

## My Help Comes from the Lord – A Study on Psalm 121

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One of my mentors explained that as people, we are usually getting into trouble, in trouble or getting out of trouble. I agree.

However, just because we are seemingly surrounded by trouble, that doesn't mean that the peace of Christ is absent, on the contrary, in John 16:33 Jesus promises us His peace despite the trouble around us.

When we are in deep trouble, we look for God's intervention so that we can find His peace, strength, wisdom, knowledge, safety, and comfort.

I pray that this message will challenge you to think differently about God, yourself, and your troubles. Grow in Him.

### **Scripture Reading:** Psalm 121 (CEV)

<sup>1</sup> (A song for worship.) I look to the hills! Where will I find help?

<sup>2</sup> It will come from the LORD, who created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>3</sup> The LORD is your protector, and he won't go to sleep or let you stumble.

<sup>4</sup> The protector of Israel doesn't doze or ever get drowsy.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is your protector, there at your right side to shade you from the sun.

<sup>6</sup> You won't be harmed by the sun during the day or by the moon at night.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD will protect you and keep you safe from all dangers.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD will protect you now and always wherever you go."

### **Introduction**

When in trouble, people generally follow what is known as a natural problem-solving process:

- We become aware of the problem.

- We couple an urgency to the problem.
- We search for answers and solutions.
- We figure out at what price the answers and solutions come.
- We debate (reason) the problem as well as possible answers and solutions.
- We decide to do something about the problem (a rational decision).
- We do something about the problem (a rational-emotional decision).

Where in this process do we turn to God? Anywhere, anytime but hopefully you have been walking with God and living in intimacy with Him. Therefore, God is already present before trouble strikes. If not, turn to God *asp.*, i.e., right at the beginning so that not only is Godly wisdom etc. an ever-present resource, but that a God-ward – God-glorifying outcome becomes the main goal in solving the problem at hand.

It is not that the natural problem-solving process falls away. It's that God is involved and supersedes anything natural and in our obedience to Him, He will work as He so chooses. God and His Word, ways, purposes become our focus despite our troubles. Our troubles and the peace of Christ are in a sense opposing – but possible – realities.

Psalm 121 is not saying that trouble won't happen, it is saying that God will protect you. It is a Psalm of praise and worship; it is part of the song of ascents (Psalms 120-134) but is the only one that is a song *to* the ascents.

### **Verse 1**

The Psalm was sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and David recognises that it is the Lord who helps them in their need and that the Lord will protect them, day, and night.

In the original text, they looked up to the mountain where they expected help to come from; they were looking upward to the place of God they were looking up to the hills of Jerusalem. In their time of trouble, they looked up – looking for God to reveal Himself to His people that are in need.

We are blessed in that we are filled with His Holy Spirit. God is with us and in us. There is no need for downheartedness, instead, rejoice.

## **Verse 2**

The call to God was made during their trouble and anxiety: from where will my help come? What I love about this is that the confession of from where help will come is not from any person, leader or priest but from God Himself.

Not only is the confession that it is God who will help in the time of need, but the confession goes on to who God is in their time of trouble: the creator of the heavens and the earth.

If God created the universe, then He can protect His people, and therefore, His people have a confident, yet humble reliance on Him.

## **Verse 3**

There is a transition here from the first person (I) to the second person (your and you). This is the start of a powerful reminder of who God is and what He will do for His people.

God is always awake, present, and protecting His people. His people are safe, God is never “off-guard.” In this confession of who God is and what God will do, those in trouble speak life into their trouble; certainty into their heart and confidence in God.

## **Verse 4**

Initially, verse 4 might seem like a repeat of verse 3, but David makes another important transition. Verse 3 referred to “your” and verse 4 refers to “the Protector of Israel,” in other words, the context changes from one person to “all of us.”

You and belong. We are the people of God, and the people of God will always be safe. God is ever-present and unlike a human, God does not get tired. A human guard can fall asleep on the job. Drivers get tired are concentrating on the road for many hours. God doesn’t even become drowsy.

Isn’t this a wonderful testimony to the majesty of God?

