

My Help Comes from the Lord

Psalm 121

Introduction

Good morning Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God? Are you also ready to be encouraged by the Word of God? We sang two songs this morning right from the Psalms and now we are in one for the message. Psalm 121. Some of you here today may know the first two verses by heart. It is a wonderful short Psalm that gives God's people a joyful confidence in Him. The encouragement it gives is not based on your own abilities or attributes, but on God's help, and protection. Let us turn to Psalm 121 this morning.

Background

This Psalm here is the second Psalm of 15 of the section known as "Song of Degrees" or Songs of Ascent." The perspective of these types of Psalms is from one who is traveling. They would traditionally be sung by one who is traveling back to Jerusalem for worship and festivals. I love to meditate on this Psalm before going on a long trip. I am reminded of the Lord's help and protection throughout the journey. The previous Psalm is written in distress, the mood here changes to is one who is confident in the Lord no matter the dangers around him,

Scripture

Psalm 121:1-8 (1) A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (2) My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. (6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. (7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. (8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Outline

I. The Lord our Helper, vv. 1-2.

A. The anticipation, v. 1a.

(1) I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,

1. As the Psalmist prepares for his way back to Jerusalem for worship, he lifts his eyes to the hills.

2. Those who are familiar with the scenery of Israel would know what he means by looking to the hills. Israel is not flat land at all. Many hills, and valleys. Even inside the city is very steep.

3. There is a lot of speculation of what the Psalmist means by “lift his eyes unto the hills.”

a. Some suggest this was a consideration of the high places where idolaters would set their altars to worship their pagan gods. (See Numbers 22:41, Deuteronomy 33:29, 1 Kings 12:31).

(1). In this viewpoint this would imply he looks up and sees the hills and he rejects that the false gods are not where he receives help.

(2). It is true pagan worship would take place in high places, but based off the entirety of the Psalm this view seems unlikely.

b. Some suggest this was an anxious look to the hills, looking for danger and threats from often-present robbers and gangs.

4. It seems what the Psalmist means by it as he looks to the hills – the high places and he is reminded of the Lord’s protection. It is as if he sees God the Creator of heaven and earth. The Bible often refers to the heights of Jerusalem as the holy

mountain where God dwells. It reminds him of where his help comes from.

Psalm 48:1-2

(1) A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. (2) Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

5. The focus of the Psalm however is not about the hills and we do not want to be caught up in what he means by it. The focus is on the Lord.

B. The question, v. 1b.

. . . from whence cometh my help.

1. He asks, “from whence cometh my help?”
2. He does not ask this in doubt or perplexity.
3. He immediately answers his own question.

b. The Psalmist looked to Jerusalem as his goal, yet his trust was not in that city itself. Help would come from the God who made heaven and earth. The Creator would be his helper.

C. The answer, v. 2.

(2) My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

1. “My helps from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.”
2. The Psalmist looked to Jerusalem as his goal, yet his trust was not in that city itself. Help would come from the God who made heaven and earth. The Creator would be his helper.

a. What a wonderful statement of truth and confidence. “My help comes from the Lord.”

b. What he is telling us is that his gaze did not stop when he looked

upward to the hills but that he looked beyond them to God, who made the hills and the mountains.

3. Sadly, the human tendency is to look for help in all the wrong places. To try to solve our problems in our own strength or according to the wisdom of the world.
4. I ask this morning to consider: where do you seek your help from? Who or what are you depended on?
5. This writer here declares in boldness and faith “My help comes from the Lord.”
 - a. The Lord who made heaven and earth.
 - b. Not some sidekick deity, or in anything man-made.
 - c. His help from the one who created him and everything in the world.
 - d. Do you know he is talking about? It is Jesus.
 - a. Isn't the Old Testament before Jesus? Yes and no. It is before Jesus added humanity. Jesus is creator and has always been.
 - b. Colossians 1:15-18.

Colossians 1:15-18 (15) Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (16) For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (17) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (18) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

II. The Lord our Keeper, vv. 3-4

A. The Lord keeps by not allowing your foot to be moved, v. 3a.

(3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:

1. The Lord keeps the feet of his saints from falling: he will not suffer them to be

moved out of the spiritual estate in which they stand.

2. God establishes in a firm place.

a. This is only possible because of the foundation in which we stand.

b. In our New Testament when we are in Christ: This is where we stand.

(1) We stand in grace (Romans 5:2).

(2) We stand in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1).

(3) We stand in courage and strength (1 Corinthians 16:13).

(4) We stand in faith (2 Corinthians 1:24).

(5) We stand in liberty where Christ made us free. (Galatians 5:1).

c. You will not be moved from this.

B. The Lord keeps us without falter, vv. 3b-4.

...he that keepeth thee will not slumber. (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

1. The one who “keepeth thee” will not slumber.

a. That word “keepeth” is a key word for the rest of the Psalm.

b. It comes from the Hebrew word “Shamar” and this is the first times its used out of 6 times throughout this Psalm.

c. The Shamar of the Lord is something Jews take absolute confidence and pride in. The meaning and capturing of this word is so broad it’s hard to use a singular English word to define it.

d. This is how Strong’s concordance defines it. “Properly to hedge about (as with thorns), that is, guard; generally to protect, attend to, etc.: - beware, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep (-er, self), mark, look

narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay)
wait (for), watch (-man).”

