

Psalms of the Degrees
Celebrating Triumph Over Trouble Through Trust in God
Psalm 120 - When Trouble Invades Your Life

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PSALM 120: The trouble alluded to in Psalm 120 is the Assyrian invasion of Judah which came after Judah experienced a spiritual revival led by Hezekiah.

Prior to the Assyrian invasion, Hezekiah became extremely sick and Isaiah is sent by God to tell Hezekiah to set his house in order because he will die. Hezekiah cries out to God. God responds by not only healing Hezekiah, but adding fifteen years to his life, and promising to deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the Assyrians. God then supernaturally moved the shadow back on the sundial of Ahaz ten degrees as a sign He would do everything He promised (2 Kings 20: 1-11).

After Hezekiah's healing, a Babylonian delegation came to present Hezekiah a gift of thanksgiving for his healing and to inquire about the astronomical wonder which had occurred. Instead of giving God the glory, Hezekiah exalted himself by showing the Babylonians all the treasures and military might of Judah in an apparent effort to secure an alliance against the Assyrians (2 Kings 20: 12-13 with 2 Chronicles 32: 24-25 & 31). For this Hezekiah is severely rebuked by God, because although worried about the Assyrians, it will actually be the Babylonians who eventually conquer Judah lead them into captivity (2 Kings 20: 14-18).

The advancing Assyrian army overthrows every fortified city in Judah except for Jerusalem & Lachish which were the two greatest fortified cities in Judah. When Lachish comes under siege, only thirty miles west of Jerusalem, Hezekiah capitulates to Assyrian demands in an effort to buy peace. Hezekiah gives the Assyrians all the silver & gold from the temple and king's treasuries, but quickly learns you cannot appease evil (2 Kings 18: 13-16). The Assyrians continue their siege of Lachish which is eventually conquered. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, sends his three top officials along with a large contingent of his army to arrange for Hezekiah's total surrender of Jerusalem. Rabshakeh, the title for the king's advisor, a skilled propagandist, attempts to persuade Judah to surrender through fear and intimidation (2 Kings 18: 19-35). He made four arguments:

1. There is no help in Egypt, who was their primary ally (vs. 19-21).
2. The Lord will not support Hezekiah, but has actually called the Assyrians to attack Hezekiah because he destroyed the altars & high places (vs. 22-25).
3. Force Hezekiah to surrender & the beneficent King of Assyria will provide the people all the blessing their king & God cannot provide (vs. 26-32).
4. God could not save Judah if He wanted to because Assyria had conquered the gods of all the other nations and would conquer Jehovah too (vs. 32-35).

1. THE EMOTIONS TROUBLE EVOKE

- You feel the ANXIETY of impending doom.

In my trouble I cried to the Lord...

Psalms 120: 1

And they said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke, & rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver.'"

2 Kings 19: 3

- You feel DEMORALIZED by the lies of the enemy.

Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows of the warrior, with the burning coals of the broom tree.

Psalm 120: 2-4

And they called this out with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, so that they might take the city.

2 Chronicles 32: 18

- You feel STRESSED OUT, as you long for peace which cannot be found.

Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar! Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 120: 5-7

Oh, why give light to those in misery, & life to those who are bitter? They long for death, and it won't come...Why is life given to those with no future, those God has surrounded with difficulties? I cannot eat for sighing; my groans pour out like water. What I always feared has happened to me. What I dreaded has come true. I have no peace, no quietness. I have no rest; only trouble comes.

Job 3: 20-26 (NLT)

2. THE LESSONS TROUBLE TEACH

- You cannot buy or manipulate yourself out of trouble. Trouble is INEVITABLE & INESCAPABLE.

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 14: 22

- When trouble comes there is only one place to look - UP TO GOD!

In my trouble I cried to the Lord and He answered me.

Psalm 120: 1

- The primary issue when trouble comes is not how to ESCAPE trouble, but how to ENDURE trouble in a way that EXALTS God.

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith & to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character...

James 1: 2-4 (Phillips)