

Psalm 121

Introduction: This is a psalm of trust. It counsels God's children to trust in the Lord in all situations of life.

Verse 1-There have been various interpretations of what the psalmist meant when he wrote, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." The most common interpretation seems to be that he was referring to the hills of Jerusalem, particularly to Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah, where the temple was built. The nation of Israel was special to the Lord and he dwelt there in a way that He did nowhere else. These hills or mountains were a symbol of the presence of the Lord. This idea is exemplified in Psalms 87:1-2, "His foundation is in the holy mountains. The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." This thought is also illustrated in Psalms 125:2, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

Verse 2-In this verse the psalmist makes it clear to whom he looks for help. His help comes from the Lord. [When this word is in small capitals in the KJV in the Old Testament, it refers to Jehovah, the Covenant God of Israel.] God indicated His very special relationship to Israel by this name. God uses this name, which is a translation of Jehovah. This name especially belongs to Him when He is dealing with His own people. His children draw great comfort and strength from this name as can be seen from Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

To emphasize the comfort that comes from what this name represents to God's people, it is used no less than five times in the eight verses of this short psalm!

Another thing that gives great comfort to God's people is that this Lord who has a special relationship with them is the One who "made heaven and earth." This reminds them of the omnipotent power of their keeper. Heaven and earth make up the universe. If the Lord made them all, then the conclusion is that what He made is fully under His control and to keep His people is an easy matter for Him.

The first thing that God has revealed in His Word is that He is the Creator. The very first verse of divine revelation is that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

There are many, many places in the Scriptures where God uses the fact that He is the Creator to comfort His people. Creation reveals His almighty power. This fact of His unchallengeable power is revealed in Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." The word "almighty" is the translation of a beautiful New Testament Greek word, *pantokrator*. This is a combination of two words, *pan*, which means "all," and *kratos*, which means "power, might, dominion." The *pantokrator* is "He who holds sway over all things; the ruler of all; the almighty."

Another fact that is derived from Creation is that He is the God of all wisdom. He who holds all power knows how to perfectly use it on behalf of His children because He is all wise. The incredible precision and skill that are revealed in Creation tell us something of the infinite wisdom of the Creator. We read in Proverbs 3:19, "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." Psalm 19: 1-6 also shows the Lord's wisdom in Creation. In Psalm 8 David stands in awe as he considers God's work of creation. In the modern, hurried world we live in, we often fail to take the time to meditate on the great wisdom and power of God in Creation. If we take the time to do so, no doubt we will be refreshed in our souls.

Let us look at just a few of the places in the Scriptures when the Lord comforts His people by reminding them that He is the all-powerful, all-wise Creator: Nehemiah 9: 6; Psalm 33: 6-9; 95: 5, 6; 100: 3; 124: 8; 136: 5-9; Jonah 1: 9; John 1: 3; Hebrews 2: 1, 10; Revelation 4: 11; 10: 6; 14: 7.

Verse 3-In this verse the psalmist states that our Lord will not suffer our foot to be moved. Firm footing in Scripture often speaks of safety and stability. There were many narrow dangerous paths in Palestine. Some of them ran on the edges of precipices or ravines. A slip would either be fatal or cause great bodily harm. Another time when sure footing was vital was in combat. If an opponent could knock his adversary off his feet, he was almost sure to be victorious. That is why, in writing of the whole armor of God in Ephesians, Paul mentioned having the feet “shod with the preparation of the gospel.” The Roman soldiers of the time wore hobnailed boots which aided them in gripping the ground and being sure footed.

God’s children have many enemies which threaten to cause us to slip; to knock us off our feet. In fact, when Asaph considered the prosperity of the wicked he wrote in Psalms 73:2-3, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." But he goes on to write that the Lord preserved his feet from slipping. A child of God can get in deep trouble, but he will never fall out of the hands of God. David knew this as he wrote in Psalms 23:3, "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." One of the most comforting Scriptures that teaches the ultimate and final safety of God’s children is found in Romans 8: 38, 39.

