

# Psalm 121 Commentary

PSALM 119

PSALMS

## Psalm 121

[1](#) (A Song of Ascents.)

I Will lift up my eyes to the mountains;

From whence shall my help come?

[2](#) My help comes from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

[3](#) He will not allow your foot to slip;

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 will not smite you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

[7](#) The LORD will [protect](#) you from all evil;

He will [keep](#) your soul.

[8](#) The LORD will [guard](#) your going out and your coming in

From this time forth and forever.

## INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY EXERCISE

BEFORE YOU CONSULT THE COMMENTARY ON PSALM 121

Need "Help"? Click and meditate on...

- Jehovah Ezer: The LORD our Helper
- [Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir's version "My Help"](#) (try to keep a dry eye!)
- Do a Greek/Hebrew Word Study on Help
- Commentaries on the Psalms
- Study the following Comments on Psalm 121

Before you read the notes on Psalm 121, consider performing a simple **Inductive Study** on this great Psalm, so that you might experience the **joy of personal discovery** of its rich treasures. If you take time to do this before you read the comments, you will be pleasantly surprised how much illumination your Teacher, the Holy Spirit will provide (1Jn 2:20, 27, 1Cor 2:10-16+ - and you will be better able to comment on the commentaries even as the Bereans "commented" on what Paul taught them in Acts 17:11+). In the instructions below note that all words/phrases in blue represent links to further discussion.

**a) Print out an **Observation Worksheet**** of Psalm 121 -- this is simply a copy of the inspired Word of God which will allow you to mark and color the text without fear of making a mistake you cannot erase from your actual Bible. In short it is exactly what it says -- it is a sheet on which to carry out your work of inductive Bible study. I use the NAS selected because it is the one of the most literal and least interpretative versions. The ESV is an excellent alternative. Or even the tried and true KJV would be fine as it is relatively literal (see explanation and chart comparing different Bible versions).

**b) Prayerfully, slowly read** (Go to the Author before you go to His Word) through the entire Psalm without interruptions for an overview. Remember that you are not in a "speed reading" contest (compare Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42+, noting especially Lk 10:42+), so if the Holy Spirit prompts you to stop and "hover" on a verse, avail yourself of that opportunity. For example, you may even feel led to use that passage in a prayer. The main point is to enjoy your Heavenly Father's presence through His living and active Word.

**c) Prayerfully read** the Psalm a second time but this time **observing** for the truth or facts that are obvious. As you focus on those things that are obvious, you will be gathering and establishing the **context** (see here also for context). As you read, be alert for the

obvious **key words** (usually repeated words but click here for more detail. Remember "God" is always is a key word). Each time you encounter a **key word** pause...

+ **Pause** and ponder (as you do, you can be sure that in a sense you are beginning to practice the blessed discipline of **Biblical Meditation** [or another discussion of meditation])

+ **Place** a unique **mark** over the **key word** (remember to mark synonyms) **and**

+ **Interrogate** the **key word** with the **5W's & H** questions. This may seem awkward at first but over time you will discover that discipline is priceless in your study of the Word of God. Remember that as you consider questions with which to query the text, you are forced to slow down and "chew" on the text (cp meditate). Dr John Piper encourages us to hone our skill of querying the text, writing that...

You can learn more from a book if you stop and ask it questions than if you just read it passively. That includes the Bible too. One of the great problems in Bible reading is that we move our eyes over the words and come to the end of a column and don't know what we've read; we don't feel our minds or spirits expanded because we saw nothing fresh. It was purely mechanical. There was no discovery, no life, no breakthroughs to new insight.

**One of the best ways to change that is  
to train yourself to ask questions of the text.**

Often the posing of the question itself will already carry its answer with it and will open your mind to new things. This fairly prosaic, historical text in Luke 3:21–38+ gives me an opportunity to show you what I mean. I'll simply take you with me through this text, pointing out the questions I asked and the answers I came up with. My guess is that as you follow me, questions of your own will arise. Good questions usually beget other questions, and that's how insight grows and grows. (**Introductory comments to his sermon on [The Baptism and the Genealogy of Jesus](#)** - click the link to see questions Piper asks as he preached this text! Now begin to incorporate this valuable discipline into your Bible reading. Beware of the danger of a "through the Bible in a year" reading program -- it is tempting to "just get through" the daily reading, but come to the end of the day and not even remember what you have read. That's "passive" reading. Interrogation of the text is "active" reading--your Teacher God's Spirit will richly reward you for your "labor of love!")

**d)** Read Psalm 121 a third time, marking and interrogating other **key words**.

**e)** Re-read once again observing for additional **key words**.

([Click](#) example of key words in Psalm 121 marked with color and shading)

**f)** For each **key word** consider making a **list** of truths in the margin of your "Observation Worksheet".

**g)** Re-read (Yes, again!) pausing, marking and interrogating any **time phrases** (And again query each phrase - for example, you can always ask "When?").

**h)** Re-read once more noting any **terms of comparison** (eg metaphor).

+ Ask what is being compared and how does this help your understanding of the "picture"?

+ Although you could have read Psalm 121 four-five times, in this simple inductive study you have read each time with a **specific purpose** which serves to actively engage your mind. In other words, instead of being a **tourist** (simply reading and re-reading without a definite purpose), you have become an **explorer** seeking priceless, inexhaustible hidden treasures that ultimately will enrich your soul. The tourist may remember he visited in Psalm 121 but weeks and even months later, the explorer will remember the truths discovered from diligent study.

**i)** If you have time, perform a **Word Study** to help mine the treasures of this favorite Psalm. Now don't check out on me but consider a simple study on the meaning of the following two words in Hebrew and then in the Greek (the Greek word the Septuagint uses to translate the Hebrew word). The word picture is profound and worth the effort.

**WORD STUDY #1** - "**HELP**" is a **key word** even though found only twice but if we removed it, the Psalm would lose much of its meaning and purpose.

**Click here** for the definition of the Hebrew word for help = **'ezer**

**Click here** for the definition of the Greek word that translates 'ezer = **boetheia**

**WORD STUDY #2 - "KEEP"** (*keeper, protect, guard* = all same Hebrew & Greek words).

[Click here](#) for the definition of the Hebrew word **shamar** and [here](#) for the Greek word **phulasso** which translates shamar

+ Now take the definitions you learned and insert them into the verse to see it this expands the meaning of the passage. Keep in mind that many Greek and Hebrew words may have more than one meaning. Therefore one has to be careful not to take a meaning that is totally unrelated to the **context** of the passage being studied. Greek and Hebrew word studies do take some practice but can be extremely helpful in expanding or amplifying the meaning in a passage.

j) Now give Psalm 121 a **title** based on what you have gleaned in your study. In your title try to use the actual words from the Psalm as much as is possible. What is the **theme** (unifying idea repeated or developed throughout a work) of this Psalm? Remember that the key words point to the main subject(s) which in turn give you the theme.

k) **APPLICATION:** How could you **apply** the truth in Psalm 121? Is there a promise to believe? Is there a change of attitude you need to make? Is there a verse to **memorize**? Are there some truths about God that should meditate upon? Is there an example to follow? Is there something for which you can thank or praise God?, etc.

Now you are prepared to read the following comments.

Psalm 121:1 (A Song of Ascents.) I will **lift** up my **eyes** to the **mountains**. From **where** shall my **help** come? (NASB: [Lockman](#))

**Septuagint (LXX)** ode ton anabathmon era tous ophthalmous mou eis ta ore pothen echei (3SFAI) e **boetheia** (noun: help, aid, used in Hebrews 4:16-note Acts 27:17) mou

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - <A Song of Degrees.> I lifted up mine eyes to the mountains, whence my help shall come.

- **I will:** Jer 3:23;
- **lift up:** Ps 2:6, 68:15,16, 78:68, 87:1, 123:1, Isa 2:3

## PSALM 121 THE TRAVELER'S PSALM

**Author** - This Psalm is anonymous humanly speaking but we can be certain that the author "*moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*" (2 Peter 1:21+ , the Holy Spirit is a Person Who speaks - see Lk 1:70+, Acts 1:16+, Acts 3:18+, Acts 28:25+, 2Sa 23:2+, Heb 3:7, 8+, Heb 9:8+, He 10:15+).

The circumstances that led to this psalm and specifically which cause the psalmist to look to the mountains are not clearly stated. The implication of his looking for help is that he may have been in a state of anxiety or distress. **On a more personal level, aren't we all in need of the LORD's help to one degree or another every day?** As Paul reminds us in Acts, God "is not far from each one of us for in Him we live and move and exist." (Acts 17:27, 28 - see God's **Omnipresence**) We need His help every moment of every day!

**Ascents** (Some versions use the phrase "Degrees") = The Songs (Psalms) of Ascent comprised [Psalm 120-134](#) which together appears to have formed a "hymn book" used by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem (which is elevated). Most interpreters feel that these 15 psalms were sung in the context of the great pilgrimage feasts in which the nation of Israel was called to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate:

- (1) the Feast of Unleavened Bread (commemorating the Exodus) in the Spring ([Passover](#)),
- (2) the Feast of the Harvest or Weeks ([Pentecost](#)- the expression of gratitude for the provision of grain) in the early Summer and
- (3) the Feast of Booths or Ingathering (Tabernacles - expression of thanksgiving for the final harvest) in the Fall. (Ex 23:14, 15, 16, 17+; Isa 30:29).

It is also very possible that these psalms of ascent were among those sung by the returning exiles from Babylon as they ascended

the mountains to Jerusalem and home (Ezra 2:1; 7:7).

**David Barker** has this introductory note on the "**Songs of Pilgrimage**"...

The title of Psalm 121 reads לַמַּעֲלוֹת שִׁיר—“a song of ascents” (NIV). The psalm is the second in a collection of 15 psalms with essentially the same title. Historically, this title has created a plethora of interpretations and approaches to this collection of psalms, but recent scholarship has come to a general consensus that the title points to songs of pilgrimage. According to this interpretation, these psalms, among others, were sung in the context of the great pilgrimage feasts in which the nation was called to Jerusalem three times a year. The term עֲלָה is apparently related to the pilgrim’s ascent of Mount Zion to Jerusalem for worship. However, it may also reflect the processional ascents to the temple by the pilgrims themselves in the final stage of their pilgrimage, or by the processional choirs who led the gathered pilgrims in worship and celebration (cf. 2Sa 6:12; 1Ki 13:33; 2Ki 23:2; Neh 12:37; Ps 42:4; Isa 26:2; 30:29; Jer 31:6; Mic 4:2). Also these songs are likely to have been among those sung by the returning exiles from Babylon as they ascended the mountains to Jerusalem and home (Ezra 2:1; 7:7). Most of the songs have Jerusalem as a central focus of celebration,<sup>9</sup> and the themes of unity, brotherly love, family, and prosperity of life were natural expressions of a worshipping pilgrimage community... The collection evidently has been carefully structured so as to create a **progression**. These psalms begin with a prayer of distress from one who is far from home (Ps 120) and concludes with a call to praise in the sanctuary of Zion (Ps 134). ([Psalm 121: The Lord Watches Over You - Bibliotheca Sacra 152:606 April 1995](#)) (Bolding added)

Notice that this psalm can be "subdivided" in to

(1) **The Anticipation of Divine Help** (Psalm 121:1-2) in which the psalmist speaks in the first person ("I," "my," Psalm 121:1-2) and

(2) **The Assurance of Divine Help** (Psalm 121:3-8), which is written in the second person singular ("you," "your"), which might have been to allow this segment to be sung antiphonally.

Looking at this psalm another way, the second six verses explain the Divine **help** mentioned in the first two verses. The explanation in the second could represent a dialogue between two parties (some commentaries suggest the psalmist and a priest). Alternatively the psalmist could be "preaching" or dialoguing with himself (between the godly man and his inner self) as we see in [Psalms 42](#) and [43](#). where David is also seeking "help". It should be noted that in addition to a dialogue between a man and his soul, other writers have interpreted as a dialogue between a layman and a priest in the liturgy of the temple, or a group of pilgrims and their spiritual leader.

### LIFTING ONE'S EYES: IT'S A CHOICE

**I will** - This signifies that the psalmist makes a choice of his will (a volitional choice) to look up to God. How often when faced with a test, trial or affliction, I choose to look down in self-pity or around at adverse circumstances, rather than gazing upward to my **Omnipotent** Father!

**I will** also indicates the psalmist recognizes that the godly man stands in **continual need of** and **dependence upon Jehovah's** help. Keen writes that

He waits — he expects — he obtains. The truest vision is soul-vision. Looking up in solicitation, contemplation, expectation. “Up,” from the mud and mire of earth, and the sins and sorrows of self. (Keen, J O: Biblical Illustrator)

**Boice** comments that the identity of the "I... my" (vv 1-2) and the "you... your" (vv 3-8) have generated a number of different possibilities, but feels that in the final analysis...

It is probably best to think of this as an internal dialogue of the psalmist with himself. We have a good example of internal dialogue in Psalms 42 and 43: “Why are *you* downcast, O my soul? ... Put your hope in God, for *I* will yet praise him” (Ps. 42:5, 11; Ps 43:5, italics added).

**Thomas Constable** agrees with Boice noting that...

The psalmist lifted up his eyes to the hills around Mt. Zion as he traveled to a feast there from some flatter part of Canaan. As he did so, he reflected on the source of his help. He also **reminded himself** that his help was the God who had made those hills along with the whole heaven and earth (cf. Ps 124:8). This was the God he was traveling to worship at the temple on Mt. Zion.

**Comment:** While the identity of the pronouns cannot be stated dogmatically, the idea of someone speaking

these truths to their own soul is very attractive. Indeed, is this not a comforting psalm to "preach" to our soul when we sense the need of the Lord's help?

**Matthew Henry** introduces this psalm with words of exhortation...

Wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourages us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction, in singing this psalm. (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

**Lift up my eyes to the mountains** - This Hebrew phrase ("lift up my eyes") is the Hebrew words **nasa** (lift) and **'ayin** (eyes). This phrase frequently indicates a looking and seeing with anticipation of or disposition toward the object one is looking at.

As discussed above, **lifting one's eyes** involves a choice of one's will. What or where one lifts one's eyes to look therefore reflects one's **heart** disposition (keeping in mind that the **heart** figuratively is like our "control tower" constantly monitoring and controlling what enters our "eye gate!"). Genesis, the book of beginnings, uses the phrase **lift eyes** 13 times (Gen 13:10, 13:14, 18:2, 22:4, 22:13, 24:63, 24:64, 31:10, 33:1, 33:5, 37:25, 39:7, 43:29) The first two uses are notable as they reflect **two choices** which in turn determine **two destinies** of two men, **Lot** and **Abram**...

And Lot **lifted up his eyes** and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. (Ge 13:10)

And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now **lift up your eyes** and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. (Ge 13:14-15)

In short, where we choose to "**lift our eyes**" can have significant consequences, either good or bad! Be careful where you **lift your eyes!**" In another "Song of Ascents" we see a good example to imitate...

To Thee I **lift up my eyes**, O Thou who art enthroned in the heavens!

**Comment:** The best place to lift our eyes is to fix our eyes on the best Person, Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). If our eyes are fixed on Him, our wills are more likely to be surrendered to His Spirit (Who enables our holy walk) and our feet are more likely to follow Him. In short, our behavior is more likely to be like Jesus (See 1 Cor 4:16, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6, John 13:15, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Cor 11:1, 4:16).

**THOUGHT** - So let me ask again, in our technologically entranced, visually oriented world, where are you "lifting your eyes?" May God grant us grace to lift our eyes to the mountains, especially to the God Who created those mountains. Amen

Regarding the phrase **lift up my eyes**, **A W Pink** says...

**Faith is to the soul—what the eye is to the body**—namely, that which enables its possessor to look outside of himself and steadfastly fix his gaze on an external object. And hence it is that the exercise and act of faith is so often referred to in the Word under the figure of "**lifting up the eyes**" and "**looking unto the LORD**."

Look upward! Was not that the very first thing which the blessed Spirit taught you, dear friend, after He had revealed to you your lost condition and made you realize that you were a guilty, polluted, and undone sinner? As the serpent-bitten Israelites were bidden to look up to the brazen serpent upon the pole—so you were taught to look upon the crucified Savior as the One who was willing and able to meet your dire need! "Look unto me—and be saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa 45:22).

Now, as you commenced, so you must continue (Col 2:6). Christ enthroned in glory is henceforth to be the grand Object of your contemplation and adoration. Look up to Him daily and view Him by faith—as the eternal Lover of your soul, as the Lord of your righteousness, as the Bread of life to feed upon. Contemplate Him as "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). However cold, dull, and corrupt you feel to be in yourself, let your very consciousness of the same, serve to drive you more and more out of yourself, to rest wholly on what He did and suffered for you, and what He now is to you. Since He is your Savior, who loved you and gave Himself for you—make use of Him. Live by faith upon Him, and thereby you will please and honor Him. Look by faith within the veil, and take a view of what your great High Priest is there doing for you: He has all your concerns before Him, and is making all things work together for your good (Rom. 8:28). Let that encourage you to cast

all your care upon Him and entrust all your concerns to Him.

## IT IS GOOD TO LOOK UP!

**J R Miller** notes that...

It is good always to look up. Thousands of people dwarf their lives, and hinder the possibilities of growth in their souls—by looking downward. They keep their eyes ever entangled in mere earthly sights, and miss the glories of the hills that pierce the clouds, and of the heavens that bend over them!

A story is told of a boy who one day found a gold coin on the street. Ever after this—he kept his eyes on the ground as he walked, watching for coins. During a long lifetime, he found a good number of coins—but meanwhile he never saw the flowers and the trees which grew in such wondrous beauty everywhere; he never saw the hills, the mountains, the sweet valleys, the picturesque landscapes; he never saw the blue sky. To him, this lovely world meant only a dusty road, dreary and unbeautiful, merely a place in which to look for coins.

This really is the story of the life of most people. They never lift their eyes off the earth! They live only to gather money, to add field to field, to scheme for power or to find pleasure. Or, if their quest is a little higher, it is still only for earthly things. They never lift up their eyes to God! There is no blue sky in their picture. They cherish no heavenly visions. They are without God in the world.

**C H Spurgeon** comments on the "**ascent**" in Psalm 123:1...

We are climbing. The first step (Ps 120) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security (Ps 121:1); from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord Himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to His throne in the heavens. Let us know it as "the Psalm of the eyes". Old authors call it Oculus "Sperans" or the eye of hope. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.