2. The first time this word is used in our Bible is in Genesis 2:15.

(15) And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

- a. Adam was set to “keep” the garden. It is so much more than simply watching over it. He would protect it, preserve, keep it from going south.
- b. The Lord does so much more than just looking upon us and knowing. He keeps, He protects, He preserves. He is the one keeping our hearts beating right at this moment.

3. The same one who keeps us does not slumber nor sleep.

- a. It seems kind of pointing out the obvious. God does not sleep.

Illustration: This reminds of me of my job while in school in Springfield MO. I worked in the security department. It was a 24/7 service and often I would have to do overnight shifts and then of course go to class in the morning. My employers and my campus were counting on during that shift that the guard was not sleeping. The biggest challenge of the shift, staying awake and alert to protect the campus from crime. We would grow more tired and weary as the night went on. For the Lord’s keeping, it is so much better than that. It is not just that He does not sleep, He never gets tired! There is no need for the Lord to rest. His keeping goes far beyond that of a nightguard. Unlike the pagan gods, our God does not need to sleep. There is never going to be a time when God is not watching out for you.

- b. Think back on Elijah went he went face to face with the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel. One of the mockeries Elijah brought up with Baal when he did not light the fire is that “maybe he is sleeping and must be

awakened.” Pagan gods were thought to be sleeping and resting whenever crops were not producing. They grew tired and weary and needed rest.

c. Our God and our Helper is so much beyond that.

4. It is both personal and national with the Lord’s keeping.

5. He is the keeper of Israel.

a. I have not done a count, but think of how many different occasions where the Jewish people should have been annihilated, and it was the Lord who kept them from being.

b. Even outside of what we read in our Bibles, the Jewish people have faced hardship after hardship and from our human perspective should have been permanently removed from the map, yet, God has always kept them.

III. The Lord our Protector, vv. 5-6.

A. The Lord is our shade upon thy right hand.

(5) The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

1. This statement would be a little odd if not considering the climate of Israel. If you are traveling on foot during the day, it is hot!
2. The brutal rays of the sun in the world of the Middle East could assault the traveler, such as the traveler on the way to one of Israel’s feasts in Jerusalem.
3. God promised care for the traveler, with a reference that goes back to the cloud by day that followed Israel in the wilderness from Egypt and shielded them from the sun.
4. Without the shade and proper precautions, the sun rays would damage the traveler

5. This word for shade is the same word used for shadow found in Psalm 91.

Psalm 91:1-2 (1) He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

(2) I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

B. The Lord is our Protector both day and night, v. 6.

(6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night

1. Even after facing the intensity of the heat in the day, there was still the coolness of the night.

2. The point here is that both day and night, 24/7, God is your protector.

IV. The Lord our Preserver, vv. 7-8.

A. The Lord preserves us from all evil, v. 7.

(7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

1. The same word “Shamar” is here again, this time translated as preserve.

2. Now, hold on. At first reading, this seems as if the Lord does not allow evil to happen to us.

3. Anyone who has lived knows and has experienced evil and bad happening to them. Even those who walk with the Lord.

a. Could someone like Joseph sing Psalm 121 while when he was stripped and sold into slavery? Or when we was imprisoned because of his integrity over something he was innocent of?

b. Or David when he was fleeing for his safety and life from Saul’s wrath?

c. Evil clearly happened to these. God certainly was allowing evil to happen and He does for us too. The key to understanding this is in the word “preserve.” It is not saying evil never happens.

d. The evil will not overtake us. No sin, no other power, not even death.

Look what Joseph confidently states to his brothers at end of Genesis.

Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

e. Evil is very real and happens to us all. We face hardships, we face circumstances beyond our strength and control. Many of us have experienced some of the heaviest trials imagined. Yet, here is what God's Word teaches when it comes to every circumstance.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

f. God may have not protected and kept us from all these things that have happened. But He did indeed preserve us through it all. He preserves our soul.

B. The Lord preserves us through this life and forevermore, v. 8.

(8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1. God's people may trust in His preserving power for all of one's activity (going out and coming in) and at all times (from this time forth, and even forevermore).

2. Nothing shall ever pluck us out of His hands. John 10:27-29.

John 10:27-29 (27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (29) My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Conclusion/Application

So where does your help come from? Where do you find peace and solace in? As the Psalmist here proclaims in song: Help comes from the Lord through His vigilant, never wearying, sleepless protection: In every danger, whether from sunstroke in the heat of the day or exposure to the cold of night. Whether we face threats to the body or soul, in every situation of life, God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, God has us covered. He is our Helper, our Keeper, our Protector, and our Preserver.

There is something very important out there that God does not just “help” with that is key to understanding. That is our salvation. Here me out: Some out there have this mindset that being saved requires an effort from us and that God just helps us with it. God did not help us get saved. God absolutely did all the work. Salvation is of the Lord and has no part in human efforts or work. It is totally depended on the work of Jesus. His death on the cross, His burial and resurrection for our sins. The only thing you contributed to your salvation is the sin that made it necessary. All your part is to simply place your trust in Him to save you. If there has never been a time where you have dealt with your sin problem, where you have been born again and stepped into new life, where you never understood what Jesus did for you. Let us help you with that.

Let’s close out reading this Psalm together.

(1) A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (2) My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. (4) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. (6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. (7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. (8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.