

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXX. Handling Deceit's Harmful Effects
(Psalm 120:1-7 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Harmful deceit is now common in many major institutions:

(1) “Beltway (Washington, D. C.) reporters were forced to reckon with their coverage of Joe Biden’s mental decline at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner . . . after honoring . . . maverick reporter” Alex Thompson “who worked to expose the ex-president’s problems, despite pushback . . . Thompson tore into . . . fellow journalists,” saying, “‘President Biden’s decline and its coverup by the people around him is a reminder that every White House . . . is capable of deception . . . But being truth tellers also means telling the truth about ourselves. We, myself included, missed a lot of this story. And some people trust us less because of it . . . I believe our mission is vital in a world where people are struggling to figure out what’s true, and people with power are not telling the truth,’ he added.” (Ryan King, “Ripping fellow journos over Joe-decline coverup,” *The New York Post*, April 28, 2025, p. 22)

WHCA President Eugene Daniels told reporter Ryan King who wrote this story, “‘We journalists are a lot of things . . . What we are not is the opposition. What we are not is the enemy of people. What we are not is the enemy of the state.’” (Ibid.) The general public that witnessed much evidence of Biden’s decline long before his tragic debate view the WHCA president’s claim that his group’s journalists are not the enemy of people as practically unbelievable!

(2) “President Trump has ordered 100% transparency about foreign sources of funding for US schools . . . Federal law . . . requires that schools report any foreign funding they receive. But under Joe Biden, the feds stopped releasing donor names to the public and instead just listed places of origin. The result? Nearly a billion dollars flowed in during his time in office from shady offshore tax havens, often concealing the true source of the funding . . . From which countries does this massive stream of largesse flow? In 2024, high among the leading givers were . . . China and Qatar. That’s right: Our main global strategic competitor and one of the worst terror sponsors in the world. No shock, then, that Harvard and Cornell – two top recipients of Qatari” donations – “offered such massive support for the Jew-hating” demonstrators “of their campus Tent-ifadas. Or that there’s been a sharp spike in US researchers caught illegally collaborating with China.” (“Sunlight for Higher-Ed Funds,” Ibid., p. 28)

(3) Recently, two different parties we know have experienced relationship alienation from family relationships due to political and ideological issues. Their experience reflects a nationwide trend: A 2024 survey by the American Psychological Association found that 77% of Americans feel significant anxiety over the future of the nation due primarily to the presidential election and the economy. (Andrea Brant, LMHC, “Political Anxiety and Mental Health: Coping With Stress in a Divided World,” April 24, 2025; betterhealth.com) Differences in how people think about politics and money have largely led to this division, meaning that it is caused by errant thinking pushed by deception.

The problem with facing so much deceit and manipulation in major institutions is that it can affect “our ability to trust, form healthy relationships and navigate the world with confidence.” (Emily Tumber, “The Impact of Deception on Mental Health: Can Being Lied to Cause Trauma?”, April 29, 2024; medshun.com)

Need: *So, we ask, “How are we to handle the harm caused by the deceit that is evident in major institutions?”*

I. In Psalm 120:2b-3, 5, 7, and 6a, the psalmist described the wrongs he had suffered from deceivers:

- A. He faced lying lips and deceitful tongues, Psalm 120:2b.
- B. The psalmist had faced hostile attitudes from those who lied to him and deceived him, Psalm 120:5, 7:
 - 1. He said he figuratively dwelt in Meshech, a barbarous people in the far north, and among the tents of Kedar, nomadic Ishmaelites in northern Arabia, people known for hostility (v. 5; *B. K. C., O. T.*, p. 882).
 - 2. Though the psalmist was a man of peace, whenever he spoke to his foes, they were for war, Psalm 120:7.

II. In facing such deceit, the psalmist suffered extensive personal pain, Psalm 120:2a, 5-6:

- A. In Psalm 120:2a, 6 KJV, the psalmist twice mentioned how his “soul” was affected by what he face, that word translating the Hebrew noun *nepesh*, meaning his emotional, mental, spiritual and physical life principle (Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 1087; Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the O. T.*, 1968, p. 56-59).
- B. Thus, his *nepesh* had lived too long among hostile deceivers (v. 5-6), and the wear of this experience had led him to call on God to deliver his emotional, mental, spiritual and physical *nepesh* from his enemies (v. 2b).

III. To solve this problem, the psalmist relied on the Lord, Psalm 120:1, 3-4:

- A. He called on the Lord in his distress, Psalm 120:1.