Ps 123:1 - **Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.** It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a fig leaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory land which lies beyond the skies.

**O Thou that dwells in the heavens,** just sets forth the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress: God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us, it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is here revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succours to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer; a glance of the eye will do it all; for - -

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,

The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye  
When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home: he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

### **When the out -look is bleak Remember the up -look.**

The psalmist looks first at what he can see but recognizes shortly that his real help comes from the One Who is unseen. And so he looks with eyes of faith, even as did Moses who

by faith... left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as **seeing** Him Who is **unseen**. (He 11:27- note) (Ask yourself "Why did Moses endure? What enabled him to not be fearful of a tyrannical human magistrate? **Observe** the text again if unsure.)

**What storm are you in now, dear child of the Living God? Where are your eyes - on the storm or on Jehovah, the One Who is in control of the storm and Who is described as your Helper in this psalm?** From television pop psychologists to the unbelievable proliferation of "self-help" books, the world is screaming at us to seek help from deep within ourselves, when **all the time** (Psalm 121:6 "by day... by night") we have access to **Jehovah Ezer, our Helper**. Let us not neglect His help as did Judah. Jehovah, speaking to faithless Judah, declared

My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jer 2:13)

**Beloved, are you at this very present time in need of help?** Then lift your eyes not to the creation but unto your Creator, Who stands ready to run to your cry for help (cp Ps 46:1-[note](#), Ps 46:2-[note](#))

**Corrie Ten Boom** once said...

**Look around and be distressed.  
Look inside and be depressed.  
Look at Jesus and be at rest.**  
(cp Hebrews 12:2-note, Mic 7:7)

**Looking to Jesus** and experiencing **rest** in Him is the same idea brought out by Solomon in Proverbs 18:10...

The Name of the LORD (Jehovah) is a strong tower. The righteous runs into it and is safe. (see notes on Pr 18:10)

**Comment:** Notice that truth precedes behavior. Belief should always lead to behavior. In other words first we note Who God is - a Strong Tower (metaphorically or figuratively speaking). But it is not just enough to know Who He is. It is not enough as some teach just to "*Let go and let God*", an approach which absolves us of human responsibility. The righteous man is a wise person, because he or she makes the choice to believe God and to run into the "cleft of the Rock" (cp Ex 33:22), knowing that He is the believer's personal Shield (Ps 18:2) and Defender, our Strong Tower. Acting on the truth about God ("running into" the truth about Him, believing that truth, acting accordingly) brings us safely into His presence. It is notable that the Hebrew word for **safe** actually pictures one being elevated above the roaring waves of the trial or affliction, just like a coastal home elevated on stilts escapes the surging seas of an on rushing hurricane.

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## **ON THE BUS; OFF THE BUS**

"On the bus; off the bus," is a common saying in the British army. It means we never know what's going to happen next—even when we're given orders. One minute we can be heading off to a warzone, and the next, we're suddenly on hold, waiting for a call.

I remember one time when I was on leave. I was relaxing at home when I got a phone call telling me I was being sent to Bosnia. I grabbed my kit, said goodbye to my wife and daughter and quickly drove to the barracks for the necessary briefings, etc.

Just minutes before it was time to go, my sergeant called me: "Stand down. You're not going today." I was put on a week's standby—but it wasn't until 6 months later that I actually got deployed to Bosnia! On the bus; off the bus—it's daily life in the armed forces.

We can go through this kind of uncertainty in all areas of our lives. We don't know what this year is going to bring, what decisions

we'll have to make tomorrow or even what the rest of today will throw at us. Not knowing what's coming can be very stressful!

In the midst of this insecurity, we need to think about a God that the Bible says is faithful and unchangeable, meaning He is always the same; Someone we can truly rely on.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not [sleep]. —Psalm 121:2-3

Get hold of a Bible and read through Psalm 121 (one of the songs in God's Word) to see what it tells us about God:

- As the world's Creator, He is our true help (vv.1-2).
- He will keep us from stumbling and giving up during difficult times (v.3).
- He never sleeps or rests from looking after us (vv.4-5).
- He is our protector from the dangers of this world (vv.6-7).
- Wherever we go, He is there with us. He will look after us forever (v. 8).

Psalm 121 doesn't promise that we'll never be sent to a dangerous battlefield or suffer physical harm. These words are a promise of God's constant faithfulness to us in a changing and uncertain world. His protection means that even though we might get hurt in this world, we will never be beaten by it. No matter what we might face, where we might go, what we might lose or what we might be asked to do, God remains the same. He is a fortress of safety; the One we can always talk to.

For [God] Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" —Hebrews 13:5b-6

The best security we have is that He "shall [look after us] . . . forevermore" (Ps. 121:8). When we trust Jesus, we are promised a future in heaven (check out John 14:1-6). There is no 'on the bus; off the bus' with God. He remains faithful to keep His promises.

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor [authorities] nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. —Romans 8:38-39

What do you think? Is God worth looking into? In the middle of our 'on the bus; off the bus' world, Jesus Christ is the certainty we need. —Lee, SASRA Scripture Reader

## DEAR WEARY BELIEVER... REMEMBER TO LOOK UP!

**J R Smith** exhorts believers to "**Look up!**"...

We are entering upon a new year, we shall have ...

new toils,

new trials,

new temptations,

new troubles.

In whatever state, in whatever place, into whatever condition we may be brought this year — let us seek grace to follow our Lord's loving advice, and "look up!"

Do not look **back** — as Lot's wife did.

Do not look **within** — as too many do.

Do not look **around** — as David did.

But "look up!" Look up to God — He is your Father, your Friend, your Savior. He can help you. He will help you. He says, "Look unto Me, and be delivered — for I am God!" (Isa 45:22KJV)

Look up for **light** to guide you — and He will direct your path.



Look up for **grace** to sanctify you — and the grace of Jesus will be found sufficient for you.

Look up for **strength** to enable you to do and suffer God's will — and His strength will be made perfect in your weakness.

Look up for **comfort** to cheer you — and as one whom his mother comforts, so will the Lord comfort you.

Look up for **courage** to embolden you — and the Lord will give courage to the faint; and to those who have no might — He will increase strength.

Look up for **endurance** to keep you — and the God who preserves you will enable you quietly to bear the heaviest burden, and silently to endure the most painful affliction.

Look up for **providence** to supply you — and the jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of oil will not run dry; but God shall supply all your needs, according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Look up **in faith** — exercising confidence in the Word of a faithful God.

Look up **in prayer** — asking for what God has graciously promised.

Look up **in hope** — expecting what you ask in the name of Jesus.

Look up with **adoration** — and adore the sovereignty, righteousness, and wisdom of God.

Look up **constantly** — let nothing daunt or discourage you! Rather say, "Our eyes are on the Lord our God — until He shows us mercy."

Look up — **for this will keep ...**

the head from swimming,

the heart from sinking,

the knees from trembling,

the feet from slipping, and

the hands from hanging down!

It is impossible to say what will happen to us, or what will be required of us this year — but "Look up!"

This direction, if properly attended to, will ... '

procure for us all that we need,

secure us against all that we dread, and

make us more than a match for all our foes and fears!

Fellow-Christian, **are you fearful?** "Look up" and hear Jesus saying to you, "Do not be afraid — I Myself will help you!"

**Are you discouraged?** "Look up" — and your youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and fresh light, comfort, and courage shall be given to you!

**Are you desponding?** "Look up" for Jesus never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax.

Do not look too much at your **sin** — but look at the infinitely meritorious blood of God's dear Son!

Do not look too much at **self** — but look at Jesus, who ever lives to make intercession for you in Heaven.

Are you stripped of your comforts, your props, and your goods? Then look up! He who stripped you — loves you! He will be more than all these to you! He will

bind up your broken heart,

calm your perturbed spirit,

cheer your drooping mind, and

fill you with His own peace and happiness.

Look up ...

for all that you need;

from all that you fear;

through all that would obstruct your way.

Look up **every day**, saying with David, "In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You — and will look up!" Psalm 5:3

Look up in **every trial**, saying "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help: my help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth!"

Do not look at your **sin** — it will discourage you!

Do not look at your **self** — it will distress you!

Do not look at **Satan** — he will bewilder you!

Do not look to **men** — they will deceive, or disappoint you!

Do not look at your **trials** — they will deject you!

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us — looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!" Hebrews 12:1-2

**Look only,  
look always,  
look intently —  
to Jesus!**

**Run** looking, **work** looking, **fight** looking, **suffer** looking, **live** looking, and **die** looking — to Jesus, who is at God's right hand in glory.

**Oh, look, look, look to Jesus!**

Although the psalmist can see the mountains (or has a memory of actually having seen them) surrounding Jerusalem, here he sees with the eye of faith. As one sage has asked

Are, to us, the things unseen the solid things, and the things visible the shadows and the phantoms? We see with the bodily eyes the shadows on the wall, as it were, but we have to turn round and see with the eyes of our minds the light that flings the shadows. (Author unknown)

**Mountains** - Which mountains? Where? Although I feel the **mountains** have some allusion to Jerusalem, one source rightly notes that

there is no certainty about the location of these hills. Anderson thinks they are the mountains on the route from Jerusalem to the psalmist's home, and Taylor takes the journey to be the reverse of this. Some believe that these are the hills of or near Jerusalem, while others see an allusion to the "high places" where the pagan gods were believed to live. (**Ed note**: and where idolatry was practiced by many of the Israelites)" (Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms. Page 1051. New York: United Bible Societies)

In another Psalm of Ascent we read that

As the **mountains** surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever. (Ps 125:2-[note](#))

**Comment**: Observe that **mountain** is a **term of comparison**, specifically a **simile**, a comparison which is always introduced by either "**like**" or "**as**." Beloved, whenever you encounter a term of comparison, pause and ponder what the Spirit is revealing by asking the 5W/H questions.

**A S Algen** - The meaning of the Prophet is abundantly obvious, which is, that although all the helps of the world, even the mightiest,

should offer themselves to us, yet we ought not to seek safety anywhere but in God; yea, rather, that when men shall have long wearied themselves in hunting after remedies, now in one quarter and now in another, they will at length find from experience, that there is no assured help but in God alone. By the mountains, the Prophet means whatever is great or excellent in the world; and the lesson he teaches is, that we ought to account all such favor as nothing. ([Commentary on Psalms - Volume 5 - Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#))

If by **the mountains** the psalmist was referring to places of false worship, Jehovah's warning in Jeremiah would apply:

Surely, the **hills** are a deception, a tumult on the **mountains**. Surely, in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. (Jer 3:23)

**Spurgeon** has an applicational note on the "**mountains**" writing...

The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, and from these our help must come. (Treasury of David)

**James Montgomery Boice** comments that Psalm 121 has been known as **The Traveler's Psalm**...

David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer of the continent of Africa, read Psalm 121 and Psalm 135, which praises God for his sovereign rule over all things, as he worshiped with his father and sister before setting out for Africa in 1840. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Moffat, wrote him at Linyardi that Psalm 121 was always in her mind as she thought about and prayed for him.

J. S. Watson, a Rear Admiral in the United States Navy and the successor to Admiral Dewey, who commanded the U.S. fleet in the Philippines during the Spanish American War, wrote, "My favorite chapter is the Traveller's Psalm, Psalm 121. The seventh and eighth verses mean more to me than any other."

William Edwards was a British magistrate caught in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. His escape after hiding out for months is a thrilling story. He wrote at one point, "Nothing new has been settled about our plans, and we are much harassed. Heavy guns were firing at Turruckabad today. We know not for what cause, but they reminded us painfully of our fearful proximity to that place where so many are thirsting for our lives. Amidst it all, the psalms are most consoling and wonderfully suited to our cause, especially the 121st: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help' [kjv]."

These are only a few of what must be many thousands of instances when, in danger, God's people have turned to Psalm 121 and found comfort...

the marvelous spirit of tranquil trust in God that the psalm breathes from beginning to end. It is this trust that makes Psalm 121 such a strong discipleship song for pilgrims of all times and all countries...

Protection by God, under the watchful eye of God, is the dominant idea in the psalm. (Boice, J. M. Psalms. Originally published: Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books)

**Expositor's Dictionary of Texts** writes...

Dr. Blaikie, in his Life of Livingstone, tells that this Psalm and the 135th were read by him when he parted with his family and went out first as a missionary to Africa 'I remember my father and him,' writes his sister, 'talking over the prospects of Christian missions. They said that the time would come when rich and great men would think it an honour to support whole stations of missionaries, instead of spending their money on hounds and horses. On the morning of 17 November, 1840, we got up at five o'clock. David read the 121st and the 135th Psalms and prayed. My father and he walked to Glasgow to catch the Liverpool steamer.' The old man walked back with a lonely heart to Blantyre, while his son's face was set in earnest toward the dark continent.

**Rod Mattoon** writes...

A little boy was spending his Saturday morning playing in his sandbox. He had with him his box of cars and trucks, his plastic pail, and a shiny, red plastic shovel. In the process of creating roads and tunnels in the soft sand, he discovered a large rock in the middle of the sandbox. The lad dug around the rock, managing to dislodge it from the dirt. With no little bit of struggle, he pushed and nudged the rock across the sandbox by using his feet. (He was a very small boy and the rock was very large.) When the boy got the rock to the edge of the sandbox, however, he found that he couldn't roll it up and over the little wall. Determined, the little boy shoved, pushed, and pried, but every time he thought he had made some progress, the rock tipped and then fell back into the sandbox. The little boy grunted, struggled, pushed, shoved—but his only reward was to have

the rock roll back, smashing his chubby little fingers. Finally he burst into tears of frustration. All this time the boy's father watched from the living room window as the drama unfolded. At the moment the tears fell, a large shadow fell across the boy and the sandbox. It was the boy's father. Gently but firmly he said, "Son, why didn't you use all the strength that you had available?" Defeated, the boy sobbed back, "But I did, Daddy, I did! I used all the strength that I had!" "No, son," corrected the father kindly. "You didn't use all the strength you had. You didn't ask me." With that the father reached down, picked up the rock, and removed it from the sandbox.

Beloved, God is our Helper. He is the helper of the hopeless, the homeless, the hurting, the harassed, and the heckled. He knows what you need emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, and financially. We are wise if we will tap into His strength to face our mountains and hills. He will provide for every need that you have.

[\(Treasures From Treasured Psalms\)](#)

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**Lift Up Your Eyes** - A woman whose work demanded constant reading began to have difficulty with her eyes, so she consulted a physician. After an examination he said, "Your eyes are just tired; you need to rest them."

"But," she replied, "that is impossible in my type of work."

After a few moments the doctor asked, "Do you have windows at your workplace?"

"Oh, yes," she answered with enthusiasm. "From the front windows I can see the noble peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and from the rear windows I can look out at the glorious Allegheny foothills."

The physician replied, "That is exactly what you need. When your eyes feel tired, go look at your mountains for 10 minutes—20 would be better—and the far look will rest your eyes!"

What is true in the physical realm is true in the spiritual realm. The eyes of the soul are often tired and weary from focusing on our problems and difficulties. The upward look—the far look—will restore our spiritual perspective. At times we feel overwhelmed by life's troubles. If we look to the Lord in His Word and in prayer, however, He will put our problems in perspective and renew our strength. Let's lift up our eyes! (Psalm 121:1). —Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lift up your eyes, discouraged one,  
The Lord your help will be;  
New strength will come from Him who said,  
"For rest, come unto Me."  
—Anon.

For the right spiritual focus, fix your eyes on the Lord.

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What Can I Do With My Worry?](#)
- [Overcoming Worry](#)
- [What does the Bible say about worry?](#)
- [Does the Bible say anything about insomnia?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about hypochondria or being a hypochondriac?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about restlessness?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about anxiety?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about stress?](#)

**Related Resources:** Make a joyful noise to Jehovah -

- [Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir's version "My Help"](#)
  - [I Lift Up My Eyes - Paul Wilbur](#)
  - [Lift Up My Eyes - Brian Doerksen](#)
  - [I To The Hills Will Lift My Eyes - from the Psalter, 1912](#)
  - [Mine Eyes Look Toward the Mountains - cyberhymnal](#)
- 

**From whence shall my help come?:** This is a question, but the question does not express doubt, despondency or despair. It is simply asked to introduce the answer which follows. Note that Psalm 121 is often misunderstood especially when read in the KJV.

Matthew Henry writes "*We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm.*"

THOUGHT - As an aside, dear follower of Christ, if you do not find yourself continually in a state of desperate need for God's help, then you REALLY do need help! A corollary thought is that if you view family, friends, wealth, position, etc as your main source of help in this life, you might miss the real main Source, God Himself! God grant us grace to depend on Him in our "time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

**Barnes** - The expression would properly denote a condition where there was danger; when no help or aid was visible; and when the eyes were turned to the quarter from which help might be expected to come. What the danger was cannot now be ascertained.

**Keil & Delitzsch** comments that "To render (as does the KJV) "from which my help cometh" (as Luther does) is inadmissible." In other words, the **KJV** renders the verse not as an interrogative (question) but as a statement of fact "A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, **from whence cometh my help.**" Without going into technical details, suffice it to say that the Hebrew word translated "whence?" or "where?" always conveys the idea of a question. This section should therefore be read as a **question** "From whence cometh my help?" It is rendered in this manner by most of the modern translations. For example the CSB plainly states "I look up to the mountains – does my help come from there?" Which is answered by the declaration "Not from the hills or the creation, but from the God of creation."

**Net Bible Note** - The Hebrew term me'ayin is **interrogative**, not relative, in function. Rather than directly stating that his source of help descends from the hills, the psalmist is asking, "*From where does my help come?*" Nevertheless, the first line does indicate that he is looking toward the hills for help, probably indicating that he is looking up toward the sky in anticipation of supernatural intervention. The psalmist assumes the dramatic role of one needing help. He answers his own question in v. (Ps 121:2) .

## HELP Hebrew = 'Ezer

**Help** is the Hebrew noun **'ezer** (root verb = 'azar - commonly used of military support between countries) (click) referring to assistance or to the one who provides the assistance ("**helper**"). **'Ezer** (actually the verb form 'azar) is used in the OT to refer to military assistance such as God's help in battle (1Chr 12:18).

