Bible Study

Psalm 120: Far from Home

What are the Songs of Ascents?

Psalm 120 is the first of 15 special psalms called the "Songs of Ascents" (Psalms 120–134). "Ascent" means "going up." Jerusalem was built high on a hill, so travellers had to climb to get there. Every year, Israelites travelled to Jerusalem for big Jewish festivals, and they sang these songs on the way.

What does "ascents" mean?

View	The idea	Evidence(s)
Pilgrim songs	Sung by worshippers "going up" to Jerusalem for the three great feasts	Jerusalem sits high in the Judean hills, so every journey there was a climb (Deut 16:16; Ps 122:1–4; Isaiah 30:29).
The fifteen temple steps	Sung by the Levites on the fifteen steps between the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel	The Mishnah (Middot 2:5; Sukkah 5:4) links the fifteen steps with the fifteen songs and describes Levites making music there at Tabernacles. It never actually says these psalms were sung there.
Return from exile	Songs for the "going up" from Babylon	Ezra 7:9 uses the same noun for the return from Babylon.
Step-like poetry	Each line climbs by picking up a word from the line before	See "dwell… dwell" (vv. 5–6) and "peace… peace" (vv. 6–7). Not every psalm in the group works this way
Hezekiah	Linked to the fifteen years added to King Hezekiah's life	A minority view: 2 Kings 20:6 gives the fifteen years, and Isaiah 38:8 the "*degrees*" of the sundial

How are the songs put together?

Many Bible experts think the 15 Songs of Ascents were arranged in five groups of three songs each. Read in order, they tell a story, kind of like a trip from start to finish. The songs begin sad and end happy, like a long, hard trip that ends with arriving home safe.

- The start (Psalm 120): The writer is in trouble and far from home.
- The end (Psalm 134): God's servants are in his house, the temple in Jerusalem, praising him at night.

Group	Psalms	The movement
1	120–122	Distress among liars → the Lord keeps us on the road → arriving in Jerusalem
2	123–125	Eyes on God under contempt → "our help is in the name of the LORD" → secure like Mount Zion
3	126–128	Restoration and joy → unless the Lord builds the house → the blessed home
4	129–131	Affliction → forgiveness "out of the depths" → a quieted soul
5	132–134	David and Zion → brothers in unity → blessing in the house of the Lord

Context and meaning of the Psalm 120

Psalm 120 is a lament, which is a sad prayer or song that tells God about a problem. It picks up where the psalm before it, Psalm 119, leaves off. The last verse of Psalm 119 says: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant." Psalm 119 ends with someone who is lost and asking God to find them. Psalm 120 is where that person starts the trip back. So, it brings to repentance. To repent means to turn around: to stop going the wrong way and head back toward God. Peterson says that turn is the first step of every journey to God.

Psalm 120 is the starting line of this journey. It sounds like the songs begin in a faraway land. So, when we read Psalm 120, we're joining the travellers just as they set out from home. It shows how many Israelites felt when they lived far from home or among nations that were against them. They felt like strangers in places where people didn't care about God or peace. They wanted God and peace, but the people around them did not.

Psalm 120 is an individual lament that looks forward to thanksgiving. That means it's a sad prayer by one person who is hurting but who trusts that one day they'll be thanking God. The author of the psalm was surrounded by people who lied and liked to pick fights. He felt alone, like a stranger far from home, living among ungodly people. So, he cried out to God for help, asking God to make things right and bring peace.

The psalm doesn't tell us who wrote it, so scholars came to different conclusions.

- ***Option 1: King David***. The people who translated the King James Bible put a short summary at the top of this psalm: "David prays against Doeg." Doeg worked for King Saul, who was David's enemy. Doeg used his words to get the priests who had helped David into terrible trouble (1 Samuel 21–22; Psalm 52). Famous Bible

teachers John Calvin, Matthew Henry and Charles Spurgeon also thought the psalm might be about David.

- ***Option 2: After the exile***. Others think it was written later, when the Israelites had come home from exile and were rebuilding Jerusalem. A man named Sanballat tried to stop them. He spread lies saying their leader, Nehemiah, was planning to rebel and make himself king (Nehemiah 6:5–9).

Nobody knows for sure. But the psalm is written in a general way, so any traveller could sing it as their own song.

