

TBC – 9/8/02 p.m.

THE LORD, THY KEEPER

Psalm 121:1-8

Intro: One thing that stands out in the Psalms about every human being is that we all need help. Many people think that they are in control of their lives, but no one is! Solomon said, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). There is no such thing as a truly self-sufficient person. Again, many people think they are, but there is no such person. Oh, we have certain needs that we think that we can meet, but the truth is that we need help, and we need it constantly. The Psalmist recognized this, and he wrote this Psalm to tell us about the only true, reliable help that there is. But he began this Psalm by asking a question.

I. THE IMPORTANT QUESTION (Psa. 121:1).

The KJV does not make verse 1 a question, but the NKJV does, and so do the NASB and the NIV. And this seems to be the consensus of those who have really studied this Psalm.

There have been various ways in which expositors have approached this verse. In the first place, there certainly is an emphasis in this Psalm upon creation, or perhaps it would be better to say, upon the Creator. See verse 2. So some have taken this verse to suggest that since the hills and the mountains seem to represent the glory of creation itself, is it possible to find anywhere in creation, the help that we all should know that we need? Are there men, or cities, or anything that we can find on earth that will give us the help that we need?

Others, since the hills were the places where the pagans usually placed their temples and places of worship – others say, is help to be found in any of the religions of the world, or any of the philosophies of the world? Do our universities and places of learning provide for us the help that we need?

The Holy Spirit through Jeremiah has provided the answer for us. In Jer. 3:23 we read these words: “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains.” The hills and the mountains represent some of the greatest glories of creation, but God did not make them to be objects of our pursuit for help, or for our trust. You can look all through the universe and never find the real help that you and I are

going to need to cope with the needs we will face in our lives. This is why the people who don't read the Bible are so prone to make mistakes in looking for their help, and end up making tragic mistakes. Apart from Scripture, the only place that people can look for help is in creation itself. Every once in a while a person will think that he has discovered the answer, and begins to shout joyfully, "Peace, peace," only to discover later that there is no peace on this earth and in this life if the only places we are looking is what we can see.

In verse 2 the Psalmist gives us the answer to the question.

II. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION (Psa. 121:2).

What is the answer? "My help cometh from the Lord." But who is He? He is the One Who "made heaven and earth."

We are living in a day when evolution is taught as fact, and creation is just an old antiquated theory, when just the opposite is true. Evolution always has been and always will be utterly ridiculous, but creation is the only reasonable, the only true explanation of where the heavens and the earth came from. Man looks at creation (although he doesn't call it that), and sees its marvels, and instead of worshiping and trusting the God Who did all of these marvelous things, he does as Paul said man will do, he worships creation and creatures, but doesn't give a thought to the Creator.

The Psalmist was writing by divine revelation. Moses, in writing the book of Genesis, which gives us the account of creation, was writing by divine revelation. Nobody was present at creation to see how it all came about, and so God had to tell us. And that message is given in the Bible. God made us so that we are all dependent upon Him. He gives us every breath that we breathe. He provides our food. He keeps this whole universe in operation. And if the Lord made the heavens and the earth, then it follows that He can take care of all that He has created. And that is just what He has been doing since the time of creation.

People need help, and the help that people need can only be provided by the Lord. This is the Lord of the Bible – the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And they have given us our Bible to show how, from the very beginning, They have been the help of all who dwell upon the earth. They take care of the birds that fly in the air, the animals that walk on the earth, and the creatures that live in the sea. And the Father,

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Son, and Holy Spirit especially, are concerned about meeting the needs of their people, the redeemed of humanity. We read this morning about what happened to Moses and the Israelites in Egypt. The Lord gave them favor. He protected them through all of those years in Egypt. And He brought them out of Egypt and gave them their own land. If the Lord had not helped them, the Israelites would all have died in Egypt, or they would have been absorbed into Egyptian life and culture.

At this point the Psalmist began to explain how the Lord would help His people. Notice that we have “I” and “my” in verses 1 and 2, but then the emphasis turns to “He” and “thy” from verse 3 on. And there is a further emphasis on the fact that the way the Lord helps His people is by *keeping* them.

III. THE LORD, THY KEEPER (Psa. 121:3-8).

Note the emphasis in the following verses where basically the same word is used:

- 1) V. 3 – “He that keepeth thee will not slumber nor sleep.”
- 2) V. 4 – “He that keepeth Israel . . .
- 3) V. 5 – “The Lord is thy Keeper.”
- 4) V. 7 – “The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil.”
“The Lord shall preserve thy soul.”
- 5) V. 8 – “The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

This word means *to protect, to provide, to attend to, to preserve*. When we got to a certain age, or if you are not there, when you get there, your parents will give you more and more liberty. *The Lord never does that*. And actually we as parents never let our children go because we are continually following them with our prayers even when we can't be with them. But the Lord never lets us out of His sight. We may not see Him, but He always sees us. I pray for some people whose whereabouts I don't know, but I can always be sure that the Lord knows right where they are at the very minute I am talking to Him about them. What the Lord does for us is too wonderful for us to fully understand.

Let's read and see what the Lord does. Grammatically there is a good reason for even taking verse 3 as a prayer. (Read it as a prayer.) K & D translate “to be moved,” as *to totter*. He will not let us lose our footing so that we fall. Neither does He get tired so that He might doze off at the

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very moment when we might need Him the most.

In verses 4 and 5 the Psalmist meant that the Lord does not take naps, nor does He go through the cycle that we do of sleeping and waking up and sleeping, and so on. He never gets tired. He is a shelter for us.

In verse 6 we need to remember that the Lord made the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. So this expression emphasizes in another way that our Lord is watching over us, caring for us, meeting our needs *twenty-four hours out of every day*.

In verse 7 He keeps us from all evil. He guards us, holds us back from sin. And He wards off those who would harm us.

And then in verse 8 we see that He will keep us in all of the goings and comings of life. He goes out with us, and He comes back with us. This is probably a reference to Deut. 28:6:

6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

There really isn't anything that isn't covered by Psalm 121. And this applies, of course, especially to those who know the Lord, and who are really trusting Him for the help which He alone can give, and will give. It is truth that goes beyond our ability to comprehend what the Psalmist, guided by the Spirit of God, is telling us.

Go back over this Psalm, and let your heart drink in the truth that is here. We all need help, not just now and then, but all of the time. And the more we look to the Lord for the help that He alone can give, the greater will be our peace and our joy. We need to do what David said in Psalm 16:8 that he "always" did:

8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Concl: Who can possibly forget what Isaiah said about the Lord's keeping us in peace – Isa. 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

And a verse that we all in America need to remember these days which

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has to do with the Lord's keeping power is found in Psa. 127:1:

1 Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

And then remember Num. 6:24-26:

24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

25 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Let me remind you of some of the great NT verses which speak of the way the Lord helps us by keeping us. Sometimes neither one of these words is used, but the idea is there.

For example: John 10:27-30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

And then let me remind you of what our Lord told His Father in His great prayer recorded for us in John 17:

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John

17:11-17).

Then remember Paul's great words in 2 Tim. 1:12:

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

And who could forget that great benediction at the end of Jude epistle:

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

The Apostle Peter added to this list of verses:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).

And then what about Phil. 4:6-7:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

From all of these Scriptures it is very clear that the keeping power of the

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Lord is not only a truth that we need to be acquainted with, but a truth which we constantly need to depend upon, and to glorify the Lord for all that He has done to keep us, and all that He will do to keep us until that day when we stand perfect and complete before Him in glory.