**'Ezer** (actually the verb **'azar**) is used of Jehovah's personal assistance for those who cannot help themselves (Ps 10:14<sup>[note](#)</sup>; Ps 72:12<sup>[note](#)</sup>). **Ezer** is repeatedly used in the Psalms in reference to God's divine intervention.

THOUGHT - Let me make a suggestion - pause for a moment, ask God's Spirit to teach you and then meditate on the following verses that speak of Jehovah's HELP. Get a piece of paper or your devotional notebook and record each verse with truths that the Spirit brings to your mind (and remember to check the context which will help you arrive at an accurate Interpretation which in turn leads to an appropriate Application), especially as you query the text with 5W/H type questions (See John Piper's thoughts on importance of learning to "query the text"). (Ps. 20:2; Ps 33:20; Ps 70:5; Ps 115:9-11; Ps 124:8; Ps 146:5).

**David** declares

Jehovah is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in Him, and I am **helped**. Therefore my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him. (Ps 28:7<sup>[note](#)</sup>;cf Ps 86:17<sup>[note](#)</sup>).

**Spurgeon comments:** "Heart trust is never disappointed. Faith must come before **help**, but **help** will never be long behindhand. **Divine help** is given us **every moment**, or we would go back into perdition; when clearer help is needed, we have only to put faith into exercise, and it will be given us." (Bolding and underlining added. [Treasury of David](#))

## HELP Greek = Boetheia

The **Septuagint (LXX)** has the Greek word **boetheia** (word study) which is used only twice in the NT, once in a well known passage in [Hebrews 4:16](#)-note "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to **help** (boetheia) in time of need."

The second use of **boetheia** by Luke gives us a great word picture of "**help**", describing the storm tossed ship in ([Acts 27:17](#)), writing that

after they had hoisted (the lifeboat) up, they used **supporting cables** (boetheia) in undergirding the ship and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor, and so let themselves be driven along.

This procedure of passing **supporting cables** under the ship to hold it together and keep the beams from separating is known as **frapping**, (*frap* is a nautical term that means to draw tight, to lash down or together). So in the midst of the storm the sailors wrapped cables around the ship's hull and winched them tight. Thus supported, the ship would be better able to withstand the severe pounding of wind and sea.

Beloved, do you see the word picture inherent in the Biblical use of (boetheia) in Psalm 121? From time to time all of saints encounter unexpected storms and are in need of the Captain of the vessel to batten down the hatches, sending His **help** that we might be able to endure the stormy trial or temptation. Here in Psalm 121 the psalmist is seeking help... he doesn't give us his name nor the reason he is seeking help (unless [Psalm 120](#) can be taken as the immediate context).

**Alexander Maclaren** writes that

There will be no reception of the Divine help unless there is a sense of the need of the Divine help **Ed**: A corollary truth is that many times God sends or allows trials in our life seeking to cause us to remember that He and He alone is the help we need. We are in greatest danger when we have the least sense of our need for His help!). God cannot help me before I am brought to despair of any other help. If we conceit ourselves to be strong we are weak; if we know ourselves to be impotent, Omnipotence (see **Omnipotent**) pours itself into us. (Biblical Illustrator)

**Spurgeon** reminds us that

No **help** comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills; it is on the road, it "cometh." The psalmist with the eye of faith could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

Yesterday's promise secured strength for what we have to do today, but this promise guarantees help when we cannot act alone. **The Lord says, "I will help you."** Strength within is supplemented by help from without. God can raise up allies in our warfare if it seems good in His sight. Even if He doesn't send human assistance, He Himself will be at our side, and this is even better. "Our august Ally" is superior to thousands of human helpers.

His **help** is timely, for He is a very present help in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1 [note](#)).

His **help** is wise, for He knows how to give what is good for us.

His **help** is effective, though futile is the help of friends.

His **help** is more than help, for He carries all the burdens and supplies, all the needs.

"The Lord is my **helper**; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Heb 13:6-note).

Because He has already been our help, we feel confidence in Him for the present and the future.

**Our prayer is**, "Lord, be my **helper**" (Psalm 30:10-[note](#)).

**Our experience is**, "The Spirit also **helps** in our weaknesses" (Romans 8:26-note).

**Our expectation is**, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my **help**? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1).

**Our song will be**, "You, Lord, have helped me and comforted me" (Psalm 86:17-[note](#)).

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**Guaranteed security** by J O Keen (Biblical Illustrator)...

**I. The godly man's need.** "Help." Can never outgrow this: dependence the characteristic of the creature: "help" must be had in the conflict or it will end in defeat, in the toil or it will issue in failure, in the pilgrim-march or we faint and fail by the way, etc.

**II. The godly man's attitude:** Looking for help--"I will lift up my eyes," etc. He waits--he expects--he obtains. The truest vision is soul-vision. Looking up in solicitation, contemplation, expectation. "Up," from the mud and mire of earth, and the sins and sorrows of self. "The hills" expressive of strength, "the strength of the hills is His": of majesty--of stability, "the everlasting hills": of

reverence, "the silence of the hills breathes reverence" (Mrs. Hemans); striking and suitable emblem of Him to whom all might, and majesty, and duration, and reverence belong.

**III. The godly man's confidence:** "My help cometh from the Lord," etc. He is assured that He who made the heavens and made the earth would rather let the sky fall and the earth perish from the want of His support, than that he should suffer injury from the withholding of His help. Help alone cometh from God: help does and ever will be vouchsafed, etc.

**IV. The godly man's safety: "He will not suffer," etc.**

1. Safety guaranteed from the highest source: "the Lord is thy Keeper" (verse 5). His wisdom, power, love, all His attributes a royal battalion--bodyguard around him, unceasingly around him (verses 3, 4).
2. Safety guaranteed to the whole man, under all circumstances, through all time, from all evil (verses 7, 8).

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## The good in time of need

### I. His attitude.

1. God is the only true help of the soul. He alone can raise it from its fallen condition, break its fetters, heal its wounds, energize its faculties, and set it on a course safe and prosperous.
2. To Him the godly soul instinctively looks in trial. The worldly man in trial looks to earthly things for succour and support, to social sympathies, to human friendships, to Church officers, but the good man turns at once to God, feels that from Him alone the necessary help can come.

### II. His protector.

1. The universal Creator.
2. A sleepless Guardian.
3. The all-sufficient.

**III. His confidence** (verse 7). (Homilist.)

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## A W Pink comments on Psalm 121...

For the benefit of young preachers, let us say that were we sermonizing this verse, our divisions would be:

1. A definite decision—"I will."
2. A right resolve—"I will lift up my eyes."
3. An obvious object—"unto the hills" (the Lord).
4. An eager expectation—"from whence comes [not "possibly may come"] my help."

It was the look of faith and hope; and such a look is never put to confusion. It was the opposite of slothful inertia or fatalistic apathy. He did not say, "I will wait until I feel moved by the Spirit," but determined upon discharging his own responsibility. He had no right to expect it, unless he sought it—sought it definitely, resolutely, earnestly, believingly. "Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Isa 30:18); and He often waits for our importunate waiting upon Him, for only then do we really value His gracious supplies.

"My help comes from the LORD" (Psalm 121:2). That is a very comprehensive word which includes a great variety of blessings. Let us conclude with a short, "Bible reading" which will serve to open the meaning of this "help" and at the same time, set forth the different favors for which it is the Christian's privilege to look upward.

1. For a daily supply of grace: "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto you, and will look up" (Psalm 5:3).
2. For wisdom: "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon you" (2 Chronicles 20:12).
3. For deliverance from temptations: "My eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net" (Psalm 25:15).
4. For illumination and transformation: "They looked unto him, and were enlightened" (Psalm 34:5).

5. For directions: "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,...so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God" (Psalm 123:2).
6. For comfort: "My eyes are unto you...leave not my soul destitute" (Psalm 141:8).
7. For the awing of the heart: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things" (Isa 40:26).
8. For courage: "Not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27).
9. For perseverance: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus" (Heb 12:1-2).
10. For the appearing of Christ, "Looking for that blessed hope" (Ti 2:13).

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## My Help!

My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121

For decades the renowned Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir has blessed multitudes through their soul-refreshing gospel songs. One example is their recording from Psalm 121 titled "My Help."

Psalm 121 begins with a personal confession of faith in the Lord who brought all things into existence, and He was the source of the psalmist's help (vv. 1–2). Just what did this mean? Stability (v. 3), around-the-clock care (vv. 3–4), constant presence and protection (vv. 5–6), and preservation from all kinds of evil for time and eternity (vv. 7–8).

Taking their cues from Scripture, God's people through the ages have identified the Lord as their source of "help" through their songs. My own worship experience includes lifting my voice with others who sang a soulful rendition of Charles Wesley's, "Father, I stretch my hands to Thee, no other help I know; if Thou withdraw Thyself from me, ah! whither shall I go." The great reformer Martin Luther got it right when he penned the words, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing."

Do you feel alone, forsaken, abandoned, confused? Ponder the lyrics of Psalm 121. Allow these words to fill your soul with faith and courage. You're not alone, so don't try to do life on your own. Rather, rejoice in the earthly and eternal care of God as demonstrated in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. And whatever the next steps, take them with His help.

By Arthur Jackson

Today's Reflection Father, how grateful we are that Scripture and song remind us that You are our source of help. Help me to not forget that this day.

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**Psalm 121:2 My [help](#) comes from the [LORD](#), Who [made heaven](#) and [earth](#). (NASB: Lockman)**

**Septuagint (LXX):** he boetheia (help) mou para kuriou tou poiesantos (AAPMSG) ton ouranon kai ten gen

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - My help shall come from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth.

- **My help:** Ps 46:1 Ps 124:8 Ps 146:5,6 Isa 40:28,29 Isa 41:13 Jer 20:11 Hos 13:9 Heb 13:6;

## THE PSALMIST CONFESSES TRUST IN GOD'S HELP

**My help comes from Jehovah** (note) (**yhwh**) - A confession reflecting the psalmist's faith or trust that God was His Helper. (**Have you made this confession recently?**) The Helper is none other than Yahweh, the great "I Am", the unchanging, eternal, self-existent, living God, the "I am that I am," the [covenant](#)-keeping God.

"The meaning of the name **yhwh** may best be summarized as "present to act (usually, but not only) in salvation." The revelation of the name is given to Moses, "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14), and later in a self-presentation, "I am the Lord" (Ex 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). The name **yhwh** specifies an immediacy, a presence." (Elwell, W. A: Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids:



Baker Book House) (See related study on the Name **Jehovah**)

In NT terms one could just as readily say "My help comes from Jesus" for He proclaimed Himself identical with **Jehovah** (See **Jehovah = Jesus**) when He said to the Jews

Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I Am**. (Jn 8:58)

**Comment:** John uses 7 "I AM's" to describe Jesus: BREAD (Jn 6:35,41,48, 51), LIGHT (Jn 8:12), DOOR (Jn 10:9), GOOD SHEPHERD (Jn 10:14), RESURRECTION & LIFE (Jn 11:25), WAY (Jn 14:6), VINE (Jn 15:1, 5). **Beloved, stop for a moment and meditate on each one of these great "I Am" statements by Jesus assessing how each description/name gives us a different aspect of His "multicolored" help.**

**My help... Jehovah** - This is a proper perspective! Help from God. Not from other people (although God can and does use other people often) but from Him. It is interesting that even in Christian bookstores, "self help" books have found a popular niche. This Psalm presents the antithesis -- **Not "self" help but Savior help!**

**THOUGHT** - Here's a test question - Where (to whom) do you go first when faced with an obstacle, a difficult trial, a sudden adversity, etc. Do you run to the Rock of your Salvation? Do you see Him as your Help? Are you in distress even as you read these notes? To whom have you taken your burden? Have you cast it on Jehovah? (Cp Ps 55:22)

Notice that the psalmist says "**my help**" implying personal possession, which in turn suggests that he had formerly experienced **help** from Jehovah. I would think that every believer has had some experience with the **help** from Jehovah. To be sure, even our very introduction into this grace in which we now stand was totally dependent on His **help**. The problem with our past experiences of His **help** is that they are in the past and we have a tendency to be forgetful, especially in the pressure of the moment of a trial or test. God continually called Israel to **remember** what He had done, so that they might believe what He could do. (E.g., Deut 7:17, 18, 19, Neh 9:17, Ps 77:11, 12, Ps 105:5, Ps 106:7, Ps 143:5, Eccl 12:1, Isa 57:11, Jer 17:2, Lam 3:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26)

## **OUR GREAT NEED: GOD'S HELP**

**Alexander Maclaren** sounds a warning to all saints who are on their journey home...

The sense of our own weakness and the consciousness of the perils upon the path ought ever to be present with us all. Brethren! if, on the one hand, we have to cultivate, for a healthy, vital Christianity, a vision of the mountains of God, on the other hand we have to try to deepen in ourselves the wholesome sense of our own impotence, and the conviction that the dangers on the road are far too great for us to deal with. 'Blessed is the man that feareth always.' 'Pride goeth before destruction.' Remember the Franco-German war, and how the French Prime Minister said that they were going into it 'with a light heart,' and how some of the troops went out of Paris in railway carriages labelled 'for Berlin'; and when they reached the frontier they were doubled up and crushed in a month. Unless we, when we set ourselves to this warfare, feel the formidableness of the enemy and recognise the weakness of our own arms, there is nothing but defeat for us.

The Psalmist asks himself, 'From whence cometh my help?' and then the better self answers the questioning, timid self: 'My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.' There will be no reception of the divine help unless there is a sense of the need of the divine help. God cannot help me before I am brought to despair of any other help. It is only when a man says, 'There is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God!' that God comes to help.

There is a story in the Book of Chronicles (2Chronicles 20:1-24), about one battle in which Judah engaged, of a very singular kind. The first step in the campaign was that the king of Judah gathered all his people together, and prayed to God, and said, 'We know not what we shall do. We have no strength against this great multitude that cometh against us, but our eyes are unto Thee.' Then a prophet came and assured him of victory, and next day they arrayed the battle (2Chr 20:15, 16, 17). It was set in this strange fashion: in the forefront were put the priests and Levites, with their instruments of music, and not soldiers with spears and bows, and they marched out to battle with this song, 'The Lord is gracious and merciful. His mercy endureth for ever.' (2Chr 20:21) Then, without the stroke of sword or thrust of spear, God fought for them and scattered their foes. (2Chr 20:22)

'Which things are an allegory.' If we recognise our helplessness, God is our help.

If we conceit (imagine) ourselves to be strong, we are weak;  
if we know ourselves to be impotent, Omnipotence pours itself into us.

We read once that Jesus Christ healed 'them that had need of healing.' (Lk 9:11KJV) Why does the Evangelist not say, without that periphrasis, 'healed the sick'? Because he would emphasise, I suppose, amongst other things, the thought that only **the**

## sense of need fits for the reception of healing and help.

If, then, we desire that God should be 'the Strength of our hearts, and our Portion for ever,' the coming of His help must be wooed and won by our sense of our own impotence, and only they who say, 'We have no might against this great multitude that come against us,' will ever hear from Him the blessed assurance, '**The Lord will fight for you.**' '**Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!**' (2Chr 20:17KJV)

So, brethren! the assurance of faith follows the consciousness of weakness, and both together will lead, and nothing else will lead, to the realization of the vision of faith, and bring us at last, weak as we are, to the hills where the weary and foot-sore flock 'shall lie down in a good fold, and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.' ([Psalm 121:1,2 Looking to the Hills](#))

**Albert Barnes** adds that the phrase **my help** reflects...

- (a) a consciousness that help could come only from God;
- (b) a belief that it would come from Him; and a confident yet humble reliance on Him.

(**Ed**: The psalmist could not see Him except with eyes of faith [2Cor 5:7, 2Cor 4:17, 18, 19], a faith based on past experiences of His immutable faithfulness.)

**Mike Gilbert-Smith** says...

In contrast to humans meeting human needs, the psalmist says, "My help comes from the Lord." Why turn to anything else? If you are a creature, your only possible help is from your Creator. Seek your blessings only within God's will. He will supply your needs. Ask yourself, what help do you give others? In difficult relationships or tough situations, do you tell your friends what they are comfortable hearing or do you direct them to God? Nonbelievers, if you don't turn to God for help, what do you turn to? Does it ultimately address the problems causing your discontent? You will end up bitter if you rely on anything other than God. ([Psalm 121 brief transcript](#) - I would also encourage you to listen to the excellent, much more in depth and very practical 54 minute mp3 on [Psalm 121](#))

## THE CREATOR ALL CAN HELP & PROTECT ALL!

**Who made heaven and earth** - He is able. If you think your problem is too complex for Jehovah remember His rhetorical question (expecting an affirmative reply) "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" (Ge 18:14, cp Jer 32:27, Mt 19:26, Isa 59:1, Nu 11:23) Even as He had all the power needed to protect the psalmist, so too He is ready and able to protect all His children. This assurance is repeated in Ps 124:8-[note](#) ("Our help is in the Name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth."). Only the Creator can be the **Helper** of His creation. If he has accomplished the greater (Creation of everything), He will surely accomplish the lesser (Be our Helper in time of need). His attributes such as His **Omnipresence**, **Omniscience** and **Omnipotence** assure us that He has the ability to follow through on His promise to help us. He Who spoke the heavens is to be "**my**" personal Helper! **Is this not an awesome, humbling thought?** The next time you are in a tight spot, recall this verse to your mind ("Preach it to your soul!" in the pattern of Ps 42:5). The **transcendent** (exceeding usual limits) Creator is also the ever-present Watcher of each of His children! **Meditate** on this truth.

Will He not His help afford?  
Help, while yet I ask, is given:  
God comes down, the God and LORD  
That made both earth and heaven.  
[To the Hills I Lift Mine Eyes — Charles Wesley](#)

In regard to the God **Who made heaven and earth** the **ESV Study Bible** notes that

Biblical authors cite this idea, based on Ge 2:4 and Ex. 20:11, to stress that the God of Israel has universal and unbounded power: cf. 2Kings 19:15 (= Isa. 37:16); 2Chr 1:12; Ps. 115:15; Ps 124:8; Ps 134:3; Ps 146:6; Jer. 32:17.

