

The Lord Thy Keeper

Psalm 121.

Hamilton Smith.

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In this beautiful Psalm we have the experiences of a believer who, in the midst of trials, finds in the LORD his help and unfailing resource. The first verse is really a question. It should read:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?" (R.V.)

The God-fearing man finds himself faced with trials and difficulties, but realises that in himself he has no power to meet the circumstances. He needs "help." The greatest source of weakness in the presence of trial is often the self-confidence that leads us to think we can meet the trial in our own strength, or by our own wisdom. We have to learn, and it may be like Peter of old, through bitter experience, that, in the presence of trial and temptation, we have no strength in ourselves. At every step we need a helper to support us in the trial, and carry us through the trial.

Realising his need of help, the question immediately arises in the soul of the Psalmist, "From whence shall my help come?" He is surrounded by mountains that look strong, imposing, and immovable, even as there are those in the world that apparently are firmly established in power, and unassailable by an enemy. But can we trust in any fellow creature? The prophet Jeremiah tells us, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jer. 3: 23). Realising his need of help, and that the help of man is in vain, the godly man turns from the creature to the Creator, and very blessedly he says,

"My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

He does not fall back on the acknowledgement of a general truth that there is help in the LORD, but, in simple personal faith, he says, "My help cometh from the LORD."

In the remaining verses of the Psalm the Spirit of God answers this simple faith by unfolding to us the blessings of the one who looks to the LORD for his help. The one recurring thought in these verses is the constant care of the LORD. The word "keep" is the characteristic word of the Psalm. Bearing in mind that the word "preserve," in verses 7 and 8, should be translated "keep," it will be noticed that this encouraging word occurs six times in the last six verses.

1. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved."

First, the soul learns, that, looking to the LORD for help, he will be kept amidst *all dangers*. In days when we may be faced with sudden dangers, working desolation, how good to be encouraged by the word, "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall *keep thy foot from being moved*" (Prov. 3: 25, 26). If we take our eyes off the LORD, and get occupied with the passing prosperity of the wicked, we may have to say, like the man of Psalm 73, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." Looking to the LORD, and rejoicing in the LORD, we shall be able to say, with Hannah of old, "He will keep the feet of His saints . . . for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. 2: 1, 9).

The road we travel may at times be rough, the enemy may oppose with his wiles and snares; temptations may abound, and difficulties arise — all these trials the LORD may allow — but there is one thing He will not allow: He will not suffer the feet of those that trust in Him to be moved from the path that leads to glory. Thus, in the next Psalm, in response to the LORD'S word "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," the godly soul can say with the utmost confidence, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Psalm 122: 2). The last words of the Lord to Peter were, "Follow Me." He has marked out the path for the Christian, and if, with our eye upon Christ as our unfailing help, we follow Him, it will lead far into the depths of glory where He has gone.

For the path where our Saviour has gone
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne,
And His strength shall be ours on the road.

2. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Secondly, the one who looks in simple faith to the LORD, learns that His care is *unceasing*. An apostle may sleep on the mount in the presence of a glory too bright for nature; and again in the garden in the presence of a sorrow too deep for our endurance; but the One who is our Keeper will "neither slumber nor sleep." A back-sliding saint, like Jonah of old, may be "fast asleep," even when the LORD is working, the wind is rising, the sea is raging, the ship is sinking, and the men of the world are trembling, but there is One, who having loved His own which are in the world, loves them unto the end with a love that never ceases to care for His own amid all the storms of life.

Thou weariest not most gracious Lord,
Though we may weary grow;
In season, the sustaining word
Thou giv'st our hearts to know.

3. "The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand."

Thirdly, looking to the LORD for his help, the soul is assured that the help of the LORD is *always available*. A friend at our right hand is a friend at our side, to whom we can turn at any moment. So David can say, "I have set the LORD alway before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not

be moved." The wicked man, trusting in himself, "said in his heart I shall not be moved," only to come under the judgment of the LORD (Psalm 10: 6, 16). The godly man, trusting in the LORD at his right hand, can say, "I shall not be moved." Moreover, he can say it with the utmost confidence, for if the Lord says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, . . . we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13: 5, 6). How good to realise there is a Friend beside me, to whom I can turn — One with all wisdom to guide in every difficulty, with all the power to overcome every opposition, with all sympathy in every sorrow, and all grace for every weakness, and mercy for every need.

