

Text: Psalm 121

Title: From where does my help come?

Theme: The Psalmist reminds the people of God that the Lord is their all-powerful and all sufficient helper in their Christian journey.

I was told that a family in Philadelphia would sing this Psalm every time their family travelled. Out of curiosity, I went to ask one of their family members why they would do that. And he told me that because Psalm 121 is known to be a traveler's Psalm. And later, when I was reading this Psalm, I found out that this Psalm is one of the Psalters in a collection of Psalms called the "Song of Ascent". **Do you know what it means?** A song of ascents was a collection of fifteen Psalms that the Jews used to sing when they were **going up** to Jerusalem during their three yearly festivals. They sang these songs because Jerusalem was located on a high hill, way above the sea level. It meant that the Jews had to climb upward in order to get to the city. And these songs were written in order to remind them of who God is and what He has done, and what He would do in the future!

And this **Psalm tells us 2 things about God that are important to our growth in grace**, and they will also be our main points today:

1. **The Power of God (vv. 1-2)**
2. **The Promises of God (vv. 3-8)**

I. **The Power of God v.1-2**

As the Jews went up to Jerusalem, they sang these songs **to praise the power of God**. But they were also singing to themselves. They used these songs **to encourage themselves**. You see, the paths ahead of them were not smooth trails and gentle slopes, but these are very rocky and remote paths. The Jews had to literally climb one hill after another in order to get to Jerusalem. More than that, it was the desert we are talking about, there were wild beasts and snakes at night, there could also be robbers hiding in the hills! In other words, going up to Jerusalem was not an easy journey. It was an anxious one, the journey was filled with unforeseen difficulties, one little wrong step could easily cost your life!

But in the midst of his anxiety, the Psalmist was using the difficulty of his journey and the needing help of the journey as a picture of how much he needed spiritual help for the difficult spiritual journey of his life. You see, while his need flooded his soul, he showed how his need is met in the next verse, he said, "my help comes from the Lord". When the Psalmist lifted his eyes up to the hills, he was anxious because he saw the dangers ahead. But the thing is that while the hills gave him anxiety, it also gave him the most comforting truth. It is because the hills reminded him the source of his help. The Psalmist said, "my help came from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth". The Psalmist was reminded of the One who was above the hills. He was not speaking of receiving help from a god who made a part of the heaven or some part of the earth, but Yahweh, the covenant God!

Why would the Psalmist have this confidence? It is because he recognized that Yahweh, who made the heaven and earth was His Heavenly Father! **Who spoke the universe into being and all that in it in six days, and governing it still by His providence!** In Exodus 4:22-23, the Lord said to Moses, "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn."²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'" You see, the Lord did not only see Israel as a nation, but as His child. The One who made the heaven and the earth called the people of Israel His children! What a comforting truth for the Psalmist when he recognized that his help was not found in any created creature or in any mere man, but it is found in his Heavenly Father, who split the Red Sea in order to lead the Israel out of the land of Egypt, and destroyed their enemies by closing up the water! He was the One who revealed Himself and promised to so keep Abraham, Jacob, Moses and all Israel! **What a sweet reminder to the Psalmist while he was anxious and afraid! For his Heavenly Father was the all-power God, who created all the hills that he had to climb, and He was right there with him.** He who had been the help of Israel would also be his help, and would uphold him while he kept pressing on in his journey! What a blessing it is to know this wonderful truth! This was the motivation for the Psalmist, this was the encouragement for the Psalmist so that he might carry onward in his upward journey to Jerusalem!

Lessons:

General lessons and specific lessons:

1. **Do you love to sing the Psalms?** Brothers and sisters, you see how there are joyful psalms, and psalms of petitions, psalms that ask God for forgiveness and for help, or even psalms that remind and assure us of the faithfulness of God. **The Psalms were written for us to praise God!** Therefore, let us learn to love and sing the Psalms!
2. **God's power is meaningful to you because He is your Father.** Remember in Lord's Day 9 of the Heidelberg Catechism, "that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son," You see, the Lord became your Father through the Lord Jesus who lived and died for you! **Your Father is in heaven. He had all power.** You can therefore trust him with your life. And you now have access to him...anytime...day or night...That veil in the temple was torn in two. He will help you through your many trials and troubles. No harm can come upon you unless he permits it. Do you use that access?
3. **You too must long for worship and be eager to meet with God.** Is it hard, like on a very cold snowy morning, to come to worship? Yes. But you are going to meet with the one who is able to help you – your all-powerful Father.

