

I LIFT MY EYES TO THE LORD

Introduction

Over the past few weeks we've been talking about about what on earth is God doing? We saw the Grand Story of His redemptive plan. We saw that Jesus is building His church. We saw that He is pruning and cleansing the church. We saw that He is perfecting His people through progressive stages of spiritual growth.

This morning we are going to bring it all to a close by spending a little time in the 121st Psalm. [Psalm 121](#) is the second Song of Ascents, a set of 15 songs that pilgrims sung on their way to Jerusalem for the great feasts. [Psalm 120](#) describes their deep need. It speaks of their distress and the difficulty of living in a sinful world. [Psalm 121](#) begins with that thought in mind, and then shows how the people of God are able to not only survive, but even thrive, in this fallen place.

The Psalmist uses travel as a picture of life.

Let's look to the Psalm.

- › A SONG OF ASCENTS.
- › 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills.
 - › From where does my help come?
- › 2 My help comes from the LORD,
 - › who made heaven and earth.
- ›
- › 3 He will not let your foot be moved;
 - › He who keeps you will not slumber.

- › 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
 - › will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ›
- › 5 The LORD is your keeper;
 - › the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
- › 6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
 - › nor the moon by night.
- ›
- › 7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;
 - › he will keep your life.
- › 8 The LORD will keep
 - › your going out and your coming in
 - › from this time forth and forevermore.

THE QUESTION

- › I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? (Psalm 121:1)

The traveler on the road had little protection against bandits or raiders. For the most part, these people weren't soldiers. They were laborers, or farmers, or merchants. When trouble threatened them, they would do what any of us would do: they would look to see who might be able to help.

The Psalmist says that he lifts up his eyes to the hills, and asks a question: *Where does my help come from?* Will the hills send help? Not likely; they're more likely to be concealing dangers. It would be good to remember today that we could make a small alteration and this text would remain absolutely the same: I lift up my eyes to *Capitol Hill* - is that where my help comes from? How about the White House? Or the Supreme Court? Friends? Family? Neighbors?

THE ANSWER

- › My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

No, our help comes from our God, the Creator of heaven and earth, Yahweh. He created the hills, and the rivers, and the wilderness, and the mountains. He created all people, good and evil alike. He established every authority and government on earth, including the current administration in Washington D.C. We have little to fear from them; they are under God's authority. Whatever evil He permits them to do is for their judgment, not ours. We are to stand in faith and remain loyal to our Lord. One day, certainly on the Day of Judgment, our faith and faithfulness will be vindicated.

Paul wrote in [Second Corinthians 11:26](#) that he was a pilgrim, on frequent journeys. He was in danger from rivers – but Yahweh made the rivers. He was in danger from robbers, and Jews, Gentiles, and false believers – but Yahweh made mankind. He was in danger in the city – but Yahweh is Lord over the city. He was in danger in the wilderness – but Yahweh created the earth. He was in danger at sea – but Yahweh made the oceans.

There is no reason to think that if we trust Jesus Christ everything will always make us happy or content. There is every reason to believe that if we trust in God He will cause everything to work together for our good.

HOW DOES GOD HELP?

How then would Yahweh help His people?

YAHWEH WATCHES OVER US

- › **3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

Yahweh is described as a watchman, a security force during the day, and a guard at night. Nothing can slip past Him; nothing gets to us without His knowledge AND His permission.

He had always watched over His people. In fact, Aaron was commanded by God to speak a blessing over the people of Israel. It's found in [Numbers 6:24-26](#):

Numbers 6:24-26 2016 ESV

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

This is both a prayer and a promise: The Lord WILL bless you, He WILL keep you, He WILL make His face shine upon you, He WILL be gracious to you, He WILL lift up His countenance upon you, He WILL give you peace.

This is a unique statement made to those whom God uniquely loves. It is not a universal blessing. Aaron was not commanded to speak this to the Midianites or the Egyptians or the Assyrians. He was commanded to speak to God's people, because God intends this blessing for His people alone.

Peter says almost the same thing in the New Testament:

1 Peter 1:5 2016 ESV

who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So in the Psalm comfort comes from the fact that Yahweh, the watchman, will not allow the feet of His people to slip on the road. Roman roads were wonders of modern progress (for the time). Other civilizations did have some established roads near cities and within their borders, but the Romans built over 250,000 miles of wide (8 to 12 feet on average), straight roads, 50,000 miles of which were paved with stone and concrete. Their roads stretched from Britain to North Africa, and from Spain to Iraq. They were smooth, straight, solid, and cambered to shed rain.

But this Psalm was written hundreds of years before the Romans built their road system. Most were nothing more than dirt paths. They were uneven, often rocky or muddy, and untrustworthy. These poor pathways were so common that the idea of a broad, straight road was used to describe God's favor.

Psalms 5:8 2016 ESV

Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

Proverbs 3:5-6 2016 ESV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Yahweh the watchman keeps us on a straight road, so that our feet don't slip. He is constantly vigilant to protect us. He knows our world. He knows the risks we face everyday. And He never, ever lets up His guard, or looks away even for a moment.

