

FBC Service Sunday November 24, 2024, Our Helper 24/7 Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is a favourite passage of a lot of people, and rightfully so. It's full of precious promises that **meet every need we will ever encounter**. Its promises are applicable not merely for travellers on a difficult earthly journey, but more importantly, for earthly pilgrims on a journey to heaven.

And with good reason, because the words the unnamed psalmist pens by inspiration of the Holy Spirit are tremendously comforting.

We begin our journey with the psalm writer as he looks ahead to the path in front of him: *I lift up my eyes to the mountains. Where does my help come from?* If you've travelled through the mountains, you know how majestic and powerful they seem.

If the psalm writer didn't see God's majesty and power in the landscape, then he certainly sees it in God's solution to his problems: **My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.**

There's no doubt in the psalm writer's mind how he'll get through his problems safely: it will be God's doing. **The one who made the entire universe is certainly able—and willing—to keep him safe.**

We often look for help in all the wrong places. We look to ourselves and the strength of our will to "gut it out" and fix something, or just ignore it and hope that it goes away. We try everything at our disposal to solve the problem and nothing seems to help. **Often, we turn to God as a last resort.**

But the psalm writer encourages us to take a different approach. All the problems, all the heartache, all the grief, all the pain, all the sickness, all the guilt, whatever it may be, **bring it to God.**

This psalm asks a vital spiritual question. And the psalmist supplies the profound spiritual answer to that question, and then having supplied that answer, begins to apply that answer to himself.

Just like the Psalmist, we also need to apply the answer to this vital spiritual question, a spiritual answer which is monumental.

I want to begin this morning by asking a simple question: **Where do you look when life is beating you down?**

When challenges arise, when the weight of the world presses in on you, where do you turn for help? A friend, a family member, or even your own strength.

But what happens when those things aren't enough, when we're faced with problems bigger than what we can handle on our own?

In the ancient world, mountains were often seen as places of strength and stability. They were towering symbols of permanence—unchanging, unmovable. And in Psalm 121, the psalmist asks a question we all have at one point or another: *"Where does my help come from?"*

As he lifts his eyes to the mountains, he reflects on the great struggles and dangers of life.

But instead of relying on the mountains, he answers his own question: *"My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

This verse speaks directly to the deep need for a reliable, eternal source of help in the midst of life's uncertainty.

It reminds us that no matter how high or how insurmountable our struggles may seem, our help is not found in the mountains, but in the One who made the mountains.

As we dive into this Psalm this morning, I want us to reflect on where we are looking for our help. Let's remember that the same God who created the heavens and the earth is our present help, and He stands ready to assist us in every season of life.

Let's pray and then turn our hearts to His Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You again for the Lord's Day and the privilege of gathering under Your Word with Your people.

We're here because we know where our hope is found, and we need to be refreshed in that hope, we need to taste and see that You are good, and we need to hear from Your lips words of comfort and strength.

By Your Holy Spirit, open our hearts to understand it, believe it and change us by it. We pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

My heart has been heavy as I've ministered to the many sick and shut ins in our congregation, and witnessed firsthand the pain and heartbreak of separation of precious loved ones and declining health.

We all need a word of encouragement from the Lord, and we find it here in Psalm 121.

We all need help at times in life. In 1967, the Beatles used to sing: "I get by with a little help from my friends." The commercial in the early 1990's for the Lifeline alert product carried the tagline: "Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!"

Where do you go when you need help? Do you call on family? Friends? Dial 911?

It's so good to have a support system in place isn't it, but we need to look further than that.

We also need to look to God for our help. Benjamin Franklin once said, **(not the Bible)** "God helps those who help themselves," but the Scriptures teach us that God helps those who seek His help.

Psalm 121 is a psalm about trusting in God's providential care.

It's a travel Psalm. Many families read this Psalm out loud together before going on a trip. Devout Jews recited portions of this Psalm when they left or entered their homes.

Do you need help this morning? Then this psalm is for you. What a great Psalm it is to memorize on our life's journey. Eight dynamic verses packed with uplifting truths for us.

Psalm 121 teaches us three big truths about God's help and care for us. It teaches us.

1) The Creator is our helper.

2) The God of Israel is our protector.

3) the LORD will keep us from all evil.

