

"In His Hands"
Psalm 121

July 10, 2005

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction

1. God is the Protector of His people, which means that He ...
2. Background to the Psalm
 - a. this is one of the 15 songs of ...
 - b. these were sung ...
 - c. Psalm 126 (see verses 1–2) may have been sung when ...
 - d. Like today's text, Psalm 125 (see verse 2) was inspired by ...

B. Question & Answer Time Psalm 121:1–2

1. the question being asked is ...
2. lying behind the question is that it was in the hills (mountains) where ...
3. from where does help not come? ... from where does it come?
4. what distinguishes the LORD making Him able (Psalm 96:5)? He is...
5. 1 Timothy 3:16: our faith is founded upon the historical fact of ...

6. what distinguishes the Lord Jesus Christ making Him able (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:1–2)? He is...

C. He Protects Us As a Body Psalm 121:4

1. The LORD could protect the nation of Israel because
 - a. (Compare Psalm 139:9–10) He is unlimited with respect to ...
 - b. (Compare Psalm 139:11–12) He is unlimited with respect to ...
2. The Lord Jesus Christ can protect His body, the church
 - a. Galatians 3:29, believers are heirs of the ...
 - b. because (Matthew 28:19-20) He has promised ...
 - c. so the Lord Jesus Christ is unlimited with respect to ...
 - d. Ephesians 5:25–27: we are assured of this because ...

D. He Protects Us Individually Psalm 121:3, 5–8

1. the Lord Jesus Christ cares about our well-being
 - a. in the P_____ realm
 - b. in the S_____ realm
 - c. and our D_____ activities
2. that He cares for us individually is illustrated by Paul's words found in Galatians 2:20, in that for every Christian, the Lord Jesus Christ is their O_____ P_____ S_____ which means that when Jesus died on the cross, he died ...

A. Introduction

1. God is the protector of His people
 - a. this is the theme of Psalm 121 which we read at the start of our service this morning
 - b. from start to finish, this Psalm portrays God as protector, and, depending upon the translation that you are using, you will find in this Psalm these truths:
 - (A) God is the One who helps His people
 - (B) God is the one who watches over His people
 - (C) God is the One who keeps His People
 - (D) God is the One who guards His People
 - (E) God is the One who preserves His People
 - (F) God is the One who protects His People

2. let us look at the background of this Psalm
 - a. this is the second in the group of fifteen psalms
 - (A) which are entitled in most translations
 - (B) in the Authorized Version as “songs of degrees”
 - (C) or “songs of ascents” in most modern translations
 - b. why do they bear this title?
 - (A) these are very ancient titles, dating back at least to the second or third century before Christ was born
 - (B) some think they are called this because of the rising tempo in each song as it moves to its climax
 - (C) but they are more commonly understood as describing the songs which the pilgrims sang as they journeyed up to Jerusalem for one of the three annual feasts
 - c. some appear to have been written after the captivity of the ten northern tribes and the exile of the southern kingdom
 - (A) being sung by those returning permanently first under Zerubbabel and then later with Ezra
 - (1) as may have been in mind in Psalm 126: 1-2 (NAS)

(2) 1 When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, We were like those who dream. 2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

(B) and those who remained in the land of exile would also come: from the fertile plains of Medea, of Elam, of Mesopotamia (or Babylonia), and of Asia Minor

- (1) who would travel to northern Syria
- (2) then southward along the Jordan Valley
- (3) with the lower mountains to the east
- (4) the higher (mountains) to the west
- (5) and finally begin the ascent up to Jerusalem

d. these Psalms show imagery suggested by the terrain over which the pilgrims' pathway passed

(A) for example, Psalm 125:2 (NAS): *As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever.*

(B) and is certainly the case for Psalm 121 which we are looking at this morning

3. so, let's look at this Psalm and see what it has to tell us about God being our Protector

B. Question and Answer Time Psalm 121:1–2 (NAS)

1. 1 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.

a. the Authorized Version expresses this as a statement, which can be quite misleading, for it is really a question

b. questions and answer are one of the ways that we teach

- (A) especially children (often their questions, not ours!)
- (B) so here was an opportunity as families travelled to Jerusalem, for fathers to teach their children, as they were walking in the way, or they sat down, or rose up
- (C) for on either side of the valley were the mountains
- (D) the one on the west being higher
- (E) so the father could point to these, asking the question, "From where shall my help come?"