YAHWEH SHELTERS US

- › **5 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

A shelter protects us from the elements, and gives an amount safety. The Lord promises to be our shelter and our home, and to protect us with tenderness and love.

Psalm 61:4 2016 ESV

Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! *Selah*

The word translated shade can also be understood as a shadow. It's not just that Yahweh covers us, but that He is as close to us as our own shadow.

The sun and moon are pictured here as enemies which might strike us at anytime. Well, it's true that God created the sun and the moon to rule day and night; [Genesis 1:16](#) tells us that.

But it is equally true that He rules over them, and one day He will destroy them in judgment:

2 Peter 3:10 2016 ESV

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

When He promises to protect us from the sun and the moon, He is promising to protect us from every force, every agency, every enemy, every power, every ruler, every system.

When they ARE permitted to move against us it is for the glory of God and the advance of the Gospel.

In 2015 a group of men in Syria, who were Christians in name only, were attacked by three Isis terrorists. A man named Falit saw three of his friends die on the street; nine others were wounded. Laying there in the street, with bullets flying around and hand grenades exploding, Falit realized that while he was “Christian” because he was part of the Eastern Orthodox Church, he was not truly saved. He said in an interview, “I remembered my sins, and I prayed in tears, asking Jesus give me a new life, as His servant.”

Yahweh, the watchman of His people, protected Falit that day, not just from bullets, but from judgment. He protects us 24-hours a day. As we saw in the previous verses, He never sleeps, He never gets weary or loses interest.

YAHWEH DEFENDS US

- › **7 The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.**

Yahweh protects His people from evil.

What kind of danger do you face every day? Do you risk your life just to get to work?

Linda and I had the opportunity to visit missionaries in Africa ten years ago, and we spent a few days at an economy safari camp. We drove several miles down a dirt road to reach the camp, seeing giraffe, impala, and elephants. Two leopards strolled through the camp every night. There were hippo in the river, and cape buffalo and lion in the area. We found out that several people who worked in the camp walked from a nearby town, and returned *after dark*. In *Africa*.

We should all remember how Peter described Satan:

1 Peter 5:8 2016 ESV

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

I remember that road through the darkness, and those who had to walk it, and it makes my skin crawl. I think about Satan prowling around like a roaring lion, and I’m so grateful that Yahweh protects me from evil.

Yahweh protects His people from death.

That doesn't mean we won't die. In fact, our death is so assured that [Psalm 139:16](#) says that our days are numbered. Our birth certificates have expiration dates. At the same time, death is a servant of God. Death has never taken a single person even one second before the time God had decreed for them on earth. A Civil War general was once asked how he could remain calm in the midst of battle. He answered, "My religious beliefs teach me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready whenever it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and all men would be equally brave."

How did a man learn that kind of trust in God and His sovereignty? He heard the Word of God taught well. He believed what the Scriptures said, without reservation. If ever he experienced doubt, he went back to the Word of God and rested in it. Even when circumstances were frightening, his faith stood firm. He knew, as we should also know, that while each of us faces death, we face it in God's time. Death can't take us one heartbeat early.

Faith in God frees us from the fear of death, so that we might live to please Him.

Yahweh protects His people in every circumstance and situation of life.

He protects us when we go out and when we come in. That phrase covers every imaginable experience and event, every moment: being awake and being asleep; at work, rest, and play; in health and sickness; in good times and bad times. His protection is global, universal, exhaustive.

But we still get sick. We still face tragedy. We still suffer. We still die.

This doesn't mean that Scripture is lying, or that God is unfaithful. It means that His work of protection is not simply against such minor things as disease and death. His protection guards our souls against the schemes and plans of Satan, and against all the might and power of Satan's minions. Every person mentioned in Scripture at length is shown to have suffered in one way or another. The Lord Jesus Himself was tortured and put to death in a brutal way. Yahweh didn't fail His own Son; the Father achieved His eternal purposes through the suffering of His Son. And His Son rose again, didn't He, in victory and glory. Yahweh will not fail us, either.

BRINGING IT HOME

I realize that many people wonder how they could trust a God who would not give them their best life now.

For myself, I wonder how anyone could not trust a God who has promised eternal life; not just life for eternity, but life that is eternally abundant, and proven His faithfulness through fulfilled prophecy, and His power by raising His own Son from the dead.

Charles Spurgeon writes in his “Treasury of David,”

“None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self-secure. Every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that eternal security is provided. Yahweh will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this He will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusts in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time endures.”

Beloved, Yahweh will keep your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

Because of this we can put all of our faith and confidence in our God. There is no need to have a backup plan in case God fails us; He won't. There isn't any need to look for other gods to take up the slack.

Because our God is sovereign, because He never lies, because He has promised to protect us and defend us, we don't need to fear the attacks of the enemy of our souls. Satan is a lion, seeking someone to devour. Having faith in our God means having Him close by us all the time. We shouldn't take Satan lightly, of course, but when we are trusting our God, obeying Him, abiding in Him, remaining close to Him, we can rest easy.

And because our God is so faithful, and has promised us this protection, we can offer up gratitude and praise to Him. He is worthy of our praise; He deserves our worship; He has a right to our gratitude.

Let's pray!