

Thought for Today: June 30, 2008

Psalm 123 (NASB)

**To You I lift up my eyes,
O You who are enthroned in the heavens!
Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes look to the LORD our God, until He is gracious to us.**

**Be gracious to us, O LORD, be gracious to us,
For we are greatly filled with contempt.
Our soul is greatly filled with the scoffing of those who are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.**

This psalm, this prayer, is not for the perfect. So if your life is without struggle, then you probably do not need to spend any time thinking about the words of this short psalm. This psalm is for those of us who still need help. It's for those of us who still have questions. It's for those of us who know all too well about our failings and our imperfections. But it is not a psalm about despair. It is not a psalm about bottomless guilt. It is not a psalm about self pity or anger or cynicism. Instead, this psalm is a simple plea for God to tend to the wounds of His humble servants.

The imagery is simple but profound. We can imagine how a servant or a slave would be completely reliant upon his or her master. We can envision the hopeful, wide-eyed stare as a servant watches the master's every move and hangs on every word that drips from the master's lips. This psalmist says that this is how we watch and wait for God.

"Until He is gracious to us." That's what the psalmist is waiting for—more grace. I don't know exactly what was causing the psalmist's distress. Did friends turn on him? Did coworkers slander or abuse him? Did unbelievers make fun of his faith? He doesn't say. He only says that some arrogant people are making fun of him and treating him with contempt. As far as we know, the prideful scoffers could be fellow believers who are adding to the distress of a fallen brother. We've seen that happen before. Some of us have experienced it ourselves. But notice what this battered believer does.

He doesn't demand vengeance. He doesn't run from God. Instead, he cries for grace. He remembers that his Master is enthroned in glory, and he turns his eyes to God. He isn't ignoring the unfairness of life, but neither is he willing to sit idly by and pout. He's doing something about it. He's praying in humility.

Sometimes we just don't pray because we don't think that we know what to say. We feel foolish when we can't find the right words. The next time that happens to me, I'll know what to say. It's always appropriate to go to God in humility and pray, "Be gracious to me, O Lord, be gracious to me."

In Him,
Patrick Barber