

God Guards Your Life

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[0:00] Help, I need somebody. Help, not just anybody. Help, you know I need someone. Help. You may recognize this popular Beatles song that goes on to describe this man who lived this formerly very self-assured life and he's come to the realization that he really needs somebody's help.

Well, help me is the repeated cry of the Christian. If we were to compare the Christian life to a race, help me would be written on the starting line.

By grace, each one of us who is in Jesus Christ has come to recognize his or her own sin and the offense that this sin is to a holy God.

And in that recognition, we recognize that God must send help. The cry of the condemned who is aware of need, help, I need somebody.

Help, not just anybody. Help, you know I need someone. Help. help. And our God kindly replies, help is on the way.

[1:23] I'm sending somebody, not just anybody. I know you need someone. I give you my son. God has answered the cry of the guilty who cry out to him for help by sending Jesus Christ to die in our place for our sin.

And he offers us life eternal in exchange. But we don't just enter the race by saying, help me, and then run it in our own strength.

Help me remains our plea while we live in this fallen world. While we struggle through this life that many times, in many ways, is hard, and difficult, and sorrowful, and painful.

And that's why we're going to be in the Psalms for the next several weeks this summer. Because the Psalms are full of real people with real problems crying out for help.

There's Psalms that describe a lack, whether it's a lack of safety, or a lack of nourishment, or a lack of wisdom and understanding. There's Psalms that address the problems of our hearts, whether it's anger, or fear, or jealousy, and shame.

[2:41] And there's Psalms that speak of great trials and tribulations, whether it's suffering, or enemies pressing in around, or the fallout and consequences of sin.

In part, the Psalms teach us that it's okay to cry for help. In fact, we must cry out for help. We cannot run this race alone.

And the Psalms aim us to the one who can help us. Helps us aim our emotions and our fears and our heartache at the one who can truly help, the one true living God.

We all can grow in this asking for help and turning to God in our need. And so we get to learn and grow together in the Psalms this summer. And there's really no better way to set out on this journey of learning how to ask for help and learning who to turn to in the midst of our need than by opening to Psalm 121.

If you haven't opened yet, I invite you to do so. Follow along. The reason why this Psalm is so helpful as we kind of launch into this Psalms for the Helping series is because it's going to ground us in the truth that God is our help.

[4:10] To say it more specifically, Psalm 121 teaches us this, that the Lord will guard every detail of your life day by day forever.

The Lord will guard every single last detail of your life day after day after day after day after day forever.

We're going to walk through this Psalm this morning. We're going to take a look at the four parts. Technical name is four stanzas.

There's four stanzas of this Psalm and we're just going to move through them one by one and they sort of build on each other but all of them aim at this main idea that the Lord will guard every detail of your life day after day forever.

So look with me in verses 1 and 2. The first stanza of this Psalm. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

[5:16] My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. As the psalmist gazes up into the mountains this question bubbles up.

Where is my help to come? There's something about seeing these mountains that prompts this question and I think it's because these mountains represent some sort of danger that he looks at these mountains and fear starts bubbling up.

Where's my help? Perhaps he's journeying through some rough terrain in the middle of summer in the desert heat of Israel. Perhaps he's on a route that's known to have violent robbers and thieves who would threaten his life and his possessions.

Maybe even these physical mountains that he's looking all around at maybe they represent other fears and dangers in his life that have nothing to do with literal physical mountains.

Now the psalmist is in danger of becoming overwhelmed, discouraged, which is much worse than simply what these mountains represent. but we see in verse 2, the psalmist aims his confidence in the Lord.

[6:40] My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and who made earth. Essentially, he says, my helper made these mountains and everything else for that matter.

And great confidence rises from his heart that's higher than the mountains that surround him. when the psalmist remembers the power of the God who can say, let there be light and there was light. The one who has the power to create all things out of nothing. That's where the psalmist's help is found. But notice in verse 2 as well that it's not just the awesome power of the creator God that is in view in verse 2.

That all caps Lord is important. This is the covenant name of the God of Israel. The one who keeps steadfast love toward all of his people forever.

This Israelite songwriter is placing his confidence in the covenant keeping God of Israel. The one who delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.

[7:48] The one who brought his people through the wilderness into the promised land of Canaan. The one who promised to send a forever king to sit on the throne of David.

The one who has always been faithful to his promises. This psalm's melody is one of a sweet relationship and intimacy between this psalmist and the one true living God.

The one who keeps faith forever. He knows his Lord intimately and he knows that his God is his help. Well this covenant name Lord or in the Hebrew Yahweh will show up four more times in this psalm.

Twice in verse 5 and then once in verse 7 and once in verse 8. The psalmist is confidently declaring that my help comes from the true God.

It's not my smarts or my money or my strength. It's not some wooden idol that I've carved myself. but the God of the universe who claims Israel as his own possession.

[8:56] He is my source of help. And it bears mentioning that the kind of writing that we're looking at adds to this confidence.

We're not looking at an academic textbook or a comic strip in a newspaper. We're looking at a musical composition. By its nature music affects our emotions and our inner person.

