

Psalm 121 - He Shall Neither Slumber Nor Sleep - 2019-04-14

Call to Worship: 1 Corinthians 15:20-21

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:8-18

Sermon: He Shall Neither Slumber Nor Sleep - Psalm 121

Benediction: 2 Thessalonians 3:16

INTRODUCTION

I need help! I need to be protected! I need to be saved!
That is so often the thought of my heart; perhaps it is of yours, too.

The government authorities who are supposed to protect me from the criminal element in society often are, themselves, the most dangerous threats to my safety; they conspire to remove all legal protections from me; they keep passing laws making the free exercise of my most basic rights illegal!

My own body is betraying me!

-it gets sick; sometimes very sick; people die of illness; even the young get chronic diseases that leave them often laid out in bed, or weak, unable to do what they need to do

-it gets injured; it gets sore; people die in car wrecks and other accidents

-it gets old; everything wears out; arthritis gets in the joints and won't go away

My closest friends, even those who were in the assembly with me on the Lord's Day, are now abandoning me. My heart is aching as they say things about me that are not so. My family is groaning as their friendships are fraying.

Those things try to trouble me, even me, who is safely in Jesus Christ through faith.

But some of you are troubled by much greater troubles.

-you know you are not safe in Jesus Christ

-you are a rebel against God, and in danger of the fires of hell

-any moment you may find yourself tormented in the fire

-even if that does not come for another 100 years, yet surely it will come, which you know full well

We need help! We need protection! We need salvation!

TEXT

Psalm 121

BODY

(1) I will lift up my eyes to the hills-- From whence comes my help?

-I find no help in myself

The world's message, preached so loudly in a hundred disney movies, a thousand popular songs and a million tweets and texts, is that you should believe in yourself and follow your heart

-I find no help in other people

-I look up, away from myself and those with me

-This is essential

-If you are not yet in Christ, to be saved you must look up

-you cannot save yourself

-other people cannot save you

-If you are in Christ

(2) My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

-whose primary identification with us is as the one who made heaven and earth

-no obligation to say "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" because the LXX translates as "kurios" and the New Testament authors quote it as "kurios"

-the LORD is not a man like me, and like other people with me

-He is the Creator; therefore He is, ultimately, the only source of help; He is also the perfect source of help

(3) He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.

He who "keeps" you

Hebrew *shamar* literally "to hedge about" to guard; to protect; to keep; to preserve

This is then the word

4 - He that keeps Israel

5 - The LORD is your keeper

7 - The LORD shall preserve...shall preserve

8 - The LORD shall preserve

He will not allow your foot to be moved

that is, He will guard you, protect you, keep you, preserve you

and He will not fail ever fail to do so, because, unlike human guards, he does not slumber

(4) Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

-it has just been said already that He will not slumber; so why say it again?

-this is part of the poem, to give glory to God and comfort to us sinners

-statements about God's protection of us, each then amplified to show its completeness

-neither slumber nor sleep?

-translators since long ago have judged that the use of two different words for sleep here is to cover both the falling asleep from drowsiness and the intentional lying down to sleep

LXX - G3573 *nustazo*

Strong: to nod; that is, by implication, to fall asleep; slumber

Thayer: to nod in sleep; to be overcome with sleep; to fall asleep

Vulgate - dormitabit

form of dormito to slumber; to feel sleepy, drowsy

Wycliffe - he schal not nappe, nether slepe

He will never fail to keep us because He sometimes fails to be attentive to us

He will never fail to keep us because He needs rest, needs a break

Instead, He who keeps us neither slumbers nor sleeps

(5) The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

When you have to be outside to do your work, or to be on campaign in warfare, the sun can be very hard on you; we know that here in Texas; it would be just as much so for the author of this psalm; he would not have had an air conditioned vehicle or home; the main defense against the effects of the burning sun is shade

The LORD is your shade, not far away, but right at hand

(6) The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night.

We see the pattern from “slumber nor sleep” repeated here. It has already been said that He is our shade; now there will be a statement of how He is not sometimes, but always our shade

It is easy enough for us to picture how we would benefit from shade against the burning sun during the day.

But we, in our culture, would not think of needing to be shaded from the moon at night. But for this Hebrew poet, being shaded from the moon was a way of talking about being protected from whatever troubles night would bring

-cold

-the predations of wild animals

-the criminal activities of bandits

So that we are protected by the LORD all the time, both day and night

(7) The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.

The first line here emphasizes that He who keeps us shall keep us not only from some evil, nor from most evil, but from all evil

all kinds of evil

all instances of evil

The second line emphasizes that He shall preserve not only our bodies and our physical life; indeed not primarily or always our bodies and our physical life; but primarily our inward, spiritual life, our souls

We see this developed in the NT by our Lord Jesus, who instructs us not to fear men, who may be allowed by God to harm our bodies, but who can do no more; instead, we are to fear God who can destroy both body and soul in hell

How is it that He can preserve my soul, when it is He Himself who is the great threat to my soul; He is the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell

He has sent His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to take the punishment we deserved upon Himself..

(8) The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

The final two statements of how our LORD shall preserve us

your going out and your coming in

-you go out to start something; you come in when you are finished; so, from start to finish

-you are sometimes in the comfort and safety of home; you are sometimes out away from home

from this time forth, and even forevermore

-now, and in the future during this life

-when this life is over, and you die

-when this age is over, and the Lord Jesus comes back

-forevermore

CONCLUSION

Do not look to yourself for help

Do not look to other men for help

But look in faith to God our creator

He is the protector of all who trust in Him

He is the protector who neither slumbers nor sleeps

He will keep you

He will surely help you

Webster 1828 on “whence”

“From whence” may be considered as tautological, from being implied in whence; but the use is well authorized, and in some cases the use of it seems to give force or beauty to the phrase.

Trapp:

we slumber before we sleep; but God shall do neither

Spurgeon:

neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep

K&D:

To render “from which my help cometh” (Luther) is inadmissible. It is an interrogative even in Joshua 2:4, where the question is an indirect one.

In Psa_121:1 the poet has propounded a question, and in Psa_121:2 replies to this question himself.

thy Keeper will surely not slumber; and then confirms the assertion that this shall not come to pass by heightening the expression in accordance with the step-like character of the Psalm: Behold the Keeper of Israel slumbereth not and sleepeth not, i.e., He does not fall into slumber from weariness, and His life is not an alternate waking and sleeping. The eyes of His providence are ever open over Israel.

