to find evidence of this wild doctrine before 1830 have failed..."

I'm going to read something: "And therefore, when in the end the church shall suddenly be caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, and neither shall be." "

Those words were written by Irenaeus, Bishop of what is now Lyon in France, in his work, *Against Heresies*. It wasn't written in the 1800's but in the 180's - in 180AD. A mere one-hundred fifty years after Jesus rose from the dead... About one hundred years after the apostle Paul was martyred... Sixty-five years after the apostle John died... The church was teaching the rapture.

When someone tells you the early church had no doctrine of the rapture, at best they are ignorant.

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Let's read verses three and four again:

Psa 120:3 What shall be given to you, Or what shall be done to you, You false tongue?

Psa 120:4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With coals of the broom tree!

The psalmist sees the end of the Father of lies, and of lying. He will be defeated. He will be burned by fire that cannot be quenched.

Those who have resisted the grace of God to save them will join the Devil and his angels in the Lake of Fire.

The more I focus on earthly things, elevating their importance, the more susceptible I am to the world of lies surrounding me. The psalmist was suggesting that I focus on end-things, on endings. That I focus on my destination more than anything else, allowing my heavenly future to dictate my decisions.

We read of our destination in the Revelation, "And [the angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (21:10).

In the Old Testament we read, "The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

In context, the prophet was talking about God singing over Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

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I don't think it is wrong to think God sings over the church; and over each of us who are in Christ. He has a playlist for each of us - songs for every season of our lives, for every experience along our way home

I can't wait to hear that playlist as I approach the "holiest city above the earth."

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