

My Help Comes from the LORD

In this series of articles from Psalm 121 I've been focusing on the fact that God is our "keeper." The words translated "keep" and "keeper" are pervasive throughout the Psalm (vss. 3-5, 7-8). This highlights the truth that God intimately cares for his people. The Hebrew word translated "keep" can mean to, "keep, guard, observe, preserve and to give heed." According to one Hebrew lexicon we're told that the Hebrew word translated "keep" carries the meaning of the "full range of protection" of our Covenant God for his children. Initially we saw that, for Christians, God is our *personal keeper*. The Psalmist tells us that his "help comes from the LORD." (vs. 2) "LORD" is the Hebrew word *Yahweh* which speaks of the God of personal and intimate covenant relationship with his people.

God is also our *powerful keeper*. He is the God "who made heaven and earth." (vs. 2) This tells us, at the very least, that there's no problem that we face that is out of God's ability to take care of according to his perfect will for each of our lives. In my last article we began to look at the fact that God is our *providential keeper* which is just to say that God is in complete control of our lives and of his world. As we continue, I want to look further at God's *providential* watch-care over the lives of his people. In this Psalm, the pronouns throughout are singular (e.g., I, my, etc.) which focuses on the personal and individual aspect of God's keeping. That being said, the Psalmist highlights the *corporate* aspect of this Psalm by referencing "Israel" in verse 4. So, then, these promises from God are to be seen both as promises to God's people *individually* as well as a promise for the Church: God's people *corporately*. Even though we may do pretty well at reading this Psalm (and many other scripture passages) as *personal* comfort, we may not often focus on the importance of this Psalm for the church. May God forgive us should our focus merely be on our own personal wants while failing to pray for, sacrificially support and serve the local church. How can we neglect the church for whom Christ died?

Looking further in our text, we see in verse 5b that the LORD is our "shade" or it could be translated "shadow." This is just a metaphor for God's protection. We can see this same thing in a number of other scriptures. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the *shadow* of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1) "In the *shadow* of his hand he hid me....." (Isaiah 49:2) This word translated "shade" can also speak of God's bringing times of *refreshing* into our lives. Notice now verse 6: "The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night." Scholars note that the two lines of verse 6 are poetic

parallels. In other words, naming a pair of opposites includes everything in between. This is typically seen as a favorite way of expressing *totality* for the writers of the Psalms. Again we're reminded of God's comprehensive, *providential keeping*. God is involved in every minute detail of the lives of his people. Jesus teaches this same truth in Matthew 10:29-30. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered." God is our *providential keeper*.

Lastly in this Psalm I want to call attention to the fact that God is our *permanent keeper*. At this point in the Psalm we go beyond the day to day to cover in broad brush strokes the totality of our existence. "The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life." (vs. 7) One commentator has said that, "In light of other scriptures, to be kept *from all evil* does not imply a cushioned life, but a well-armed one." Even when we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4) God has promised the *permanent keeping* of his people. Notice now verse 8: "The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." The phrase translated "...your going out and your coming in" is given to show us that God's *permanent keeping* covers every aspect of our lives. Added to this is the phrase, "...from this time forth and forevermore." Everything and always! God is our *permanent keeper*. This is why the Psalmist has no reservations in declaring, "My help comes from the LORD."

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