**'Ah Lord GOD! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm!  
Nothing is too difficult for Thee  
(Jer 32:27)**

**Derek Kidner** observes that...

The thought of this verse leaps beyond the hills to the universe; beyond the universe to its Maker. Here is living help: primary, personal, wise, immeasurable. (Tyndale OT Commentary-Psalms)

**Psalm 146** echoes this truth about God the Creator declaring

How blessed is he whose **help** (Hebrew = **ezer**; Greek = **boethos**) is the God of Jacob, whose hope (Greek = **elpis**) is in the Lord his God; **Who made heaven and earth**, the sea and all that is in them, Who keeps faith forever." (Ps 146:5 [note](#), Ps 146:6 [note](#))

**Spurgeon on Ps 146:5:** Heaped up is his happiness. He has happiness indeed: the true and the real delight is with him. The God of Jacob is the God of the covenant, the God of wrestling prayer, the God of the tried believer; he is the only living and true God. The God of Jacob is Jehovah, who appeared unto Moses, and led the tribes of Jacob out of Egypt, and through the wilderness. Those are happy who trust him, for they shall never be ashamed or confounded. The Lord never dies, neither do his thoughts perish: his purpose of mercy, like himself, endures throughout all generations. Hallelujah!... He is happy in help for the present and in hope for the future, who has placed all his confidence in Jehovah, who is his God by a covenant of salt. Happy is he when others are despairing! Happiest shall he be in that very hour when others are discovering the depths of agony. We have here a statement which we have personally tried and proved: resting in the Lord, we know a happiness which is beyond description, beyond comparison, beyond conception. O how blessed a thing it is to know that God is our present help, and our eternal hope. Full assurance is more than heaven in the bud, the flower has begun to open. We would not exchange with Caesar; his sceptre is a bauble, but our bliss is true treasure.

In each of the two titles here given, namely, "the God of Jacob", and "Jehovah his God", there is a peculiar sweetness. Either one of them has a fountain of joy in it; but the first will not cheer us without the second. Unless Jehovah be his God no man can find confidence in the fact that he was Jacob's God. But when by faith we know the Lord to be ours, then we are "rich to all the intents of bliss."

**Spurgeon** writes that...

He would sooner unmake them than desert his people. He that made heaven and earth could certainly find shelter for us either in heaven or in earth. He cannot, he will not leave us, he will make room for us in heaven when there is no room for us here. What a blessed thing it is to look right away from the creature to the Creator! The creature may fail you; but the Creator is an ever-springing well of all-sufficient grace

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** notes that

This confession (Yahweh is "the Maker of heaven and earth.") goes beyond the modern controversy of evolution and creationism. The creedal statement, also taken up in the **Apostles' Creed**, originally signified an apologetic statement on Yahweh's sovereignty over all realms: heaven and earth, thereby excluding any claims by pagan deities. Yahweh Alone is God (cf. Ps 115:4 [note](#), Ps 115:5 [note](#); Ps 115:6 [note](#); Ps 115:7 [note](#); Ps 124:8 [note](#); Ps 134:3 [note](#); Ps 146:6 [note](#); Jer 10:11)! The sole source of "help" comes from Yahweh, Who, as Creator, has unlimited power." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

**Meditate** on the truth that the same awesome, majestic God takes a personal interest in His children, so that you too will be led to proclaim Him in your experience as Jehovah "**my help**" ("I Am your help")! Then take a moment to worship Him by singing the familiar words of Martin Luther's hymn, [A Mighty Fortress Is Our God](#)...

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our **Helper** He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

**Spurgeon** comments

What we need is **help**, -- **help** powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present **help** in trouble (Ps 46:1). What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope (not "hope so" but absolute assurance that He will do us good) is in Jehovah, for our **help** comes from Him (the God of Hope Ro 15:13). **Help** is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for He Who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah Who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of Him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our **infinite Helper**. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit His people to be destroyed (cp 2Pe 2:5, 6, 7), and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than He shall fail Whose ways are everlasting (Ge 21:33, Isa 40:28). We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to Him Who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures (Ro 1:25ff): it is wise to trust the Creator. ([Treasury of David Psalm 121:2](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** writes that

"This psalm is special to my family. When our children were young and we were all in the car ready to leave on a trip or a vacation, we often read Psalm 121 and then prayed. The children became accustomed to hearing the words, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills--from whence comes my **help**? My **help** comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (v1,2). God is our **Helper**. You don't have to go on a vacation or drive on a busy highway to know that. **Where does your help come from?** The psalmist lifted his eyes to the hills. The most stable, secure thing the Jews knew were the mountains around Jerusalem. Then the psalmist lifted his eyes higher and said, "No, I don't get my **help** from the hills. I get my **help** from the heavens. God is my **Helper**." Whatever your need or task is today, your **help** will come from the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. A God big enough to make this world and keep it going is big enough to help you with your problems today." ([Wiersbe, W in his devotional: Prayer, Praise and Promises](#))

"I require to remember that my, **help** cometh from the LORD, not only when seemingly there is no outward **help** from men or otherwise, but also and especially when all seems to go well with me, -- when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, I am most in danger of making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse; or else of saying to my soul, "Take thine ease", and finding the destruction which attends such folly." (Alfred Edersheim)

"God's strongest saints realize their weaknesses, and appeal to Him for strength. One Sunday morning, as Charles H. Spurgeon passed through the door back of the pulpit in the Tabernacle, and saw the great crowd of people, he was overheard saying, "O God, help!" Strong as he was, he realized that he was insufficient for so great a task as preaching the Gospel in power, unless God should be his Helper." (from Tan, P. L. Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations)

Perhaps you might pause for a moment and sing the following hymn ([click link](#)) as your prayer...

### **Abide with Me**

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
**Help** of the helpless, O abide with me.

This beloved hymn of comfort and trust was written in 1847 by [Henry F. Lyte](#) a man of delicate health most of his life who served tirelessly as a pastor in a seashore church in Devonshire, England where he ministered to the rough sailors and uncultured villagers who loved him. Health finally forced Lyte to retreat to the milder climate of sunny southern France, and he prepared to sail. On his last Sunday after 24 years of faithful service, despite being too weak to stand and preach, somehow he was able feebly stand and preach his parting message to his weeping flock. That evening, as he walked down to the ocean and watched the sun setting, he took out a piece of paper and penned the poem that was later put to music in this beautiful hymn. The next day he left for France. Reaching Nice, he had a seizure and passed away with the words, "Joy! Peace!" on his lips. In his going out and coming in, Lyte experienced help for the helpless from Jehovah, the Helper of all our souls.

The British Press Association reported the following incident related to the hymn [Abide with Me](#): A British submarine lay disabled on the ocean floor. After two days, hope of raising her was abandoned. The crew on orders of the commanding officer began singing the words of the first verse of [Abide with Me](#) (the verse above). The officer explained to the men that they did not have long to live. There was no hope of outside aid, he said, because the surface searchers did not know the vessel's position. Sedatives were distributed to the men to quiet their nerves. One sailor was affected more quickly than the others, and he swooned. He fell against a piece of equipment and set in motion the submarine's jammed surfacing mechanism. The submarine went to the surface and made port safely! (Adapted from Tan, P. L. Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations)

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### **Look Up!**

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. —Psalm 121

In a park near our home there's a trail I enjoy walking on. Along one section there's a panoramic view of red sandstone rocks in the Garden of the Gods with the majestic 14,115-foot Pikes Peak behind them. From time to time, though, I find myself walking that section occupied with some problem and looking down at the wide, smooth trail. If no one is around, I may stop and say aloud, "David, look up!"

The psalms known as "Songs of Ascents" (Ps. 120–134) were sung by the people of Israel as they walked the road up to Jerusalem to attend the three annual pilgrim festivals. Psalm 121 begins, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence comes my help?" (v. 1). The answer follows, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (v. 2). The Creator is not an aloof being, but a companion who is always with us, always awake to our circumstances (vv. 3-7), guiding and guarding our journey through life "from this time forth, and even forevermore" (v. 8).

Along life's path, how we need to keep our eyes fixed on God, our source of help. When we're feeling overwhelmed and discouraged, it's all right to say aloud, "Look up!"

By David C. McCasland

Today's Reflection - I look up to You, Father, for You are the One who can help me. Thank You for the joys and trials in my life right now. I'm grateful that I never walk alone.

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**Psalm 121:3 He will not [allow](#) your [foot](#) to [slip](#); He who [keeps](#) you will not [slumber](#). (NASB: Lockman)**

**Septuagint (LXX):**me dos (2SAAS) eis salon (rolling or tossing motion, especially the restless movement of the sea in its tidal rise and fall) ton poda (foot) sou mede nustaxe (3SAAS: become drowsy, dose) o **phulasson** (PAPMSN: phulasso: continually acting as watchman, guarding, protecting, watching over) se

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - Let not thy foot be moved; and let not thy keeper slumber.

- Ps 91:12 1Sa 2:9 Pr 2:8 3:23,26 1Pe 1:5

In the original Hebrew, verse 3 can also be rendered as a prayer. And so it could read be read

"May he not allow your foot to slip. May your keeper not slumber."

The 1899 Douay-Rheims version for example translates this verse as

"May he not suffer thy foot to be moved: neither let him slumber that keepeth thee."

The English translation of the Septuagint (LXX) has

"Let not thy foot be moved; and let not thy keeper slumber."

The recently released, scholarly NET Bible also has

"May He not allow your foot to slip! May your Protector not sleep!"

So all of these versions would be read as a prayer. Then verse 4 would read like a response, the NET Version reading

"Look! Israel's protector does not sleep or slumber!"

### **JEHOVAH, GOD, THY GRACIOUS POWER**

Jehovah, God, Thy gracious power,

On every hand we see;

Oh, may the blessings of each hour

Lead all our thoughts to Thee.

Thy power is in the ocean deeps,

And reaches to the skies;

Thine eye of mercy never sleeps,

Thy goodness never dies.

From morn till noon, till latest eve,

Thy hand, O God, we see;

And all the blessings we receive,

Proceed alone from Thee.

In all the varying scenes of time,  
On Thee our hopes depend;  
Through every age, in every clime,  
Our Father, and our Friend.

**He will not allow your foot to slip**- The psalmist then describes Jehovah's help, first in negative terms (Psalm 121:3-4) and then in positive terms (Psalm 121:5, 7-8). If He does not allow our foot to slip, the idea is that He will enable us to stand. Like little children, we are safe when our Father "holds our hand!" Remember that in Ps 121:1 the psalmist asks where would his help come from and here we see it as if he is speaking to his own soul, imparting confidence in Jehovah's keeping ability.

**Jude** echoes the truth of Ps 121:3 writing...

Now to Him Who is able (dunamai which is in the present tense = continually has the inherent power) to keep (phulasso - same verb used in Lxx of Ps 121:3,4,5,7,8) you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24, 25)

**Comment:** Note the phrase "**keep you from stumbling**" implies that in our Christian journey, there are many obstacles and situations which could indeed cause us to stumble in our spiritual walk. And indeed sometimes we do fall, but David writes that "*When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.*" (Psalm 37:24). Jude encourages us that in spite of our tendency to fail, God's promise is that He will bring us through it all and one day will make us stand in His very presence. **He is able! Do you believe that truth?** You can because as Paul writes "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass." (1Thes 5:24-note, cp Php 1:6-note)

**Mike Gilbert-Smith** says...

If you slip, you can fall, and on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem if you tumbled down a mountainside that could mean death. This is a powerful image. God will not let your foot slip – He constantly watches and keeps us. Have you ever thought your concerns or temptations were too small to take to God? He is not like us; He doesn't get tired or bored. There is no time when we cannot turn to Him, yet sometimes we are slow to turn to God for help. As you begin to stumble, your instinct should be to turn to God. ([Psalm 121](#))

**James Smith**... is right when he notes that...

- The Christian is always on dangerous ground!
- We may fall into sin — even when we cannot fall into hell.
- We may break our bones — when we cannot break our neck.
- We may make sad work for repentance — when we do not incur a sentence of final condemnation.
- We are liable to fall by error — which is specious and powerful.
- We are liable to fall by Satan — who is crafty and malicious.
- We are liable to fall by our weakness — which is very great.
- We are liable to fall by sinful pleasures — in which the flesh takes delight.
- We are liable to fall by our unhallowed tempers — which need constant watchfulness and incessant prayer.
- We are liable to fall by erroneous people — who may, like Satan, lie in wait to deceive us.

**We therefore need keeping —  
constant keeping, divine keeping!**

Our path is often slippery — and we are apt to be incautious. But it is our unspeakable mercy, that God has promised to keep us. "He keeps the feet of His saints."

But He will have us feel our weakness, and need of His keeping — and plead with Him to keep us: "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

**Slip (mot)** is a Hebrew verb indicating to be moved, removed, to fall. **Mot** is used of a wavering, wobbling action, response, or condition in various situations: and occurs as figure of speech referring to great insecurity. It is used figuratively of a foot slipping and in Deuteronomy speaks of failure of God's people, Moses recording

"Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will **slip** (mot); for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending

things are hastening upon them." ([Dt 32:35](#))

David echoes this truth exhorting saints to

**"Cast your burden** (Hebrew = yehab = an interesting Hebrew word which literally means "what is given" lot, burden, what is given as a gift (the implication being that it is a gift given in & by the Providence of God! The Greek word in the (LXX) = merimna from merizo = draw in different directions = word picture of the effect that "cares" can have. Note that the related word **"worry"** conveys a powerful word picture: English word "worry" is derived from Old High German "wurgan" = to strangle and in British dialect means "choke" or "strangle" - what can "cares" and "worries" do? Draw you in different directions! Strangle you, so to speak!) **upon Jehovah** (Whose name means "I Am... " I Am able to sustain you in all your cares and worries!), **and He will sustain** (Hebrew word "kul" verb = to hold, to contain feed, to supply. It indicates clasping or holding in something. Beloved you are in your Helper's grip and He is able to keep you from slipping irrevocably. The (LXX) has the Greek verb diatrepho = support, maintain, sustain continually, to feed or nourish. One use of diatrepho describes to "keep the patient well nourished"! Now "plug" that thought back into the verse and praise Jehovah, the Great Physician!) **you. He will never allow the righteous to be shaken** (Amplified adds "made to slip, fall, or fail")." (Psalm 55:22) (Devotional)

"What your God lays upon you, lay upon the Lord. His wisdom casts it on you; it is your wisdom to cast it on him. He gives you your portion of suffering; accept it with cheerful resignation, and then take it back to him by your assured confidence. **He shall sustain thee**. Your bread will be given you; your waters will be sure. Abundant nourishment will fit you to bear all your labors and trials. As your days, so shall your strength be. **He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved**. He may move like the boughs of a tree in the tempest, but he will never be moved like a tree torn up by the roots. Many wish to destroy the saints, but God has not suffered it, and never will." (Spurgeon, C. H. [The Treasury of David](#))

To reiterate, **"never... shaken"** is God's promise in the trial, but note that He does not promise the trial won't feel like waves rocking us to and fro but He does promise that we will not slip and fall. Let us cling to His Truth in the midst of the storm so that our souls are firmly anchored.

**Edward Everett Hale** (1822-1909), former US Senate chaplain:

"Never attempt to bear more than one kind of trouble at once. Some people bear three kinds--all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have."

**John McNeil** writes...

Any of you who have tried to climb the hills know that that is just the great danger of it. One slip, and you may go sheer down hundreds of feet, and be dashed to pieces. Do we not use this expression to cover the idea of safety? We talk about the "sure-footed" guide, and the "sure-footed" mountaineer, the man of keen eye and cool nerve, and of muscles like iron all over his body; a man who can be depended on. If he gets a foothold for his foot, he will put his foot there, and keep it there, until he gets another as good. So is the Christian. Why, in one sense, we are engaged in a perilous journey. We are going up. We are climbing. To brace yourself to climb the Matterhorn is a small thing compared with this girding of your mind to be sober and climbing right up from hell to heaven. And that is the climb for every one of us. (Biblical Illustrator)

**Spurgeon** wrote that

"You may expect that between here and heaven, if you have not met with it yet, you will have enough trouble to destroy you unless **the Lord is your Helper**..."

... Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult—yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if He will not allow it—we shall never be moved! If our foot will is thus kept—we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also! Those who have God for their keeper—shall be safe from all the perils of the way.

Among the hills and ravines of Palestine, the keeping of the feet is a great mercy. But in the slippery paths of a tempted, tried and afflicted believer, the blessing of upholding is of priceless value—for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger! To stand 'steadfast' and pursue our holy way—is a blessing which only God can give. It is worthy of His divine hand—and worthy also of our perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in heavenly progress—and we shall never be overthrown!

The psalmist writes

"Bless our God, O peoples, and sound His praise abroad, Who keeps us in life, and does not allow our feet to slip." ([Psalm 66:8-note](#), [Ps 66:9-note](#))

When the verb 'slip' is used with 'foot' or 'feet', it denotes slipping in a time of trouble. The Lord is the one who is immovable ([Ps 30:6-note](#); [Ps 62:2-note](#); [Ps 112:6-note](#)) and he holds his children so that their feet do not slip ([Ps 17:5-note](#)).

One of the other psalms of ascent helps understand **'their foot shall not slip'**, the psalmist writing that

Those who trust in Jehovah are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. ([Ps 125:1-note](#))

**Spurgeon** writes that

Zion was the image of eternal steadfastness—this hill which, according to the Hebrew, “sits to eternity,” neither bowing down nor moving to and fro. Thus doth the trusting worshiper of Jehovah enjoy a restfulness which is the mirror of tranquility; his hope is sure. As the LORD sitteth as King forever, so do His people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in Him is firm. We are, we have been, we shall be as steadfast as the hill of God. Zion cannot be removed, and does not move; so the people of God can neither be moved by force from without or fickleness from within. ([The Treasury of David](#))

Commenting on Psalm 121:3 (**he will not allow your foot to slip**) Spurgeon writes that

"Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if He will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our feet will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer—**"May He not suffer thy foot to be moved"**

**Promised preservation**

should be the subject of **perpetual prayer**;  
and we may **pray believingly**,  
for those who have God for their Keeper  
will be safe from all the perils of the way.

Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon (timely benefit especially one given in answer to a request) of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. **To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude.** Our feet will move in progress, but they will not be moved to their overthrow." (Bolding added. [The Treasury of David Psalm 121:3](#))

David echoes this true adding in (Psalm 37:23, 24) that

The steps of a man are established by the LORD and He delights in his way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.

