

Text: Psalm 121

Theme: Personal Protection for a Powerful God

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You have to admire the faith of the evolutionist. The simplest reproducing cell is incredibly complex. Imagine a wristwatch that was capable of producing other wristwatches. With today's computer technology, such a mechanism is not outside the realm of possibility. But the skill and ingenuity required to produce it is thoroughly impressive. The inventor would deserve more praise than the mechanism itself.

Yet the evolutionist believes that such a mechanism could produce itself by accident, without any designer involved.

That faith is concealed behind a massive array of logical and fossil evidences to support the theory that evolution actually happened. And this superficial evidence has succeeded in convincing most of the scientific and intellectual community. Those who believe the theory of evolution are generally unaware of the faith that is being demanded of them. They would protest that the Bible demands faith, that they are only following where the scientific evidence leads them. But the conviction that the universe arrived at its present condition without the intervention of God is a conviction that demands blind faith in a man-made explanation of an incredibly complex universe. It is much easier to believe that the universe and everything in it were created by a God who is wise and powerful beyond human imagination.

Of course, the argument itself is largely academic. The universe will continue in its present form whether you believe God created it or not. The real significance lies in your relationship with this God. And that significance is proclaimed to us over and over again in the 121st Psalm, which declares, "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

Your confidence in your helper depends upon the quality of your helper. Most of us would rather not have a tooth pulled by an automobile mechanic. Instead we go to a qualified dentist, who can do the job efficiently without causing unnecessary discomfort. The quality of our helper determines our confidence in the successful outcome of the procedure. Our confidence is complete when our helper is the Lord who made heaven and earth, and everything that heaven and earth contain. And that confidence is expressed in the opening words of the 121st Psalm.

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

There are no hills in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan where I grew up. You can stand in the middle of the country road and see no curves until the road disappears on the horizon. It is very different in Grenada, where I assisted at Grace Lutheran Church a few months ago. The island is simply a mountain range sticking out of the sea. Flat land is rare. Most of the time you are

walking up or down a hill We did not see the sun until two hours after sunrise. We were surrounded by lush, green hills, and some of the most beautiful scenery anywhere in the world. The psalmist had some very different hills in mind, but the point is the same. The God who made heaven and earth is not stuck in some far-away galaxy out of reach and out of mind. He is as near as the top of those nearby hills. My Helper is close at hand. And he is always close at hand.

“He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”

A watchman who falls asleep is good for nothing. He cannot warn of approaching danger or drive off an intruder. But God has not taken a nap in 2000 years, or in two billion years, for that matter. This God who is as close as the nearby hills is always alert and ready to come to our aid.

“The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night”

Even in Wisconsin we are familiar with the damage that the sun can do, especially at the lake or on the beach. They don't make suntan oil for nothing, and if you don't use it, painful sunburn can result, and eventually even skin cancer. But I'm not familiar with any damage that is done by moonlight However that's not the point that the psalmist is making. Your Helper does not sleep. Therefore he is available, whether the sun or the moon is shining He is even closer than the nearby hills. He is like the umbrella you take to the beach. He is your shade at your right hand. He is as close as your cell phone, only you don't have to wait for help to arrive after you dialed 911. This all-powerful Helper is as close as your right hand.

“The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life.”

Of course, this raises some questions. I remember walking down a treacherous path with the Grenadian lady who was my guide. What if she slipped and fell? How would I carry her down to the car so I could take her to the hospital? What if I slipped behind her and caused both of us to fall?

Well, that didn't happen. We both made it down safely, just like the psalm says, “He will not let your foot slip.” But then there was another time when my foot did slip and I sat down hard, hard enough to remember it for a couple of weeks. Where was the Lord? Did he take a nap when the sun went down?

Notice that the psalm not only says, “The Lord will keep you from all harm.” It also says that he will watch over your life. That is a much more comprehensive project. The Lord is not interested in making our life comfortable and convenient He intends that our life should continue after death in the glories of heaven And sometimes a comfortable and convenient life can get in the way of that intention When life is too easy, we tend to lose track of our dependency upon God. We think we can take care of ourselves. We forget to pray. We forget that we are sinners who need to repent and daily seek the forgiveness of a loving God. It is not God's purpose to harm us, to punish us. As a loving father disciplines his child, so our Father in heaven sends us the

discipline we need to keep us from straying off of the narrow path that leads to eternal life. He will not let your foot slip off of that path.

I don't know why the Lord allowed my foot to slip on that dark night in Grenada. Perhaps it had something to do with the people I was visiting that night. Perhaps it made them appreciate the effort I had made to conduct a Bible study with them, so that seven years later they and their children are still active members of Grace Lutheran Church in Grenada. Maybe God had some other purpose in mind in allowing my foot to slip that night. The point is simply this. God does not promise us a carefree life. But he watches over me, not just for the day, but for eternity.

The psalm further emphasizes God's complete protection in the last verse. "The Lord will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore" Whether you are going to work or coming home from work, whether you are going to school or coming home from school, whether you are leaving your home in Wisconsin or returning to it again, whether you are starting on a new career or getting ready to retire, whether you are the prodigal son leaving his father's home, or the repentant son returning to your Father again, whether you are coming or going, your ever-vigilant God is watching over you, not only for this life, but forevermore.

The Lord who made heaven and earth is not only interested in watching over you all the days of your life. He wants to bring you safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death into eternal life. That's why he sent his one and only Son into this world that first Christmas Eve, and then sent him to the cross with the burden of your sins. For the wages of sin is death, and you have sinned, along with all the other children of Adam and Eve. They ate from the forbidden tree and brought sin and death upon all of their descendants, including you and me. But before God announced his judgment upon their disobedience, he promised that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head. And that's just what happened when Jesus, born of a virgin, offered his life as the atoning sacrifice that paid for the sins of the world. He removed our guilt and wiped out Satan's claim upon our souls. He transformed us into children of God who would now rather serve God than submit to the devil. The God who made heaven and earth, who is as close as the top of the nearby hills, this God will watch over you as his own dear child until he has you safely with him in heaven.

Right now, what is your biggest worry, your greatest fear? It may be some trivial thing, like a child coming home late from school. It may be the loss of a job and essential income. It may be a wayward son or daughter who has chosen a self-destructive lifestyle. Or maybe you have been told that your remaining days are short, so that you may not be able to tune in again next Sunday.

Whatever your fear, whatever your worry, you can take comfort in the constant protection of an all-powerful God. When the burden of anxiety weighs you down, go to the 121st Psalm. Read what is written there. Listen, not only to the words, but also to their meaning as we have shared them together today. And let the Holy Spirit lift the burden from your heart, so that you may enjoy the peace that belongs to those who have put their trust in the constant protection of an all-powerful God.

Dear Father in heaven,

Thank you for revealing to us your constant and powerful protection in the 121st Psalm. Thank you for drawing our attention to these words on this Sunday morning Now let your Holy Spirit work powerfully in our hearts, so that we may receive the comfort that these words offer. Grant to us the faith the drives out fear, so that we may find peace in the midst of trouble, and await the deliverance of a powerful and forgiving God. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.