2. what lay behind this question?
 - a. perhaps it was the thought that raiders and robbers might swoop down on the band of pilgrims to take their possessions and do them harm
 - b. but more likely it was the fact that in those mountains
 - (A) in those high places
 - (B) the pagan nations — the Amorites, Canaanites, and so on — had raised altars to false gods
 - (C) and later, many of the Israelites had taken to the worship of those false gods in the same high places
 - c. so the question is asked: Is it from those false gods that were worshipped in those mountains that help comes

3. “No! Certainly not!” comes the answer; then from where?
 - a. “[from the Lord](#)” — from the covenant God who delivered Israel centuries before from Egypt and made them His own very special people — from their Saviour God
 - b. and what makes this Lord different from the gods that were worshipped in those mountains?
 - c. the answer is the same as is found in Psalm 96:5 (NAS): “[For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens.](#)”
 - d. their Saviour God is distinguished from all other false gods because He is Creator; maker of the heavens and the earth
 - e. this Saviour God, then, has the unquestioned power, so that He can help, watch over, keep, guard, preserve and protect His people ... after all, He is Creator

4. and, we who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are trusting in that same Saviour God, the Lord, whom this Psalm describes
 - a. the New Testament shows us that He is Jesus of Nazareth
 - b. 1 Timothy 3:16 (NAS) gives a capsule summary of our faith: [And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.](#)
 - c. does Jesus Christ, God the Son, have the required power? Certainly yes, for He is Creator:
 - (A) John 1:3 (NAS): [All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being](#)

that has come into being.

- (B) Hebrews 1:1–2 (NAS): 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

5. We may trust Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to help, watch over, keep, guard, preserve and protect, because He is Creator

C. He Protects Us as a Body Psalm 121:4 (NAS)

- 1. let me jump ahead for a moment to verse 4 (NAS): “Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.”

a. because the Lord is Creator

- (A) who created space, is unlimited by the extent of space
- (B) there is nowhere over which He cannot keep watch; the Psalmist put it this way in Psalm 139:9–10 (NAS): 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Thy hand will lead me, And Thy right hand will lay hold of me.
- (C) the scope of the LORD’s oversight is unlimited: in the days that this Psalm was written, He could watch over all of Israel, “from Dan to Beersheba”
- (D) and, indeed, after the captivity and exile, over many lands: from Egypt to North Syria; from Asia Minor and points west to Persia and eastward

b. but the Lord as Creator

- (A) who created time, is also unlimited with respect to time
- (B) here, we find, that His watch is never interrupted
- (C) “He ... will neither slumber nor sleep”
- (D) the Psalm writer continues with this idea, 139:11–12 (NAS): 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,” 12 Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee.
- (E) so the Lord watched over His people Israel, year after year; century after century; so that even the captivity and the exile were part of His caring watch in order that they might repent and return to Him

2. what Israel was as the people of God in the Old Testament, so is the church the people of God in the New Testament
 - a. let's not become sidetracked today on what this implies
 - b. perhaps some day we can look at the implications of the church of Jesus Christ being made up of "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29)
 - c. as did the LORD in the Old, so does the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, help, watch over, keep, guard, preserve and protect, His people: His body, the church
 - d. and he can do that,
 - (A) whether we are talking about the church universal which is spread around the globe into its every corner
 - (B) or we are speaking of this local church gathering here in Aurora
 - (C) because as we have already pointed out, He is Creator
 - (D) and so is unlimited by extent of space
 - (E) and has all power given unto Him in heaven and earth
 - e. and our assurance that He will, indeed, do this, is found in the promise which He has made in the great commission to His apostles, Matthew 28:19-20 (NAS): 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 - (A) the Lord Jesus Christ is unlimited with respect to space
 - (B) the Lord Jesus Christ is unlimited with respect to time
 - f. which assurance is also ratified by what He has done for the church, His body; Ephesians 5:25b-27 (NAS): 25 ... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.
3. We may trust Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to help, watch over, keep, guard, preserve and protect us as a body, as a church, both around the world and right here in Aurora; and, as the saying is, "You can take that to the bank."