**Spurgeon** comments that

"Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep. He shall not be utterly cast down. He will be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment he shall be up again ere long. No saint will fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all. For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. He does not leave his saints to mere delegated agency; He affords personal assistance. Where grace does not keep us from going down, it will save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall, but because God is their Helper and therefore none can prevail against them." (Spurgeon, C. H: [The Treasury of David](#))

The slipping of one's foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, [Psalm 38:16](#); [66:9](#), and would be especially meaningful in the rocky, treacherous terrain of the mountains surrounding Jerusalem, where a single slip of the foot could bring quick slippage and great injury.

**He Who keeps (protects, guards) you will not slumber** (GWT: "Your guardian will not fall asleep") Jehovah your Helper will not sleep lightly or doze and (figuratively) will not be in a torpid, slothful or negligent state. How sure can we be? Look at Ps 121:4.

**Matthew Henry** comments...

Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that, whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. Those must needs be well kept that have the Lord for their keeper. If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper... The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.

**John MacArthur** in [Seven Keys to Contented Living](#) tells of...



Paul Reese's wonderful story about the man who in World War II was on an American ship that was shot and was sinking and he dove off the deck and hung on to something in the water for a while until he was picked up by a German freighter. He and a couple of other men were thrown in the belly of the ship as prisoners. And he wrote in his little biography,

I began to commune with the Lord. At first I couldn't sleep. The stress was great and the fear was great. Then I remembered the words of Psalm 121, 'My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He that keeps thee will not slumber, behold he will neither slumber nor sleep.' So I said, 'Lord, there isn't any use both of us staying awake. As long as You're going to keep watch, I'll thank You for some sleep.' And I got it. (Ed: Amen!)

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**The Christian's stability** - The North Pole is perpetually roving within the limits of a circle sixty feet in diameter. What is the North Pole to-day is not the North Pole to-morrow. The true North Pole has been known to travel more than four feet in a week, while sometimes it has required more than a month to cover a yard. Suppose that you and I were to sail from opposite points to discover this turning-point. We will say that you, with your astronomical instruments, planted your flag upon the exact North Pole six months ago, and then went away. I, arriving to-day, make equally accurate calculations and plant my flag also upon the true North Pole. My flag is probably forty feet from yours, yet neither of us is in error. To-morrow the elusive little tip-top of the earth will have slipped away from both of us. And if I were to claim a building site the corner-stone of which was marked by this North Pole, a strange predicament would follow. I should have to place my fences upon castors, and keep them continually moving in order to mark strictly my own reservation. So it is with too many Christian lives. Want of stability in the Christian faith and life is one of the great--one might say the greatest--hindrances to the true development of Christianity among us. We are constantly veering round in our faith and life, following the latest "new belief," accepting every modern "faith," or doubting some established Christian doctrine. Let us be more stable in our religion. (Signal.)

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**His Mind Never Wanders** - Has this ever happened to you? I was driving down the highway on a pleasant evening after a full day. I was paying attention to traffic and driving defensively. The next thing I knew, I heard the crunch of tires on gravel. They were mine! I snapped to attention. My mind had wandered and I had strayed to the edge of the road. Either I was daydreaming or I was enjoying the beauty of the evening and forgot what I was doing.

What would happen if God's mind wandered? Consider Colossians 1:17 (note), which says that in Christ "all things consist." This means that in His providence, the Son of God holds all things together and keeps our world in motion. So if His mind wandered, trees would crash to the ground. Water would pour out of the oceans. The planets would go spinning off through space. Prayers would be unheard and unanswered. And those He protects would be left vulnerable to the attack of the enemy. But that could never happen. Why? Because the God who never sleeps is watching over our world--and us--all the time (Psalm 121:3, 4). We are ever at the center of His attention and His care. We are secure because we love and serve a God whose mind never wanders. --D C Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I know God's care and kindness  
Will ever with me stay,  
To assist me on life's journey,  
And brighten up my day. --Hall

Because God's mind is on us, we can put our mind at ease.

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**Always Awake** - A mother and her 4-year-old daughter were preparing for bed. The child was afraid of the dark. When the lights were turned off, the girl noticed the moon shining through the window. "Mommy," she asked, "is that God's light up there?" "Yes, it is," came the reply. Soon another question: "Will He put it out and go to sleep too?" "Oh no, He never goes to sleep." After a few silent moments, the little girl said, "As long as God is awake, I'm not scared." Realizing that the Lord would be watching over her, the reassured child soon fell into a peaceful sleep.

As Christians, we may confidently commit both the night and the day to our ever-faithful God. He is fully aware of our fears in the dark as well as our frustrations in the light. We can be assured of His constant care. His loving eye and protecting hand are always upon us.

Perhaps you face lonely hours because of illness or the loss of a loved one. The shadows of the night make the anxiety of your situation seem greater than ever. Doubts arise and fears flood your soul, robbing you of your needed rest.

Trust the heavenly Father, and with the psalmist you will be able to say, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). Remember, God is always awake.— by Paul Van Gorder

In His care confiding  
I will sweetly sleep,  
For the Lord my Savior  
Will in safety keep.  
—Psalter

If you have trouble getting to sleep,  
try resting in the Lord.

## KEY WORDS IN PSALM 121

**Key Words** (see notes) in **inductive Bible study** are words that are repeated and of such significance that their removal would significantly alter the intended meaning in a passage. The **LORD** of course is always a "key word." **"Help"** is also clearly a key word in this psalm even though it is only mentioned twice. In this psalm one might also consider the multiple personal pronouns to be key words. The dominant key word in Psalm 121 is translated keeps (twice), keep, keeper, protect and guard. These six uses in English correspond to one word in the original Hebrew text - **shamar**.

### HEBREW VERB SHAMAR

As noted the Hebrew verb **shamar** occurs six times in eight verses. Shamar is a major OT verb, occurring in some 431 verses and is translated by a variety of English words. Basically **shamar** conveys the picture of one exercising great care to watch over and so to keep, preserve, protect and guard. It can mean to hedge about as in guarding or protecting a person or object. The first Old Testament use is instructive for the "LORD God took the man (Adam) and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and **keep** (and **guard**) it." ([Genesis 2:15](#)). As [Genesis 3](#) shows, Adam did not guard the garden carefully enough! In another instructive use we see the Jewish men who "were gatekeepers **keeping watch** at the storehouses of the gates." ([Neh 12:25](#))

The verb **shamar** describes a most tender preservation. For example, the noun shemurah is derived from shamar and is used in Ps 77:4 ([note](#)) for the **eyelids**, which are "the keepers" of the eyes. ([See note](#)).

**Shamar** was used by Israel in recounting Israel's Exodus and wilderness journey, the people (answering Joshua's challenge to remain faithful) declaring that

"the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and **preserved** (shamar; LXX = dia-phulasso = watch carefully, guard closely) us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed." (Joshua 24:17+)

### GREEK VERB PHULASSO

The Greek translation of the Hebrew text (Septuagint or Lxx) renders **shamar** with the Greek verb **phulasso**.

**Phulasso** ([5442](#)) means to watch, to carry out the function as a military guard or sentinel (cp Ac 23:35, 28:16), to keep watch, to have one's eye upon lest one escape, to guard a person that he might remain safe (from violence, from another person or thing, from being snatched away, from being lost). The NT uses phulasso of guarding truth (eg, 1Ti 5:21+, 1Ti 6:20+, 2Ti 1:14+)

- [Click here for an in depth 3 page discussion of phylasso in the New International Dictionary of the New Testament](#)(and check the preceding article on tereo for more discussion)

**Phulasso** is the verb used to describe the shepherds **"keeping watch"** (phulasso) over their flock by night (Lk 2:8), which congers up the image of savage wolves seeking to devour the helpless sheep. Elsewhere we read of the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd Who keeps watch over His sheep.

**Paul** assures us that...

the Lord is faithful (He is trustworthy, worthy of all our trust), and He will strengthen and **protect** (phulasso) you

from the evil one. (2Th 3:3) (Why can we be certain God will protect us from evil and the devil, the evil one himself? How is God characterized by Paul, which undergirds his declaration that God will protect us? See God's attribute **Faithfulness**)

Peter records that God

did not spare the ancient world, but **preserved (phulasso)** Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. (2Pe 4, 5+)

**Comment:** Ponder the picture in this passage! Imagine the roaring seas, spreading out over the land as the rains came falling down. Picture men and women and children crying out for **help** as the waters rose. And let this sad, tragic picture help you discern the meaning of phulasso.

**Phulasso** is used 31 times in the NAS abstain, 1; guard, 8; guarded, 1; guarding, 1; guards, 1; keep, 5; keeping, 2; keeps, 1; kept, 4; kept under guard, 1; maintain, 1; observe, 2; preserved, 1; protect, 1; watching, 1 Matt. 19:20; Mk. 10:20; Lk. 2:8; 8:29; 11:21, 28; 12:15; 18:21; Jn. 12:25, 47; 17:12; Acts 7:53; 12:4; 16:4; 21:24, 25; 22:20; 23:35; 28:16; Ro 2:26; Gal. 6:13; 2Th 3:3; 1Ti 5:21; 6:20; 2Ti 1:12, 14; 4:15; 2Pe 2:5; 3:17; 1Jn 5:21; Jude 1:24)

**Phulasso** can also mean to keep away from or make an effort to abstain from as in (Luke 12:15).

Figuratively **phulasso** means to keep so as to observe and not violate, such as God's Word. Thus Jesus said

Blessed (makarios) are those who **hear** the word of God, and **observe (phulasso = guard, present tense = continually)** it. (Luke 11:28+)

**Comment:** Note carefully that the blessing is not just in the knowing of the Word of Truth but of the obeying of the Word of Truth (Contrast Jas 1:22+ with Jas 1:25+)

In a similar use in the LXX we read

Where there is no vision (no prophetic vision, no truth), the people are unrestrained (run wild!), but ( - What is contrasted? At least two truths!) happy (blessed - fully satisfied independent of the circumstances = not natural effort but a supernatural bestowal!) is he who **keeps (LXX = Phulasso)** the law. (Pr 29:18+)

The idea of **phulasso** in preceding two examples (Lk 11:28+, Pr 29:18) is that of the keeping of the commandments, and refers not only to the act of obeying them, but to an attitude of attentive care and protectiveness for their preciousness and honor, an attitude which leads one to carefully guard them from being broken (Note: We can "keep" them only because He has "kept" us and empowered us to be able to "keep" them. If we try to "keep" the law in our own strength, we call that legalism. Grace sets free. Legalism puts us back into bondage to the law and sin.)

**Phulasso** indicates safe custody and often implies assault from without and Vine says is a stronger word than the synonym **tereo** which expresses watchful care. I love the ending benediction by Jude...

Now to Him who is able to **keep (phulasso)** you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24,25+)

The **Septuagint (Lxx)**, the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, translates every occurrence of **shamar** with the same Greek verb **phulasso**, (see [Sept uses below](#)) which was used commonly in secular writings as a military word (for example to describe the duty of a military sentry) and meant to guard (so as to protect from danger especially by providing watchful attention), defend or keep watch in order to prevent robbery, loss or harm.

**Phulasso** means to keep in safe custody and its use often implies assault from without. For example, Luke records that "when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was **guarding** him." (Acts 28:16+) The verb **phulasso** is in the **present tense** picturing continuous action - you have a round-the-clock ("24/7") "Guard". As noted above, Adam was instructed by God to **keep** (guard - Hebrew = shamar; Lxx = phulasso) the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:15+)

Now take this information on **phulasso** and "plug" it back into the phrase **He Who keeps you**. For example, you could read it as "He Who continually guards you to prevent robbery or loss... " What an encouraging picture of the "keeping" power of our great God, Jehovah. Beloved, believe this truth about Him. It does not mean we will not suffer or that we will not be attacked or afflicted. But it does mean that Jehovah Himself will protect us when the trials come.

God's help **keeps** the believer. Nearing the end of his life, Paul had come to know God as his personal Help (cf, "my help"), for even

in the face of persecution for the gospel, he was able to declare

I am not ashamed; for I know Whom I have believed and I am convinced that **He is able** (He has the inherent power - He is the Creator of heaven and earth) to **guard** (or **keep** = phulasso) what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (2Ti 1:12+)

**Beloved, we have a trustworthy, vigilant "Watchman"  
Take comfort in this truth.**

**Gilbrant on phulasso** - The verb **phulassō** is related to the noun **phulax**, “sentinel, watchman,” and indicates the activity of a watchman (Bertram, “phulassō,” Kittel, 9:236). Another related term is **phulakē** (5274), a “watch” (e.g., Mt 24:43), especially a “watch of the night.” The scope of **phulassō** ranges from “watching over, taking care of,” to “keeping” a law or command. **Phulassō** enjoys extensive usage (nearly 500 times) in the Septuagint where it replaces as many as 11 Hebrew expressions. The plainly dominant counterparts, however, are the forms of **shāmar** (the **qal**), “to guard, protect, keep” (around 375 times). Adam was given the responsibility to “take care of” the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:15NIV). In a different understanding, after the Fall, “cherubim (of the Lord) and a flaming sword flashing back and forth (were placed) to guard the way to the tree of life” (Ge 3:24NIV); that is, they prevented entrance. In a more figurative sense, “keeping” the way of the Lord, His word, His covenant, or His commandments means to obey Him (Ge 18:19; Ex12:17,24; 19:5; cf. 13:10; cf. Leviticus 18:26,30; Deuteronomy 6:17 and throughout the Old Testament). Elsewhere it may describe “observing” a feast or the Sabbath (e.g., Exodus 23:15; 34:18; Deuteronomy 5:12). God also “watches over” the righteous. As the Psalmist declares, “O Lord, you will keep us safe” (Psalm 12:7NIV; cf. 16:1 [15:1]; 25:20). He “protects” us from harm and evil influence (Psalms 140:4; 141:9). God’s role as “Watcher” or “Guardian” may recall His being the Great Shepherd who “guards” His flock (cf. *ibid.*, 9:237; see also Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, pp.100-114, for the use of this imagery; e.g., Psalm 23; Jeremiah 31:10). **New Testament usage** largely accords with the classical and Septuagintal patterns. **Phulassō** may signify “keeping” or “observing” commands, decrees, or feasts (e.g., Matthew 19:20; Mark 10:20; cf. Acts 16:4). It concerns especially “keeping” God’s Word by being obedient to His commands (Luke 11:28; cf. John 12:47). Paul used the expression in his letters to Timothy to encourage him to “guard” (NIV, in the sense of take care of, protect from the threat of false teaching) the “deposit” (NIV) with which he had been entrusted (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14). The term “deposit,” **parathēkē**, is a metaphor from common life “reflecting the highest kind of sacred obligation in ancient society, namely, being entrusted with some treasured possession for safe-keeping while another is away” (see on this Fee, *Good News Commentary*, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, p.118). From another perspective, and perhaps recalling the Old Testament idea of God as a “Guardian,” Paul was confident in God’s ability to “keep” what he had been entrusted with (2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 24; but cf. 1 John 5:21). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Phulasso** in the Septuagint - Gen. 2:15; 3:24; 18:19; 26:5; 30:31; 31:24,29; 41:35-36; Exod. 12:17,24-25; 13:10; 15:26; 19:5; 20:6; 22:7,10; 23:13,15,20,22; 31:13-14,16; 34:18; Lev. 8:35; 18:4-5,26,30; 19:3,19,30,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:2-3; Num. 1:53; 3:7-8,10,28,32,38; 6:24; 8:26; 9:19,23; 18:3-5; 22:35; 23:12; 31:30,47; Deut. 4:2,6,9,15,40; 5:1,10,12,15,29,32; 6:2-3,17,25; 7:9,11-12; 8:1-2,6,11; 10:13; 11:1,8,32; 12:1,28,32; 13:4,18; 15:5; 16:1,12; 17:10,19; 23:9,23; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,13,15,45; 29:9; 30:10,16; 32:46; 33:9; Jos. 1:7; 6:18; 10:18; 22:3,5; 23:6,11; Jdg. 1:24; 2:22; 7:19; 13:4,13-14; 1 Sam. 1:12; 7:1; 13:13-14; 19:2,11; 21:4; 22:23; 25:21; 26:15-16; 29:11; 30:23; 2 Sam. 11:16; 15:16; 16:21; 18:12; 20:3,10; 22:22,44; 23:5; 1 Ki. 2:3-4,43; 3:6,14; 8:23-25,58,61; 9:4,6; 11:10-11,38; 13:21; 14:27; 20:39; 2 Ki. 6:9-10; 9:14; 10:31; 11:5-7; 12:9; 17:9,13,15,19,37; 18:6,8; 21:8; 22:4; 23:3-4; 25:18; 1 Chr. 9:19,23; 10:13; 22:12-13; 23:32; 26:10; 28:7-8; 29:18; 2 Chr. 6:14-16; 7:17; 12:10-11; 13:11; 19:7; 23:6; 33:8; 34:9,22,31; Ezr. 4:22; Neh. 1:5,7,9; 2:16; 9:32; 10:29; 12:45; 13:22; Est. 1:1; 6:2; Job 10:12,14; 13:27; 14:13; 22:15; 23:11; 24:15; 29:2; 33:11; 36:21; 39:1; Ps. 12:7; 16:1; 17:3,8; 18:21,23; 19:11; 25:20; 34:20; 37:28,34,37; 39:1; 56:6; 59:1,9; 71:10; 78:10,56; 86:2; 89:28,31; 97:10; 99:7; 103:18; 105:45; Ps 106:3; 107:43; 116:6; 119:4-5,8-9, 17, 34, 44, 55, 57, 60, 63, 67, 88, 101, 106, 134, 136, 146, 158,167-168; Ps 121:3-5,7-8; 127:1; 132:12; 140:4; 141:9; 145:20; 146:6,9; Prov. 2:8,11; 4:5,13,21; 5:2; 6:20,22; 7:1-2; 8:32; 10:17; 13:3,6,18; 14:3; 15:5; 16:4,17; 19:8,16,27; 21:23,28; 22:5; 24:22; 25:10; 27:18; 28:7; 29:18; Eccl. 3:6; 5:1,8,13; 8:2,5; 12:12-13; Cant. 1:6; Isa. 7:4; 21:11-12; 26:2-3; 27:4; 42:20; 52:8; 56:1-2,4,6; 60:21; Jer. 4:17; 5:24; 8:7; 9:4; 16:11; 17:21; 31:10; 32:2; 35:4; 36:5,20; 52:24,31; Ezek. 11:20; 17:14; 18:9,21,27; 20:18-19,21; 33:4-6,8; 34:16; 36:27; 37:24; 40:45-46; 43:11; 44:8,14-16,24; 48:11; Dan. 9:4; Hos. 4:10; 12:6,12; Amos 1:11; 2:4; Jon. 2:8; Mic. 6:16; 7:5; Hab. 3:16; Zech. 3:7; 11:11; Mal. 2:7,9,15-16; 3:7,14;

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## **Our Night Watchman**

Read: Psalm 121:1-8

He who keeps you will not slumber. —Psalm 121:3

My husband and I were committed to having a "people ministry." We longed to bring Christ's good news to needy people and to be good news through our day-to-day involvement with them. The snag was that I was "working the nightshift" as well by carrying people's burdens to bed with me. My restless nights often immobilized me during the day.

