

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXXIII. God's Deliverance From Contempt
(Psalm 123:1-4)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The Christian community often faces contempt, and it can be quite draining for individual believers:

(1) The Pew Research Center recently reported that white evangelicals continue to give President Trump his greatest political support (Chip Rotolo, "White evangelicals continue to stand out in their support for Trump," April 28, 2025; [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org)), and some commentators claim evangelicals are following President Trump over Jesus' teachings (Ailia Slisco, "Evangelicals Are Now Rejecting 'Liberal' Teachings Of Jesus," December 22, 2024; [newsweek.com](https://www.newsweek.com)). However, no member of our Church tells me that he voted for Trump because he preferred his words over Jesus' words! Indeed, members report they voted for Mr. Trump regardless of his personal flaws because he supports law and order, fiscal responsibility, the Bill of Rights and a strong national security better than the other candidate. Nevertheless, several believers have expressed frustration over facing contempt by the legacy media or progressives they know for voting for a man who is such an easy target for criticism over what he says or does.

One reason conservative Christians support President Trump was the conduct of the Biden administration: "When you force a country to navigate a political landscape characterized by lies" like the former administration did, "you invariably produce distrust" and a thirst for a moral compass. ("Diagnosis shouldn't shift conversation," Republican-American, May 20, 2025, p. A6) For example, news last week of the former president's stage four cancer, though eliciting sympathy from many, still raises a question as to "whether Mr. Biden was battling what may well end up being terminal illness during his time in the White House." (Ibid.) Many people will express their sympathy – as well as they should – but not their trust! The now exposed coverup of the former president's dementia has led to the suspicion that he and his administration knew of his cancer for some time in his presidency!

(2) The legacy media treats conservative Christians unfavorably: Associated Press writer, Peter Smith, in his story, "Critics say Trump's religious agenda will benefit conservative Christians," Ibid., p. B9) told how the president said, "'We're bringing back religion in our country' . . . when he announced the creation of the Religious Liberty Commission. 'We must always be one nation under God, a phrase that (the radical left) would like to get rid of . . .'"

Conservative Christians were not identified as receiving special treatment in this story, for even the photo with the story pictured President Trump with a group of ministers from a variety of faiths. Nevertheless, the title of this story unjustly implies that conservative Christians are being unfairly favored by the president's religious agenda.

(3) "(O)ne Connecticut man . . . in an . . . email" to the cities of Waterbury, Torrington, Hartford, New Britain and Bridgeport "admonished them for flying the Christian flag on public property." ("Christian flag is a patriotic symbol," Republican-American, May 6, 2025, p. A6) "(H)is views . . . are far from uncommon. This perspective holds that the freedom to practice one's religion without fear of government persecution somehow requires the government to, in an act of overt dishonesty and revisionism, downplay Christianity's role in both historical and contemporary American life – a role that no other belief system played on a remotely similar scale . . . (For example), the Declaration of Independence mentions that Americans' rights come from their 'Creator'" and the "Pew Research Center noted, 'nearly all state constitutions reference either God or the divine,' (including) Connecticut's, whose preamble states, 'The people of Connecticut acknowledging with gratitude, the good providence of God . . . ordain and establish the following constitution and form of civil government.'" (Ibid.)

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God direct that we deal with unjust, debilitating contempt that we face?"*

I. Psalm 123:1-2a appealed to God for His supply for the needs of a downcast nation of Israel:

- A. Since slaves were the property of their masters, they were considered part of the family, so masters were obliged to provide for every need of their slaves. (Zondervan Pictorial Ency. of the Bible, v. Five, p. 456)
- B. The psalmist voiced the plight of himself and others in Israel as being like downcast slaves who looked to their Master, the God of Israel, to meet their pressing needs, Psalm 123:1-2a. They obviously felt troubled.