It's a way of communicating that speaks to the heart as much if not more so than it speaks to our minds. The confidence the psalmist has is celebratory and joyful.

It's melodious confidence. He's so confident in his source of help that he writes a song so he can sing about it. Hopefully we all know something of this right?

We've been singing already this morning and I'm guessing that there's certain songs based on certain experiences that you've had in your life that when you hear them you sing them in a certain way.

[10:05] You sing them with more emotion and more tears and more faith than other songs because they speak to where you've been. It's one of the

reasons why we sing so many songs here about the cross of Jesus.

We're very aware of the ugliness of our sin, our rebellious natures that deserve God's wrath and instead God sends Jesus to rescue and forgive us.

We sing loud and we sing full because we're grateful. The psalmist declares my help is from the Lord and invites us to agree and to lift our voices with his in celebration.

So that's the first stanza of our psalm, the confidence in the Lord. If you look at verses three and four, we have the second part of the psalm.

The psalmist is going to give reason for his confidence. The reason is the Lord doesn't sleep. first thing we need to see is that there's a shift in person.

[11:17] Verses one and two, I lift my eyes, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord. Now in verses three to the end of the psalm, it's he will not let your foot be moved.

He who keeps you will not slumber. So maybe there's a new voice speaking in these verses. It could be that the first person is kind of despairing and his friend starts speaking and no, no, no, no, no, your foot won't be moved.

Or it might be the person who's speaking in verse one and two says, I testify to these things and now friend, let me tell you what my God will do for you. Either case, this psalm invites us to speak this not just for ourselves but for each other.

We need to remember this. When we see people struggling, we need to remember saying, no, no, God will not let your foot be moved. If God be for you, no man be against you.

God will guard your life, brother. God will guard your life, sister. We have reason to be confident because he doesn't sleep.

[12:27] He doesn't slumber. I just love how verse three starts, he will not let your foot be moved. A while back, the family went to the Racine Zoo.

Right in the middle of the park, there's this large rock structure that's been built and pretty much in any day or night, on top of it sits this huge mountain goat just gazing over the entire park.

That goat needs to be sure-footed to make it up that rocky ledge. And he is. By his nature, this mountain goat is sure-footed.

Psalms 121 says that the Christian is sure-footed by grace. Because notice, it's not because we've set ourselves up for success, we don't have good traction on our new hiking boots or whatever else, it's the Lord will not let your foot be moved.

Our sure-footedness is by grace because God has set us on a solid rock and we will never be moved. He who placed you there doesn't slumber.

[13:50] This word slumber is interesting. It kind of signifies dozing off or kind of that mid-afternoon energy lull when your eyes start kind of getting a little heavy. God doesn't catnap.

He has no need of kind of a mid-afternoon caffeine jolt to get him back alive. That word's important because then in verse 4, notice that the psalmist expands it, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

So now we're talking about that deep REM cycle, that REM cycle sleep, the nighttime sleep that's extended to recharge for the next day.

God doesn't catnap and God has no need of sleeping at night. He's always awake and perfectly awake, completely awake. He doesn't slumber or sleep. We can have confidence. There's good reason to trust him because he's always on the watch.

God doesn't sleep. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't sleep. We could spend all day and all night in awe of this, but we doze off before we fully comprehend it.

[15:06] But in verse 4, we see something else as well. That this is the one place in the psalm where it's not an I or a you singular. It's not an individual being spoken of.

In verse 4, the psalmist zooms out and says, Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. We could say a few different things about this, but what I want to call to your mind is if you're ever in the position of thinking yourself too insignificant, not important enough for God to actually care about your life and your problems and your concerns and your fears.

This verse helps us. It shows us that things are much bigger than just individuals. The God who is looking over individuals is looking over individuals because they're part of his people.

It's a huge community of people, and because God is faithful to his community, to his family, he's faithful to the individuals that make up that family.

We have good reason to believe that he will guard our lives in Christ. That's the second stanza. The third stanza gives us this beautiful image of the Lord's care, and it's not a, the Lord will do X, Y, and Z, and that's how he will do this, but it gives us this common image, this common experience that we can understand and say, God keeps you like that.

[16:49] So listen for it. First verse five, the Lord is your keeper. This is now the third use of this word keeper.

It showed up twice before in verse three and in verse four as he who keeps you and he who keeps Israel. So since it shows up three times already and will show up three more times in verses seven and eight, we should probably try and understand it a little bit.

This word keep speaks of paying careful attention to something. So if you're looking on with an NIV Bible, you might see that he will watch over you.

I think that's a helpful way to understand this, that it's the gaze of God on his people, but in a way that's looking out for them, that's protecting them, that's keeping them from all evil and harm.

The idea of guarding and protecting is caught up in this word. The Lord is your keeper, Christian, and it's beautiful because this line of verse five is at the very center of the psalm.

[18:06] I read something that said there's something like 58 syllables before this statement and 58 syllables after this statement. This is really the center of the words, but not just the center of the words, this is the center of the whole purpose of the psalm.

