

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

CXXI: God's Comprehensive Watchcare Over His People

(Psalm 121:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Regardless how diligently we try to protect ourselves from trouble, we humans are limited as to knowledge and ability, so we are always vulnerable to harm on a wide variety of fronts.
- B. Pilgrims who traveled to Jerusalem were aware of the dangers they faced from wild animals and robbers just to make the journey, what reminded them of other threats they faced in life, so pilgrim Psalm 121 addressed this issue of man's many dangers with God's comprehensive solution. We view it for insight and edification:

II. God's Comprehensive Watchcare Over His People, Psalm 121:1-8.

- A. The introductory remarks are part of the first verse, so the numbering system in the Hebrew text matches that of the English Bible (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1087), so we stay with the English Bible's numbering system.
- B. We thus translate Psalm 121:1-8 (as follows):
 - 1. "A song of ascents. I lift up my eyes unto the hills. From where does my help come?" (Psalm 121:1)
 - 2. "My help comes from Jahweh, Maker of heaven and earth," Psalm 121:2.
 - 3. "He will not let your foot totter, shake, slip (*mot*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 556-557); He Who keeps watch (*shamar*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 1036-1037) over you will not be drowsy, slumber (*num*, Ibid., p. 630)," Psalm 121:3.
 - 4. "Behold! He Who keeps watch (*shamar* again, cf. v. 3) over Israel will not be drowsy, slumber (*mot* again, cf. v. 3) nor go to sleep (*yashen*, Ibid., p. 445)," Psalm 121:4.
 - 5. "Jahweh keeps watch (*shamar* again, cf. v. 3, 4) over you; Jahweh is your shade over your right hand [of one's greatest ability that an enemy was most likely to attack; Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 28]," Psalm 121:5.
 - 6. "The sun will not smite [harm] you by day nor the moon by night," Psalm 121:6.
 - 7. "Jahweh keeps watch (*shamar* again, cf. v. 3, 4, 5) over you from all calamity; He keeps watch over your life principle (*nepesh*, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical realms of one's life; Ibid., Kittel; Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59)," Psalm 121:7.
 - 8. "Jahweh keeps watch (*shamar* again, cf. v. 3, 4, 5, 7) over your coming and your going in [all activities of life pictured in one's coming out of his house and re-entering it in his daily activities] from this time unto eternity," Psalm 121:8.
- C. We consider significant observations regarding this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. Since this is a pilgrim psalm, the pilgrim who is ascending up into the hills of Judaea where God's temple is situated claims that he looks up unto those hills toward which he is headed and confesses that His help comes from the Lord up there in front of him Who resides in His temple up in Jerusalem, Psalm 121:1-2a.
 - 2. That help from the Lord is sufficient to address the pilgrim's needs, for it comes from the Creator of the entire universe Who is thus aware of and sovereign over every calamity that can befall His people, v. 2b.
 - 3. As the pilgrim walks along ascending up into the hills of Judaea, he trusts that God will not let even his foot totter in instability, shake in frailty or slip by accidental fall as he travels to worship the Lord, v. 3a.
 - 4. Indeed, God Who keeps watch over His own does not get drowsy and slumber so as to neglect His care (v. 3b), He does not get drowsy and slumber nor go to sleep even in watching over the whole nation (v. 4).
 - 5. Jahweh even keeps watch over one's most likely realm for calamity [right hand of ability] (v. 5), He keeps him from harm from all of nature epitomized in the antonymical pair of the sun that rules the day and the moon that rules the night (v. 6; Gen. 1:16), He keeps watch over His people from all calamity (v. 7a) that can affect all realms of life [*nepesh*], be it the emotional, mental, spiritual or physical realms (v. 7b).
 - 6. Jahweh also keeps watch over all one's activities in his daily experiences (v. 8a) throughout not only his entire earthly life (v. 8b), but even on into all eternity that is to come (v. 8c).

Lesson: *The pilgrim psalmist testified of God's infinitely competent, diligent watchcare over every possible need for protection in His people for all time and eternity. He thus implied the need to relax in God's care even as His people perform duties like making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem that please the Lord but also involve some risk.*

Application: *May we always perform God's will even if it involves some risk, for the Lord will protect us so that we can accomplish the tasks He has assigned for us to fulfill!*