II. The need at hand was God's deliverance of Israel's people from demoralizing contempt by Gentile foes:

- A. Most commentators believe this psalm was authored after the Babylonian Captivity when Israel's returning exiles faced much contempt from their Gentile neighbors (Neh. 1:3; H. C. Leupold, The Psalms, 1974, p. 878).
- B. Thus, feeling like they were still oppressed slaves of Gentiles like they had been in Babylon for 70 years, the exiles asked God as their Master to provide for the needs of their inner man since they were despised, v. 2b-4:

1. Three times (verses 2b and 3) the psalmist said he desired that God might “have mercy” (KJV) on them.
2. The Hebrew verb rendered “have mercy” is *hanan*, what actually means “show favor, be gracious” in the sense of showing compassion for an afflicted party (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 335-336; H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 303-304).
3. Thus, the psalmist did not ask for God’s forgiveness of Israel’s sin, but for His compassionate intervention for the wrong they faced from the profuse contempt their Gentile foes leveled at them, Psalm 123:3b-4:
 - a. The psalmist said Israel was “exceedingly filled with” contempt (KJV), what translates *saba’* (Ibid., B. D. B., p. 959), “satiated,” figurative for “wearied of” (Ibid.; Ibid., H. A. W., v. II, p. 869), Psalm 123:3b, 4a.
 - b. What they found so wearying was the “contempt” (KJV; *buz*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 100) they faced, v. 3b, 4b.
 - c. This contempt was expressed as much “scorning” (v. 4 KJV), that is, much “ridicule, mocking” (*la’ag*, Ibid., p. 541; Ibid., H. A. W., v. II, p. 480-481) by their Gentile enemies.
 - d. Such ridicule and mocking afflicted the “soul” of Israel’s people, their *nepesh* or their whole mental, emotional and spiritual inner man (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1088; Robert B. Girdlestone, Syns. of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59). This was a demoralizing, draining trial that had occurred over a long period of time.

Lesson: *Israel’s people looked in faith to God as their Master Who provided for their every need to deliver them from great demoralizing contempt by their Gentile foes.*

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) If facing great demoralizing contempt from our enemies, may we look in faith to God as our Master to deliver us from such a trial for His glory.*

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

We view Scriptures applicable to our need for God’s deliverance from contempt as noted in our introduction:

(1) When Psalm 123 was likely authored, (a) God raised up Nehemiah, a highly capable cupbearer to Persia’s king (Neh. 1:11c) to rebuild the city wall of Jerusalem that would provide military protection and relief from much of the contempt they faced from neighboring Gentiles, cf. Nehemiah 1:3; 2:19 with 2:17-18 and 6:15-16. (b) Similarly, we can rely on the Lord to provide gifted servants of His to serve Him in our behalf to offer us relief from contempt.

(2) We also know from passages like Daniel 9:26d that God is in control of the affairs of mankind, and there is evidence that He is providing some degree of a check against excessive contempt that Christians face from anti-Christian foes: (a) Evidence comes from a report in the following editorial: “‘Young people are more culturally progressive than their elders, but large-scale college freshman data and exit polls show a substantial rightward shift among young people from 2021-2024. In Britain, YouGov’s tracker finds the under-25s moving sharply right on transgender issues and immigration since 2022. Both elite and public opinion on transgenderism has shifted against the left in the past two years, its first cultural loss in six decades. . . . (S)ocial media and today’s opinion-led media, which helped spread woke ideas off campus in the 2010s, have facilitated a wider backlash that has entered state and federal politics. Op-eds in liberal outlets have criticized diversity training, cancel culture, transgender medicine, DEI and administrators and diversity statements.’” (Eric Kaufmann, “Welcome to the Post-Progressive Political Era,” Wall Street Journal, May 14, cited in Republican-American, May 19, 2025, p. A6) (b) In addition, the Trump administration last Thursday has restricted Harvard University from enrolling foreign students due to the influence of the Chinese Communist Party on that institution and Harvard’s failure to check antisemitism in its ranks. (Morgan Philips, “Trump administration terminates Harvard’s student visa program,” May 22, 2025; msn.com)

(3) In Matthew 16:18, Jesus predicted that He would build His Church, that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. “Jews” in Jesus’ audience “would understand hades’ gates to refer to physical death,” what may have been His death or the deaths of believers who would follow Him in the Church era (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 57). Either way, Church History has revealed the ongoing development of the true Church regardless of problems without or even problems from within the Church!

(4) Christ’s empowerment over resistance to the Christian faith was evident in the Early Church, too. In Acts 5:40-42, after being beaten by the Sanhedrin and told no more to speak in the name of Jesus, Christ’s apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ’s name and they kept right on preaching Jesus in the temple and in every house in Jerusalem! We can rely on the Lord for the power to remain joyful and faithful in ministry to Him like the apostles did in the Early Church!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. If we face debilitating contempt, may we trust the Lord our Master to provide for our every need.