- B. The psalmist then trusted God severely to punish those who spoke harmful deceit to him, Psalm 120:3-4: He looked to God to punish his enemies with a warrior's sharp arrows and with coals from the broom tree that was used for firewood because it burned longer than many other woods (Bible Know. Com., O. T., op. cit.).

IV. For our further application, we can use Psalm 23:1-3a for God's renewal of the *nepesh* that is negatively affected by prolonged exposure to hostile, harmful deceivers (as follows):

- A. If we relate to God as our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1a), we can apply Psalm 23:1b-3a for renewal of our *nepesh*.
B. That renewal is described in Psalm 23:1b-3a (as follows):
1. With God as our Shepherd, we will not "be lacking" (*haser*, B. D. B., op. cit., p. 341), Psalm 23:1b.
2. Specifically, God will "cause [us] to lie stretched out" (*raba'*, Hiphil causative, Ibid., p. 918) in "pastures, meadows" (*nawah*, Ibid., p. 627) of "fresh, tender, spring grass" (*deshe'*, Ibid., p. 206), nutritious food for grazing sheep, and God "leads [us] to a watering place and causes [us] to rest there" (*nahal*, Piel intensive, Ibid., p. 624-625) to drink, Psalm 23:2.
3. Psalm 23:2 focuses specifically on God's nurture of the *nepesh*, the inner man:
a. Shepherds tell us that sheep are so timid that they are afraid to drink from even slightly moving water.
b. Accordingly, God leads and causes His people completely to relax on richly grassed, spring meadows and He guides them to drink from waters that are obviously still so that they can relax and rest there.
C. Thus, God "restores, refreshes" (*shuv*, Polel intensive, Ibid., p. 996-1000) His people's *nepesh* (Kittel, op. cit., p. 993), their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical life principle (Girdlestone, op. cit.), Psalm 23:3a.

Lesson: *To handle long-term, harmful deceit from his hostile foes, the psalmist called upon God to deliver him from his foes and to punish them. For restoration of the inner man's fatigue from facing harmful deceit, if we look to Scripture's God as our Shepherd, He will fully renew and restore us.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) In facing long-term, harmful deceit from hostile foes, may we call on God for His deliverance and trust Him to punish them. Then, to handle the wear to our inner man of facing such deceivers, may we yield to the shepherding ministry of God for complete, refreshing renewal.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

We view Scripture for insight on dealing with the issues of concern in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) On the White House Correspondents' Association president's claim that regardless of his group of journalists' missing the mental decline of President Biden that the journalists were not anybody's enemy, be it the state or the people, (a) Proverbs 20:12 claims that God gave us hearing ears and seeing eyes as the best empirical means to discern physical reality. Applied to the WHCA, past observations reveal that we need to use our ears and eyes with our brains to discern if the WHCA is actually rebuilding trust or if it is still biased. (b) 1 Timothy 4:22, 24-25 applies here: Just as we believers should lay hands suddenly on no man either to ordain men to be pastors nor receive penitent backsliders into our fellowship, we need to watch to see if the media are truly repentant!

(2) On the discovery that institutions of higher learning that have seen student unrest against Jews or collaborating with China caused by hefty donations from anti-Semitic nations or respectively China, (a) 1 Timothy 6:10 ESV tells us that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. The saying, "follow the money" applies here, that to understand much of what occurs in today's world, we need to research the financial greed behind the scenes. (b) As believers, 2 Timothy 6:17 calls us not to be proud nor to rely on collected wealth, for riches are uncertain, and God is the One Who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Our faith needs to rest in the Lord Who is our real security.

(3) On the crisis that affects even local family relationships due to deceived thinking in politics and the economy, (a) we should trust in God as Romans 13:1-4 claims He sovereignly determines who comes to power, and Hebrews 13:5-6 tells us to avoid greed and trust the Lord to meet our living needs. (b) For **our** part, Proverbs 14:15 NIV states, "The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps." Thus, prudent people not only carefully evaluate what others claim to be true, but in applying what they judge to be true, they think about the steps they take to avoid failure. As an example, famed investor Warren Buffett advises *care* and *caution* in investing: He urges us to ignore the stock market since it's manic depressive and not to fret over the economy, for no one can predict its future. Rather, we should buy stocks or stock funds of good companies that can profit regardless what will occur, that then we will eventually succeed. (Robert G. Hagstrom, Jr., The Warren Buffett Way, 1994, p. 224-236)

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we ask God to deliver us from harmful deceit and follow Him as our Shepherd for renewal.