

SESSION SIX

A God Who Cares (*Psalms 121*)

“Nobody seriously believes the universe was made by God without being persuaded that He takes care of His works.” ~ John Calvin

I. Overview

A majority of scholars believe that Psalms 120-134 are a collection of songs used by pilgrims. These psalms were sung in the context of the great feasts in which the Israelites were called to journey to Jerusalem three times a year. Psalm 121 serves as a prime example of these psalms—a psalm that reiterates the Lord’s care for those who seek Him.

II. The Content

A. The pilgrim identifies Yahweh as his source of help (vv. 1-2).

v. 1 – The reference to “hills” speaks of the location of God’s provision and protection (Gen 19:17; Deut 33:15) and of a place of renewal and hope (Isa 55:12; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13).

v. 2 – The pilgrim answers his question in v. 1 with a bold affirmation of faith. This declaration of trust is rooted in Yahweh’s role as the Creator (cf. Pss 115:15; 134:3). One commentator writes, “Because all things are God’s handiwork, he has the power to help whatever might happen; for even now all things are still in His hand It represents not a piece of knowledge but a decision to submit oneself to God’s creative will and power.” (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 747).

B. A fellow pilgrim affirms Yahweh’s care (vv. 3-8).

1. Yahweh serves as an unsleeping Shepherd (vv. 3-4).

v. 3 – The psalmist uses “watch/protect” six times in this psalm. This term most likely recalls Joshua’s recounting of the Exodus/wilderness journey (e.g., Josh 24:17). Thus, in singing this psalm, these pilgrims would relive the Exodus experience.

v. 4 – Identifying Psalm 121 as a “psalm of comfort”, Martin Luther writes: “that we should remain steadfast in faith and await God’s help and protection. Because even though it appears that God is sleeping or snoring . . . this is certainly not so, despite the way we feel and think. He is surely awake and watching over us Eventually we’ll learn that, if we can only hold fast.”

v. 4 – “Israel’s protector” reinforces the pilgrim’s confidence as he recalls the God of the covenant with Israel. Israel’s past history and ongoing covenantal relationship with Yahweh assures the pilgrim, a member of this community, of God’s future provisions.

2. Yahweh serves as an unailing Protector(vv. 5-6).

v. 5 – The reference to “at your right hand” is a common biblical metaphor that indicates both favor and strength (cf. Gen 48:13-14). When used specifically of the Lord, the phrase speaks of God’s power to deliver (e.g., Pss 18:35; 98:1; Isa 41:13).

v. 6 – Sunstroke was a serious concern in the scriptures (e.g., 2 Kgs 4:18-37; Isa 49:2, 10; Jon 4:8). Beliefs in the harmful effects of the moon’s rays also existed (e.g., Matt 4:24 – “lunatics”). Undoubtedly these figures of speech indicate Yahweh’s continual protection.

C. A fellow pilgrim pronounces Yahweh’s protection for a lifetime and beyond (vv. 7-8).

v. 8 – the psalmist highlights the totality and comprehensiveness of God’s protection with the use of “all”.

David Barker summarizes this psalm: “God is neither too great to care, nor are God’s people too insignificant to be noticed. This quiet psalm reflects on God who quells the anxiety of the pilgrim’s heart, who watches over him or her with a shepherd’s gentleness and a guardian’s vigilance, and who gives thoughtful benediction to one’s daily routines.” (“The Lord Watches Over You,” 181).

III. Intersect

A. God’s promise to care for us in life’s journey warrants our contentment.

James 4:1-3 -

Luke 11:9-13 -

“Be content to be at God’s allowance. God knows which is the fittest pasture to put His sheep in. Sometimes a barren ground does well, whereas a fine pasture may not.” ~ Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, 128.

- B. A pilgrimage of faith rules out autonomy and misguided dependence. Our full trust must be placed in God.

1 Peter 5:6-11 -

- C. The power and wisdom God used in creating the world is at your disposal—now and for all of eternity!

1 Peter 1:3-9 -

It is Well
Text by Horatio G. Spafford

Verse 1:
When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

Chorus:
It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Verse 4:
And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,
“Even so” – it is well with my soul.