Key Words

Verse	Hebrew (simplified)	Meaning	Why it matters
Title	*shir ha-ma'alot*	"song of the goings-up"	From *'alah*, to go up: the noun for steps, and for the journey up to Jerusalem
1	*tsarah*	distress	Comes from the word for narrow: being hemmed in, in a tight place
2	*sephat-sheqer*	a lip of falsehood	Open lies
2	*lashon remiyyah*	a tongue of deceit	Crafty, treacherous speech that looks friendly but harms
2	*nephesh*	soul	The whole self, "my life", not just the inner spirit
4	*retamim*	broom bushes	White broom, a desert shrub whose charcoal burns very hot and very long
5	*garti* (from *gur*)	I sojourn	To live as a resident foreigner, without land, rights or roots
6	*rabbat*	long, too long	Weariness: "I have had more than enough"
7	*ani shalom*	literally "I — peace"	Peace is who he is, not just what he wants

NOTE: The broom bush is a plant that grows in the desert. When its wood burns, it makes coals that get very hot and stay hot for a long time. People used these coals for cooking and keeping warm. The psalm uses this picture to make a point: God's punishment for liars will be strong and will last a long time, just like broom bush coals.

The writer says they live in Meshek and Kedar, but they probably don't mean those places exactly. The names are symbols. Meshek was a warlike people who lived far away to the north. Kedar was a group of wandering tribes in the Arabian desert. Both groups were known for being rough and ready to fight. Using these names is a bit like saying, "I'm stuck living with the meanest people at the ends of the earth." The writer is saying they live among people who are unfriendly and far from God.

Psalm 120:1

"I call on the Lord in my distress, and he answers me"

"Distress" means being in deep trouble or feeling really upset. The psalmist isn't imagining a problem that might happen someday. He is in trouble right now and needs help fast. So, he prays to God, trusting that God hears him and will answer.

This verse is short, but it says something big: God is faithful. That means he keeps his promises and we can count on him. Even when we feel helpless, God is close and ready to answer.

The words are simple and clear. The verse has two parts that go together: I call, and he answers. The writer doesn't say "maybe he'll answer." They're sure he will. The verse sounds urgent because he is in trouble, but it also sounds hopeful because he trusts God to help. Because it's so simple, it's easy to remember when you need it most.

God isn't far away, and he doesn't ignore us. He listens when people cry out to him. He knows when we're hurting, and he's willing to step in and help. The verse also shows that prayer is more than words we say out of habit. It's like a direct line to a God who cares and is always listening.

When something goes wrong, like a fight with a friend, trouble at home, stress about school, or scary news in the world, this verse reminds us to turn to God first. God hears our prayers. No problem is too big or too hard for him. All through the Bible, God listens when his people call to him. He cares about them and is ready to rescue them.

God is like a loving father who listens to his children. When we call to him in trouble, he answers because he cares about us. He wants to be close to us. He doesn't just know about our pain. He comforts us and helps us.

The promise in this verse comes fully true in Jesus. When people cried out to Jesus for help, he helped them. Two blind men by the side of the road shouted to him, and he healed them (Matthew 20:30–34).

Jesus was in deep distress himself in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he died. He prayed to his Father, and an angel came to give him strength (Luke 22:41–43).

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God answered people's biggest cry for help by making a way for them to be saved. The Bible promises, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. When something goes wrong, who do you go to first? A parent, a friend, a pastor, God? Why?

2. The writer doesn't say "I hope he answers." He says "he answers me." What makes someone that sure?

3. Sometimes God's answer is "wait," or even "no." Does that still count as an answer? Have you ever gotten one of those?

4. The crowd told the two blind men to be quiet, but they shouted even louder (Matthew 20:31). What would make you keep shouting like that?

5. What's something you're worried about right now? How could this verse help you trust God?

Psalm 120:2

"Save me, Lord, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues"

Words are powerful. Kind words can build people up, but lies can tear them down. In ancient times, spreading lies about someone (called slander) could ruin that person's good name or cost them their job. It could split a community apart, or even put someone's life in danger.

"Deceitful" means dishonest: trying to trick people into believing something that isn't true. In this verse, the psalmist asks God to rescue him from people who are telling lies about him and saying mean things that aren't true. Those lies are hurting and could turn other people against him.

He knows words can do real damage, and that can't fix it alone. Only God can truly rescue him. This prayer comes from someone who feels deeply hurt and is asking God to step in and bring out the truth.

The verse uses two-word pictures: "lying lips" and "deceitful tongues." "Lying lips" and "deceitful tongues" mean almost the same thing. Hebrew poetry often says an idea twice in different words to make it stronger. We use our lips and tongues to talk, so these phrases stand for people who say things that aren't true. The pictures remind us that words can hurt as much as a weapon. The verse is a quick, desperate cry of "Save me, Lord!" that shows how badly the writer needs help.

