

Part I: Confidence in God – His Providence
Protected by the Power of God
God is our Helper, Keeper, Protector and Preserver
Psalm 121

Introduction

Currently studying 1 Peter – 1 Peter 1:5 says we are “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

We as Christians are protected by God’s power. The word for “protected” means to “keep with a garrison”. Refers to a being protected by a military guard either to prevent hostile invasion or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight.

Images in the Psalms, particularly Psalm 121, which is where we will be today present us with a shadow of what we see revealed in the New Testament. The Psalmist uses many metaphors to get his message across.

The Psalms are where I go when I need peace and comfort in my heart, particularly when I feel the world is pressing in.

Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”

The Psalms of Ascent give hope.

Several themes emerge in the Psalms of Ascent, including: relief from enemies; help for those who seek God; the Lord as defender of His people; the Lord is the strength of His people; joyful return to the temple; laboring and prospering with the Lord; blessings for those who fear the Lord; a song of victory over the enemies of Zion; waiting for the redemption of the Lord; simple trust in the Lord; the eternal dwelling of God in Zion; blessed unity of the people of God; praising the Lord in His temple.

Psalms of Ascent – Sung by Pilgrims on the way up to Jerusalem, which is between 2700 and 2900 feet in elevation. I was first introduced to the Psalms of Ascent when I visited Israel in December of 2018. On the drive from the Tel Aviv airport to Jerusalem our tour guide, Uri, spoke to us about the 6-lane highway we were traveling along. He stated that in 1948 it was essentially a stone road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It was then that he talked about the Psalms of Ascent, and that there are 15 of them beginning with Psalm 120 and ending with Psalm 134.

Psalms of Ascent were sung on three occasions/feasts:

- I. Unleavened bread (Passover)
- II. Pentecost and weeks
- III. Tabernacles/booths

David authored four Psalms of Ascent: 122, 124, 131, 133

Solomon authored one: 127

Ten remain anonymous

The Psalms of Ascent were sung far away from Jerusalem as the Pilgrims moved toward the temple where they finished their worship with Psalm 134:1-3.

Luther believes Psalm 121 is a Psalm of consolation. Alexander says this whole Psalm is a description of Jehovah as the guardian and protector of His people. All of the verses, except verse 6, use the Hebrew word, Shamar, to emphasize the idea of God's guardianship.

The only name of God found here is Jehovah. In scripture, there is no other name given to God more than Jehovah. It is expressive of self-existence, independence, unchangeableness, and eternity.

Outline of Psalm 121:

Psalm 121 possesses a note of strong assurance and has four key sections:

- I. Helper – 121:1-2
- II. Keeper – 121:3-4
- III. Protector – 121:5-6
- IV. Preserver – 121:7-8

Let's look at the Psalm verse by verse and allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and apply the truths to our lives.

PSALM 121

The Lord is our Helper:

Verse 1: I will lift up my eyes to the mountain; from where shall my help come?

It is natural to understand the reference to mountains to refer to the elevation of Jerusalem – hills – Mt. Moriah and the Temple.

There are seven hills or mountains in and around Jerusalem, so the pilgrims would “go up” to Jerusalem.

Add two photos of the Temple Mount and Mt. Moriah

We have safety only in God. The meaning of the writer of this Psalm is obvious which is that all the helps of the world, even the strongest, should offer themselves to us when actually we only have safety in our God.

Without God nothing is strong, nothing is holy, nothing is finished, nothing is successful and nothing is perfect. We can only carry out our plans when God empowers us with His strength.

Psalm 29:11, the Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

The word strength is meant to be understood as all that is necessary to sustain life. It is by God and by God alone that we live. All our strength is from Him. This is true of our natural life and it is true of our spiritual life.

Nothing really is left to us except to place our confidence in God.

Psalm 123:1 says, "To thee I lift up my eyes, Oh thou who art enthroned in the heavens!"

Isaiah 40:26 says, "lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the one who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing."

Verse 2: My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The word in Hebrew for "made" is Asah – describing God's creative activity – in fashioning the created objects.