One night as I was getting ready for bed, I was thinking about my burdens and what to do with them. As I laid aside each piece of clothing, I decided to lay aside each concern, one by one. Then, as I put on my comfortable robe, I felt released from people's burdens and ready to rest. At first I felt guilty and uncaring. Then the Holy Spirit reminded me that God neither slumbers nor sleeps. If God wanted me to be involved during the night, He would let me know. Otherwise, while I slept and refreshed myself, I knew that He would sit up all night and keep watch over my every concern.

If you're a believer, you too have a "people ministry." But remember, you don't need to work the nightshift. Instead, practice laying aside your concerns daily, like pieces of apparel. Then wrap yourself in the reassuring robe of God's keeping power and rest awhile.

Into His hands I lay the fears that haunt me,  
The dread of future ills that may befall;  
Into His hands I lay the doubts that taunt me,  
And rest securely, trusting Him for all.

—Christiansen

For a good night's rest, rest in the Lord.

By Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Spurgeon** has these devotional thoughts on Psalm 121:3...

If the LORD will not suffer it, neither men nor devils can do it. How greatly would they rejoice if they could give us a disgraceful fall, drive us from our position, and bury us out of memory! They could do this to their heart's content were it not for one hindrance, and only one: the LORD will not suffer it; and if He does not suffer it, we shall not suffer it. The way of life is like traveling among the Alps. Along the mountain path one is constantly exposed to the slipping of the foot. Where the way is high the head is apt to swim, and then the feet soon slide; there are spots which are smooth as glass and others that are rough with loose stones, and in either of these a fall is hard to avoid. He who throughout life is enabled to keep himself upright and to walk without stumbling has the best of reasons for gratitude. What with pitfalls and snares, weak knees, weary feet, and subtle enemies, no child of God would stand fast for an hour were it not for the faithful love which will not suffer his foot to be moved.

Amidst a thousand snares I stand  
Upheld and guarded by thy hand;  
That hand unseen shall hold me still,  
And lead me to thy holy hill.

**Psalm 121:4** [Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

**Septuagint (LXX):** idou (2SAMM: aorist imperative = command which can convey a sense of urgency: pay attention! look! listen! = to arouse attention) ou (absolute negation) nustaxei (3SFAL: doze) oude (absolute negation) hupnosei (3SFAL: sleep) o **phulasson** (PAPMSN: continuously watching over) ton israel

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - Behold, he that keeps Israel shall not slumber nor sleep.

- **He Who keeps:** Ps 27:1 32:7,8 127:1 Isa 27:3; **Will:** 1Ki 18:27 Eccl 8:16 Rev 7:15
- [Spurgeon's Sermon - Psalm 121:4 123:2 Wakeful and Watchful Eyes](#)

**Behold** (hinneh) is a Hebrew interjection meaning look, now, etc the function of which is to call attention to the text which follows. Hinneh serves to alert the reader to give it special attention. Don't miss this point! The psalmist is focusing our attention on the truth that God keeps Israel. Indeed, the very existence of the Jew and the Jewish state of Israel is a vibrant testimony to God's "keeping power!"

**THERE IS AN EYE THAT NEVER SLEEPS**

There is an eye that never sleeps  
Beneath the wing of night;  
There is an ear that never shuts  
When sink the beams of light.  
There is an arm that never tires  
When human strength gives way;  
There is a love that never fails  
When earthly loves decay.  
That eye is fixed on seraph throngs;  
That arm upholds the sky;  
That ear is filled with angel songs;  
That love is throned on high.  
But there's a power which man can wield  
When mortal aid is vain,  
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,  
That listening ear to gain.  
That power is prayer, which soars on high,  
Through Jesus, to the throne,  
And moves the hand which moves the world,  
To bring salvation down.

**Spurgeon** comments that...

**Behold** ... is meant to attract the readers' attention. In some books, which are intended to be sensational, you are asked to **behold**, and when you look, there is nothing to see; but when God's Word bids you **behold** what it has to say, you may be sure that the exclamation is not superfluous or misleading. It would be a marring of the Word of God to leave out even one of its smallest expressions; and, therefore, when we see this word "**Behold**" placed at the beginning of the text, we may rest assured that there is... something worth noting, worth examining and considering, and worth remembering and carrying away.

A very useful series of discourses might be preached upon the "**Beholds**" of the Old and New Testaments, which culminate in John the Baptist's "**Behold** the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and Pilate's "**Behold** the man;" and still more in our Lord's own message to John, "**Behold**, I come quickly."

(Behold in Psalm 121) tells us about God's eyes: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." His eyes are never closed; no feeling of weariness or need of slumber ever causes them to be heavy and to shut.

**He Who keeps Israel** - If God has kept Israel as a distinct people group and nation for over 4000 years, surely He is able to keep your foot from slipping. God was faithful to His promise that the Hebrew people would not disappear from the face of the earth, and is just as faithful to keep you dear believer. The same Divine Guardian of Israel is the Guardian of every believer who has entered into [covenant](#) with Him by placing their faith in Jesus Christ. Study the history of this tiny country Israel which today is in some areas as narrow as 20 miles across, is surrounded by inveterate enemies, is far from being consistently obedient to Jehovah, and yet He continually **keeps** and **watches over** them. Why? Not because of their goodness or greatness but because of His faithfulness, for He is Jehovah, the [covenant](#) keeping God, Who remains faithful to His [covenant](#) promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf Ge 12:1, 2; Ge 15:5, 18; Ge 17:7,17:8). This same [covenant](#) binds Him to faithfully, continually watch over all who have entered by faith into the New [Covenant](#) in Messiah's blood (Jer 31:31, Lk 22:30).

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, perhaps you are reading this, longing for the watch care of the Almighty, omnipotent God. If you have never truly confessed with your mouth Jesus as your Lord and believed in your heart that God raised Him from the dead (cf Ro 10:9, 10-note), then please enter into His eternal New [Covenant](#) today by placing your faith wholeheartedly in Jesus, Who longs to be your Helper and Protector today and throughout eternity, "for the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Ro 10:11-note)

## **THE UNFAILING WATCH**

In **Faith's Checkbook**, **Spurgeon** has the following devotional thoughts on this Ps 121:4...

**The Unfailing Watch** - Jehovah is "the Keeper of Israel." No form of unconsciousness ever steals over Him, neither the deeper slumber nor the slightest sleep. He never fails to watch the house and the heart of His people. This is a sufficient reason for our resting in perfect peace. Alexander said that he slept because his friend Parmenio watched; much more may we sleep because our God is our guard. "Behold" is here set up to call our attention to the cheering truth. Israel, when he had a stone for his pillow, fell asleep; but His God was awake and came in vision to His servant. When we lie defenseless, Jehovah Himself will cover our head. The LORD keeps His people as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a sentry keeps watch over his sovereign. None can harm those who are in such keeping. Let me put my soul into His dear hands. He never forgets us, never ceases actively to care for us, never finds Himself unable to preserve us. O my LORD, keep me, lest I wander and fall and perish. Keep me, that I may keep Thy commandments. By Thine unslumbering care prevent my sleeping like the sluggard and perishing like those who sleep the sleep of death.

**C H Spurgeon** comments on **He that keeps Israel** noting that...

By this expression we understand that the Lord keeps his people as a shepherd keeps his flock. There is a great depth of meaning in that word "keep" as it is thus used; for a shepherd keeps the sheep by feeding them, by supplying all their needs, and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging of the wolf or by the straying of the sheep. Both by night and by day, even an ordinary shepherd takes great pains and the utmost care to preserve his sheep; while "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," who was brought again from the dead, uses his omnipotence, his omniscience, and all his divine attributes in the keeping of his sheep. O beloved, if you are indeed his people, and the sheep of his pasture, rest assured that he will preserve you! You are in good keeping, for he is the good Shepherd, and the great Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd; and he will perform all the duties of his office well and faithfully, that he may keep securely all whom his Father has committed unto him.

Another figure may equally well illustrate the meaning of this expression. The Lord keeps his people, not only as a shepherd keeps his sheep, but as a king keeps his jewels. These are rare and precious things which are his peculiar treasure, and he will not lose them if he can help it. He will go to war sooner than be deprived of them. He will put them in the securest casket that he has in his strong room, and set his most faithful servants to guard the place wherein they are stored. He will charge those who have the custody of his crown jewels to take a full and accurate account of them, and to be careful to examine them from time to time to see that they are all there, for he greatly prizes them, and is not willing for one of them to be lost. They probably cost him a great price; or, if not, they are part of his royal heritage, and of the glory and honor of his kingdom, so he desires to keep them all. Even so does the Lord Jesus keep his people, for they are his jewels. He delights in them, they are his honor and his glory. They cost him a greater price than they can ever realize. He hides them away in the casket of his power, and protects them with all his wisdom and strength. Concerning those who feared the Lord, and thought upon his name, it is written, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." It is God's work to keep his own jewels; he does not commit them even to the custody of the tall archangel who stands nearest to his throne, but the Lord himself keepeth them, and none shall be able to pluck them out of his hands.

This is not all, for we might multiply figures to almost any extent, and still not exhaust the meaning of the text. The Lord keeps his people as a governor keeps the city committed to his charge. He places his guards around the walls, he has his cannon on the battlements, to defend the place against those who besiege it, and he is himself constantly on the watch. Early in the morning, and late at night, he is on the walls; and through the night the watchmen keep their continual round, for the city must be preserved from scaling ladders and from

assaults of every sort. The Lord will not let even the suburbs of the New Jerusalem be conquered by the foe. He will preserve the holy city, his own Church, until the day when his Son shall come to reign in her forever.

I find that, in all probability, the figure here used is an allusion to the common custom of having guards to watch the tents of travelers passing through the desert. At this very time, if you were journeying through the Holy Land, you would find that, when you came to your camping ground, and nightfall drew on, there would be certain persons employed to watch over the different tents; for, otherwise, the wandering robbers of the desert would soon enter, and take away your valuables, or even your life. I have noticed, in the books of two or three travelers, this observation, "We found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a tant keeper who could keep awake all night." One gentleman speaks of discovering a thief in his tent, and when he went outside to call the watchman, he found that the man had gone so soundly to sleep that he could only be aroused by one or two gentle kicks. When a man has been travelling with you all day, it is unreasonable to expect him to keep awake through the night to take care of you. Hence, see the beauty of the expression used by the psalmist: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." There shall be no deep sleep falling upon him; nay, there shall not even be a brief period of slumber, not even a wink of sleep shall ever overcome him. A man may say, "I am so tired that I cannot keep my eyes open," but God says not so.

**Will neither slumber nor sleep** - Simply put "**God is never caught off guard.**" This should encourage you, beloved. You need not fear with such a divine sentry watching over your soul. God never sleeps, and there is no danger that the psalmist will be forgotten. Isaiah records a similar truth regarding God's continual watch care...

"I, the LORD, am its keeper; I water it every moment. Lest anyone damage it, I guard it night and day. (Isa 27:3)

**Boice** records a secular example of a vigilant watchman...

When a person asked the Greek general Alexander the Great how he could sleep soundly when he was surrounded by so much personal danger, he replied that Parmenio, his faithful guard, was watching. How much more soundly should we sleep when God, who never slumbers nor sleeps, is guarding us! ([Psalms Volume 3 Psalms 107-150 Expository Commentary](#)).

**MacDonald** records a related story noting that...

Alexander the Great told his soldiers, "I wake that you may sleep." Throughout the night hours, when we are no longer conscious of the world around us, there is One greater than Alexander who watches over us with constant, unwearied care.

**Barnes** rightly reminds us that...

His eyes are upon us by day, and in the darkness of the night (cp Pr 15:3) - the night literally; and also the night of calamity, woe, and sorrow... Never slumbers, never ceases to be watchful. Man sleeps; a sentinel may slumber on his post, by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot may slumber at the helm; even a mother may fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the needs of the world.

In stark contrast are the so-called gods of men's vain imagination. Elijah ridiculed the prophets of Baal by sarcastically suggesting their god was asleep and telling them to

Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, **or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.**" (1Ki 18:27).

Pagans permitted their gods to sleep, but the God of Israel is not like any god--he does not need to sleep and so is always there to help. This image of sleeplessness (and watchfulness) brings to mind the image of Jehovah, our Good Shepherd (Jehovah Roi [Raah, Rohi]), Who unceasingly watches over His "flocks" by night (cf Luke 2:8)! Dear saint, with such a Good Shepherd, instead of counting sheep, you should be able to experience comfortable sleep!

"In Mesopotamian literature a sleeping god is one who is unresponsive to the prayers of the person who is calling out for help... In a Babylonian prayer the worshiper wonders how long the deity is going to sleep." (Matthews, V, et al: The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

**Spurgeon** - We could not stand a moment—if our Divine Keeper were to sleep! We need Him by day and by night. Not a single step can be safely taken—except under His guardian eye. God is the convoy and body-guard of His people. When dangers are all around



us—we are safe, for our Preserver is awake, and will not permit us to be moved. No fatigue of exhaustion can cast our God into sleep—His watchful eyes are never closed.

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## **Sleepless In Heaven**

He who keeps you will not slumber. —Psalm 121

One of the most dangerous aspects of flying is the landing. As the aircraft gets closer to land, the air traffic is more congested, the weather on the ground may be far worse than the weather at 30,000 feet, and the runways may not be clear of other planes. So pilots rely on the air-traffic controller to coordinate all the details so that every plane can arrive without incident. Without the air-traffic controller, chaos would be certain.

Imagine, then, the panic when the pilot of an airliner full of passengers radioed the tower and got no answer. It was eventually discovered that the air-traffic controller was in fact there but sound asleep, putting pilot, passengers, and plane in great jeopardy. The good news is that the plane landed safely.

Even better news is that God, the ultimate traffic controller, neither slumbers nor sleeps. From His heavenly vantage point, He knows all that is going on in and around your life. As the psalmist notes, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber" (121:2-3).

You can count on it—God knows the impending dangers and will tirelessly direct the traffic of your life for your good and His glory (Rom. 8:28). By Joe Stowell

When trouble stalks the path we tread,  
We need assurance, Lord, to know  
That all our steps are being led—  
That You, our God, are in control.  
—D. De Haan

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**He's Up Anyway!** - Linus Mandy wrote, "A friend was telling me she helped out at a kid's summer camp a few years ago. After rounding up the troops for the night, she told them, 'Let's go to sleep and put our cares in God's hands.' 'Yeah,' said one of the kids, 'He's up all night anyway!'"

We all battle with the problem of worry. Fears about the future gradually creep in. Then they get stronger and stronger, and can eventually become overwhelming. This happens when we begin to replace our faith with anxiety, shifting the burden from God's strong shoulders to our frail ones. We fret. We're afraid. We can't sleep.

At times like this we need to remind ourselves that God is always on the alert. He never sleeps (Psalm 121:4). He knows everything, including what we fear (Ps 44:21-[note](#)). He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-[note](#), Ps 139:8-[note](#); Ps 139:9-[note](#); Ps 139:10-[note](#)). He is in charge of our world (Ep 1:11-note). Therefore, we do not need to be afraid.

Do you really believe that God sees all, knows all, is all-powerful, and is in control? Then put your cares in His hands. Entrust Him with whatever it is that's keeping you awake at night. He'll take care of it. He's the One who never slumbers nor sleeps. --D C Egnor  
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When fear and worry test your faith  
And anxious thoughts assail,  
Remember God is in control  
And He will never fail. --Sper

**Worry is a burden God never meant for us to bear.**

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**Spurgeon** - "As a shepherd keeps his sheep — by feeding them, by supplying all their needs, and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging of the wolf or by the straying of the sheep. As a king keeps his jewels. God hides His people in the casket of His power, and protects them with all His wisdom and strength... Think of God's eyes as never wearying of His people. Infinite patience! God is never forgetful of His people for a single moment. God is always ready to show Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him. God is never asleep in the sense that He ceases to consider us. You and I, in thinking of one thing, often forget another; but it is not so with God. He is so great that His

centre is everywhere, and His circumference is nowhere; and you, dear brother or sister, may be the very centre of God's thoughts, and so may I; and all His redeemed may at the same moment have His thoughts fixed upon each one of them."

**Spurgeon** writes that "The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew -- "The keeper of Israel," and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word "Behold" is set up as a way mark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenseless man was safe as in a castle. In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting name -- "The God that led me all my life long": perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word "keepeth" is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, "Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep -- the Keeper of Israel". It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all. Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear." ([The Treasury of David Psalm 121:4](#))

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**He Never Sleeps** - Giraffes have the shortest sleep cycle of any mammal. They sleep only between 10 minutes and 2 hours in a 24-hour period and average just 1.9 hours of sleep per day. Seemingly always awake, the giraffe has nothing much in common with most humans in that regard. If we had so little sleep, it would probably mean we had some form of insomnia. But for giraffes, it's not a sleep disorder that keeps them awake. It's just the way God has made them.

If you think 1.9 hours a day is not much sleep, consider this fact about the Creator of our tall animal friends: Our heavenly Father never sleeps.

Describing God's continual concern for us, the psalmist declares, "He who keeps you will not slumber" (Ps. 121:3). In the context of this psalm, the writer makes it clear that God's sleepless vigilance is for our good. Verse 5 says, "The Lord is your keeper." God keeps us, protects us, and cares for us—with no need for refreshing. Our Protector is constantly seeking our good. As one song puts it: "He never sleeps, He never slumbers. He watches me both night and day."