God is on the side of truth. People may twist the facts or change someone's words to make them look bad, but God sees everything exactly as it is. He is fair, and he will make things right. The writer trusts that one day God will show everyone the truth.

The verse also shows a better way to handle being lied about. Instead of getting even or staying angry, the author brings the problem to God and lets him handle it.

Today, lies spread fast through gossip, rumours and things people post online. This verse reminds us to ask God for protection when someone spreads lies about us. It also reminds us to be careful with our own words, so we aren't the ones hurting others. When someone does lie about us, we can trust God to stand up for us instead of trying to get back at them.

The writer goes to God because they trust that God cares and will do what's right. God loves people who have been treated unfairly, and he hears them when they call for help. He sees our pain and cares about it, especially when someone blames us for something we didn't do or says untrue things about us.

Jesus knows what it feels like to be lied about. Before he was crucified, the Jewish priests brought in people to tell lies about him (Matthew 26:59–61). Jesus didn't fight back with angry words. He stayed quiet and trusted God to show the truth. That's an example for us when people treat us unfairly.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. A rumour can go around quickly. Have you ever seen that happen? How do you think the person felt about it?

2. Is exaggerating the same as lying? Where would you draw the line?

3. When do you need to be more careful with your own words? (Think about gossip, teasing or exaggerating.)

4. Look at what the writer asks God for: rescue, not revenge. Why is that harder to ask for?

5. Jesus stayed quiet when people lied about him. But if someone is spreading lies about you, is staying quiet always the right choice?

Psalm 120:3

"What will he do to you, and what more besides, you deceitful tongue?"

In this verse, the psalmist stops talking to God and starts talking straight to the "deceitful tongue," meaning the liars who are causing all the trouble.

The writer asks a rhetorical question: a question asked to make a point, not to get an answer. "What will God do to you?" really means "God is going to deal with you!" He is sure that God will punish people who use lies to hurt others. It's a warning: people who spread lies and blame others for things they didn't do won't escape God. Lying has consequences.

The author talks to the tongue as if it were a person. This is called personification, giving human qualities to something that isn't human. It makes the lying tongue seem almost alive, like a dangerous creature that can do a lot of harm.

The question has two parts: "What will he do to you, and what more besides?" The second part adds even more. It means God's punishment will be complete, and more than enough. The writer sounds angry about the lies, but also calm and sure, because they know God will stand up against evil.

God is the final judge, and he sees right through every lie. He won't ignore lies and gossip. He will respond in the right way. God is fair, and he will fix the wrongs people cause. Sometimes it looks like liars are getting away with it, but that won't last forever. In the end, everyone has to answer to God.

This verse is a serious reminder that God cares about the truth. Gossip, rumours and false stories are everywhere today, so this verse calls us to be honest people in what we say and in how we treat others. It also comforts us: God knows about every lie told about us, and he will make things right in his own time. We don't need to get revenge. We can trust God to handle it.

God's love isn't just a feeling. It's active, which means he does something. He protects his people and stands up for the truth. Judging people who use words to hurt others is part of how God loves the people who got hurt. He won't let evil go unpunished, and he is always on the side of truth.

Jesus was lied about many times, especially at his trial before he was crucified. Many people told lies about him, and their stories didn't even match (Mark 14:56–59). Jesus didn't get even or make threats. Instead, he "entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23), which means he left it to God, who is always fair. Jesus shows us how to deal with lies: be patient and trust God. When God raised Jesus from the dead, it proved that Jesus was telling the truth all along. That gives hope to everyone who is treated unfairly.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Proverbs 12:19 tells a lie "Lasts only a moment." Do you agree? Think of a lie from real life, a book or a movie that came out in the end.

2. Is it wrong to want God to punish someone who hurt you? Why or why not?

3. Matthew 12:36 talks about "empty words." What's something you said this week without really considering?

4. How does it make you feel to know that God hears all what people say about you?

5. When people insulted Jesus, he didn't threaten them back (1 Peter 2:23). Which is harder for you: not getting even, or not getting the last word?

Psalm 120:4

"He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom bush"

This verse answers the question from verse 3, "What will God do to the liar?" The answer is that God will punish them. The writer is sure that God won't ignore the harm lies cause. He will act, and he will act strongly.

