

## **HELPED BY MY HELPER, KEPT BY MY KEEPER**

### Psalm 121

**Intro:** Going from Psalm 115 which we considered together last Sunday morning, to Psalm 121 today, does not mean that I consider the Psalms in between of lesser importance. I am going from Psalm 115 to Psalm 121 because there is a relationship between these two Psalms which I want to emphasize with you this morning.

In reading through the Psalms more than once each year which has been a habit of mine now for many years, a habit which some of you have also, it is inevitable that we notice some words or phrases or subjects which appear in more than one Psalm. Such is the phrase that I want to call your attention to this morning. You will see it here in Psalm 121, verse 2, the latter part of the earth which refers to the Lord, “which made heaven and earth.”

Last Sunday we had it in verse 15 of Psalm 115. That verse tells us, “Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.”

Going on from our Psalm today, you will find it again in Psalm 124:8, the last verse of that Psalm. This is what that verse says:

8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Two more references to the Lord as the Creator in these words we have seen so far. In Psalm 134, a very short Psalm of only three verses, has as its last verse:

3 The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion  
(Psa. 134:3).

The last verse that I want you to see is Psalm 146:6, but I need to read verse 5 with it to get most of the thought that the Psalmist was making:

5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God:

6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is:  
which keepeth truth for ever.

Now I am not saying that these are the only references to the Lord as the Creator in the Psalms, but I am reasonably sure that these are the only Psalms in which this particular phrase appears: in Psalm 115, 121, 124,

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134, and 146. Actually this is the emphasis in the very first verse of the Bible: Genesis 1:1.

Some of us have just finished the study of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and this statement appears in that long prayer in chapter 9 as the Levites led the people in tracing the history of Israel and the Lord's faithfulness to them in spite of their sins. In verse 6 of Nehemiah 9 this is how the Levites prayed at the beginning of that prayer:

6 Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

You may not have been able to have your Bible open to Nehemiah 9:6 as I read this verse, but I hope that you have taken down the reference because I want to emphasize one word in particular that the Levites used. They were not only honoring the Lord as the Creator of the heaven and the earth, and all things in them, but they said, "And Thou preservest them all"! They were giving expression to a very important truth connected with God as the Creator. They did not believe like the Deists that God created all things, wound it up like a clock and let it run by itself, but the Lord God created all things, and from that day to this He has been preserving all that He made. So our God is not only the Creator, but the Preserver, the Sustainer, the Protector of all that He has created. If God took His hand off of our universe for a fraction of a second, all of creation would suddenly become chaos! And I hope you realize that in all of these verses (and in many more which could be added to them) when the Psalmists and others spoke of God creating the heaven and the earth, they were not in these passage speaking of heaven where God dwells, but heaven where He placed the sun, moon, and stars – the heaven which we see when we go outside and look up into the sky over us. This is what the Bible speaks of "the firmament." It is all one immense, immeasurable unit.

Now in Psalm 115 we find that these great truths concerning God as the One Who made the heaven and the earth and as the One Who keeps it all going, are the truths that are expressed three times in verses 9, 10, and 11 of Psalm 115. Let me read them to you again as I did a couple of times last Sunday. Follow me if you will in your Bible – verses 9, 10, 11:Ps 115:9-11

9 O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield.

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10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield.

11 Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield.

The Psalm addresses three groups, and he told all of them to “trust in the Lord.” Why? Because for each group and all of them put together, “He [the Lord] is their Help and their Shield.” If you could see my notes, you would see that I have capitalized “Help” and “Shield.” Can’t we take this as Names of God?

Let me ask you a question. I am not going to ask you if you need help in your life, but I am going to ask you, How many places do you need help in your life? I am sure that I can answer that question for all of us: We need the Lord everywhere in our lives, and we need it all of the time. Isn’t that right? Well, we need to trust our Creator, and now our Savior, because that is His Name, “Help,” or “Helper.”

What is a shield? A shield was a part of the equipment that in ancient days was used to protect soldiers in one army from the enemy in another army. We Christians are involved in a spiritual warfare, and the Lord is our Shield. The Apostle Paul called it “the shield of faith.” The Lord is not only our Savior, but He is our Protector, our Preserver. How long do you think that we would last in our salvation if we could only depend upon ourselves to protect ourselves?

Is it any wonder that the Psalmist who wrote Psalm 115 said in verse 15, “Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.” I pity people who don’t know the Lord because they have troubles and problems like we do, and they face all of the dangers and opposition from the Devil that we do, but they have no Help; they have no Shield. They are on their own!

Now this is why Psalm 121 is actually a sequel to Psalm 115. I don’t mean by that that the same Psalmist wrote both Psalms, but I do mean that the note which is struck in Psalm 115 is expanded upon in Psalm 121.

Please notice that Psalm 121 is called, “A Song of degrees.” And you will notice that this title is give to all the Psalms from 120 to Psalm 134. They are also called, Psalms of Ascent, because they were sung by the Jewish people as they went up to Jerusalem when they celebrated their feasts.

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There is also the idea that these Psalms came from the days of Nehemiah when the people went up on the walls of Jerusalem after they were rebuilt, and carried on traditionally by the people afterwards to celebrate the restoration of the nation under Ezra and Nehemiah. But however often these Psalms were used, they were to bring the nation back, so to speak, to the wonderful truths with which the nation of Israel had been so singularly blessed.