It's the theological center. The Lord is your keeper. It's part of who God is towards his people. He protects, he guards, he upholds those who are his. And to drive this point home, the psalmist tells people who are living in a desert climate that the Lord guards them like shade in a heat wave. That's how he guards his people. Even in Wisconsin, we get the imagery, right? Summer is here. Maybe in March, we wouldn't want to be sitting in the shade, but in July, you better find some shade.

You're going to get burned. You're going to get weary and start sweating and need water and other things. Shade protects us from the heat. Doesn't mean that it's not hot.

[19:29] Plenty of life that's uncomfortable and difficult. But this says that through the midst of it all, God is like a shade in a heat wave on the right hand of his people.

He preserves us. He supplies what we need. In verse 6, the imagery continues, the sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.

Notice the kind of parallel symbols. Sun and moon, day and night. Maybe you see shade and a heat wave and you go, okay, that's great, but God, what if my problems are all after dark?

I don't need shade at that point. I need light or illumination or something like that. Sun and moon, day and night. The psalmist says, there is not a single minute of any single day that goes by that God is not your protector.

Shade on your right hand. He is your guard 24-7. He will keep watch over you. He's your keeper.

[20:36] There's one last stanza, verses 7 and 8, for us to look at. So far, we've seen the psalmist declaring his confidence in his source of help.

We've seen the reason why we too should be confident in the Lord's help. We've seen this imagery that the Lord's help is like shade on the right hand.

And finally, we see that verses 7 and 8 are going to tell us about how far reaching the scope of the Lord's care.

And notice how far it goes. Every detail, now, and forever. The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. He will keep your life, verse 7 tells us.

[21:42] From all evil, you're going out and you're coming in, now and always. He will keep your life. It's a glorious truth this psalm shares

with us.

Hope you're hearing its melody today. The Lord, your keeper, will guard every single detail of your life day after day forever.

There's no day, there's no event, there's no set of circumstances that slips by his care. He is your keeper. It's amazing that the psalmist gives no qualifications, no exception clauses.

He keeps your life, well, accept that one time and he keeps your life. Period. If you belong to the Lord, he's got you covered.

Maybe at this point, you're saying, okay, okay, okay, but what sense of that, right? Because we've all been burned by the sun. We all know times when it doesn't seem that shade is available, both literal shade and then also just shade in life.

[23:00] Seems like the problems are just weighing us down, beating us down. There's nowhere to turn for help. Can we really believe that this psalm is true? We've all had experiences that make us kind of uncomfortable to say, the Lord is my helper, right?

At least I have. How is God keeping us then in the midst of very, very difficult things? Is he keeping us then? Of course he is and it's why the all capital Lord is so important.

this everlasting steadfast love of God who has made a covenant with us. We certainly know and must say that this earthly life is but a vapor, that our outer selves are wasting away, that sometimes the flaming darts of the evil one hit their mark and wound us deeply.

And we're all walking around with various limbs and dried tears and scars. But God is our keeper. Nothing in this life will be our downfall because we're his. I invite you to turn over to Romans chapter 8 starting in verse 31.

[24:29] Psalm 121. I think this is how Psalm 121 would answer in the midst of life.

This is how the Lord is our keeper in the midst of hardship. Start in verse 31 and read to the end of the chapter. What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised.

Who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us. I think he will keep you from all evil. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[25:40] Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No. No. In all these things, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul says, suffering, evil, hardships will come.

But our lives are secure. Our feet will not be moved. Harm will not get the last word. Evil doesn't win. So our Lord is our keeper. He will guard every single detail of our lives day by day forever.

[27:02] forever. We can sing it because Jesus died for our sins and was raised. As we start the series, it is right and good to remember who our help and who our keeper is.

It's the one we see in Psalm 121 made heaven and earth. The one who never slumbers nor sleeps. the one who sent his son to save sinners like us.

He will guard every single detail of our lives day after day after day forever. It's who he is.

He's pleased to do so for all of us if we're in Christ, if we're Christians. after I pray, we get to sing together, yet not I but through Christ in me.

There's this repeated line that's been hooking me day after day this week. We have this instant opportunity now to put this Psalm into practice.

[28:21] The line of this Psalm, to this I hold. It keeps getting repeated over and over. It's kind of the refrain. To this I hold, my hope is only

Jesus .

He's guarding my life. I hope in him. To this I hold, my shepherd will defend me. Through the deepest valley he will lead.

There's nothing in this life that will overtake me because God has put my foot on the rock. To this I hold, my sin has been defeated. evil doesn't get the last word because Christ has conquered the grave, shed his blood for my sin.

Let's pray together and then sing in response to the goodness of Psalm 121. Father, we thank you for your word. It's true.

You are our keeper. We long to by faith live in the goodness of this. God, we just ask that joy would rise in our hearts as this truth lingers there.

[29:33] We rejoice in you and we trust in you and your goodness to preserve our lives because Jesus is our king. It's in his name we pray.
Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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Amen.