## **Verse 5**

“The Lord is your protector.” There is a wonderful connotation/meaning that is found with the use of the word “protector” in this context. It means:

- That despite your trouble, the Lord will preserve you. He is your sanctuary. He is your safe place. He will look after you.
- That He will deliver you from your sin. Typically, when we are in trouble, we think of those things happening to us: finances, relationship conflict etc. But what does this help if we are doomed to eternal death because of our sins?

God is protecting – delivering us from the consequences – of our sin through Christ Jesus and drawing us ever closer to Him through the working of His Holy Spirit.

Our protector is at our right side – the place of strength -when we are in trouble. And it's from this position of strength that God will protect against the sun. The sun is an interesting image to use; the sun is relentless, it burns us, it scorches the earth and draws out every lost drop of moisture – water – thus causing things to wilt – grow weak. God will be your shadow against this sun. He will be your shade.

### **Verse 6**

The Psalmist, having dealt with the sun, now moves to the night. In the desert, the heat of the day is replaced by the cool of the night. As the sun rules the sky in the day, the moon rules the sky at night. And we should not forget that God created them both and therefore rules over both.

The moon does not give much light compared to the sun. Moving in the dark is dangerous if you cannot see where you are going. The Psalmist here wants to convey that God protects us for all of the day – all 24 hours – no matter if it is day or night time.

### **Verse 7**

In verse 7, the Psalmist advances his thoughts in that in the previous verses he identified some particular things from which God will protect His people.

In this verse, the Psalmist is in effect saying, “and everything else.” With this generalization, he is saying that God will protect His people from all evil. If it’s evil, then God will protect you from it.

Some translations add “he shall preserve thy soul.” This is rather beautiful when we work from the Hebrew to the translation – the translation in a sense falls short of describing that the life that God has given you – breathed into you – this too will be protected by Him. Nobody can remove the life that God has given you because He is protecting it.

### **Verse 8**

In the translation we are using this morning, the CEV, verse 8 marks the 5<sup>th</sup> time the word “protector” is used. 5 out of 8 verses directly refer to the protection of God.

If we look back, the Psalmist has covered that God never rests, He protects us from sin, specific things and general things, in other words from everything! Now that the Psalmist has covered pretty much everything is describing God’s protection, he introduces the time aspect.

He says, “now and always.” We need to appreciate the importance of this statement. When we call out for help it is because we are usually in danger – now. When we are anxious it is usually about something in the future.

The past is behind us, and our lives are evidence of the fact that God was with us. Now the Psalmist ties up the rest of time – now and always – in the present and the future.

But the Psalmist is not done yet – he has already covered “everything” and “always” and now moves to “space and place” when he says, “wherever you go.” We take up space – we see each other! But we are also at a place, be it on our way to Jerusalem or in our living room.

When it comes to God’s protection, nothing is left out: God covers time, space, and matter.

### **Conclusion**

The Psalm began with the Psalmist looking upward in his moment of trouble and confessing that God Almighty will come to his help.

The Psalmist, during trouble, confesses who God is and that God will protect us from harm, sin and generally everything else, through all of time and wherever we may be.

And that is perhaps what we really need to appreciate when we are trying to get out of trouble. What delivers us today might not work tomorrow. What works in South Africa might not work

in Georgia or Chile. We don't have enough knowledge to cover all bases in getting ourselves out of trouble. We may reach that point where, in looking around us everything seems hopeless.

Brothers and sisters, the sooner you prayerfully – or in worship like with Psalm 121 – include God in your problem solving, the sooner you will look up toward Him and find your shelter there.

The Christian life is one where we walk with God. We must always be aware of His presence and make Him our number 1 priority. Our lives should not be a matter of when trouble strikes then look up. Our lives should be a matter of looking up whether trouble is present or not.

God is not someone to be brought out on special occasions or when we can't do it and need help. Live in continuous intimacy with Him, in Him and through Him.

I did not earlier mention that verses 7 and 8 are also a blessing.

And this blessing is my closing prayer, for you:

<sup>7</sup> The LORD will protect you and keep you safe from all dangers.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD will protect you now and always wherever you go.”

Amen.