

Good Morning. My name is Lee Lewis and I have been asked by Matt if I would preach. He threw out some dates and I picked this date towards the end of the summer. I really regret that because it has actually ruined my summer. But I am excited nonetheless to share with you today. I feel like the Lord has given me a specific word for our church, and I'm excited to be able to share that with you. Open your Bibles to Psalms 120. I am not going to get there immediately. I need to say a few things before we get into the text. We will read Psalms 120 and 121.

I've been on staff here for three-and-a-half years, and I've had the opportunity to study Genesis 1, 2 and 3 somewhat extensively. I wouldn't say that I have mastered those chapters by any means. There is so much there. Specifically for what Michael Snetzer does within our Recovery Ministry, there are several different talks that we do based off of Genesis 1, 2 and 3. Having studying that and having the opportunity to study that has been very eye-opening, mainly because there are some significant consistencies between the way people are and the way the Scripture reads them to be in Genesis 1, 2 and 3 and what I see consistently in my office and in ministry. One of the things that I have noticed, specifically when it talks in Genesis 1 and 2, is you see where there is something that is not ready to be inhabited by man, there is a vast nothingness. Then God takes that whatever and He begins to bring order to it. He creates and He says it's good. He does this until He's finished creating. He creates Adam, He creates Eve and then He does something that I think it's profound and we just read over like if it's nothing. He begins to speak to Adam and Eve. He begins to give them direction. Now keep in mind Genesis 3 has not happened and there is no sin. And whatever God created He said it was good. The only thing that He said wasn't good was that man shouldn't be alone, so He creates Eve. And that just points to this incredible picture of community and God has not created us to be independent. And then He further emphasizes this when He gives Adam counsel. "Go eat this. Don't eat that. Go here. Don't go here." So you clearly see in Genesis 1 and 2, when there is no sin, that God creates in such a way. He creates man and He creates woman to be dependent upon him, which I think would tell us something about us today.

Here is where I found myself extremely frustrated personally today in my own walk and with the people I was spending time with and being able to counsel. I could spell out to you very clearly what was wrong with me, especially if I was struggling with something. I could tell you why I was struggling or when I struggled what it looked like. But what I couldn't tell you is what was going on in my heart that led to that struggle. I couldn't tell you was that fact that I realized that in those moments that there was something misfiring within me. But I didn't realize how dependent I was upon everything other than God. So you see that God has created man, He's created mankind and He has created woman to be dependent and that hasn't changed. That hasn't changed. You are dependent. The problem is we are dependent upon everything but God, which is why I wanted to get into Psalms 120. Because the psalmist is going to spell out very clearly what it looks like to seek refuge and to seek the Lord and dependency on God.

I think there are two extremes with the heart that is dependent upon something other than God, and I'll explain them very quickly. I believe everybody who walks in pride or some type of self-rule falls in one or both of these categories. I think the first one you would call self-pity. Here is the type of person. A lot of times they have been dragged through the mud. Maybe they're an abuse victim, they have just been trashed for the better part of their life and they have a lot of wounds and a lot of hurt. But rather than running to Lord with those wounds, rather than running to the Lord with their pain, they curl up in the corner in self-pity and self-loathing and they isolate. The best example I can give you is my granny. She passed on a couple years ago. She was just an incredible godly woman. As I got older and I studied biblical

counseling and was in seminary, she began to open up to me and tell me the stuff that she went through. I counsel people all the time, and it by far is the worst story I've heard of abuse. Just the wounds from that were significant and deep. But then the Lord brought her out of that situation when one of her brothers took her out of that situation. And as she got older, the Lord began to grab her heart, began to do the work, began to heal and He began to work on those wounds. She would tell you if she was here. Her tendency in her flesh was to curl up in the corner and isolate. That is what she would tell you. And she would want everyone to feel sorry for her. She would want everyone to look about how bad she had it and how much she had gone through. And she would want everyone to see it but wouldn't want to join with anybody because then they might speak truth to her and she didn't want to hear that truth. But as the Lord worked and refined her, He brought her out of that.