4. **Have you noticed how we usually begin the worship service? How the minister always asks “Congregation of the Lord, in whose name is your help?”** Did you know that it is actually pointing you to the one who helps you? Think about how do you usually respond to that question, **you say, “Our help is the name of the Lord, Creator of heaven and earth!”** You know that when you come into worship, you are worshipping the all-powerful God! So, let this shape your attitude when you come to Sunday worship!

II. The Promises of God (vv. 3-8)

In the next few verses the Psalmist further instructs God’s covenant people that the powerful God to whom they were singing **gave them many promises of help.**

Your all-powerful God really uses his power for your good. You see, some people might be able to help you, but they aren’t willing. Some may have money...but it is only for their use. **But God, because He is your Father, He uses his power to do for you what is good!**

But notice a change here. In V1-2, the Psalmist used the first person “I”, “me”, “my.” “My help” is in the Lord. But here in these next verses, the Psalmist used the second person, “you” and “your.” Why does he do this? It is because when we use the pronoun “you,” it means we are getting personal. We want people to personally feel and respond. As the representative of God, the Psalmist speaks for God. And that is always a personal challenge.

a. God the watchful keeper

First of all, notice in verses 3 and 4, **the Psalmist said that God had promised that He would not allow your foot to be moved.** What did the Psalmist mean? I mentioned earlier that this is a Psalm that the Jews sang while going up to Jerusalem and the roads were filled with dangers. Let me illustrate: when I was younger, my parents put me into this rock-climbing camp, and I had to pair up with someone about the same weight, so that person makes sure that if you slip or if you miss the hand grip, you won’t fall. But you see, that person doesn’t go up with you to the mountain, he stays down on the ground and you are on your own when you climb. Our Lord though, will not allow your foot to be moved. This is like having an extra security here, because **the Psalmist tells us that the Lord climbs with him and that he is so confident that the Lord will catch him if he slips.**

More than that, the Psalmist also said that God **would not slumber nor fall asleep.** You see, if you go climbing and your partner falls asleep, you are in deep trouble there. Do you know in the ancient days, there was an occupation called the watchman? The watchmen were responsible in watching out in the night time, they were to ring the bell if they saw enemies coming toward them! The watchmen had to pay careful attention when they guarded the night. You see, there was no ground for them to sleep. And this is what the Psalmist was telling us about the Lord! **He is a watchful keeper, He is ever so attentive!** He would not become lazy nor yawn while the Psalmist went up to the journey ahead of him! In other words, **He is a guardian!** And we should also pay close attention to verse 4, the Psalmist said, “He who kept Israel”. You see, the Psalmist was reminding himself of God’s faithfulness. He remembered how the Lord led his forefathers out of the land of Egypt, the Lord was ever so watchful to tend for His people, even though they went through trials and they had many troubles, the Lord was never asleep, He was always ready, always attentive! **Remember also what Psalm 91 says, “For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. ¹²In their hands they shall ^[a]bear you up, Lest you ^[b]dash your foot against a stone.”**

You see, the Psalmist was confident that just as the Lord had ever been a watchful Keeper to Israel, He would also be a watchful Keeper to him.

b. God the protector

Second, the Psalmist also said that the Lord is a protective Guardian. **The Lord did not only promise him to be watchful, but He also promised to protect.** In verses 5, the Psalmist said that the Lord was his shade at His right hand! What does that mean? We should first consider what a shade is for? A shade is to protect us from the heat, so that the Psalmist would not die by the heat of the sun or dehydration! And it also does more! We should keep in mind that the journey was in the wilderness, and deserts get cold in the night time, and evening was when the wild beasts came out to hunt! But the comfort that the Psalmist found was that the shade of the Lord would protect him both the day time and the night time. So, you see, **the Lord doesn’t say that there is danger...which would be good by itself...he goes farther and protects you from the danger.**

Did these verses remind you of another account of how God led the Israelites throughout the day and the night? Maybe you remember that the Lord had done so to Israel when He led them out of the land of Egypt to the Red see, *Exodus 13:20-22 said, “So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. ²¹And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²²He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.”* You see, the Psalmist was reminding himself of God’s faithfulness toward Israel, how He had protected them from the Egyptians and the Philistines! What faith can we see from the Psalmist! **You see, the Lord our God is not a God who is limited in power, but He is not only is a watchful Keeper, but He is also a protective Keeper!**

c. God the spiritual keeper

Finally, the Psalmist said that God was also a permanent Keeper. The promise that the Psalmist laid out here was that he had faith in that the Lord would not only preserve him from physical harm, but all harm. You see, the Psalmist no longer had to be afraid when he climbed up the hills, it is because he had put his faith in the one who had promised to guard him from all evil, and the One who had also promised to be with him in his going out and coming in! What a promise! But in verse 7b, the Psalmist said that the Lord would also preserve his soul, which refers to his spiritual wellbeing! But how? How would the Lord preserve his soul?

