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:
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:
1. v. 1: What is the writer doing at the beginning? What does he need?
   a. Looking for help
2. Where do we typically look for help?
   a. Ourselves! We look for what we can do: our talents, other people, objects, other part of creation
3. Why is this the natural direction to look when we need help? And where do all those things actually come from?
   a. What we see immediately around us are obvious places to look … though all of them are also dependent on God!
4. Does the writer find help in the hills? Where does he find help?
   a. No; his help is found in the Lord
5. 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.

6. **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...)

7. **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

8. **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.

9. **So why does it matter that God does not sleep and will not let your foot slip?**
   a. God is always watching, protecting, on your side.

10. **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 it?**
    a. cool, refreshing, comforting, delightful
    b. 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.

11. **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.)

12. **v. 7: Now the writer moves to “evil”: what does the writer 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)
    b. “The Lord will keep your life” – **how much control do we have over what happens to us?**
      i. Some control, based on choices/consequences
      ii. Ultimately, God is in control of life and death; and even death is not the final sting.

13. **v. 8: The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in:** I wonder what that means?
    a. Any journey, real or figurative—he is with you. Outward bound or inward bound.

14. **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....

15. **How does this psalm reassure you?**
    a. Our confidence is in God – why? What is God’s character like?
    b. Have faith in his care and protection
    c. God 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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