Here is the other extreme and this one frustrates me the most, because I see it far more. Our culture in America actually encourages this unfortunately. It's this rugged individualistic independent self-made person. Clearly that speaks and teaches and preaches against what God did in Genesis 1 and 2. Here is the guy that I'm thinking of. He is the guy that is self-made and no one has ever handed him anything. He's done it himself. He's built his empire and he has picked himself up from his boot straps. He can do it, he can fix it, he can roll his sleeves up and handle it. He is all independent and away from the Lord. So when this guy he sees weakness, he sees it as weakness and he mocks it, he scoffs it. He's above that and he doesn't see himself as weak. But he is equally deceived!

Both types are isolated, both are arrogant and both seek their own way outside of the Lord. Psalm 120, the psalmist is going to give us a much better picture of how it should look. Verse 1 the psalmist says, "In my distress I call to the Lord and he answered me. Deliver me, oh Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior's sharp arrows with glowing coals at the broom tree. Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshach that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! Too long have I had my dwelling among those that hate peace. I am for peace, but when I speak they are for war!" Immediately in verse 1 the psalmist says, "In my distress, I call to the Lord." So he realizes his weakness, he realizes his lacking. His weakness, his vulnerability has been exposed. And he is not acting like it has not been. He sees that is exposed, he sees the state of who he is and he sees his deep need for the Lord and so he says, "In my distress I call to the Lord and He answered me. Deliver me, oh Lord."

Then he goes into briefly explains some of his circumstances. Specifically in verse 5 when he says, "Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshach, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" He is not referencing these tribes to say Meshach and Kedar have come against me. That would never have happened. They weren't allies first of all, and geographically speaking, there is no way they would have teamed up. He is using them as an example to paint a picture of how difficult things are for him. It is not like, "Man, I had a tummy ache today and had a rough day." It is worse case scenario type thing. "My two enemies who hate each other have decided to join forces and come against me." That is a pretty bad day right? So he is using this as an illustration to paint a picture of his circumstances.

But keep in mind of what he has done in verse 1. "In my distress I call to the Lord" paints a brief picture of his circumstances, but here is what is going to become central. His circumstances are not central. Psalm 121:1 is where the psalmist moved and we all have heard this verse if we have been in church. "I lift my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth." So immediately you see the psalmist shift from circumstances and the focal point becomes God. Distress is realized, the weakness is realized, he moves to the Lord and he looks to the mountain. He is not looking to some type of fortress. The psalmist isn't looking to a hill where there are some type of fortress with walls and an army. He's not saying, "If I can just get there I'll be good." No, he is referencing Zion. He's going, "I look to the mountain. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord." So he is referencing the fortress of God, the refuge of God.

Let's keep reading verse 3. "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber or sleep. Behold he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." Growing up, my favorite part of this text would have been, "I lift my eyes to the mountains. Where does my help come from?" A cheesy worship song was written about it. . . I love that song. It is surely outdated I would imagine, but that was the tag line of that chorus in that particular song. But as I study this passage, this text, I tell you what jumps out to me what really warms my heart a lot more is verse 6 where it says, "The sun shall not strike you by the day, nor the moon by night." Do you see the holistic provision there? It's not from noon to six but from morning to night. Do you see the complete provision?

Let's keep going verse 7. "The Lord will keep you from all evil." Not some evil, not 50% or 60% of evil, but the Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life, not part of your life, not 15 years, 40 years or 50 years. He will keep your life. "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." It is a holistic divine protection that the Lord offers us. And the opportunity in our weakness, which the psalmist is going to clearly point out, is that weakness is not the problem. Weakness reveals our deep need for the Lord, and in our need we look to the mountain. His provision is perfect and is complete. It is all that I need. There is no strategizing that trumps His provision.