Are you facing difficulties? Turn to the One who never sleeps. Each second of each day, let Him "preserve your going out and your coming in" (v.8). — by Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Rock of Ages stands secure,  
He always will be there;  
He watches over all His own  
To calm their anxious care.  
—Keith

The One who upholds the universe  
will never let you down.

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**The Eye That Never Sleeps**- Detective Allan Pinkerton became famous in the mid-1800s by solving a series of train robberies and foiling a plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln as he traveled to his first inauguration. As one of the first agencies of its kind in the US, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency gained even more prominence because of its logo of a wide-open eye with the caption, "We Never Sleep."

There is no better feeling than knowing you are protected and secure. You feel peaceful when the doors are locked and all is quiet as you drift off to sleep at night. You feel safe. But many lie awake in their beds with fearful thoughts of the present or dread of the future. Some are afraid of commotion outside or of a spouse who has been violent. Some cannot rest because of worry over a rebellious child. Others are anxiously listening to make sure a seriously ill child is still breathing.

These are the times when our loving God encourages us to cry out to Him, to the One who will neither "slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). Psalm 34:15 reminds us that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry."

Pinkerton may have been the original "private eye," but the One who really has the eye that never sleeps is listening to the cries of "the righteous" (Ps. 34:17). — by Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Before you sleep, just gently lay  
Every troubled thought away;  
Drop your burden and your care  
In the quiet arms of prayer.  
—Anon.

**We can sleep in peace  
when we remember that God is awake.**

Psalm 121:5 The **LORD** is your **keeper**; The **LORD** is your **shade** on your **right hand**. (NASB: Lockman)

Septuagint (LXX): kurios **phulaxei** (3SFAI: shall keep you) se kurios skepe (shade as suggesting protection or security) sou epi cheira (hand) dexian (right) sou

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - The Lord shall keep thee: the Lord is thy shelter upon thy right hand.

- **Shade:** Ex 13:21 Isa 4:5,6 25:4 32:2 Mt 23:37; **On right hand:** Ps 16:8 109:31

**Jehovah is your** (personal) **Keeper (shamar)** - He Himself is your Guardian, Preserver, Defender. See also Ps 121:7 where "LORD will protect" and Ps 121:8 where "LORD will guard" both = **Jehovah shamar**. As **Albert Barnes** says...

He will keep time from danger; he will keep thee from sin; he will keep thee unto salvation.

David describes Jehovah as His Defender in Psalm 41

How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble. 2**Jehovah** will protect (**shamar**) him, and keep him alive, And he shall be called blessed upon the earth; And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies. (Ps 41:1-2)

We see this same truth in several other psalms...

**The LORD preserves (Jehovah shamar)** the simple (Those whose lack of wisdom and experience exposes them to danger. - Ryrie); I was brought low, and He saved me. (Ps 116:6)

(A Song of Ascents, of Solomon.) Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless **the LORD guards (Jehovah shamar)** the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (Ps 127:1)

**Comment:** This is most instructive verse - (1) It teaches the foundational truth that man has a responsibility, but he can do nothing in the supernatural realm without God's enablement! Compare this same truth in Phil 2:12 and Phil 2:13. (2) The watchman is only effective because God is the Guard, the Defender!

**Spurgeon:** Around the wall the sentinels pace with constant step; but yet the city is betrayed unless the alert Watcher is with them. **We are not safe because of watchmen if Jehovah refuses to watch over us** Even if the guards are wakeful, and do their duty, still the place may be surprised if God be not there. **"I, the Lord, do keep it", is better than an army of sleepless guards.** Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from laboring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty (MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY - which refutes the specious teaching of "Let go, let God"), nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth His power (GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY), to render second causes effectual. Holy Scripture endorses the order of Cromwell -- **"Trust in God, and keep your powder dry"**: only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. **Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear.**

**The LORD keeps (Jehovah shamar)** all who love Him; But all the wicked, He will destroy. (Ps 145:20)

**Comment:** Who "loves" Him? Only those who have believed love God, having been justified (declared in right

standing before God by grace through faith) and had the love of God poured out within their hearts (Ro 5:5). Because of this spiritual transaction, they are able to lovingly obey God's laws (note: not legalistically, but lovingly, as motivated and enabled by the indwelling Spirit), such obedience itself even being a mark that one loves God and belongs to God's family. (Jn 14:15, 21, 23, 1Jn 5:2)

**The LORD protects (Jehovah shamar)** the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow; But He thwarts the way of the wicked. (Ps 146:9)

Consider pausing a moment to offer up the following hymn as a prayer and doing so without any doubting beloved, because our Great Father Who art in heaven is faithful to His Word...

### KEEP THOU MY WAY

Keep Thou my way, O Lord, be Thou ever nigh;

Strong is Thy mighty arm, weak and frail am I;

Then, my unchanging Friend, on Thee, my hopes depend,

Till life's brief day shall end, be Thou ever nigh.

Keep Thou my heart, O Lord, ever close to Thee;

Safe in Thine arms of love, shall my refuge be;

Then, over a tranquil tide, my bark shall safely glide;

I shall be satisfied, ever close to Thee.

Keep Thou my all, O Lord, hide my life in Thine;

O let Thy sacred light over my pathway shine;

Kept by Thy tender care, gladly the cross I'll bear;

Hear Thou and grant my prayer, hide my life in Thine.

**Spurgeon** notes that "Here the preserving One, Who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named -- **Jehovah** is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion (Ed note: uncoined gold or silver in bars - the precious metals are called bullion, when smelted and not perfectly refined), and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person -- Jehovah, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in Person, -- Jehovah is thy keeper, in behalf of a favoured individual -- thy, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour -- Jehovah is thy keeper. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil." ([Treasury of David Psalm 121:5](#))

**Wiersbe** writes that "God is also our Keeper. "He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:3,4). This is a dangerous world we live in. Enemies would like to attack and destroy us. But as we walk in the will of God and depend on His power, He is there as our Keeper and Preserver. "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil" (Psalm 121:7). This verse doesn't say we won't have pain. It doesn't say we will never suffer or sorrow. Though we may be hurt, we won't be harmed. "He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore" (Psalm 121:7,8). (Wiersbe, Warren: [Prayer, Praise and Promises](#))

Someone has said that the three keys to real peace are: fret not, faint not, fear not.

1. Fret not--because God loves you (1Jn 4:16).
2. Faint not--because God holds you (Psalm 139:10-[Spurgeon's note](#)).
3. Fear not--because God keeps you (Psalm 121:5).

*When the way is dim, and I cannot see  
Through the mist of His wise design,  
How my glad heart yearns and my faith returns  
By the touch of His hand on mine. --Pounds  
© 1913 Hope Publishing Company*

## The perfect antidote for fear is trust in God.

**The LORD is your shade** or "your shadow" Just as everywhere we go our shadow goes with us, so too God "shadows" us at all times and in all circumstances. The parallel truth is echoed by the writer of Hebrews who reminds us that "we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?" ([Heb 13:6](#)-note) The truth is that Jehovah surrounds His people, and guards them at every point of attack. The foe must be able to pierce the impenetrable and conquer the invincible, before he can touch the feeblest saint who is sheltered by the wings of God. Satan speaking to Jehovah about His servant Job said

"Hast Thou not **made a hedge about him** and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." (Job 1:10)

**Shade** (tsel) or **shadow**, refers to a condition resulting when something is interposed between an object and a light source and is frequently used as a highly expressive symbol of protection or refuge especially in the hot, arid middle east. **Shade** or **shadow** refers to that which keeps an object safe from harm or danger, even as shade comes between the light source and an object. Joshua and Caleb in seeking to instill confidence in the Israelites to go up and take the land of Canaan, declared

do not rebel against Jehovah and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their **protection** (literally = "their shade" = tsel; Amplified = "shadow of protection") has been removed from them, and Jehovah is with us; do not fear them. (Nu 14:9)

Isaiah records a similar great truth about God...

For You have been a defense for the helpless,

A defense for the needy in his distress,

A refuge from the storm, a **shade** from the heat;

For the breath of the ruthless Is like a rain storm against a wall. (Isaiah 25:4)

**Matthew Henry** - He not only protects those whom He is the keeper of, but He refreshes them: He is their **shade**. The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being Who is infinite substance is what He is in order that He may speak sensible comfort to His people, promises to be their *umbra*-their **shadow**, to keep as close to them as the shadow does to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isaiah 32:2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance.

**Spurgeon** comments that on this figurative description (see [Figurative language](#)), noting that

A **shade** gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing; even divine goodness, which is a right hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah Himself will interpose to shade us, and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right hand Attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety. "The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings". How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satan standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said, "their defence has departed from them". God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels. ([Treasury of David Psalm 121:5](#))

We see a similar picture of God's perpetual protective presence over His people in Israel's exodus, Moses recording that Jehovah

was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. (Exodus 13:21)

And just as Jehovah had sheltered Israel's "going out" with a pillar of cloud (Shekinah), so too in the future there be a similar covering. The prophet Isaiah records that in the one thousand year (Millennium) reign of the Messiah on earth,

"the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. And there will be a shelter to give **shade** (shadow = same Hebrew word *tsel* as here in Psalm 121:5) from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain." (Isaiah 4:5, 6)

**Comment:** Isaiah's description recalls Ezekiel's prophecy of the return of the **Shekinah glory cloud** to the rebuilt Millennial temple on Mt Zion (Ezek 43:2, 3, 4, 5).

**David** emphasizes the effect of an awareness of Jehovah's presence at his right hand writing...

I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (Hebrew = mot = same word used in Psalm 121:3 for "slip". (Psalm 16:8-[note](#))

**Comment:** Setting the LORD continually before him was a conscious, intentional choice David had made, one we should all strive to imitate as the Spirit enables us. In Acts 2:25 this psalm is rendered "I WAS ALWAYS BEHOLDING THE LORD IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN."

**Spurgeon comments** that Peter applies Psalm 16:8 to Jesus: The eye of Jesus' faith could discern beforehand the continuance of divine support to his suffering Son, in such a degree that he should never be moved from the accomplishment of his purpose of redeeming his people. By the power of God at his right hand he foresaw that he should smite through all who rose up against him, and on that power he placed the firmest reliance.

**Thomas Brooks has some very practical thoughts:** *I have set the Lord always before me.* David did not by fits and starts set the Lord before him; but he "always" set the Lord before him in his course; he had his eye upon the Lord, and so much the Hebrew word imports: *I have equally set the Lord before me*, that is the force of the original word, that is, I have set the Lord before me, at one time as well as another, without any irregular affections or passions, etc. In every place, in every condition, in every company, in every employment, and in every enjoyment, I have set the Lord equally before me; and this raised him, and this will raise any Christian, by degrees, to a very great height of holiness.

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### [Three Keys To Peace](#)

Read: Psalm 121

Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. —Psalm 144:15

When W. B. Davidson was a young boy, he walked with his father 3 miles from his rural home to his grandmother's house. While they were visiting, the sun set. Davidson writes, "Between our home and grandmother's house was a swamp. That night the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the crickets, and the shadows of the trees frightened me. I asked my father if there was any danger of something catching us, but he assured me that there was nothing to dread. And so, taking me by the hand, he said, 'I will not allow anything to harm you.' Immediately my fears passed away and I was ready to face the world."

Someone has said that the three keys to real peace are: fret not, faint not, fear not.

1. Fret not—because God loves you (1 Jn. 4:16).
2. Faint not—because God holds you (Ps. 139:10).
3. Fear not—because God keeps you (Ps. 121:5).

As we rest in the love of Christ and recognize that God holds our hand, we too shall be at peace and unafraid. The "three keys to real peace"—fret not, faint not, fear not—can open our prison of worry and discouragement. Let's step out into the full joy and liberty of the children of God!

The perfect antidote for fear is trust in God.

By Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Psalm 121:6** The [sun](#) will not [smite](#) you by [day](#), [nor](#) the [moon](#) by [night](#).

Septuagint (LXX): hemeras o helios (sun and so the heat of the sun) ou (absolute negation) sugkausei (2SFAI: set on fire or burn up) se oude (absolute negation) e selene (moon) ten nukta (night)

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night.

- **The sun:** Ps 91:5-10 Isa 49:10 Rev 7:16

**Sun... by day... moon by night** - Notice that day and night the Lord is our protector, clearly implying that we are continually in need

of His watch care, which He continually provides.

**Sun... by day** - If you've ever visited Israel, you know that **"sunstroke"** is constant threat to travelers who are under hydrated and over exposed! Here the psalmist is using figurative language to remind us that Jehovah is our Helper and Protector in all the dangers, afflictions and adversities that we will ever encounter, whether by day or by night.

**Smite** (strike, hit, beat, slay, kill, first use Ge 4:15, Ps 78:20 of striking the rock) - Strike as with a rod or staff or with plague or pestilence, and then to kill or slay. **Not smite** parallels **shade** as a picture of protection. A sun "smite" alludes to a sun stroke.

**Moon by night** - The reference to the moon may simply lend poetic balance to the verse, but it is likely a reference to the primitive belief that the moon was dangerous and could have adverse effects one's mind. They believed that the rays of the moon had an abnormal effect on the eyes and could cause brain damage. We've all heard the familiar English expression "**moonstruck**" (mentally unbalanced, romantically sentimental, lost in fantasy) which apparently reflects this strange ancient belief. The etymology (study of the linguistic development of words) of the English word "**lunatic**" is from the Latin word **lunaticus**, which is derived from the Latin word **luna** reflecting the belief that **lunacy** fluctuated with the phases of the moon. (Merriam-Webster) Whether the psalmist meant to address such pagan beliefs is uncertain.

**John Phillips** adds this anecdotal note...

I remember as a boy its being said that people in asylums behaved more irrationally during a full moon.)

In an interesting NT passage **Matthew** records that as the news about Jesus

went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, **epileptics**, paralytics; and He healed them. (Mt 4:24)

The word translated "**epileptic**" is a Greek verb which literally means **to be moonstruck** and in Greek usage was equivalent to being afflicted with epilepsy, the symptoms of which were thought to become more aggravated during certain lunar periods.

**Barnes** comments that this may refer to the belief concerning...

The influence of the moon, in producing madness or disease - the general influence of it on health - is often referred to. Thus Shakespeare says:

"The moon, the governess of floods,

Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

That rheumatic diseases do abound."

Midsummer Night's Dream, ii. 2.

"It is the very error of the moon;

She comes more near the earth than she was wont,

And makes men mad."

Othello, v. 2.

**David Barker** has an interesting comment on the psalmist's reference to the **"moon"** writing that

While the Hebrew pilgrim may well have known from his understanding of God and the world that such a danger does not actually exist (**Ed note**: that the moon could really cause mental illness), it is easy to understand how popular lore and superstition would invade and dominate in spite of theological understandings to the contrary. The psalm realistically addresses the mind-set of the pilgrim in his perceptions of dangers and fears." Barker goes on to add that "there seems to be more here in reference to the superstitions and popular fears of the people of the day. One wonders how many of God's people today still pause to pick up a four-leaf clover or feel a twinge of anxiety when a black cat crosses the road ahead of them." ([David Barker: "THE LORD WATCHES OVER YOU": A PILGRIMAGE READING OF PSALM 121: Bibliotheca Sacra: Volume 152, issue 606, page 163](#))

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**DIVINE SUNSCREEN** - Some people are harmed by the sun's powerful rays. They may be allergic to the sun, or they may have a disease, like vitiligo (lack of protective pigment and propensity to severe burns) lupus erythematosus. If these people are exposed to direct sunlight for an extended period of time, they have a visible and painful reaction. To protect themselves, they wear large-brimmed hats and clothing to cover their arms, legs, and necks. They use the strongest sunscreen possible to protect exposed skin

areas. And they spend the midday hours in the shade.

In a similar way, Christians need spiritual protection from the "harmful rays" of evil world system. Its ruler Satan bombards us continuously with potentially harmful temptations and pressures that will weaken our testimony and turn us away from the Lord if we yield to them. God Himself provides us with all the protection we need. He stands between us and the enemy even as His cloud of glory separated Israel from Pharaoh's pursuing army. Jehovah is our Shield and our Fortress (Ps 144:1-[note](#), Ps 144:2-[note](#)). But we must apply this protection through prayer, reading and meditating on the Bible, faith and obedience, right thinking, fellowship and accountability with other Christians, and continual dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit and the transforming power of the grace He supplies. These spiritual disciplines will keep the world from getting through to us. God truly is our Shade, our Shadow and our Keeper. By David C. Egne ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

*The hosts of God encamp around  
The dwellings of the just;  
Protection He affords to all  
Who make His name their trust.  
- Tate and Brady*

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The IVP Bible Background Commentary has an interesting note:

Anyone who has traveled in the Middle East knows the threat of dehydration and sunstroke. Many of the roads to Jerusalem exposed the traveler to oppressive heat. Just as too much exposure to the sun could be dangerous, it was believed in the ancient world that too much exposure to the moon could pose a health threat. Medical diagnostic texts from first-millennium Babylonia and Assyria identify several conditions as a result of the "hand of Sin" (Sin was the moon god), including one in which the patient grinds his teeth and his hands and feet tremble, and another that has all the symptoms of epilepsy. English words like "moonstruck" and "lunatic" show that such belief persisted into relatively recent times. (Matthews, V, et al: The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

**Psalm 121:7 The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. (NASB: Lockman)**

Septuagint (LXX): kurios **phulaxei** (3SFAI: guard, protect, watch over) se apo (basic meaning = separation from) pantos (all) kakou (evil) **phulaxei** (3SFAI: guard, protect, watch over) ten psuche (soul) sou

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - May the Lord preserve thee from all evil: the Lord shall keep thy soul.

- **Protect:** Ps 91:9,10 Job 5:19-27 Pr 12:21 Mt 6:13 Ro 8:28,35-39 2Ti 4:18;
- **He will:** Ps 34:22 41:2 97:10 145:20

**The LORD will protect** - Jehovah shamar - ([Torrey's topic "protection"](#)). Dear child of God, you can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that nothing can come into your life apart from the permissive will of God. Everything is "filtered" through the hands of our loving Father. There are no chance circumstances or random occurrences in the life of a believer. Nothing happens in a believer's life that is purposeless for "we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Ro 8:28-note, cp Genesis 50:20). As John Calvin says "Whatever thou shalt undertake or engage in during thy life shall come to a happy and successful termination." **See related study on The Providence of God.**

**From all evil** - How much? "All"!

In a similar statement in [Psalm 91](#) the psalmist writes that

"you have made the LORD, my refuge, even the Most High (El Elyon), your dwelling place. **No evil will befall you**, nor will any plague come near your tent." (Psalm 91:9-[note](#), Ps 91:10-[note](#))

**Solomon** records this proverb...

No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble. (Pr 12:21)

To reiterate, God will not let anything happen which does not work "for good to those who love Him" (Ro 8:28note, Ro 8:29-note),



hard as it may be at times to believe this promise when we are in midst of "the fiery furnace" of affliction or trouble.

