

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm One Hundred And Twenty-Three - Direction For When We "Can't TAKE Any More Contempt" (Psalm 123:1-4)

I. Introduction

A. I have known **many** believers who have expressed their being mentally, emotionally or even physically exhausted from taking much contempt or ridicule from ungodly parties. Their burden does not come from knowing they must face it, but from the *fatigue* of **constantly having** to face it!

B. Psalm 123:1-4 addresses this problem of **weariness** in having to handle much contempt as follows:

II. Direction For When We "Can't TAKE Any More Contempt", Psalm 123:1-4.

A. This psalm of ascents, or pilgrim psalm was sung as the godly made their way upwards in the Judaeen hills toward Jerusalem. The psalmist **theologically** looks upward toward God as his Sovereign just as he **geographically** looks upwards towards God's Jerusalem temple, Ps. 123:1.

B. As such, the psalmist pictures himself as God's slave, either as a male slave or female slave called a maid, in seeking God's mercy for his or her personal need, Psalm 123:2.

C. To understand why the psalmist seeks God's help as a **slave**, we must realize that a slave in the Ancient Near East not only belonged to his or her Master, but enjoyed the Master's protection and provision in that role, providing him greater livelihood and protection security than poor freemen enjoyed, cf. Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 5, s. v. "Slave, Slavery." (p. 453-460) **Accordingly, the psalmist needs God's help for something he is unable to provide for himself.**

D. Thus, as a needy **slave** of God's, the psalmist petitions Jahweh for mercy as he is **unable** to gain *refreshment* from being **wearied** from having faced much *contempt* from an abusive party, Ps. 123:3.

E. In fact, the psalmist explains that his whole person has experienced great wear facing such contempt, v. 4:

1. The (KJV) word "soul" in verse 4 is from the Hebrew word *nephesh* used elsewhere in Genesis 2:7 to describe Adam as a "living *soul*" once God had put breath into his body (Biblia Hebraica, p. 3, 1088).
2. Ken Barker, now General Editor of the NIV, while he was my Hebrew prof at Dallas Seminary told our class that *nephesh* identifies one's life principle, or physical, mental, emotional and spiritual vitality.

F. **Thus, the psalmist is worn out from being unable to revive himself from the wear of always facing contempt, and thus looks to God as His PROVIDING, PROTECTING MASTER to help him out and thus preserve GOD'S OWN INTERESTS in having His slave refreshed from being persecuted.**

Lesson: Handling our being WORN OUT so we can't TAKE any more contempt from being constantly ridiculed by a party comes by (1) CEASING to TRY helping ourselves and (2) looking to GOD as our Providing, Protecting MASTER for HIS intervention. (3) The hope for this is that GOD will be MOTIVATED to help us over concern to protect HIS OWN DIVINE interests in us!

Application: For handling WEARING persecutors who show us contempt, we must (1) start by yielding to the WILL of Christ in every area of our lives. Only when we SUBMIT to God's LEADING in all of life can we expect Him to interact with us with comprehensive, nourishing blessings, John 14:21, 23. (2) ONCE we have SUBMITTED to God's revealed will as His SERVANT, our welfare becomes HIS concern that we should EXPECT to spark God's HELP to our being worn down by abusers, Ps. 123:2-4. (3) On the other hand, IF we HAVE submitted to God's leading in all of life and STILL suffer mistreatment, that state is a unique, unfathomable divine ASSIGNMENT, and we must not worry about the wear that comes to us in such a case, 1 Peter 4:19; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. (4) Yet, if we STILL have a "rough time" TOLERATING mistreatment, our INTOLERANCE signals that we have NOT YET fully submitted in some area to GOD'S leading, and we are unwisely trying to handle the overpowering burden we face ourselves! There should be NO MORE fretting if we have fully submitted to the Lord's leading! (5) Rev. 3:16-19 reveals GOD may ALLOW troubles to come to DRIVE us to yield to His will!