Our help comes from the energy of God.

He is the creator and his power which brought all things out of nothing is competent for any work.

(See notes on the Lord who made Heaven and Earth)

The Lord is our Helper

The Lord is also our Keeper:

Verse 3: He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.

There is a promise and a prediction in this verse.

Israel is well known for its rocky and slippery terrain. It would be easy to slip walking around this country, so the sliding of the foot is seen as a misfortune in life.

The clause expresses the watchfulness and perfect care of God over His people. He watches us unceasingly and cares for us as a guardian.

In 1 Samuel 2:9, Hannah, says "He keeps the feet of His godly ones,"

We see film clips on our life journey, but God sees the entire movie. Romans 5:1-5 teaches God uses tribulations and trials in our lives to bring about perseverance and to develop our character to conform us to the image of Jesus.

Jesus has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, but He is also using this time to “prepare us” for a place!

[APPLICATION STORIES]

Verse 4: Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

“Slumber nor sleep” combination strengthens the expression. The literal translation of slumber is “to snore”.

In 1 Kings 18:27-29 Elijah derides the prophets of Baal by sarcastically suggesting their god was asleep, on a journey, or perhaps had gone aside to the bathroom, when they needed him.

In 1 Kings 18:30-40 we read . . .

Psalms 127:1 says, “unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.” Our God never sleeps.

One old commentator said, “In vain do faithful pastors labor until God grants His blessing on the church.”

1 Corinthians 3:7 says, “So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.” In every undertaking God is not merely our chief, but our sole dependence.

Those therefore sadly sin against God who give credit to their success or prosperity because of their human wit, power or perseverance. Man is a sinner, a fool and a worm, but the Lord, He is God, keeps the feet of His Godly ones – and He never slumbers or sleeps.

The Lord is our Helper

The Lord is our Keeper

And The Lord is our Protector:

Verse 5: The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

Jehovah’s work is all perfect. His preserving care is all we need. To be at the right hand is to be at the place of protection and defense. MacArthur says it represents the place of human need.

Psalms 91:4 says “He will cover you with his pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark. His care is all we need.

In Psalm 16:8, the word says, "I have set the Lord continually before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

Verse 6: The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.

In Jonah 4:8 says "And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying "death is better to me than life.'" In the Middle East, the sun can kill you in the day as Jonah pronounces.

The commentator Clarke says the Psalmist means, that they shall not be injured by heat nor cold. By a sunstroke by day nor a frostbite by night.

The essence of the verse is that God provides around the clock protection.

The Lord is our Helper

The Lord is our Keeper

The Lord is our Protector

And Lastly, The Lord is our Preserver:

Verse 7: The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.

Verse 7 perhaps explains verse 6.

In Psalm 41:1-2 the Word says "How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the Lord will deliver him in the day of trouble. The Lord will protect him, and keep him alive, and he shall be called blessed upon the earth."

The Word says that we are always under His divine care.

Verse 8: The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.

The protection and preservation promised extends to God's people in all their acts and ways.

Ravi Zacharias went to be with Jesus on May 19, 2020. He tells the story on one of his trips across Vietnam when he was 25. The car that he and his traveling companion were riding in broke down. There was a lone Jeep that passed he and his companion and they ignored their plea for help. After some time Zacharias and his friend got their car engine going again and as they set off, they came across the Jeep a few miles down the road, overturned and riddled with bullets, with all 4 passengers dead. Ravi Zacharias sometime later said of this moment, "God will stop our steps when it is not our time, and He will lead us when it is."

Proverbs 2:8 says that the Lord "preserves the way of his godly ones." Deuteronomy 28:6 says, "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out."

Verse 8 says. . . “from this time forth and forever”. . . We have protection from God through endless ages.

John Bunyan

William Cowper

David Brainerd

God is our Helper, our Keeper, our Protector and our Preserver Forever! Psalm 31:15 teaches “My times are in thy hand.”

What are the implications for the Faith Family here at Westwood: