



Lesson 5: Service

Psalm 123 (The Message)

¹⁻⁴ **123** I look to you, heaven-dwelling God,
look up to you for help.
Like servants, alert to their master's commands,
like a maiden attending her lady,
We're watching and waiting, holding our breath,
awaiting your word of mercy.
Mercy, God, mercy!
We've been kicked around long enough,
Kicked in the teeth by complacent rich men,
kicked when we're down by arrogant brutes.

I. If God Is God At All

"I look to you, heaven-dwelling God, look up to you for help." (Psalm 123:1 The Message)

Service begins with an upward look to God. God is over us. He is above us. The Christian looks up to God, not at him, or down on him. Too often though we tend to demand from God as if he was our slave or genie in the bottle. We pray for God to do this or that and fail to humble ourselves and trust God will do what is best for each of us.

If God is God at all...

- He must know more about our needs than we do.
- He must be more in touch with our thoughts, emotions, and bodies than we are.
- He must know more about our relationships with others and our nations than we do.

We are presented in the bible with the God of Exodus and Easter, the God of Sinai and Calvary. If we want to know God, understand God, we must do it on His terms. If we want to see the Real and True God we must look to the place of authority. The scriptures! The moment we look up to God (and not over him or down on him) we are in the posture of servitude.

II. Mercy, God, Mercy!

What happens when we look up to God in faith? What we find is a God of mercy. Three times the expectation is shown in Psalm 123, *"We're watching and waiting, holding our breath, awaiting your word of mercy. Mercy, God, mercy!"*

As Christians it is our conviction that God intends good for us. He does not treat us according to what we deserve, but according to his plan. We live under mercy. God does not treat us as strangers or aliens, so he can evaluate our worth or usefulness. He rules, guides, commands, loves us as children whose destinies, he carries in His heart.

III. Urgent Service

A third element in the servant life is urgency: *"Mercy...We've been kicked around long enough,/ Kicked in the teeth by complacent rich men, / kicked while we're down by arrogant brutes."*

As Christians we know that the real problem is not in achieving freedom but learning to serve under a better master. The disciple realizes that every relationship that excludes God becomes oppressive. Recognizing and realizing that, we urgently want to live under the Lordship of Jesus whose yoke is easy, and burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

IV. Reasonable Service

The best New Testament commentary for Psalm 123 is Romans 12-16. Paul writes *"So here's what I want you to do, God helping: Take your everyday, ordinary life- your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life- and place it before God as an offering."* (Romans 12:1 The Message)

The Psalm itself says nothing about serving others. It concentrates on being a servant of God. It works something like this: If we will learn the attitude of servanthood by making God our Lord, then serving others will develop in a very natural way of life. Commands will be heard – to be hospitable, compassionate, to visit the sick, to help, to heal, to forgive, and to love (all found in Romans 12-16). See also John 13:12-17.

V. Christians Are The Freest People On Earth

God's people everywhere and always are encouraged to work for the freedom of others, helping them to be free from every form of bondage – sin, religious, economic, cultural, political – which are all used to imprison our lives. The promises of freedom are found all throughout the scripture – John 8:31-36; Galatians 5:1; 1 Peter 2:1