

## What Kind of Help does God Provide?

Message Notes, January 8, 2022

### Psalm 121 (NIV)

#### A song of ascents

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; <sup>4</sup> indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup> The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; <sup>6</sup> the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. <sup>7</sup> The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; <sup>8</sup> the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

The Question for 2023 is “from where will your help come?” Of course, we know our help comes from God, but mere head knowledge is not enough to make it our own and give us the strength to live day by day. So, what shall we do?

#### ◆ **Consciously Choose What You Listen To**

We tend to lose our peace to negative noise if we are not mindful of it (check the prayer in Psalm 120)

**Psalm 120:2,7 (NIV)** <sup>2</sup> Save me, Lord, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues... <sup>7</sup> I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.”

- Of course, literal enemies may attack, but the “song of ascents” refers to Satan’s attacks (and negative voices from within) that tend to drown out God’s voice and peace.
- As we move forward into the New Year with a renewed spirit, the negative voices from within attempt to rob us of peace. Therefore, I want to focus on learning from Psalm 121.
- ✧ What is the focus of your heart right now? Where are you attempting to fix your gaze?

**Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)** “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

- “Sow a thought, and you reap an act; Sow an act, and you reap a habit; Sow a habit, and you reap a character; Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.” Samuel Smiles

#### ◆ **Situation** Psalm 121 begins, “I will lift my eyes to the mountains” (v. 1)

- The mountains referred to are those of Zion, in other words The Temple of Jerusalem. The pilgrims on their annual journey to worship see Jerusalem come into view in the distance (topographical)
- Even as they come to worship, their hearts are not 100% directed toward God, but are rather disturbed by the problems that occupy their minds. Before they worship, their hearts were occupied with various problems and what to do about them.

Here, the psalmist speaks to his own heart, “My help comes the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”

- This confession of faith is also a very important declaration for the believer himself. By putting thoughts into words, actions will follow. This is the importance of intentionality.
- This year (2023), when we face anxiety, the first thing we should do is to consciously turn our attention to God, the Maker of this world, and resolve to listen to His voice along.

#### ◆ **Keyword: “Help is from the Lord”** Whenever we fix our eyes on the Lord, He promises that help will come to us. The single expression “*ezer* (help), *im* (with), *Yahweh* (the Lord)”=help comes from the Lord (with the Lord) underscores the clarity and the absoluteness of the promise. Cf. “Immanuel” is *Im*(with), *Nu*(us), *El*(God)

- This is a confession of faith that clarifies position and identity. Are you convinced that the Lord is the One who will solve your problems in 2023?

## What Kind of Help is the Lord's Help?

### 1. To Come Alongside Completely and Thoroughly

- Help (*ezer*) in vv. 1,2 means counterpart, like-minded, complementary. It can also mean spouse or partner. It refers to that which shares the same qualities or senses and is complementary; in other words, the help that is provided is fitting, superlative, timely, and convincing in a way that can only come from God.
  - Will not let your foot slip in v. 3 refers to being numb, carrying a rod and bar or a yoke, that is, to bear a yoke with him and so that he can fulfill what need to be done. Related to Matthew 11:28ff.  
**Matthew 11:28-31 (NIV)** <sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
  - The Lord is shade at your right hand in v. 5 means that the Lord Himself is next to me as a shield. "The Lord Himself watches over you! The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade." (NLT)
- No matter what challenges or problems you face this year, the Lord will empower you, be right alongside of you, and support you.

### 2. He Has Watched Over Us So Far

- Watch over (*shamar*) in vv. 3,4,5 occurs three times in this Psalm, but the word appears over 450 times in the Bible, characterizing God, in most of the 39 books of the Old Testament
  - In his watchfulness, He "neither slumbers nor sleeps" (v. 4) has been the standard and starting point, especially in light of how God led Israel on the night of their exodus from Egypt. In breathtaking situations, we must remember that God is the One who watches over us, never taking His eyes off of us, even for a moment.
  - The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night (v. 6) Their survival during the forty years they spent in the harsh desert environment was miraculous. God protected the Israelites from the scorching rays of the sun by a pillar of cloud and from the cold of the night by a pillar of fire. Their clothes and sandals did not wear out, and God provided water and food daily, as well as protecting them from their enemies from without.
- ✧ In our lives, the Lord always considers the state of our hearts, encouraging us and delivering us when we are in dark and dangerous states of life where we feel insecure. In what ways, including spiritual guidance, has God watched over you in the last year?

### 3. He Will Help Us from Now On

God's help is not a relic or memory of the past, but a hope and certainty for the future

- Harm The most widely used term used for adversity, so this promise is to provide protection from all kinds of troubles that may be experienced in life.
  - Forevermore is composed of two words, *forward* and *everlasting*, emphasizing that God's help will continue to be offered eternally. Our future will always be protected.
- ✧ To gain confidence regarding this protection of God into the future, take some time to look back over last year and see how God protected you, then reflect on what God is asking of you this year (use your Bible, your calendar, journal, notebooks)
- ✧ As the seasons change, it is important to pause and listen to what God is trying to teach you now. Jesus stayed up all night praying before he selected the twelve disciples.