

God's Constant Care in Uncertain Times

We've all seen and heard, through news reports and our personal experience, the fact that we're living in uncertain times. We're involved in a worldwide pandemic that's still causing loss of life as well as loss of livelihood for many. Our American economy is, by all accounts, in huge disarray. Market observers have declared that recent events and their effect on the stock market are, "...some of the most dramatic in Wall Street's 216 year history." Issues of racism and gender identity are at the forefront of our current cultural moment. Vitriolic language—like an active volcano—regularly erupts from the mouths of people on both sides of the debate producing more heat than light. Using the words of the late Francis Schaeffer, "How shall we then live" in these uncertain times? What hope do Christians have to share with others?

In 1981, a Jewish Rabbi by the name of Harold Kushner wrote what has come to be a famous book entitled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. In his book, written after the death of his son from an incurable genetic disease, Kushner tried to make sense of seemingly cruel and unnecessary suffering and loss. In a short paragraph from the book, he summed up his findings. "God wants the righteous to live peaceful, happy lives, but sometimes *even he* can't bring that about. It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims." The obvious conclusion of Rabbi Kushner is that God is ultimately impotent. Even though God is loving and really wants to, he is often unable to come to our aid and help us in our time of need. Is this the testimony of Holy Scripture?

In times of fear and uncertainty, God's people have often looked to the Psalms for comfort. This article begins a new series from Psalm 121 that I pray will be encouraging to many. This Psalm is one of the Psalms of Ascent. These are a special grouping of Psalms (120-134) that the children of Israel sang as they made their way up to the Temple in Jerusalem for worship. The Psalms bring comfort to God's people in a number of ways.

Dr. Jack Collins, Old Testament professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, writes, "The Psalms employ *rhetoric* to achieve their end of shaping our

inner life. Rhetoric is the way you present your ideas, in a way that moves people to feel the way you want them to. In the hands of unscrupulous people, rhetoric can be a tool for manipulating; but in the service of virtue, it can move its audience to do what they know is right." C. S. Lewis once wrote, "The proper use [of rhetoric] is lawful and necessary because, as Aristotle points out, intellect of itself 'moves nothing.' The transition from thinking to doing, in nearly all men at nearly all moments, needs to be assisted by appropriate states of feeling." And this is certainly true for the Psalms. They touch us—if they touch us at all—not merely intellectually, but at the deepest levels of our being.

As we begin our look at the Psalm, let me note that the words translated "keep" and "keeper" are pervasive throughout (vss. 3-5, 7-8). This serves to emphasize the truth that God is the one who "guards, protects and keeps" his people in his constant care. The Psalmist begins by highlighting the fact that God is our:

—Personal Keeper

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?" The rhetorical question from verse 1 is then answered in the first line of verse 2: "My help comes from the LORD..." This is the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. The Psalmist is speaking of the Covenant LORD. This is where his help comes from. By using this particular word, the Psalmist is making the reader aware that he is in personal relationship with the Covenant LORD. This is not some type of random prayer thrown up to some unknown deity in the hopes that "someone up there somewhere will help me." The cry of the Psalmist is spoken with the certainty that he will receive help from his God. God knows him personally. This is the hope that all Christians have. Because of our personal relationship with almighty God in Jesus Christ, we know that our prayers will always be answered according to God's perfect will for our lives and in his perfect timing.

God is the personal keeper of all Christians. We may be uncertain of the things going on around us but we should never be uncertain of the One who is in control of all things.

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