Let's look at all of these as we learn to put our trust in God's providence and care for our lives.

First of all, the Creator is our helper. Verses 1-2: *"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

These are beautiful verses of Scripture that have brought great comfort to God's people over the years.

I know many of us have quoted these verses in times of need. They reveal powerful spiritual truths about God and the help He provides.

They encourage us to look beyond the mountains to the God who created them. Mountains are symbols of strength and stability. They are great in size, long-lasting and unchanging.

The creation reflects the Creator, so the God who made the mountains is even greater in power and strength.

The hills are also upward in direction. We tend to look down when we're in trouble don't we? Our faces are downcast. Our focus is on our troubles and all our problems.

But don't look down. That's the wrong direction! The hills are a reminder that we're to look up. You have to lift up your eyes to look at a mountain. But don't stop there. Are you looking high enough? Look beyond the mountains to the God who created them because God is higher than all.

Psalms 120-134 are called Psalms of Ascent. They were sung by travellers on their way to Jerusalem, and it's very likely they sung Psalm 121 as they were nearing the hills that surrounded Jerusalem.

In that case they were not only looking up at the mountains, but they would also have been looking up towards Jerusalem and the temple.

Psalm 46:1 tells us: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble"*, and in Psalm 90:2: *"Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."*

God is bigger than any mountain and God is before the mountains. We don't look to the mountains for our strength, but the mountains get our eyes off of our problems and lift our eyes up towards God who can help us in the time we need it most.

So don't just look to the hills but look to the one who made the hills. Look past the creation to the Creator. Look beyond the mountains to the God who created them.

In verse one the psalmist asks, *"Where does my help come from?"* And in verse two we get the answer: *"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

Where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Maker of heaven and earth. What could be more encouraging than that to any believer? God not only made the mountains. He made everything!

This description of God as the Maker of heaven and earth appears three times in the Psalms of Ascent.

Here in Psalm 121 and in 124 it designates **the source of our help**, and in Psalm 134 it designates **the source of our blessing**.

We read in Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Jeremiah 10:12 says: *“God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.”*

In other words, the Maker of heaven and the earth has unlimited power, wisdom and understanding. He has all the resources and more to meet our every need. He’s got the whole world in his hands. And He is our helper.

God is not only the Creator, but He’s involved in His creation. The Scriptures teach us that God is involved in every aspect of His creation and that includes you and me.

We call God’s power over all creation His providence.

What a difference it makes to know that the Creator of the universe is your helper and your friend!

Out of all the billions of people in our world, He cares about you. How big is your problem today?

Now compare it to the Maker of heaven and earth. I think it’s safe to say, “God’s got this.”

We live in a world neither of chance nor fate. This is God’s world, and His providence means that nothing can happen to us outside of His will and providential care.

What is the source of our help? Psalm 121 tells us it’s the Maker of heaven and earth. That’s the first truth we learn from this psalm. The Creator is our helper.

The second truth is this: the God of Israel is our protector. Look at verses 3-6:

“He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD watches over you – the LORD is your shade at your right hand; 6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”

These verses teach us that God is not only the creator of the world but the protector of Israel. **And He is our protector as well!**

When we read the Old Testament and see how God watched out for Israel and took care of them, we can rest assured that He will do the same for us.

The God of Israel is our protector. **He is our bodyguard.**

And here in verses 3-6 the psalmist tells us some of the various ways that God watches over us.

“He will not let your foot slip.” (Psalm 121:3) When you build your life on God and His word, you’re on solid ground. You have a firm foundation for your feet and for your life.

We read in Psalm 37: *“The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.”*

What an incredible blessing it is to be under God’s providential care. No one hurts the person whom God protects.

Secondly, God never slumbers nor sleeps. Look at verses 3-4: *“He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”* (Psalm 121:3-4)

The pagan gods we meet in Scripture found this out the hard way when they challenged Elijah on Mount Carmel In 1 Kings 18.

There we read about the prophets of Baal trying desperately to reach their god. When Baal didn’t respond, Elijah teased them: “Shout louder! Surely he is a god! Perhaps he’s deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he’s sleeping and must be awakened.”

The implication here is if your god is sleeping when you need him most, then you don’t have much of a god, do you?