The psalmist further wrote in this verse that “He that keepeth thee shall not slumber.” The word translated “keepeth” here is a very rich word. The Hebrew word is *shamar*. It means “to take care of, guard, keep, have charge of, protect, observe.” The basic idea is to exercise great care over.^[1] To emphasize the protection that God exercises over His people this word is used six times in eight verses! It is translated “keepeth” in verses 3 and 4, “keeper” in verse 5, and “preserve” in verses seven and eight. The Holy Spirit certainly intends for God’s children to get the message that they are assiduously cared for.

The psalmist also writes that the divine keeper will not slumber. Here is not a night watchman who will go asleep on the job. We can always sleep in safety because our God is always awake! No wonder David could write in Psalms 4:8, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety."

Verse 4- The word translated “slumber” means “to be drowsy; to sleep.” Our Keeper will not sleep; He will not even be drowsy. He is ever alert to any and all danger that may threaten us.

Verses 5 and 6-This verse emphasizes that our Keeper will shield His children from all danger. In the Palestinian climate there was great danger of a traveler suffering a sun stroke if he could find no shade in the heat of the day. There is a reference to this in Isaiah where the prophet, looking forward to the time of Christ, wrote that He would be as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” (Isaiah 32: 2).

I like this quote about divine protection, both day and night: “**The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night;** no hurtful influence of the day, which the sun rules, nor of the night, which the moon rules, shall harm thee.”^[2] No sunstroke by day and no frostbite by night! Another good quote on this verse is as follows: “Neither heat nor cold, nor any inconvenience will be able to destroy God's Church, even though for a time they may molest it.”^[3]

To show the possible dangers and inconveniences that confronted people in the old days in Palestine, Jacob stated in Genesis 31:40, "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."

Verses 7 and 8-These verses are a fitting end to such a comforting psalm. God will ultimately preserve His children from all danger. This is true even of those who die the death of martyrs. There is an amazing Scripture found in the gospel of Luke. The Lord Jesus told some of His disciples they would be put to death for His name's sake. Then, speaking to those same disciples, He said in Luke 21:18, "But there shall not an hair of your head perish." Obviously He is speaking of their ultimate vindication and glorification. This kind of assurance is what has sustained the tempted, tried and persecuted saints down through the centuries. This is why Jesus could tell His followers in Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew Henry wrote, "Even that which kills shall not hurt."

The psalmist wrote that the Lord would preserve His people from "all evil." Samuel Eyles Pierce wrote of this, "Tis an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed; it honours God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, his word is immutable. Jesus preserves body and soul, he is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul."[\[4\]](#)

The psalmist also wrote that He would preserve "thy soul." In the Old Testament the word "soul" often means "life." He will preserve their souls or lives unto life eternal.

The writer closes this extremely comforting psalm by writing, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in..." This is a way of saying that the Lord would preserve His people in the totality of their activities. In the morning a man went out to work. In the evening he came in to his home, which was a haven of safety. In other words, the Lord will preserve His people everywhere and at all times. These blessings will be in this life and they will be preserved forever in the heavenly kingdom. What glorious, comprehensive promises for the believer to lay hold of and draw comfort from!

Albert Barnes beautifully sums up these all-inclusive promises in these words: "At home and abroad; in the house, in the field, and by the way; on the land and on the ocean; in their native country and in climes remote; on earth, in the grave, and in the eternal world, they are always safe."[\[5\]](#)

Conclusion

My fellow Christians, let us lay hold on these promises and live lives of victory. We may face many seemingly insurmountable difficulties, but our Lord has overcome them all for us. Let us live as the apostle Paul lived. He was constantly hounded by vicious enemies but that did not keep him from living a life of great spiritual vigor. He knew what the psalmist had written was true. Just before he died a martyr's death he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:18, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

We should be encouraged by the words of the psalmist and the apostle. Yes, we should be greatly energized and comforted by the words of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who said in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

[1] *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, pp. 939, 940.*

[2] *Family Bible Notes*, from the *Swordsearcher* Computer Program.

[3] *Geneva Bible Footnotes* from *Swordsearcher*.

[4] *Treasury of David* in *Swordsearcher*. [5] *Notes on the Bible* in *Swordsearcher*.