The author compares lying words to sharp arrows and burning coals. These word pictures show how much pain lies can cause. They can hurt people's feelings, and sometimes they can lead to people getting physically hurt too. So, he uses two strong word pictures that compare one thing to another to show how serious God's punishment will be:

- ***A warrior's sharp arrows***: A skilled warrior doesn't miss. God's judgment will hit its target exactly. It is aimed carefully. It isn't random. It hits the right person.
- ***Burning coals of the broom bush***: Remember from the background section that broom bush coals burn very hot for a long time. The consequences of lying don't disappear quickly. They last a long time.

The punishment matches the crime. In the Bible, lying words are often compared to arrows and fire (look at the verses below). The liar has been shooting word-arrows and spreading word-fire, so God answers with real arrows and fire.

God takes it very seriously when people use words to hurt others. He doesn't shrug off lies, rumours or mean words. The strong pictures in this verse show that hurting people with words has real consequences. This also means people who trust God don't need to get revenge. God is fair, and he will bring justice in his own time.

This verse reminds us that God knows about every lie and unkind thing people say about us. We don't have to take matters into our own hands. People often say things without thinking, so this verse also calls us to be honest with our own words and to trust God to fix what's wrong. In the end, God will make things right.

It might sound harsh or even a little scary. But it actually shows how much God loves truth and hates sins. Think about it: if someone hurt your friend and a teacher just ignored it, would that teacher really care about your friend? A loving God doesn't ignore wrongdoing, especially when it hurts people. When God punishes lies, he shows that he cares about the people who were hurt. God's love isn't only about comfort. It's also about standing up for what's right.

Jesus was lied about many times. Jesus didn't get even. In the end, God proved Jesus was right by raising him from the dead. The truth won over the lies. Jesus is our example and our Lord.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Out of everything in the world, why do you think the writer picked arrows and burning coals? What do they have in common with lies?

2. Psalm 64 talks about people who "aim cruel words like deadly arrows." Has a comment ever hit you like that? (You don't have to share it out loud.)

3. Broom bush coals stay hot long after the flames die down. Why do mean comments stick with us for years, when nice ones are so easy to forget?

4. A friend says, "If God really loved people, he wouldn't punish anyone." How would you answer?

5. Come up with your own word picture for what a lie does to a friendship. You can draw it if you like?

Psalm 120:5

"Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar!"

"Woe" is an old word for deep sadness. It's like saying, "Oh no, how terrible for me!" "Dwell" means to live somewhere.

In this verse, the writer is sad and frustrated about where he lives. As the background section explained, Meshek and Kedar were faraway places full of unfriendly, warlike people. The writer probably doesn't live in those places for real. He uses the names to describe how he feels: like a stranger stuck among people who don't share the same values and beliefs about God. The writer is surrounded by people who lie and pick fights, and he feels like he doesn't belong.

People who follow God don't always fit in with the world around them. This verse shows it's normal to feel uncomfortable when you're surrounded by people who are mean or don't care about doing what's right.

The Bible says God's people are like "foreigners and strangers on earth" (Hebrews 11:13–16). In other words, this world isn't our true home. The sadness shows a longing for a place where God's truth is honoured. That points to an even bigger longing for God's kingdom.

- ***The names were chosen on purpose***. Meshek was far to the north, and Kedar was far to the south in the desert. Nobody could live in both places at once! That's a clue that the writer isn't talking about real addresses. The names stand for feeling far away from home, from God and from people who think like you.
- *"**Woe**"* shows how heavy and sad the psalmist feels inside.
- ***The verse uses parallelism***. Remember how verse 2 said the same idea twice in different words? This verse does it too: "I dwell in Meshek" and "I live among the tents of Kedar" mean almost the same thing. Saying it twice shows how strongly the writer feels.

Sometimes Christians feel out of place too, like at work when colleagues make fun of things you believe, or when people around you think doing wrong is no big deal. This verse says it's okay to admit that feels hard. It also reminds us to ask God for strength to keep going. Our true home is in heaven, and God wants us to stay faithful to him even when we feel like we don't fit in.

The writer feels lonely and treated unfairly, but they still talk to God about it. That shows they trust God to understand their pain and care about it. God loves us enough to listen when we're sad, frustrated or wishing things were different. He is close to people who feel left out, and he promises to bring us to a place of peace one day.

Jesus knows how it feels not to be welcomed. The Bible says he came to his own people, but many of them didn't accept him (John 1:10–11).

Jesus often went off by himself to quiet places to pray (Luke 5:16). Even Jesus needed time alone with God.