The psalmist absolutely nails it, and when we read this, we are encouraged, we are warm and we are stirred. But we do not live this way. We don't look to the mountain! We don't look to the Lord! We look to everything but Him. And then when those fail, maybe we will call Him up. That's our tendency. We realize our need, we realize our vulnerability and we realize our weakness. And the Lord's refuge is complete. His refuge is perfect and divine. Why do we not look to the mountain? If the opportunity is to see our need for Him, why do we not shift that focus to Him? I think you could sit here and we could brainstorm and we could come up with thousands of reasons. But I believe all of them boil down to two things.

The first one the first hard issue can be found Jeremiah 17:5-8. It says, "Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land." So Jeremiah the prophet says, "Cursed is the man who puts trust in creation. Cursed is the man who goes to God's stuff rather than God." Trust is a loaded word. I think my marriage needs trust, but I don't think God has ever called me to put direct trust in her. I think He has called me to trust Him so that I know how to see her. Let me give you a personal example. I know a lot of you in here, so I am going to try and stick to personal examples because you may be thinking I'm talking about you. I'm 31 and I been married for 5 years. We just celebrated our 5 year anniversary a couple of weeks ago. One of the things I didn't know that got exposed to early on in marriage was this tendency towards idolatry. Let me tell you what I'm talking about, when I began to date Andrea my wife she, was my first serious girlfriend. Trust me now because I didn't want one. I looked high and low for one; I just could never find one. It never worked out. Some say it was a gift. I saw it as a curse early on. As those insecurities mounted and those fears mounted in me, I had a lot insecurity and fear issues growing up. I would let the Lord deal with them a little bit over here, but for the most part, in my heart of hearts, I thought that a marriage or a relationship would fix those insecurities. And if I just had that I would be fine. So literally two weeks into the marriage, this got exposed. I worked in downtown New Orleans at the Marriott. We lived out in a suburb called Kenner. I called her around 11:00 that day and her phone was buried in her purse. She just has never been connected to her phone like I am. So clearly she missed the call and she didn't call me back. Minutes turned into hours, hours turned into the rest of the day. By the time I got off of work, I was furious. On my way home, I'm thinking, "I'm going to let her have it." And here is my anger. I don't punch holes in walls or throw people across the room or cuss people out. Instead I just check out. "I will punish you with coldness. We will see if you like that." So, I get home and she is literally cooking the first meal that we had ever had married. We had eaten out up to that point. So this is the first meal she has cooked

in our marriage. I walk in the door and she says, "How was your day? I'm cooking a meal!" And she was excited because she is learning to cook. I said, "It was fine." Very cold, very short I walked in the back room and did my thing. She came in she said, "Is something wrong? Have I done something?" I said, "Nope, nothing." This went on for weeks and weeks and weeks. Three months in and here is the worst part about this. My wife didn't raise up against that and begin to quarrel with me. She just sat under it and it began to crush her. We were literally in a U-Haul on our way moving to Dallas and the Lord spoke so quickly and directly to my heart. It was one of those words, one of those moments where it provokes so much. I mean, I cried immediately and tears just began to fall. The Lord spoke to me said, "You are going to crush her. She can't fix what is broken in you Lee, only I can." So what I had done in my sick and idolatrous heart is I elevated a relationship to fix. I felt what was broken in me and the Lord said, "She can't fix it." And thank God she didn't, because I would have worshiped her had she fixed that. And we have the same tendencies where we elevate something that we perceive to fix what we perceive to be broken. And when we do that, Jeremiah is saying, "You are an idolater!" It is idolatry when you go to stuff rather than Him.

Let me finish reading because Jeremiah has something great to say. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when the heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." So Jeremiah says, "Cursed is the man who puts his trust in creation. He is like a shrub planted in the desert." Man, I'm from the desert. Shrubs don't grow out there. If there is a shrub, the leaves are burned and it is gnarled and twisted. It's not something you would want to put in your front yard. Cursed is that man who puts trust in man and makes man's flesh his strength, but blessed is the man who puts his trust in the Lord when the heat comes. It's now "if" the heat comes; it's "when" the heat comes. Because his roots go deep his leaves don't wither and he continues to bear fruit. So idolatry leads us away from the Creator, it leads us away from refuge and we seek it in other things.