There is something we must not miss here. As the Jews looked to the hill, to mount Zion, to mount Moriah, at which they were to worship, to celebrate the festivals, and those festivals they knew that these were ultimately types that **foreshadows of the promise of the**

coming of the Messiah, the coming of the eternal Kingdom! In other words, **they were looking far toward to salvation!** They were putting their faith in the Promised One, the Seed of Abraham who would come to be the fulfillment to what the yearly festivals ultimately signified, as the Pascal Lamb, the One who would perform the once and for all Sacrifice and restore unto them the communion between God and man! It is because they recognize that it is only through Him, would they receive the promise of salvation!

- **God your spiritual protector forever.**

But we must recognize that this spiritual protection does not stop. This is eternal security! God will keep the souls of his children forever. You see, the Psalmist believed that the Lord would not only be their watchful and protective keeper from the journey ahead, but he also believed that the Lord would preserve him eternally. **There was an eye of faith for not only the life he lived on earth, but the everlasting life that which he would inherit!** You see, the Psalmist had faith here, what he was ultimately saying was this, “whatever I do, whether I arrive at Jerusalem, go on a far journey, or return home, the Lord will watch over all my affairs, the Lord’s care for me is not only limited to now, but forevermore.” This is true faith. The Psalmist could say this only because he put his faith in the Lord, **whose promises did not last only a moment, but for a life time!**

What lessons can we learn from this point?

1. **The Psalmist could sing all these words only because he knew the Lord’s promises and that he was faithful to keep his promises.** He did this in the past. He would do so in the present and the future. Brothers and sisters, you must know who God is and what he has promised. This will give you your greatest comfort as you serve the Lord. But where do you get these promises? This is why we gather for worship to hear God’s Word and to do family worship, and to do private devotions. It is because that is how you hear these promises!
2. But you see, the Psalmist had true and sufficient faith of these things, but what they saw were only types and foreshadows. **And the types and foreshadows were ultimately pointing forward to the coming and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, in and through whom God’s wrath was satisfied!** Brothers and sister, but you have seen the completed promise of God! This is the Gospel! The reality is that the Lord would only keep you because of the shedding of blood of our Lord Jesus Christ! **Jesus had to be demolished in God’s wrath and cast away from God’s presence in order that we might be kept and preserved eternally!** You see, because of the Lord Jesus Christ, we could lift our eyes up to the hills and know that where our help came from! Not only that, we can also have confident that the Lord would be our watchful, protective guardian, not only physically, but spiritually!
3. And **when you have recognized God’s great power and God’s rich promises, worship with a refreshed sense.** Don’t follow man’s attempts to use the things of this world to find refreshment for the soul. Look to the One who made the heaven and the earth, and all that is in them!

CONCLUSION

We see here in this psalm that the Psalmist was going up to Jerusalem to worship. And he lifted his eyes up to the hills, he became anxious and fearful when he saw the journey ahead. But just as he set his eyes to the hills, he was reminded immediately of the Lord, who was sovereign over all and in all, who created the heaven and the earth and all things that are in them, and would keep him watchfully, protectively and eternally in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Brothers and sisters, let me ask you a question: where does your help come? Is your hope rested upon the all-powerful and ever faithful God, who created the heaven and the earth? May you recognize that just as the Lord was faithful to Israel, to the Psalmist, to the saints who had gone ahead of us, will likewise be faithful to you. Remember also, He who had created all things, who had watchfully preserved the saints of the past physically and spiritually, will also tend for you all the days of your life because you belong to Jesus Christ! And the wonderful truth is that because Jesus is our firm foundation, one of my favorite hymns go like this, “from life’s first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck you from His hand!” Let me remind you this day that whatever you do, whether you have a long journey to go, or return home, the Lord will watch over all your affairs, it is because the Lord’s care for you is not only limited to now, but forevermore!

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you do not have the Lord, who is the Creator of the heaven and the earth as your watchful Guardian to protect you because God is against you because of your sin, but if you look to Him today, and cry out to Him, He is full of mercy and He shall have compassion on you. Come now, come to Jesus, and He will not only be your Guardian, but your Best Friend.

Let us pray.