Jesus told his followers they would have trouble in this world, but he also said, "Take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Jesus promised he is getting a place ready for us, where we will never feel like strangers again (John 14:2–3).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. If you have a Bible map, find Meshek and Kedar. Why couldn't the writer really live in both places?

2. How can you keep following God when people around you don't share your beliefs?

3. Have you ever been the only one in a group who wouldn't go along with something? What happened?

4. Hebrews says God's people are "foreigners and strangers on earth." Does that make you feel lonely, or kind of relieved? Maybe both?

5. Jesus said he is getting a place ready for us (John 14:2–3). What do you picture when you hear that?

Psalm 120:6

"Too long have I lived among those who hate peace"

The writer is tired and frustrated. He lives around people who are unfriendly and always ready to fight. The words "too long" tell us this isn't a bad day or a bad week. It has been going on for a long time, and he is worn out.

The author wants to live somewhere peaceful. Instead, he is stuck in a place where discontent and conflict are normal. It's a cry from someone who feels trapped.

- ***"Too long"*** shows the trouble has gone on and on, and he is longing for it to stop.
- ***There's a contrast***, or big difference, between what the writer wants (peace) and what the people around them want (fighting). That difference makes the verse feel tense, like being pulled in two directions.
- ***The tone is sad and longing***. You can hear the heartache of someone who feels like the trouble will never end.

God is a God of peace, so when the writer wants peace, he is wanting something God wants too. But God's people often live in places that are far from peaceful. That's because the world is broken by sin and doesn't always follow God's ways.

Even so, God asks his people to be peacemakers, people who help bring peace, even when others around them don't want it. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Lots of Christians feel the same way the writer did. The world is full of arguing, fighting and people who don't care about God's ways. You might see it at school, online or even at home. This verse shows it's okay to admit that's hard and to tell God you're frustrated. But it also reminds us that even when others don't want peace, followers of Jesus should keep working for it.

God wants peace because he loves people. He wants his people to get along with each other and live honestly. The writer brings his frustration to God, trusting that God understands. Even when everything around us feels angry and messy, God stays close to people who want peace. The writer isn't giving up hope. He trusts that God will one day make things right and bring peace back.

Jesus lived surrounded by conflict, and some people hated him and wanted to kill him. But he answered them with love and patience. Jesus is peace. He told his followers, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27). Jesus shows us that we can have God's peace inside us even when there's fighting all around us. The Bible says, "He himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. "Too long." What's something you've had to put up with for a long time? What helped you keep going?

2. Romans 12:18 says "as far as it depends on you." In your last question, what part depended on you? What part didn't?

3. A non-believer reads Matthew 10:34 and asks, "Jesus wants a sword fight?" How would you explain it?

4. When you feel stressed or upset by fighting around you, how can you ask God to give you, his peace?

Psalm 120:7

"I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war"

This is the last verse of Psalm 120. The psalmist wants peace and tries hard to get along with people. But whenever they speak, the people around them answer with anger and want to fight.

It's frustrating and disappointing. Imagine trying to make up with someone after an argument and having them yell at you instead. The writer wants to live in harmony, which means getting along well with others, but keeps running into people who push back. That's part of what makes doing the right thing so hard in a world full of conflict.

- ***A strong contrast***: The verse puts two opposite things side by side. First comes "I am for peace," short and clear. Right after it comes "but when I speak, they are for war." Putting opposites next to each other shows how frustrating it is to try to do good and get a bad reaction.
- ***A cool fact***: In Hebrew, the language the psalm was written in, the first part says "I am peace." The Hebrew word for peace is shalom. The writer isn't just someone who likes peace. Peace is who they are.
- ***Simple words***: The short, plain language shows how sad and helpless the writer feels with fighting all around.

Trying to live God's way in a broken world can hurt. This verse reminds us that even when we offer peace, people won't always offer it back. That's because the world is broken by sin, and many people reject God's ways.

But the verse also teaches that we should keep going after peace anyway. We can't control how other people react. We can only control what we do. God still wants us to be peacemakers.

Sometimes we try our best to get along and people still argue, leave us out or stay angry. This verse reminds us that even if we try hard to keep the peace, not everyone will go along with it. That's not a reason to give up. God sees every time you try to make peace, like saying sorry first, refusing to join in on gossip or being kind to someone who wasn't kind to you. It matters to him even when others don't notice or care.

The longing for peace matches God's own heart. God wants his people to get along, and it makes him sad when they're treated badly for trying to make peace. God understands how much it hurts to be rejected. He promises to be with people who seek peace and to comfort them when others push back. Even when the world answers our peace with anger, God is right there with us.

