

Safely Kept in God's Love

In this series of articles from Psalm 121, we're reminded of God's constant keeping care. Last time we saw that God is the *Personal* Keeper of his people. The Psalmist shows us that God is a God of covenant who's intimately related to his covenant children. As we move further in the Psalm we learn that God is our:

—*Powerful* Keeper. "My help comes from the LORD *who made heaven and earth.*" God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing (Genesis 1). I'm reminded of God's conversation with Job especially as Job hears God speak of his work in creation. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4) "Have you commanded the morning....or caused the dawn to know its place?" (38:12) "Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help...." (38:41) (see also Ps. 104:5; Col. 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2) It's important for us to reflect on the fact that God did not speak the world into existence and then leave mankind to fend for themselves. God is not distant; he doesn't remove himself from the day to day—even moment by moment—concerns of his people. As we've already seen, God is our personal keeper. Given the biblical truth that God created the heavens and the earth, do we believe that any of our problems are too big for God's *power* to handle? There's nothing too hard for God to do nor nothing good that he withholds from his children. (Jeremiah 32:27; Ps. 34:9) As we move further into our Psalm we're reminded that God is our:

—*Providential* Keeper. The word "providence" is not used as often today as it once was. The word speaks of the God's direct involvement in all that he's made. The Westminster Shorter Catechism gives this definition: "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions" (Ps. 103:19; 145:17; Is. 28:29; Mt. 10:29; Heb. 1:3). Without breaking down every aspect of this biblically supported statement, what it says in effect is that *God is in complete control!* "He will not let your foot be moved...." (vs. 3) In the area around Palestine, it's very rocky in places. The Psalmist is pointing to the fact that, no matter where you walk, on level or rocky ground, *Yahweh* will watch over your every step to keep you from slipping and falling. "....he who keeps you will not slumber...." The Hebrew participle in the sentence teaches

us that God *continually keeps* his children. Whether we're experiencing times of joy or sorrow God is always with us.

"Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (vs. 4) Hebrew scholars teach us that verse 4 is a special type of clause which could literally be translated, "Behold, (*surely or without any doubt*) he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." In ancient times it was often thought that the gods of the nations needed sleep just as we do. But clearly, our covenant God never sleeps. We remember the biblical account of the prophet Elijah and his encounter with the prophets of the false god, Baal. In 1 Kings 18 Elijah speaks to the people: "How long will you go on between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." To help them with their indecision, Elijah suggests a test to see who was truly God. He called for two bulls to be sacrificed. One was given to the false prophets of Baal. They were to cut it in pieces, lay it on the wood, but put no fire on it. Elijah would do the same with the other bull. The agreement was that, the God who answered by fire would prove to be the true God.

The false prophets of Baal sacrificed their bull and called on Baal from morning until noon, saying, "Oh Baal answer us!" At one point Elijah said of their god, "*...maybe he's asleep and needs awakened.*" They continued chanting until the evening sacrifice, but their god never came. The story continues with Elijah calling for massive amounts of water to be poured over his sacrifice as well as the wood that the sacrifice is laid on. As we know, *Yahweh* showed up! The fire of the LORD fell from heaven and consumed the offering, the wood and the stones of the altar completely. When the people saw it they fell on their faces and worshiped the true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Our *providential* keeper is always there for his people. He never "slumbers nor sleeps." Our God keeps us safely in his loving care!

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