

THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE

PART 9

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PSALM 121

A Song of Ascents.

- 1 *I lift up my eyes to the hills—where
does my help come from?*
- 2 *My help comes from the LORD, the
Maker of heaven and earth.*
- 3 *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.*
- 7 *The LORD will keep you from all
harm—he will watch over your life;*
- 8 *the LORD will watch over your
coming and going both now and for
evermore.*

This *Psalm* is all about the Lord being a help to those who believe. It has been termed as ‘The Soldiers Song’; ‘The Travellers Hymn’, and ‘The Pilgrims Guardian’. In **The Treasury of David** by **Spurgeon** it is called. ‘A *Psalm* to the keeper of Israel’. As the *Psalm* is read the various degrees of truth are quite quickly discerned, and aspects of truth with regard to God clearly seen.

This *Psalm* is one of the collections of poems which form the songs of the degrees, ascents, or going up, that I referred to in an earlier study.

When the *Psalm* is read, it appears as a dialogue. **Adam Clark** in his commentary points out:

“This appears to be a prayer of the Jews in their captivity, who are solicitous for their restoration. It is in the form of a dialogue”.

Verses 1 & 2. The person who worships God speaks the two first verses. *“I will lift up mine eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

Verse 3. The ministering priest answers him. *“He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber;”*

Verse 4. To which the worshipper replies. *“indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”*

There is something vital that I feel should be pointed out in this *Psalm*, and it is this: it is important for each one to have a **vertical** relationship with the Lord. We are dealing with **PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE**, and this song concerns travelling a distance over a period of time. It is essential therefore that there is a **vertical** connection made between the Lord and the person who is travelling.

In life, when something goes wrong, our first thought is usually to turn to someone we know who we think will be able to help us. It is part of life to turn

to someone for help that you have confidence in. I am not unsympathetic to this type of thing; however, there are occasions when the one or ones you have the most confidence in will not be able to help. I believe this is why we need to have this **vertical** relationship with God. The horizontal connection with friends is good, but in a crisis does not always supply the answer we need. However good and helpful the people that we turn to are, there are still those moments when what we need is beyond their ability. This is something we all have to realise. Yes, it is important to have a good relationship with the people you work and worship with, but regardless of how good that relationship, there will be times when even their words, council, and advice are inadequate to meet your need.

Notice the *Psalmist* **vertical** call.

“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”.

I would like us here to consider.

1. THE PERSON TO LOOK TO.

In **John 12 vs 20 & 21** we read: *“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus”.*

It is clear that these men had heard much regarding Jesus and the help He was constantly giving to people, and therefore desired to make personal contact with Him.

When it comes to wanting help for something particular it is very often a confidence issue. In the N.T. we can take note of the various times when

people looked to the Lord Jesus for help. A list of the following instances will highlight what I mean.

Luke 8 v 41 *“Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house.”*

John 3 vs 1 & 2 *“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no-one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him”.*

Luke 19 v 2 to 4 *“A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way”.*

Mark 10 v 47 & 48 *“When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

If we consider the opening words of this *Psalm*, you will observe that the person speaking is looking beyond their present circumstances. This dialogue begins with the words *“I lift up my eyes to the hills”*. The conversation goes further than the present situation the person finds them self in. The actual situation the *Psalmist* is in, is not a pleasant one, and the writer is looking towards something better, so the question is asked, *“Where does my help come from?”* Then the answer comes: *“My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth”*.

As a Christian, if you are in a time of personal trouble the advice of this *Psalm* is worth taking note of. Look to the Lord. Look to the right place. Look to the right person.

The next thing I want us to consider is.

2. THE PLACE TO LOOK TO.

By putting this *Psalm* into the context for which it was composed, we have to consider the main theme projected. It is clear that it is about someone who is beginning a journey. Someone who is going to be on the move from one place to another, and wants the help and assistance of the Lord, to give them the assurance that they will arrive safely at their destination.

As this dialogue continues, observe the confidence that is instilled in the traveller by this second person, and also how the letter **S** is used at the beginning of some words to give assurance to the pilgrim in **verses 3 to 6**.

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

Assurance that all is well is what one requires if faced with a situation one is not very confident about. I am sure that this *Psalm* gives this to us. For no matter how long our journey through life is, we all need to have the confidence and assurance that during our traverse through life, we shall be kept, watched over, provided for, and sustained regardless of the situations we are faced with.

The place this person is heading towards is Jerusalem. Freedom from captivity had become a reality; the certainty of Jerusalem is in front of them. It's a long way off, and there will be difficulties on the journey, there will be problems never before encountered, situations that they had never had to face. But! through the definite statements and promises that are made during the dialogue, the traveller is given the kind of reassurance that all will be well.

By putting this *Psalm* in to a present day context and giving it some relevance for today, its parallel is seen in that we, like the person who wrote the *Psalm*, are on a journey following our release from bondage. We were the captives and slaves of sin prior to our conversion, but since that time, we have looked to the Person of Christ, and also the Place that He has Prepared for us, which is heaven. I know that during the journey we have been on since becoming Christians, we have all had to face some difficult times. However, look at the promises that were applied to the *Psalmist* during the dialogue about the journey to Jerusalem as stated in **verses 3 to 8**. There are precious promises, so we will consider

3. THE PROMISES TO HOLD ON TO.

There are four specific promises given in this *Psalm*.

- **The Promise of Stability.** *“He will not let your foot slip”*
- **The Promise of Sentry.** *“He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”*
- **The Promise of Shelter.** *“The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”*
- **The Promise of Security.** *“The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore.”*

These are as applicable to us today as they were to the person who wrote this *Psalm*, and we can take these promises and apply them to ourselves.

In this *Psalm* then we have the dialogue that took place between the person who wrote the *Psalm* and someone else that had a very close relationship with

the Lord, and knew the power to protect and preserve those in contact and communion with Him.