

**Unoffendable:
How to Respond to Contempt**
Psalm 123

If you spend any length of time in the psalms, I think you'll learn to love them. Because the psalms are a truly unique place in God's Word.

Athanasius "most of Scripture speaks *to* us; the Psalms speak *for* us."

The Psalms voice for us practically every human emotion. Our highs & lows / joys & sorrows / gladness & anger / lament & celebration.

John Calvin called the Psalms "An Anatomy of the Human Soul (all parts)"
there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here
represented as in a mirror... grief, sorrow, fear, doubt, hope, (joy, gladness)...
(Calvin, *Preface to Psalms*)

What a great way to think of the Psalms—as a **mirror** into every corner in your soul. If you hold the Psalms up in front of you, like a mirror; or better—like a three-sided, full length mirror (to get suit tailored just rt for wedding); if you step into the Psalms and slowly turn in each direction; God's Word will *reveal* who you really are; learn things about yourself no one else can show you.

So, we listen to the PSS over, over—on purpose—like favorite Spotify channel. And as we do, they begin to voice our hearts to God. Our questions / our sin struggles / we even learn to voice our gladness... and when we do this, it is not just therapeutic. It's **redemptive**.

Psalm 123 is a perfect example of the redemptive power of the psalms. The composer of this song has been mocked, mistreated, and hated. He takes all that hurt/injustice... and instead of a pity party ... he says, its time to worship!

We don't know the particular context of vv 3-4. It may have been coming from inside of Israel (unfaithful Israel). Or fr outside—opposing world. But we do know that whoever sings this song is someone who is **really feeling it!** Who is feeling the mockery / judgment / superiority of those looking down on him.

And he's just had enough!!! We have had *more than enough contempt!!!*

Let's start at the end of this psalm and work our way back. We'll start with the problem—with the opposition and injustice of vv 3-4.

1. When you've had enough (vv 3-4)

Read vv 3-4

What is contempt? Why does it cut so deeply?

Contempt is a powerful form of dislike/disrespect that one person has for another. It's about as *judgmental* as you can be. **It usually includes cutting words, a condescending tone, and name calling.** Sometimes it comes in the form eye rolling. Sometimes it's just cold and dismissive.

Jesus had a really strong rebuke to those who trusted in their own self-righteousness and treated others with contempt.

Throughout history God's faithful people have been treated with contempt. In the NT, the most obvious place to see this is the Book of Acts. The early church faced intimidation and threats (Acts 4), physical suffering (Acts 5), and some, like Stephen, even faced martyrdom (Acts 7).

We are not living under that threat today—at least not here in the States. But there is still plenty of contempt for the **arrogant** toward believers today:

There are at least three ways the world will make fun of you... get ready for it:

1. **Intellectually:** we are often ridiculed for our primitive views on faith and science or gender and marriage. We are easily dismissed by those who see themselves as intellectually superior...
2. **Morally:** Christian students in a public school/university context are often mocked for not embracing the ways of the world... if you choose to wait until your married to be sexually active...you will be made fun of.
3. **Spiritually:** as an open Christian in the work place you might be mocked and even passed over for a promotion. You may be slandered or even bullied because of your personal views.

So, what should you do with all this contempt and scorn coming at you? *All this pride and arrogance standing over you in judgment...* Should you defend yourself? Don't you have a right to speak up and protect your good name?

Trans What do you do when **your soul** and **the souls of others** in your tribe have had enough!!!!?? Vv 3-4...

2. When the temptations are many (1 Peter 2)

What do you do when the **temptations** are many? The temptation to respond in kind. To send some judgment and sarcasm and cutting words back at them? I mean let's be honest. Sometimes we just want to fire back! **Right?**

But that is not a gospel response.

In fact, that kind of response is curiously absent from this psalm. Yes, he/his people have been grossly mistreated—the injustice is real. He could probably make a long list of how he and God's people are in the right. But he doesn't.

Instead, he strikes a curious balance between *honesty* and *humility*. Oh, **we have had enough** of this, O Lord... but we are not here to justify our own goodness and righteousness... what we need is your **mercy**!

If one of the ways you humble us is through the world's opposition, then *we will learn to trust you even in that*.

In other words, this psalm teaches us how to be truly **unoffendable**. I am borrowing this idea from Brant Hansen and his book titled ***Unoffendable***.

This is one of my new fav books... Brant describes how *he used to feel justified in his anger toward the world that mistreated him*.

Quote some highlights from pp. 3-6

I agree with Brant. Of all people, *Christians should be the most unoffendable*.

Listen, people who oppose God and take delight in opposing your Christian faith—they are watching you very closely to see how you are going to respond. **Don't take the bait!** Don't give in to the temptation to justify yourself.

Instead, as **1 Peter 2:12** says...

1 Peter 2:20ff.

This is the same gospel spirit of Psalm 123.

Trans—the psalmist commit himself and his people to **the mercy of God**.

3. That's when it's time to worship (vv 1-2)

When you have had enough of the world... and its opposition; and when the temptations are many... that's when it is time to worship.

As I read the psalm again, watch for two things...

A. How he sees God (v 1)

When you are mistreated or misunderstood, you have a decision to make. You can stay fixated on all the ways you were wronged. Or, like the psalmist, you can train your eyes to look up in worship.

To you, I lift up my eyes = this is a posture of prayer... he is literally looking up / lifting his eyes / setting his gaze on the God who lives far above his earthly circumstances; above them and unhindered by not. Not *unmoved* by his circumstances... but *unhindered* by them.

This God remains enthroned above all things. Even when we feel like our lives are unraveling at the hands of our accusers.... He remains enthroned.

Psalm 115:3 "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases!"

Learning to pray and sing about the sovereignty of God in the midst of injustice... and misunderstanding. It is incredibly stabilizing / centering.

B. How he sees himself (v 2)

He sees himself as a servant of God. There were many slaves in the ancient world so this comparison would have been easily understood by everyone. This is not an endorsement of human slavery but, rather, a way of saying that our dependence on God is *nothing less than full surrender and obedience*.

As the eye of a servant waits for **the smallest gesture** from his master, so our eyes look to God to show us his mercy. As Kidner points out, these servants are watching for relief, not for orders. They are waiting for a gesture of grace
Communion (Chip)