But our God is always awake. He never falls asleep on His watch. Night watchmen are known to have times when they doze off on their watch, but our God never dozes or nods off or gets distracted. We can seek His face and pray to Him 24/7 and be assured He always hears us.

Because our God never slumbers nor sleeps – that means that you can! Because He’s awake, you can sleep. It’s like a child who can’t sleep until their parent promises to stay by their bedside. Then the child trustfully falls asleep knowing their parent is there to watch over them.

It’s the same way with us. It doesn’t matter what problem we’re dealing with. We can leave it in God’s hands and go to sleep at night knowing that He never slumbers nor sleeps and He will take care of it.

And then He is close beside us. Look at verse 5: *“The LORD watches over you – the LORD is your shade at your right hand.”*

The hills may be far away in the distance, but the Lord accompanies us every step of the way. He is close beside us.

And then He protects us at all times. Verse 6: *“The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”* (Psalm 121:6)

The travellers to Jerusalem faced many dangers along the way. Sunstroke was a real danger during the day, and there were often extreme changes of temperature between day and night.

There was also the danger of bandits and wild animals at night. There were dangers both day and night on the road, but verse six assured the traveller: *“The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”*

When we read that the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night, what this is really saying is that God protects us both day and night and everything in between. The God of Israel is our protector.

And then the LORD will keep us from all evil. *“The LORD will keep you from all evil – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”*

Verses 1-6 were all in the present tense, describing what God does for us. **Now in verses 7-8 we are given promises telling us what God will do for us in the future.** And in these verses the psalm moves from giving specific examples to one overriding general principle.

God watches over every aspect of our lives. That’s what verse 7 says: *“The LORD will keep you from all evil – he will watch over your life.”*

Jesus taught us to pray something similar in the Lord’s Prayer where we ask our heavenly Father: *“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”* (Matthew 6:13)

One of the daily prayers I pray for my family is: “Lord, I pray that you will protect my family today from all evil, danger, sickness and harm.”

Now that’s not the only thing I pray for them. I also pray for their spiritual growth, that God would grant them victory in their fight against sin, that they would know and follow God’s will for their lives.

But this prayer for protection is one of the big ones I pray for them each day. And why do I pray this way? I’m praying according to Christ’s model in the Lord’s Prayer and God’s promise here in Psalm 121.

These verses don’t teach us that we will never have problems or trouble in our lives, but rather that evil will never win out, that nothing can thwart God’s purpose for us.

God is for us, and we can trust His providential care, because He watches over every aspect of our life.

And then finally, God watches over every transition in our lives. Look at verse 8: *“The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more.”*

It’s usually the transitions in life that trip us up, isn’t it?

Day by day in our routines things usually go pretty smoothly, but it’s the in-between times – the commute, the move, the change of jobs, the change of health, the change of relationships – **it’s in the in-between times that we usually struggle.**

But take heart my church family, God watches over all the in-betweens as well. At home or work or away, whatever we do, wherever we go, we have the assurance God is with us.

And then we have the wonderful promise at the end of verse 8: *“The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”* God is watching over us now, and He will continue to watch over us forever.

Both of those promises are encouraging! If you had to choose one or the other, which would you choose? Now? Or forevermore? It’s a tough choice. But praise God you don’t have to choose.

They are both true for the believer in Christ!

Jesus said in Matthew 28:20: *“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* God’s promise to watch over us in Christ is true today; it’s true tomorrow; it’s true forevermore.

In Summary: We're all on a journey to God, and Psalm 121 is a wonderful song for the journey. The Maker of heaven and earth watches over every aspect of our lives.

He's never dozing and not paying attention. He does not make mistakes. He does not forget. He has our best interests in mind, especially our eternal best interests.

In good times and challenging times, lean on Him. When Satan tempts you and brings doubt to your mind and heart, flee to the comfort of God's Word that assures us of God's eternal love.

And as you go through the mountains of this life, as you face the wild animals and robbers of pain, sorrow, misery, disappointment, and heartache, take your Saviour at his Word.

Take comfort in this. Learn to trust God in all things and look for the good in all the details of life.

God cares for us. He will provide for us. He is there to help us now and for eternity.

And that means we don't need to worry or to be afraid of anything

All these things take place under His providential care

"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

Hymn: Got any rivers you think are uncrossable.

He does the things others cannot do.