I think the other one is pride. In Exodus 3, God calls Moses through a burning bush. He says, "I want you to lead my people out of slavery out of Egypt." So Moses says, "I can't do it. I don't have good speech." God says, "No, I am going to use you." So He gives Moses three particular signs. "Go to the elders of My people and tell them I am going to lead them out of slavery. Show them these miraculous supernatural signs, and then you and Aaron go to the Pharaoh and tell him the same thing. And We will begin this deliverance." So Moses goes before the elders of the people and shows them the signs. The first one is he throws his staff down and it turns into a snake. He grabs it by the tail and turns it back into a staff. The second one is he puts his hand inside of his garment and pulls it out and his hand is withered, it is diseased. He puts it back in and pulls it back out and it is fleshy and it is healed. And for the last one, he turns water into blood. So Moses says, "God is going to deliver you. He has heard your cries. He is going to deliver you from slavery, from the Egyptians." He shows them the super natural miraculous signs and the people are overwhelmed. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all of the elders and gathered together all of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all of the words the Lord that spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people and the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and they worshiped. They heard the Lord through Moses and Aaron that He is responding to their affliction and suffering. They do the supernatural signs and the Israelites believe and are provoked to throw their face on the ground and worship. You don't think they were overjoyed? This wasn't like "Yeah, the Lord is going to deliver us. Let's go back to do what we were doing." They threw themselves on the ground and begin to worship. One chapter later, Moses and Aaron go before the Pharaoh and say, "God is leading His people out." They show Pharaoh the miraculous signs. Pharaoh says, "You obviously have too much time on your hands. So go double the amount of bricks you are supposed to make, but now you don't get to use straw." So things went from really bad to awful. Things went from difficult slavery to really difficult slavery. And the people began to groan and complain. "What has the Lord done?" So then Moses turned to the Lord and said, "Oh Lord, why have You done evil to these people? Why did You ever send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to these people and You have not delivered Your people

at all?" They have cried out to the Lord. The Lord's answering their plea, He is answering their affliction, and He even shows them supernatural signs to seal the deal. And they are already complaining. This is a sign of things to come if you know anything about God leading them into the wilderness. So as the story unfolds, they cross the Red Sea on dry land into the wilderness and the people continue to grumble and complain. And here is what I propose to you. Here is the arrogance. They cry out in their affliction, they cry out in their weakness, they cry out in their pain and the Lord begins to move. But they don't like the way He is moving. They want it to look a little different. In Numbers 11, they are saying, "We wish we can go back to Egypt and eat cucumbers and garlic." Really? You would rather go back to slavery than eat the supernatural manna and quail that is delivered every morning? Do you hear the arrogance? They are delivered from affliction, but it doesn't look the way they want it to look, so they rebel against God's provision. That's pride. And In Deuteronomy 8, God explains why He was leading them into the wilderness. He says, "Remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness. . .", Who led them into the wilderness? It wasn't Moses. God did. God caused them to go into the wilderness. ". . .that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know nor did your fathers know that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years." He says to them, "I've led you into the wilderness so that you can see your heart the way that I do and that you are prone to wander." Is that not the deepest love He could have had for them? Or is it loving to leave them blind and dumb to their wandering hearts? And then they worshiped golden calves! But He loved them enough. "I've led you into the wilderness to humble you so that you can see your heart the way that I do. Did you ever lack food? Did you ever lack water? Did you ever lack clothing? Did I not lead you?" This is extremely loving of God. They were never lacking of God. His provision was there, but it just didn't look the way they wanted it to. He had delivered them from affliction and they over and over again they griped and complained about what the Lord was doing. Is this not arrogant? And we do the same thing. We will see something within us that we can't figure out, something that we don't feel like we can handle and we will bring it before the Lord in our despair in our hurt in our suffering. We go, "Lord, deliver. I'm afflicted. Lord, help." Then when He begins to move, we resist it.

