

Midweek Study

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My Help Comes from the Lord

Psalm 121:1-8

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. – A. W. Tozer¹

Psalm 121 is one of fifteen consecutive psalms (Psalms 120-134) known as “Psalms of Ascent” or “Pilgrim Songs.” These were the songs the people of God sang as they traveled to Jerusalem three times each year for the great Jewish festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Because Jerusalem sits at a significantly higher elevation than most of the surrounding regions of Israel, travelers were always ascending, always going up, toward the city. When you read anywhere in the Bible that someone is “going to Jerusalem,” they are always going up, because that is the geography of the land. These were not private, personal devotional songs sung in isolation. They were sung together, out loud, by the people of God traveling.

Psalm 121 shows us **TWO SIDES** of the relationship between the one who needs help and the God who provides it. Our side is looking up. God's side is lifting up.

1) I Will **Look Up** (Psalm 121:1-2)

A. A **Volitional** Look - “*I will*” – This is not an emotional response, but a decision.

B. A **Vertical** Look - “*lift my eyes to the hills*” – “*to the hills*” could refer: 1) to the “high places” that stood for idolatry in Israel. The Psalmist would be saying, “I don’t put my trust in those gods – my help comes from God”; Or, 2) to the physical hills surrounding him on his journey to Jerusalem for worship. He is saying, “The hills are the creation, but I worship the Creator.”

C. A **Visionary** Look - “*My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.*” – The psalmist is not just choosing to look up at something he can physically see with his eyes. He is looking past the visible world to something he can only see with the eye of faith. See also **Hebrews 11:1, 6; 1 John 5:4; 2 Corinthians 5:7.**

*If you look at the world, you'll be distressed.
If you look within, you'll be depressed.
If you look at God you'll be at rest. – Corrie Ten Boom²*

¹ From “The Knowledge of the Holy”, 1964, page 7; as quoted in *The Quotable Tozer I: Wise Words with a Prophetic Edge* (Camp Hill, PA.: WingSpread, 1984), 174.

² https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/102203.Corrie_ten_Boom

2) He Will Lift Me Up (Psalm 121:3-8)

Notice the pronoun shift here. In verses 1 and 2, the psalmist speaks in the first person: “I will lift up my eyes... my help comes from the Lord.” But in verses 3 through 8, the pronouns change. Suddenly it is “He will not allow your foot to be moved,” and “He who keeps you,” and “the Lord is your shade.” Many commentators believe this represents a second voice entering the psalm, perhaps a priest, Levite, or worship leader traveling alongside the pilgrim, who hears this declaration of faith and responds with a flood of God's own promises.

A. **He Provides for Me** (v.3-4) – See also **Psalm 23** and **Psalm 127:1-2**

B. **He Protects Me** (v.6) “The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.”

- The danger from the sun is immediately understandable. Heatstroke. Dehydration. The devastating effects of prolonged exposure. But what about the moon? The word “lunatic” comes directly from the Latin word “lunar,” meaning moon. Ancient cultures widely believed that the moon had the power to bring about madness, instability, and irrational behavior in people. There is still an anecdotal tradition today, largely dismissed by scientists, that unusual things happen during a full moon. Whatever the source of danger, whether it is visible and blazing like the noonday sun or mysterious and difficult to explain like whatever the moon might do, God is your protector. He covers what you can see coming and what you cannot see coming.³

C. **He Preserves Me** (v. 3-4, 7-8 - “Keeper” and “Preserver”)

- One Hebrew word, “shamar,” that appears six times in these eight verses:
 - o Verse 3: “He who keeps you will not slumber.”
 - o Verse 4: “He who keeps Israel.”
 - o Verse 5: “The Lord is your keeper.”
 - o Verse 7: “The Lord shall preserve you from all evil.”
 - o Verse 7: “He shall preserve your soul.”
 - o Verse 8: “The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in.”

“Keeps,” “keeper,” and “preserve” in every one of those verses is the same Hebrew root word: “shamar.” It means to guard, to watch over carefully, to maintain, to keep safe, to protect, to shield.

Practical Applications for Today:

1. **Choose to Look Up** - Begin each day by intentionally directing your heart toward God before you look at your phone, your email, or the news. Looking up is something you choose before you feel like it.
2. **Identify Your High Places** - Ask yourself honestly and specifically: where am I looking for help that is not God? What are the hills in my life that I have been treating as my source? My bank account? My doctor's report? A political outcome? Another person? None of those things were ever designed to meet your deepest needs. They may be tools in God's hand, but they are never the source.
3. **Rest in His Watchful Care** - If you are lying awake at 3 a.m. rehearsing your problems, you are carrying something God told you to hand over to Him (**see 1 Peter 5:7**). He is already at work on those problems, before you wake up and after you fall asleep. You do not have to both stay awake. Rest well.
4. **Trust Him with Today, Not Just Eternity** – As a Christian, you have put your eternal future in His hands. Since He can and has solved your greatest problem, He is more than capable of handling the details of your daily life. You can trust Him with your forever and for this week. He is Savior and Keeper.

³ This idea originated from an audio sermon on Psalm 121 by Joel Gregory.