Jesus is the greatest peacemaker. He came into a world that was against him, and many of his own people didn't accept him (John 1:11). Jesus offered peace, but many people

answered with anger and violence, and he was crucified. Through his death on the cross, Jesus made peace between God and people (Colossians 1:20). The Bible calls this reconciling, which means bringing two sides back together as friends. Jesus shows us that being a peacemaker is part of following him, even when it's hard.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. The psalmist says, "I am peace." If your friends describe you in one word, what would you want it to be? What word do you think they'd actually pick?

2. Think about the last argument you were in. If one of you had said something different at the start, how might it have ended?

3. Is being a peacemaker the same as letting people push you around? What's the difference?

4. Psalm 120 ends with the problem still unsolved. Why do you think the Songs of Ascents start this way?

5. What's one thing you can do this week to "seek peace and pursue it"?

Psalm 120 across the whole Bible

Use this table for further reading or for homework.

Theme	Psalm 120	Old Testament	New Testament
Prayer from distress	v. 1	Ps 18:6; Ps 34:17; Jeremiah 33:3; Jonah 2:2	Phil 4:6–7; Heb 5:7; 1 Pe 5:7
Lies and the tongue	v. 2	Exodos 20:16; Ps 34:13; Prov 6:16–19; 12:22	John 8:44; Eph 4:25; James 3:5–10
God's justice	vv. 3–4	Deut 32:35; Ps 7:12–16; 52:2-4; 64:3–8; Proverbs 12:9; 25:18	Matthew 12:36; Rom 12:19; Rev 21:8
Strangers and sojourners	v. 5	Gen 23:4; Lev 25:23; Ps 39:12; 42:2-3; Jeremiah 9:2	Phil 3:20; Heb 11:13–16; 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11
Peace	vv. 6–7	Ps 34:14; 122:6–8; Isa 9:6	Matt 5:9; 10:34; Rom 12:18; Eph 2:14; Heb 12:14; 1 Peter 3:11

Christ in Psalm 120

About 6 minutes. Jesus sang the pilgrim songs, walked the pilgrim road, and lived out this psalm to the end.

- ***He was a pilgrim***. At twelve he went up to Jerusalem with his family for Passover, "after the custom of the feast" (Luke 2:41–42), very likely singing these songs on the way. Later he "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).
- ***He was surrounded by lying lips***. At his trial many false witnesses came forward, and their testimony did not even agree (Matt 26:59–61; Mark 14:56).
- ***He did not retaliate***. No deceit was found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; he left judgment to God (Isa 53:7, 9; 1 Pet 2:22–23).
- ***He took the arrows and the fire***. The judgment that lying tongues deserve fell on him: "he was wounded for our transgressions" (Isa 53:5; 2 Cor 5:21).
- ***He is our peace***. He makes peace with God and between enemies (Eph 2:14–17). He told his disciples to expect trouble in the world but peace in him (John 14:27; 16:33).

Task for the week

Five short sessions of about 15 minutes each. Tick each day off as you go, and bring your notes next week.

Memory verse: "In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me." (Psalm 120:1)

☐ Day 1: Make the psalm your own. Read Psalm 120 slowly in two translations. Then write it out by hand, or rewrite it in your own words about your own situation. Which word or phrase stayed with you, and why?

☐ Day 2: The tongue. Read James 3:1–12, Proverbs 12:17–22 and Ephesians 4:25–32. For one day, notice your own words: when were they true, kind and helpful, and when were they not? What one change would make the biggest difference?

☐ Day 3: Justice belongs to God. Read Psalm 37:1–11, Romans 12:14–21 and 1 Peter 2:19–25. Is there someone whose words have hurt you? Write a short prayer handing that person and that hurt over to God, and pray for them by name.

☐ Day 4: Strangers and pilgrims. Read Genesis 12:1–4, Hebrews 11:8–16 and 1 Peter 2:9–12. In what ways are you at home here, and in what ways a stranger? What would it look like this week to live as a citizen of heaven in Benidorm?

☐ Day 5: Peace. Read Matthew 5:9 and 5:38–48, Romans 12:18 and Ephesians 2:13–18. Take one practical step towards peace: a phone call, a note, an apology, or simply praying for someone you find difficult.

Get ready for next week: Psalm 121

Read Psalm 121 twice. Count how many times the words "keep" and "preserve" appear in the KJV; in Hebrew it is one word used six times. *What is the difference between where the pilgrim is in Psalm 120 and where he is in Psalm 121?*