When my son was three-months-old, we put him in his car seat he arched his back. He is only three-months-old. Who taught him that? He was already resisting. I do the same thing. I often resist and arch my back to the perfect divine provision that the Lord has promised and is giving to me in Psalm 120 and 121. My boys have taught me this. Abel is one and Luke is nearly three. My boys have taught me this as far as pictures go. We have a blender, and my wife makes me fruit smoothies every morning. The blender sounds like a chainsaw. It is really loud. For the first five or six months, that blender would shoot on and Abel would v-line it for momma or daddy. It was usually to daddy since mom was near the blender and that would put him closer to the chainsaw sound. And sometimes he would be in a panic because he couldn't find me because I was around the corner. I have never have seen Abel duck for the nearest table or closet. You know where he goes for refuge? Daddy. So if we are so stiff-necked about this, don't we go to our Father? Why is it that we will go to a myriad of things before we go to Him? Pride and idolatry.

In Isaiah 30, the Israelites have seen this threat called the Assyrian army. The Assyrian army is known for their brutal cavalry. The Assyrians are threatening the Israelites. Here is the Israelites strategy, here is their wisdom. "The Assyrians are tough. They have a pretty brutal cavalry. Let's form an alliance with the Egyptians, the Egyptians who used to own us, the Egyptians from whom God had delivered us." Their wisdom, logic and their strategy is to go around God and they said, "Let's form an alliance with the Egyptians." Here is what Isaiah says very subtly, by subtle I mean brutally. He says, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. But you were unwilling, and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift." He tells them, "Do it. Let's see where your wisdom gets you. You will get dominated. Go to the Egyptians. You'll get crushed. The answer isn't horses." It is so loving though what he says when he says, "In

returning and rest you will be saved." So God has mercy on them and says, "Your strategy is foolish. Your strategy is going to get you killed. Return to Me." That word "return" means "repent." He says, "Repent and turn. Rest quiet and let Me take care of it."

I took swim lessons when I was 8-years-old. I remember it very vividly, because I tried to go swimming before and didn't have much luck. My parents decided to get me swim lessons. I was excited because I thought that the swimming instructor was going to teach me to do a gainer and do a free style. So I'm thinking first lesson, "We are going to do this. I'm going to learn how to do flips, free style and breast stroke. I'm going to nail this." I get in the pool and she literally says, "We can't do any of those things until you learn to float first. So come here." She grabs me by my hand. "Put your arms out put your legs out." She held my back and she says, "I'm going to teach you to float. You breathe in and out. Keep breathing, keep breathing. I'm going to let go and the water is going to hold you." So as I breathe, my arms were out, my legs were out and she removed her hands. I see her hands in the air and I realized, "Wow, she is not a liar! The water is holding me. I'm floating." I began to see the water in my peripheral vision and I flinched. When my muscles flinched, I began to have to tread water but didn't know how so she had to pull me out. What Isaiah is saying is, "Repent and do nothing." In that repentance turning from our strategies turning to the Lord, He steps in. Rest refuge and quiet is there. But it only comes through repentance. It only comes through you coming to a place where you realize your efforts will fail you. We must repent and turn to the Lord. He is refuge. He is provision.