The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

4. "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."

Fourthly, the believer looking to the LORD for his help, is assured that he will be kept at *all seasons*. In a world of warring nations we have to face ever present dangers, both "by day" and "by night." The LORD does not say to the believer, "Thou shalt not have to face these terrors even as others," but He says, "If you make Me your 'refuge', and put your 'trust' in Me, 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by *night*; nor for the arrow that flieth by *day*. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in *darkness*; nor for the destruction that wasteth at *noonday*'" (Psalm 91: 2, 5, 6).

5. "The LORD shall keep thee from all evil: He shall keep thy soul."

Fifthly, the believer that looks to the LORD for his help will be kept from all evil. At a time when the world, as in the days of Noah, is increasingly marked by corruption and violence, evil will take many forms. Scripture speaks of evil thoughts, evil imaginations, evil words, evil deeds, and evil doers. The Christian, being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, will, in a special way, be opposed by the "spiritual wickedness in high places" that is working behind the scenes. Nevertheless, looking to the LORD, the believer will, "in the power of His might," be able to withstand every attack of the enemy in "the evil day," and thus be kept from evil (Eph. 6: 10-13).

Moreover, in a world in which we know not what a day may bring forth how good to know that, of the one who looks to the LORD for his help, it can be said, "He shall not be afraid of *evil tidings*: his heart is fixed trusting in the LORD" (Psalm 112: 7). The Apostle Paul warns us that we live in a day when "*evil men* and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3: 13). In his day he had to meet those who did him "*much evil*" but, trusting in the Lord, he could say, "The Lord shall deliver me from *every evil work*, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4: 14, 18).

Nought can stay our steady progress,
More than conquerors we shall be
If our eyes, whate'er the danger,
Look to Thee, and none but Thee.

6. ***"The LORD shall keep thy going out and thy coming in."***

Sixthly, the soul that looks to the LORD for his help can count upon the unfailing care of the LORD *in all circumstances*. "Going" and "coming" speak of the changing circumstances that mark a world of unrest. In the gospel day, the Lord could say to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many *coming* and *going*, and they had not leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6: 31). In His compassionate care the Lord will give us times of rest "apart" from the busy world; but, down here, it will only be "rest awhile" — words that indicate we must be again in movement. For the eternal rest we must look on. "There remaineth . . . a rest to the people of God." Of the one that entereth into that blessed rest we read, "He shall go no more out" (Heb. 4: 9; Rev. 3: 12). In the meantime, in all the busy round of a life of toil in a world of need, the one that looks to the Lord for his help can count on the Lord to keep him in every circumstance.

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack,
His wisdom ever waketh
His sight is never dim;
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.

7. ***"From this time forth and for evermore."***

Finally, we learn that the one who looks to the Lord for his help may be assured that he will be kept through all time even for evermore. The Psalmist, doubtless, had the Millennial reign in view; the Christian can give a wider application to the words as he looks on to a glad eternity to be spent "evermore" with Christ and like Christ in the Father's house, where He has gone to prepare a place for His heavenly people. The Lord can say of His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand." In the beautiful picture of Luke 15, the Lord *finds* His lost sheep, "*layeth* it on His shoulders," and "*cometh home*." Nothing less than His home will do for His sheep. We may wander, but He finds His sheep, He keeps them in His strength in their passage through time, and at last He will bring all His wandering sheep home to be, "FOR EVER WITH THE LORD."

We thus learn from this beautiful Psalm that, trusting in the LORD, and looking to Him for our help, we shall find,

He will keep us from all danger;
His care will be unceasing;
His help is always available;
He will keep us at all seasons;
He will keep us from all evil;
He will keep us in all circumstances;

He will keep us through all time for evermore.

Oh keep my soul, then, Jesus

Abiding still with Thee,

And if I wander, teach me

Soon back to Thee to flee.