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March 25, 2025

Psalm 121

**THE GOD WHO
KEEPS AND HELPS**

¹ I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. ² My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. ³ He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. ⁶ The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. ⁸ The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

A. Help from the LORD, the Creator of all and helper of Israel.

1. (1-2) Help from Yahweh.

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? ² My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

a. I will lift up my eyes to the hills: The singer of this psalm looked to the hills, likely the distant hills of Jerusalem as he travelled toward the city to fulfill his pilgrimage. “The singer is still far from the appointed place of worship, lifting his eyes toward the distant mountains. He is not far from Jehovah, however. In Jehovah’s keeping, even though far from the center of external worship, the pilgrim realizes his safety.”

The point is wonderful. The singer understood that the group didn't need to arrive at Jerusalem before they came under God's protective care. He would watch over them on the journey. God is just as present in the journey as in the destination.

b. My help comes from the LORD: The traveler looked to Jerusalem as his goal, yet his trust was not in that city itself. Help would come from the God who made heaven and earth. The Creator would be his helper.

“The sole source of ‘help’ comes from Yahweh, who, as Creator, has unlimited power.” “What he is telling us is that his gaze did not stop when he looked upward to the hills but that he looked beyond them to God, who made the mountains.” “The City of God, and the Temple, are to be desired and delighted in; the mountains upon which they rest are to be remembered. But not from them does help come to distressed souls; it comes from Jehovah.”

2. (3-4) The help God brings.

³ He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

a. He will not allow your foot to be moved: God would help His people by establishing them in a firm place, allowing them to stand and not allowing their foot to be moved.

“The foundation, God’s infinite power and goodness, on which thou stand, cannot be moved; and while thou stand on this basis, thy foot cannot be moved.”

“Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow.” (Spurgeon)

For the Christian, this reminds us of the principles found in *Ephesians 6:11 and 13* – that the believer is to find a place to stand, and this can only be done by looking to the Lord and trusting the One who will not allow your foot to be moved. The standing of the believer in Jesus is impressive.

- We stand in grace (*Romans 5:2*).
- We stand in the gospel (*1 Corinthians 15:1*).
- We stand in courage and strength (*1 Corinthians 16:13*).
- We stand in faith (*2 Corinthians 1:24*).
- We stand in Christian liberty (*Galatians 5:1*).
- We stand in Christian unity (*Philippians 1:27*).
- We stand in the Lord (*Philippians 4:1*).
- **The goal:** We will stand perfect and complete in the will of God (*Colossians 4:12*).

b. He who keeps you: This is the first of six times in this short psalm that the Hebrew word *shamar* (translated keeps and preserve) is used. The theme is that God will watch over His people as a watchman watches over the city or the party of travelers.

“This psalmist is so absorbed in the thought of his Keeper that he barely names his dangers. With happy assurance of protection, he says over and over again the one word which is his protection against foes and fears. Six times in these few verses does the thought recur that Jehovah is the Keeper of Israel or of the single soul.” “The Divine Being represents himself as a watchman, who takes care of the city and its inhabitants during the night-watches; and who is never overtaken with slumbering or sleepiness.”

c. He who keeps you will not slumber: When we look to the LORD, we have confidence in the fact that God does not sleep. The idea is repeated in Psalm 121:4 for emphasis. God's watchful eye is always open, looking with love and care upon His people.

In his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah mocked the idol prophets when Baal did not respond, saying of Baal perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened (1 Kings 18:27). We have the great comfort in knowing that He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

This promise was especially meaningful for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. “Their daily march and their nightly encampment will then be placed under the care of Jehovah, who will hold up their feet unwearied on the road and watch unslumbering while they sleep.”

“A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. ‘How did you lose it?’ said the monarch. ‘I fell asleep,’ was the reply, ‘and a robber entered my dwelling.’ ‘Why did you fall asleep?’.... ‘I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake.’ The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up.”

B. The care of the LORD for His people.

1. (5-6) The LORD brings relief from the sun.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

a. The LORD is your shade at your right hand: The brutal rays of the sun in the world of the Middle East could assault the traveler, such as the pilgrim on the way to one of Israel's feasts in Jerusalem. God promised care for the traveler, with a reference that goes back to the cloud by day that followed Israel in the wilderness from Egypt and shielded them from the sun.

Similar promises are made in other verses such as Isaiah 4:6 and 25:4. Psalm 91:1 is especially precious, with shade being the same word as “shadow”: He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Your shade: “...both to refresh thee and keep thee from the burning heat of the sun, as it is expressed in the next verse, and to protect thee by his power from all thine enemies; for which reason God is oft called a shadow in Scripture.”

b. Nor the moon by night: Any superstitious fears they may have had from the light of the moon were of no concern to those whom God protected. He would keep and preserve His people day and night.