When I was 14, I got real sick. I'd been getting sick for a while. That summer it had just kind of culminated and finally climaxed. One night in our house I had such an intense pain, and my dad took me to the doctor the next day. They did a whole slew of tests on me. I remember sitting on that wheel chair and seeing my dad just down the hall talking to with the doctor. My dad is a big man. He is 6'3" and he is a strong man. He is a man's man. He loves the Lord and he is very gentle and tender. He is not the type that doesn't just cry for any reason. So we are sitting there, and I can see him in the distance. I see him talking to the doctor and I just saw him break. In that moment, I knew something was wrong. "Things have changed," was the thought I had. He came to me and said, "They are going to do emergency surgery on you. They don't know what's wrong. If they don't you are going to die." All my buddies are at baseball camp. And here I am, 14 years old and in the hospital. The next thing I remember waking up in a hospital room with family around me and this doctor coming to my bedside. He probably had the worse bedside manner I've ever seen. He comes, picks up my chart and he stands there and says, "Crohn's Disease, huh?" You are going to have a terrible, awful and difficult life. Then he drops the chart and walks out. It crushed me. In that moment, I felt so alone. There was this angst in my heart. I felt so vulnerable. I felt weak, like I'd never felt in my whole life. In those next weeks, my parents were so good to walk with me well. They encouraged me. I remember them saying things like, "We love you. We are here for you. We are going to pray for you. We are going to get through this." But my dad caught me one day and he said, "Lee, we love you, we are going to pray for you, we are going to encourage you and we are going to be here to do this with you." And then he threw the "but." He said, "But I can't beat this! You've got to take this to the Lord." And then he walked out of the room. It was the best thing he could have ever done for me, because I ran after Jesus hard. I ran after the Lord, because never in my life had I felt so vulnerable. That situation revealed the reality of who I really am. I'm not proposing to you today that situations, suffering and affliction are where weakness comes from. You are weak, whether you are doing really really well right now or whether your roof is about to cave in on your home. You are weak and in need. That's what I'm proposing to you. And suffering just reveals that reality. Suffering just reveals our deep need for the Lord and the opportunity in that weakness to shift our affections and our worship and our hope towards Him, not in our spouse, not in a program, not even in a church. Our hope is found perfectly in Him. He is our refuge. He is our covering. Christ absolutely satisfies this perfectly. Just as Psalms 121:6-8 proposes a divine protection, a divine refuge, Christ is the divine salvation. My hope and refuge is satisfied through Jesus Christ. That should provoke me to worship and pursue Him harder if things are really good or things are terrible. My hope and refuge are in the Lord. I look to the mountain where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord maker of heaven and earth.

I think we have an opportunity today, not to rush out of here, but to set in this and to reflect. I know there are people in here who walk in extreme God dependency. They are very attractive people. They look to the Lord for everything. They do not turn left or right, they do not make decisions without seeking the Lord. Because they realize their weakness and their deep need for the Lord. I would imagine that most of us consistently slip into a place where we are not sure how the Lord is going to deliver us, so we begin to trust our own efforts more than we seek refuge in Him. I think rushing out of here would be a mistake. As we worship, the opportunity is to bring your weak hearts before the Lord, let Him examine them and repent.

Let's pray, "Father God, we come to You right now and we just lay our hearts before You. We confess with our mouths, we confess with our hearts that we are a weak people. And we ask that You forgive us for independence from You. We ask that You would forgive us for looking to our own efforts. We pray that You would forgive us for looking to other things for refuge. Lord, You are a perfect refuge. Your provision is divine and we see this in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. For the marriages in here that are broken, I ask that You exhaust them today to the point that they see that they have no more efforts to give that they would break before You and that they would submit to You. I pray that they would find hope in You and that You would cover them. Lord, for the individual is hurting, who is suffering, struggling, be hope to them, be near to them and be a rock to them. Show them a perfect provision. Lord, for those of us that are doing well who are looking to You, we praise You for that. Let our hearts continue to be fixed upon You. All of us are in deep need and the only need that is satisfied is through You and through Christ. So we come to You and we beg that You would help us because our hearts are prone to wander. We beg You that You would do a work in our hearts that we would leave this place and we would worship You in fullness, in the spirit in truth and that we would see that You are the answer that You are our hope. We love You. In Christ's name we pray. Amen."