I want you to notice that we have some very important words in this Psalm which have to do with what we have seen in Psalm 115.

For example, in verses 1 and 2, we have the word “help.”

In verses 3 and 4 we have the word “keepeth,” and in verse 5 the word “Keeper.”

Then in verses 7 and 8 we have the word “preserve” three times.

The word “help” is the familiar Hebrew word which the Lord used for Eve when God created her and brought her to Adam because he needed help. In a similar and yet far deeper way this is what the Lord is to us. And as Adam was given only one *azer*, so we have only one in the Lord. The Lord never intended for us to be self-sufficient, and the person who thinks he is self-sufficient is totally self-deceived.

And you will notice that it is in verse 2 that we have the statement that I have been emphasizing with you. The One Who is our #1 Helper is the Lord. We never get away from our need for help, and it is always the Lord Who we must turn to first.

Notice that in verses 1 and 2 we have the personal testimony of the Psalmist.

Beginning with verse 3 and going to the end of the Psalm, the Psalmist is assuring individuals in Israel who know the Lord that what he, the Psalmist has in the Lord, is a certainty for all of the Lord’s people. And here we come to the word “keepeth” and “Keeper.” What is the emphasis here? The word “Keeper” means *a guard*. That is what the Lord is to each and every one of us.

And then we go the word that the Psalmist used in verse 7 and 8, the word

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“preserve.” What is its basic meaning? It points to the success of the Lord in protecting his people, so we could translate this word as *to save*. It speaks of the ultimate success that the Lord will have with all of His people.

Now let us go back to the first of the Psalm and apply what we have learned from our survey of the whole Psalm, and seek to put it together for our blessing.

There seems to be general agreement among Bible scholars that the second part of verse 1 is a question, and that verse 2 gives us the answer to the question. There are at least two possible meanings for verse 1. The Psalm speaks of the need that people have for help, all people. It was known in OT times that the mountains were usually a safe place for a person to hide from his enemies. You will possibly remember that when Joshua sent two men into the promised land in preparation for the invasion, They went to the house of a prostitute by the name of Rahab where she protected them. And when the king of Jericho sent to her to have her bring the two Jews to him, at first she hid them with stalks of flax. And then when the king's men left, Rahab told the spies, “Get you to the mountain . . . and hide yourselves there three days . . . and afterward may ye go there way” (Joshua 2:16).

In Psalm 11, a Psalm of David, it is recorded that he said,

In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain (Psa. 11:1).

So this is one way that the Psalmist in Psalm 121 may have been thinking. Should I flee like a bird would do to be safe? The second part of verse 1 probably should be translated as a question: “From whence cometh my help?”

Another explanation might also be, Should I do what any man should do, flee to a mountain, or hill?

The other possibility is that the heathen usually put their places of worship on high hills, or mountains. So the question should then mean, Shall I do what the heathen do when they are in danger – go to their altar in some high place?

What was his answer? We have it in verse 2. And there we see that the fact that the Lord is the Creator, not only creating all thing on earth, but

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also in heaven, and sustaining and maintaining all that He has made, there is no other that the Psalmist could possibly turn to but the Lord seeing He has shown Himself to be the ever-living God, mighty in power, infinite in goodness, superior to all of His creation. It is very significant that at this moment he recognized that the One Who created all things (including his enemies) was sovereign over all that He had created. *This was the settled conviction of the Psalmist, a position from which he could not be moved, nor could he find anywhere else such security and blessing.*

At this point the Psalmist stopped talking about what he was going to do, and started talking to the whole nation as God's people, giving them the reasons that they should follow him in what he had done. It was through the truth that he was setting before, basically one other person, the reasons why he should trust in the Lord, and wait on Him.

And here the Psalmist used a Hebrew way of expressing two opposites to include everything else in between, such as, day and night. The Lord never slumbers nor sleeps, so the safety of His people is assured as we hear it said today, twenty-four, seven.

There is not a moment of any day but that the Lord Himself stands guard over His people. And He even has control over the sun by day, and the moon by night. There apparently is some evidence to the effect that both or either the sun and the moon can have a detrimental effect upon people. Perhaps sun stroke is one example.

So we can be assured that no one can provide for us the help that the Lord can. His help is constant and sufficient against all enemies. And the Lord guards us around the clock, day after day, as long as we live.

Verses 7 and 8 assure us individually that the Lord will ultimately "preserve," *save us*.

**Concl:** It seems to me that Jude 24 and 25 gives us an infallible illustration of the truth taught in Psalm 121.

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

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

I gave my message today the title, "Helped by My Helper, Kept by My

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Keeper.” I meant to imply by this title that the writer of Psalm 121 meant to indicate that the Lord Himself is both our Helper and our Keeper for all of us. The crucial question facing all of us is how constantly and how much are we trusting in the Lord to be our Helper and our Keeper that we may be at peace that He will also be our Preserver. He is able. There is no question about that. The question for all of us is are we willing. The Lord’s plan is designed that we might be on the receiving end of His blessing and His promises, but that to Him shall belong all of the glory.