“What the psalmist really means, though in figurative language, is that nothing either of the day or night can harm us if God is keeping guard. God is our covering against every calamity. He is our shade against the visible perils of the day as well as the hidden perils of the night.”

“God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to smite is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth’s condition.”

“But let the pope be the sun and the emperor the moon (as the canonists called them), yet the sun shall not smite the Church by day nor the moon by night. Luther was at the same time excommunicated by the pope and proscribed by the emperor; yet died he in his bed.”

Proscribed – forbid, especially by law

2. (7-8) God preserves His people.

⁷ The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. ⁸ The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

a. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: The singer had great confidence in God's protecting power. Evil men may come and afflict the child of God, but the LORD shall preserve your soul.

“In the light of other scriptures, to be kept from all evil does not imply a cushioned life, but a well-armed one.” He shall preserve your soul: “Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory.”

The LORD shall preserve...He shall preserve....
The LORD shall preserve: “Three times have we the phrase, ‘Jehovah shall keep,’ as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise?”

b. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in: The promise is comprehensive. God's people may trust in His preserving power for all of one's activity (going out and coming in) and at all times (from this time forth, and even forevermore).

“When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection.”

Your going out and your coming in is not only a way of saying ‘everything’...in closer detail it draws attention to one’s ventures and enterprises (Ps. 126:6), and to the home which remains one’s base; again, to pilgrimage and return.”

“He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.” (Adoniram Judson)



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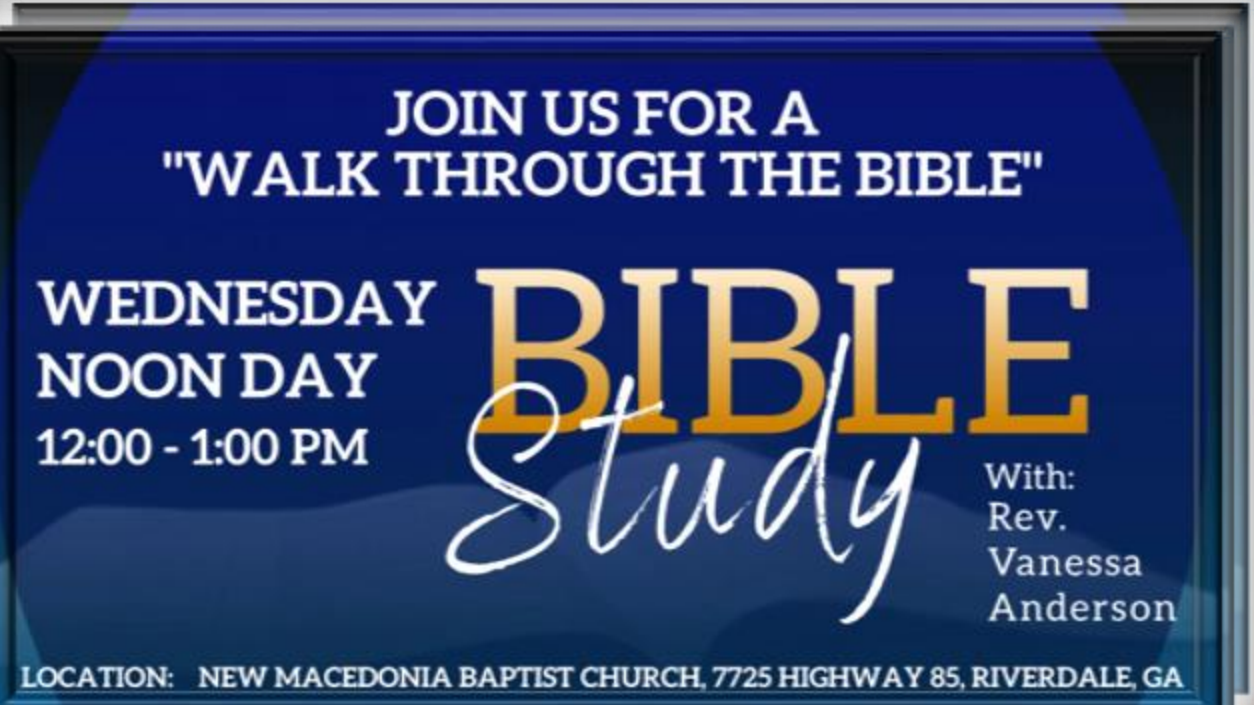
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