



## Lesson 3: Providence

### Psalm 121 (The Message)

- 1-2      121 I look up to the mountains;  
          does my strength come from mountains?  
          No, my strength comes from God,  
          who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.
- 3-4      He won't let you stumble,  
          your Guardian God won't fall asleep.  
          Not on your life! Israel's  
          Guardian will never doze or sleep.
- 5-6      God's your Guardian,  
          right at your side to protect you—  
          Shielding you from sunstroke,  
          sheltering you from moonstroke.
- 7-8      God guards you from every evil,  
          he guards your very life.  
          He guards you when you leave and when you return,  
          he guards you now, he guards you always.

### *I. Travel Advisory*

There are three possibilities of harm shared in this psalm. A person travelling by foot can at any time step on a stone and sprain their ankle. A person could get too much exposure to the sun and get sunstroke. And a person can get fatigued and anxiety after travelling for such a long way and become emotionally ill which the writer describes as moon stroke.

What would an updated list look like today? If God is our guardian, why do Christians still get hurt, sick, or suffer?

### *II. Help From The Hills*

When you get into trouble where do you turn for help? The person set on the journey of faith gets into trouble, and looks around for help ("I look up the mountains" v1) and asks this question: "Does my strength come from mountains?" When a person of real faith looks around at mountains for help what do they see?

The Hebrews say more than the beautiful majesty of mountain ranges. They would have seen places filled with pagan worship being practiced on the hilltops. There were spells, chants, prayers offered for the perils of the road. Do you fear the sun's heat, go to the sun priest and pay for protection from the sun god. There were many frauds on the hilltops of Palestine. Elijah says this to the prophets of Baal in a challenge:

*By noon, Elijah had started making fun of them, taunting, "Call a little louder—he is a god, after all. Maybe he's off meditating somewhere or other, or maybe he's gotten involved in a project, or maybe he's on vacation. You don't suppose he's overslept, do you, and needs to be waked up?" (1 Kings 18:27 The Message)*

A look to hills for help ends in disappointment. No matter how beautiful they are they are just hills. Psalm 121 rejects the worship of nature, a religion of stars and flowers, a religion in the hills, instead it looks to the Lord who made everything. Help comes from the Creator, not from the creation.

The promise of the Psalm is not that you will never stub your toes but that no injury, no illness, no accident, no distress will have evil power over us, that is will be able to separate us from God's purpose and will in us.

Three times in Psalm 121 God is called Yahweh (His personal name) and eight times he is described as the guardian or the one who guards. All the water of the ocean cannot sink the ship unless it gets inside. Nor can all the trouble in the world harm us unless it gets within us. The promise of the Psalm, "God guards you from every evil."

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

### **III. Traveling Companion**

Psalm 121 learned and sung regularly in our walk with Christ, clearly defines the way we live out our discipleship – which in a word is GOD! Once we get this Psalm in our hearts it will be impossible for us to be defeated with the heartaches and difficulties that will surely come.

*No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 The Message)*