

Psalm 121: 1-8 (ESV): I Lift My Eyes to the Hills

Main point: God is present with you, watching over you.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Some call this the soldier's psalm and think it was written by David in the midst of a military campaign, trusting God to protect him. Others call it the traveler's psalm and think David wrote it when he was going abroad, and designed it *pro vehiculo*—*for the carriage*, for a man's convoy and companion in a journey or voyage.¹

Focus of the study:

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

³ The Lord will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

Questions:

- v. 1: What is the writer doing at the beginning? What does he need?*
 - Looking for help
- Where do we typically look for help?*
- Ourselves! We look for what we can do: our own talents, other people, objects, other parts of creation.*
- Why is this the natural direction we look when we need help? And where do all those things actually come from?*
 - What we see immediately around us are obvious places to look ... though all of them are also dependent on God!
- Does the writer find help in the hills? Where does he find help?*
 - No; his help is found in the Lord
- Why is the Lord more powerful than the hills/mountains? Why should we look to God for help?*

¹ Matthew Henry's commentary: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+121&version=ESV>

- a) God made the hills, made heaven and earth! We must look beyond earthly things, instruments of God, when we need help.
7. *The writer then turns to speaking to another person: "The Lord will not let your foot be moved..." or another translation, "The Lord will not let your foot slip." What is it like when you're climbing a mountain out in the wilderness? What kinds of dangers are there?*
- a) Can be intimidating; forces greater than yourself; you have to be careful of all sorts of things (such as: weather, animals, bad trails...)
8. *What does it mean when you're on a trail on a mountainside and your foot "doesn't move"?*
- a) You are on solid ground; steady, not shaken
9. *What do you think it would be like if you were out hiking on a mountain and the sun went down?*
- a) Scary! You can't put one foot forward for fear of slipping off the edge.
10. *So why does it matter that God does not sleep and will not let your foot slip?*
- a) He is always watching, protecting, on your side.
11. *v. 5: Again, thinking about being on a mountainside: "The Lord is your keeper; he is your shade..." What is shade like? How close is shade?*
- a) cool, refreshing, comforting, delightful
- a) You have to be close to the source to stand in its shade! If you're far away from the source, like a tree or building, you won't get any shade.
12. *v. 6: How does the sun "strike" you? How does the nighttime/moon "strike" you?*
- a) (generate thoughts: heat, hard to keep moving, unknown things at night, can't see, heatstroke, etc.)
13. *v. 7: Now the psalmist moves to "evil": what does he say the Lord will protect you from?*
- a) "all evil" – what does that include? (generate ideas...) The evil of circumstances and the evil of hearts (trouble and sin)
- a) "The Lord will keep your life" – *how much control do we have over what happens to us?*
- i. Some control, based on choices/consequences
- i. Ultimately, God is in control of life and death; and even death is not the final sting.
14. *v. 8: The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in: I wonder what that means?*
- a) Any journey, real or figurative—God is with you. Outward bound or inward bound.
15. *How often will God do this? When does God's care expire?*
- a) Never expires! From this time forth and forevermore. *How often are we exposed to dangerous things?*
- i. All the time! We're just not aware of it....
16. *How does this psalm reassure you?*
- a) Our confidence is in God – why? What is his character like?
- a) Have faith in his care and protection
- a) He is PRESENT WITH YOU always.
- Ask for any other prayer requests for today.
 - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
 - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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