At the very end of Paul's life, the great apostle testifies...

The Lord will deliver me from **every** (cp Ps 121:7 phrase "from all evil") **evil deed**, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2Ti 4:18)

**Spurgeon** adds that

The psalmist... assures people who dwell in God that they will be secure. Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it. He who makes God his refuge will find him a refuge; he who dwells in God will find his dwelling protected. We must make the Lord our habitation by choosing him for our trust and rest, and then we shall receive immunity from harm. ([Treasury of David Psalm 121:7](#))

Eliphaz, in trying to convince Job to repent, spoke of the blessing of penitence, declaring that

from six troubles He will deliver you, even in seven evil will not touch you. (Job 5:19)

Solomon reminds us in the proverb that "no harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble." (Proverb 12:21, cp 1Pe 3:13-note; Ps 91:10-note) The verse is also true when one considers what happens to people after death as well as before.

**Matthew Henry** adds that

"Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. He will, by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that, though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation, and though they may come into trouble, into many troubles, yet to them those troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others, for they shall be overruled to work for their good... (the righteous) shall be safe under the protection of Heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them." (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

**He will keep your soul** - What an encouraging truth. This reminds me of Peter's affirmation regarding God's ability to protect...

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, **reserved** in heaven for you, who are **protected** by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Peter 1:5-7-note)

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
He'll never, no never desert to his foes.  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
He'll never, no never, no never forsake!

[How Firm a Foundation vocal by Fernando Ortega](#)

**Matthew Henry** notes that "It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection: He shall preserve thy **soul**. All souls are His; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

**Peter** alludes to **God's soul keeping power** in summarizing the redemptive work of Christ...

He (Jesus) Himself bore our sins in His body on the Cross, that we might die to sin (the penalty and the power of sin) and live to righteousness (progressive sanctification); **for (term of explanation - What is Peter explaining? How does this help us understand "you were healed"? Is he discussing physical or spiritual healing?)** by His wounds you were healed. For **(term of explanation - What is Peter explaining?)** you were continually straying like sheep, but now **(term of contrast - What is Peter contrasting?)** you have returned to the Shepherd and **Guardian** (episkopos = one who has the responsibility of caring for spiritual concerns) of your **souls**. (1Pe 2:24, 25-note, cp 1Pe 4:19-note)

**Spurgeon** notes that

"God not only keeps His own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard His own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in this verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agents, but by Himself; and the person

protected is definitely pointed out by the word "**thee**", -- it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:" he shall preserve thy soul, -- or Jehovah will keep thy soul.

**Soul keeping is the soul of keeping.  
If the soul be kept all is kept.**

The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. **Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory.** What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?" (Bolding added. [Treasury of David Psalm 121:7](#))

In summary, Jehovah your Helper is your personal Protector. Jesus' encouragement to His twelve disciples before sending them out was

do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the **soul**; but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mt 10:28. cp Lk 12:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Is 8:12, 13, 51:7, Ac 20:23, 24, 21:13)

You may lose all your earthly possessions like Job but you will never lose your **soul** for Jehovah is the Keeper of your **soul**. When Jesus promised His disciples that "not a hair of your head will perish" ([Lk 21:18](#)) He was not promising the preservation of their **physical** lives (In [Lk 21:16](#) He had just clearly stated that "they will put some of you to death"), but was promising that they would suffer no eternal loss because God Himself keeps the **soul** of all those who belong to Him. Paul affirms the psalmist's thoughts, writing that

"I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 8:38, 39-note)

**Psalm 121:8 The LORD will guard (keep) your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever \*. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Septuagint (LXX):** kurios **phulaxei** (3SFAI: guard, protect, watch over) ten eisodon (coming in, entrance) sou kai ten exodon (exodos: going out, departure, euphemistically can refer to the end of earthly life) sou apo tou nun kai eos tou aionos

**English Translation of the Septuagint** - The Lord shall keep thy coming in, and thy going out, from henceforth and even for ever.

- **your going out:** Dt 28:6,19 2Sa 5:2 Ezra 8:21,31 Pr 2:8 3:6 Jas 4:13-16;
- **from this time:** Ps 113:2 Ps 115:18

**The LORD will guard** - Jehovah shamar - ([Torrey's topic "protection"](#))

**Your going out and your coming in** - This verse serves a figure of speech to encompass "everything you do." Everywhere you go, you are guarded by omnipotence!

Blessed shall you be when you **come in**, and blessed shall you be when you **go out**. (Deut 28:6)

**D S Mackay** writes...

The Religion of the Threshold - Psalm 121:8 - Between these two things—the exits and the entrances of the day—lie the whole problem and struggle of existence.

I. Get into the habit each morning and evening of meeting God for a moment on the threshold as you go out and come in, and though you may not see it, others will begin to see a new element of strength and tenderness in your character. The man and the woman who keep trust with God at the threshold for just a moment each day as they go out and come in are ready for every contingency.

II. Of course, to offer that kind of prayer means that you and I are determined to live a certain kind of life.

There are three definite blessings on which we may surely count every day as we go out and come in, if we live this religion of the threshold.

(a) It will redeem the monotony of the day, and will sweeten its drudgery.

(b) It will make us ready for the unexpected things in life.

(c) It will hallow our evenings and sanctify our moments of rest. A simple religion, this religion of the doorstep, but death will be sweeter if we have learned to keep tryst with God as we go out and in.

—D. S. Mackay, *The Religion of the Threshold*, p. 25. (*The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts*)

## **A LIFETIME GUARANTEE!**

**From this time forth and forever** - Jesus promised His disciples (then and now) that He would give them "another (Gk = allos = another of the same kind) **Helper** (paraclete), that He might be with (us) **forever**." (Jn 14:16) The Divine Helper's protection is promised not only for the ascent (whether that ascent was to the Temple in Jerusalem or elsewhere) but for the entire pilgrimage of one's life and thereafter in eternity! God watches over the believer all the time, in every circumstance, and forever. In 1719 Isaac Watts expressed God's ever present help this way...

### **Our God, Our Help in Ages Past**

Our God, our **help** in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Our God, our **help** in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

**Jesus** Who has

all authority... in heaven and on earth" (that should take care of your home address, beloved) **said** "lo, I am with you always (He sent us His Helper Who will indwell us forever), even to the end of the age." (Mt 28:18, 20)

Our personal Protector promises to perpetually preserve our passage from morning until evening, from infancy until old age and from old age throughout the ages to come... in short, forever!

**Adoniram Judson** said God

has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven. (see Adoniram Judson: Missionary to Burma)

The **going out and the coming in** refer to all of the believer's undertakings and occupations. Perhaps too these words refer specifically to the pilgrim's journey to Jerusalem. The watch care of the believer's guardian starts the moment he looks toward the hills of Zion, and it continues into the uncharted future.

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### **Safe In God's Care**

Read: Acts 27:27-44

The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore. —Psalm 121:8

President Franklin D. Roosevelt loved the song we call the Navy Hymn. It was sung at his funeral in Hyde Park, New York, on April 14, 1945. The words of the hymn were written in 1860 by William Whiting, who taught and directed a 16-voice boys choir. He penned them for a student who was about to set sail for America and who was apprehensive about the journey.

The beautiful tune was written by John B. Dykes and first published in 1861. He named the hymn tune Melita, the Roman name for Malta, the island where Paul was shipwrecked.

The hymn is a simple prayer based on the profound truth that the eternal God who created the universe controls all the elements of nature and can protect His own no matter how great the peril. Wind and wave are subject to His command. The first verse reads:

Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
O hear us when we cry to Thee  
For those in peril on the sea.

When we or loved ones take a journey to some far-off destination, or if we only travel to and from work, we can be sure of His protection and care.

We need not fear shipwreck with Jesus at the helm.

By David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **God Of The Hills & Streets**

The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore. —Psalm 121

The 121st Psalm was a favorite of my father. The Scottish people called it “The Traveler’s Psalm.” Whenever a family member, a guest, or a friend was leaving on a journey, this psalm was read—or more often sung—at family prayers. When my father left the “old country” alone as a teenager to come to the United States, he was bidden farewell with this psalm.

Over the years, my father enjoyed many hearty days and endured others that were dark and grim. He carried this psalm’s words with him into battle during World War I, and then out of it as he lay in a hospital for almost a year recovering from shrapnel wounds.

In verse 1, the psalmist looked beyond the hills to the God who made them. My father lived in the toughest section of New York City. Although he seldom saw hills, he held to the assurance that the God of the hills was the God of the dangerous streets as well.

How many “goings out” and “comings in” my father made in his 87 years! And when he went out for the last time, I believe he was singing Psalm 121 as he descended into the valley and traveled home to the other side.

How reassuring that the God of the hills and the streets goes before every believer in Christ! By Haddon W. Robinson

He will ever keep thy soul,  
What would harm He will control;  
In the home and by the way  
He will keep thee day by day.  
—Psalter

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## **APPLICATION OF PSALM 121**

**The Holman OT Commentary** has a wonderful word on the application of Psalm 121...

How can we find the supernatural strength of God that can empower us for life's journey? Several actions are necessary if we are to advance triumphantly in the will of God.

**Look exclusively to the Lord.** This is precisely what the psalmist did. When he said, "I lift up my eyes to the hills" (v. 1), he was looking exclusively to God, the Maker of heaven and earth, from whence his help would come. So must all believers. By looking to God, we look away from ourselves and from all others for strength. In so doing, we must rely completely upon God as the source of spiritual power in Christian living. Faith looks to God, not to man.

**Listen attentively to the Lord.** God's Word is an all-sufficient source of divine grace for pilgrims on life's journey. God's Word is an unlimited reservoir of undeniable spiritual energy for all who will receive his truth. Only by looking into the Scripture can we truly look to the Lord who has spoken to us in the Bible. If we are to know God's strength, we must hear and heed his Word.

**Lean wholly upon the Lord.** We must rely upon the superabundant grace of God's Spirit in every demand of life. Only as we recognize our own weakness does God's power fill and flood our souls. When we trust in ourselves, we are impotent. But in looking to God, we find great strength. Let us learn to cast our burdens upon him and lean upon him. ([Holman Old Testament](#))

Spurgeon comments that

"When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping.

**Our exits and our entrances are under one protection.**

Three times have we the phrase, "**Jehovah shall keep**", as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore... everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints (Mt 24:13, Heb 3:6, 14) is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed. Under the aegis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread.

**None are so safe as those whom God keeps;  
None so much in danger as the self secure.**

To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this He will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in Him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time endures. Glory be unto the **Keeper of Israel**, Who is endeared to us under that title, **since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept**. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble." ([Treasury of David Psalm 121:8](#))

Bishop Couper describes a beautiful word picture writing that

the word "**shamar**" (see Hebrew verb [shamar](#) and the corresponding Greek verb [phulasso](#)) imports a most tender preservation; from it comes "**shemurah**" (once in Psalm 77:4-[note](#)), signifying the **eyelids**, because they are the **keepers of the eye**, as the LORD is called in the verse preceding -- the keeper of Israel". If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it; all their motion is for the good of the eye. O, what a comfort is here! The Lord calls (Israel) "the apple of his eye" (Ed note: God "found him [referring to Israel] in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of His eye." [Deut 32:10](#) He Who keeps Israel as the apple of His eye will likewise keep, guard, protect and watch over all who are His children by faith). O, how well are they kept whom "the keeper of Israel" keepeth! The LORD was a buckler to Abraham, none of his enemies could harm him; for his buckler covered him thoroughly. The LORD was a hedge unto Job; Satan himself confessed he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job... But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times, is the word of **keeping** or **preserving** repeated), why is it now made over again? ... for a remedy of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to "sacrifice to their own net," or "to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand," as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their "deliverance" to their "calf," and therefore often is this resounded, "The LORD," "The LORD." Is thy estate advanced? The LORD hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the LORD, **thy help** is from on high, and to Him let the praise be returned." (From a Sermon by Bishop Couper, entitled "His Majesties Coming in", 1623.)

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**[I See You](#)**

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Psalm 121

When Xavier was two, he darted into one aisle after another in a small shoe store. Hiding behind stacks of shoeboxes, he giggled when my husband, Alan, said, "I see you."

Moments later, I saw Alan dash frantically from aisle to aisle, calling Xavier's name. We raced to the front of the store. Our child, still laughing, ran toward the open door leading to the busy street outside.

Within seconds, Alan scooped him up. We embraced as I thanked God, sobbed, and kissed our toddler's chubby cheeks.

A year before I became pregnant with Xavier, I'd lost our first child during the pregnancy. When God blessed us with our son, I became a fearful parent. Our shoe store experience proved I wouldn't always be able to see or protect our child. But I discovered peace as I learned to turn to my only sure source of help—God—when I struggled with worry and fear.

Our heavenly Father never takes His eyes off His children (Psalm 121:1-4). While we can't prevent trials, heartache, or loss, we can live with confident faith, relying on an ever-present Helper and Protector who watches over our lives (vv. 5-8).

We may encounter days when we feel lost and helpless. We may also feel powerless when we can't shield loved ones. But we can trust that our all-knowing God never loses sight of us—His precious and beloved children.

How does being led by God, our Good Shepherd, empower you to "walk through the darkest valley"? (Psalm 23:4). By Xochitl Dixon

Today's Reflection - Thank You for watching over our loved ones and us, Lord.

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**Hills And Streets - Psalm 121:8** - Psalm 121 was a favorite of my father. Scottish people called it "The Traveler's Psalm." Whenever a family member, a guest, or a friend was leaving on a journey, this psalm was read--or more often sung--at family prayers. When my father left the "old country" as a teenager to sail alone to the United States, he was bidden farewell with this psalm.

Over the years, my father enjoyed many hearty days but endured others that were dark and grim. In World War I, he carried this psalm's words with him into battle, and then out of it as he lay in a hospital for almost a year recovering from shrapnel wounds.

In verse 1, the psalmist looked beyond the hills to the God who made them. My father lived in the toughest section of New York City. Although he seldom saw hills, he held to the assurance that the God of the hills was also the God of the dangerous city streets.

In his 87 years, my father experienced many "goings out" and "comings in." And when he went out for the last time, I believe he was singing Psalm 121 as he descended into the valley and traveled home to the other side.

How reassuring that the God of the hills and the streets goes with every believer in Christ! --H W Robinson [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

He will ever keep thy soul,  
What would harm He will control;  
In the home and by the way,  
He will keep thee day by day. --Psalter

Keep your eyes on God He never takes His eyes off you.

## Charles Wesley's Hymn Psalm 121

1 TO the hills I lift mine eyes,  
The everlasting hills;  
Streaming thence in fresh supplies,  
My soul the Spirit feels.  
Will he not his help afford?  
Help, while yet I ask, is given:  
God comes down; the God and Lord  
That made both earth and heaven.

2 Faithful soul, pray always; pray,  
And still in God confide;  
He thy feeble steps shall stay,  
Nor suffer thee to slide:  
Lean on thy Redeemer's breast;  
He thy quiet spirit keeps;  
Rest in him, securely rest;  
Thy watchman never sleeps.

3 Neither sin, nor earth, nor hell

Thy Keeper can surprise;  
 Careless slumbers cannot steal  
 On his all-seeing eyes;  
 He is Israel's sure defence;  
 Israel all his care shall prove,  
 Kept by watchful providence,  
 And ever-waking love.

4 See the Lord, thy Keeper, stand  
 Omnipotently near!  
 Lo! he holds thee by thy hand,  
 And banishes thy fear;  
 Shadows with his wings thy head;  
 Guards from all impending harms:  
 Round thee and beneath are spread  
 The everlasting arms.

5 Christ shall bless thy going out,  
 Shall bless thy coming in;  
 Kindly compass thee about,  
 Till thou art saved from sin;  
 Like thy spotless Master, thou,  
 Filled with wisdom, love, and power,  
 Holy, pure, and perfect, now,  
 Henceforth, and evermore.

## HYMNS ON HELP FROM GOD and PSALM 121

- [I Cried to God in My Distress](#)
- [For the Dear Ones Parted from Us](#)
- [Now, the Hour of Worship O'er](#)
- [Thine Eye Can See](#)
- [O God, the Help of All Thy Saints](#)
- [Our God, Our Help in Ages Past](#)
- [O Help Us Lord, Each Hour of Need](#)
- [Help Us, O Jesus, Thou Mighty Defender](#)
- [Help Us, O Lord!](#)
- [Jehovah, My God, on Thy Help I Depend](#)
- [Dear Jesus, Canst Thou Help Me?](#)
- [God Help Our Country to Be Strong](#)
- [The Lord Hath Helped Me Hitherto](#)
- [Purer in Heart, O God Help Me to Be](#)
- [Across the Sky the Shades of Night](#)

- [I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes](#)
- [Mine Eyes Look Toward the Mountains](#)
- [To the Hills I Lift Mine Eyes](#)
- [Unto the Hills Around Do I Lift Up](#)
- [God's Boundless Love](#)
- [Jehovah, God, Thy Gracious Power](#)
- [Over All](#)
- [There Is an Eye That Never Sleeps](#)
- [Keep Thou My Way](#)
- [Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir's version "My Help"](#)
- [I Lift Up My Eyes - Paul Wilbur](#)
- [Lift Up My Eyes - Brian Doerksen](#)
- [I To The Hills Will Lift My Eyes - from the Psalter, 1912](#)
- [Mine Eyes Look Toward the Mountains - cyberhymnal](#)

## Psalm 121

Key words marked with color or shading

**1** (A Song of Ascents.)

I Will lift up my eyes to the mountains;  
From whence shall my **help** come?

**2** My **help** comes from the LORD ,  
Who made heaven and earth.

**3** He will not allow your foot to slip;  
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 will not smite you by day,  
Nor the moon by night.

**7** The LORD will protect you from all evil;  
He will keep your soul.

**8** The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in  
From this time forth and forever.