

April 25

Psalm 120,121, 140, 143, 144

As you read through the book of Psalms, decide what type of Psalm it is, whether it is a "help", a "thanks", or a "wow" Psalm. The next thing you ought to do is to look for the key verse or verses, the ones that boil everything down to the spiritual bottom line. These are the verses you would memorize if you wanted to remember the content of the Psalm. Finally, you should give the Psalm a title that will summarize for you the chapter's basic theme. The Daily Bible gives a brief name to each, but probably more memorable if you give it your own! - OR USE SOAP FORMAT WITH PSALM 121. Whether you give your own title, SOAP or some other type of journaling I am sure that you will gain even more than before from your study of the Book of Psalms.

Let's focus on one of our Psalms from today's readings...Psalm 121...one of the most familiar Psalms in the Bible. A Psalm of Hope in a world without hope!
Three things jumped out to me in the Psalm of Hope.

V. 1) "I will lift my eyes to the hills." Hope requires a lifted head. Our help comes from heaven. Our help comes from God. For you to have hope, you have to lift your head. You have to look up. And there's something about the body language involved in doing that—looking up and praying with your head raised to God, saying, "Help me!"

V.2) "the maker of heaven and earth". Hope requires a God who is in control. A God who really is in control and a God who can therefore help us. It's very important that we understand that. Help comes from God, not from other people. The God of the Bible knows the end from the beginning. He's not surprised by anything.

V.5) "He who watches over you will not slumber nor sleep". Hope requires an alert God. It requires a God who is keeping us and a God who is not sleeping. God never sleeps so that you can sleep. He's watching over you. One that's trustworthy. God would say this to you—"I am trustworthy. Cast your anxieties on me. Don't you realize that I care for you, and that I don't sleep so that you can sleep?"

Psalm 121 comes from a section of psalms known as the **songs of ascent**.

These Fifteen psalms (120-134) were sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem during the great feast days of ancient Israel. Taken together, the songs progress from the start of the journey in a foreign land to the worship of God in His temple in Jerusalem. Let's go back to ancient Israel and imagine what a journey might have been like....Perhaps you are traveling with a band of your kinsmen, making the long and dusty journey to Jerusalem. You see the hills ahead of you and your mind starts wandering...possibly fear of enemies, maybe feelings of being lost, feelings of insecurity or weariness in the middle of a long journey. Without thought, you begin singing a familiar Psalm... *"I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come?"*

As your voice echoes, another voice answers with the familiar words, *"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."*

Your band of travelers are reassured in the knowledge that your help comes from the Lord, the sovereign God who sits on the throne and orchestrates all events.

Several voices in your group pick up the song, *“He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.”* Soon the whole caravan joins in and sings with you, *“The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.”*

Soon all in the caravan are caught up in the familiar Psalm of Hope, worshiping this keeper, this preserver, this shepherd God who keeps you in the palm of his hand, who watches your every step, and who does not allow you to be challenged beyond your strength.

You and your companions burst forth the last verse, *“The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and you’re coming in from this time and forevermore.”*

As we come back to the present, I want you to know that those pilgrims who sang that song thousands of years ago are your brothers and sisters in Christ. The God they sang about is the God we worship. They sang to remind themselves that God guided their steps; they sang to remind themselves that God ruled creation; they sang to remind themselves that every moment was lived under God’s loving care. This psalm tells us, the church, that no matter what the circumstances, we are secure in God’s hands. It does not promise an easy life. Rather, it proclaims such confidence in God that nothing will shake it.

Let’s be real now. Life will be painful. Life can be hard. We live in a world still suffering under sin. But God will give you the strength to persevere on the journey to the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem. And as you make that journey, you can truly say these words,

*“The Lord will keep me from all evil; he will keep my life.
The Lord will keep my going out and my coming in
from this time on and forever more.” Amen.*