D. He Protects Us Individually

1. Now, you may respond, all that sounds very nice
 - a. I can come to terms with the Lord protecting the nation of Israel, because after all, that was an entire nation
 - b. I can understand the LORD's protecting the church, for that encompasses many people and is worthy of His effort
 - c. I can even accept the LORD's protecting this local church
 - d. but how can I expect that He would care for just me, just one little speck on this planet of billions of people?
2. and this is where we come to the greatness of the Lord; He is the infinite God who is capable of infinite love for each and every infinitesimal individual
 - a. look again in that Psalm (NAS)
 - (A) verse 3: keeping your foot from slipping
 - (B) verse 5: a shade upon your right hand
 - (C) verse 6: protecting from heat of the sun in the day and the cold of the moon at night
 - (D) verse 7: protecting from evil
 - (E) verse 8: protecting your exits and entrances
 - (F) all these are things that have to do with pilgrims as they make their way along the way to Jerusalem
 - b. now if you think about those words you will realize that these forms of protection are related to the individual
 - (A) the Lord Jesus cares about your physical well-being: you foot, your hand, your being too hot or too cold
 - (B) the Lord Jesus cares about your spiritual well-being: protecting your soul from evil
 - (C) the Lord Jesus cares about your day-by-day activities: your going out, your coming in
3. for example, let us look for a moment at that phrase, "[The Lord is your shade on your right hand.](#)" (Verse 5)

- a. Maureen and I have enjoyed quite a few hikes together
- (A) most of the time this was with our children
 - (B) but perhaps the most notable was just the two of us into the Cathedral lakes in southern British Columbia
 - (C) full of enthusiasm, we were off early in the morning
 - (D) parked just off the road
 - (E) and headed south, packing our tent, sleeping bags, food and other equipment
 - (F) travelling quite a few kilometres southward
 - (G) and climbing somewhat (as I remember) over 1000 meters in altitude
 - (H) with the sun climbing in the sky until at noon it beat straight down upon us
 - (I) and, when we were getting pretty weary, falling behind the hill to our right so that we were in the shadow
 - (J) just when we needed it, getting a little refreshed in that shadow, so that we could go on another hour or so
 - (K) where we stopped and camped by a little brook
 - (L) that mountain became our shade upon our right hand
- b. I think that is what is in the mind of the Psalmist here
- (A) the pilgrims are headed south through Jordan's valley
 - (B) they start out early in the morning with enthusiasm
 - (C) through the heat of the day they continue southward
 - (D) then, the sun dips behind the mountains to the west to give a time of refreshment in which to finish their journey for that day.
 - (E) that, says the Psalmist, is what the Lord is to us
 - (F) He is that time of refreshment, of coolness after we have been weary with the heat and exertion of the day
 - (G) that is the Lord, our protector

4. the Lord Jesus Christ cares for each one of us as individuals

a. it starts with the cross

b. Paul could say in Galatians 2:20 (NAS): **I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,**

but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

- c. did you notice those words: He loved ME; He delivered Himself up for ME. That's personal. That's individual.
- d. that is why we speak of accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your OWN PERSONAL Saviour: it's an individual response
- e. and, if you know Him in that personal, individual fashion
- f. then you can rest and rely upon the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will help, will watch over, will keep, will guard, will preserve and will protect you day by day as you walk through life with Him

E. How about you, this morning? Have you accepted Jesus as your own personal Saviour? Are you able to go confidently out into the coming week, knowing that no matter what, the Lord Jesus Christ is watching over you in every situation and every activity. If you should have any doubt at all on this subject, do not leave here this morning without having that doubt erased. Then you shall be able to sing with assurance our closing hymn "Children of the Heavenly Father," knowing that it applies to you.

1. © 2005 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by "Kerux" followed by a sermon or illustration number.