

February 28 & March 1, 2026 – Lent 2

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot stumble. He who watches over you will not slumber. Yes, he who watches over Israel will not slumber. He will not sleep. The Lord watches over you. The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will watch to keep you from all harm. He will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your going and your coming from now to eternity.

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

You're planning a road trip. Most people like to listen to music to make the trip go by faster. What would you choose to listen to? Do you bring a bundle of CDs or your iPod to plug in, or turn on Sirius satellite? Music has been a part of the travel experience in cars. But that is not a recent phenomenon. Music while traveling is ancient, dating back to almost the beginning of time. And in the Bible, you can even find an example of this in the book of Psalms. Psalms 120-134 are all labeled with the heading "**A song of/for the ascents.**" These were the road trip playlist for God's Old Testament people. These were psalms that would be sung or spoken while they traveled, especially when they traveled up to Jerusalem for worship.

So, today, we're going to cue up one of the tracks from God's road trip playlist here and consider what it would mean for the pilgrims to sing this psalm on their way up to the temple—and what it means for us to have these truths in our hearts as we travel through this life.

Psalm 121, our focus for today, is a well-known psalm. The words the unnamed psalmist pens by inspiration of the Holy Spirit are tremendously comforting. We begin our journey with the psalm writer as he looks ahead to the path in front of him: **I lift up my eyes to the mountains. Where does my help come from?** If you've traveled through the mountains, you know how majestic and powerful they seem. Now, those in Israel aren't as grand as the Rockies or the Himalayas, but you might well think about the hill mountains that we have in our immediate area. Now, with a modern vehicle, traversing those paths with their paved roads is not a huge problem. But what about if you were on foot and the road was dirt and rock? That becomes a bit more treacherous.

But it was more than just elevations and unstable footings that someone traveling in Old Testament times would have had to contend with when they hit the high hills and low mountains. Because those hills hid another danger, bandits looking to rob those who wind their way through narrow passes. While the mountains could communicate the power of our Creator God, they also were dangerous, difficult places. So, for the psalm writer, lifting his eyes to the mountains is probably less about God's majesty and more about the concerns for safety that going through such places would bring.

Which is why he asks the question, "**Where does my help come from?**" He looks at the treacherous road ahead and thinks, "How am I going to get through *that*?" Does that sentiment feel relatable? Maybe we're not making a multi-mile journey through a mountain on foot, but seeing what's ahead and not seeing a good way through it, not seeing a possible positive outcome, seeing only danger and hardship and maybe worse things that you'd rather not think about, well, that is what we have to contend with at times.

If the psalm writer didn't see God's majesty and power in the landscape, then he certainly sees it in God's solution to his problems: **My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.** There's no doubt in the psalm writer's mind how he'll get through this treacherous problem safely. It will be God's doing. The one who made the entire universe is certainly able and willing to keep him safe.

We often look for help in all the wrong places. We look to ourselves and the strength of our will to "gut it out" and fix something (or just ignore it for long enough and hope that it goes away). We try everything at our disposal to solve the problem, and nothing seems to help. Often, we turn to God as a last resort. But the psalm writer encourages us to take a different approach. When you face the problems, the heartache, the grief, the pain, the sickness, the guilt, whatever it is, bring it to God first. As he approached the mountains the Psalmist didn't crumble in fear; he didn't see that all hope was lost. He went forward confident in God's promises.

Now, we should discuss for just a moment what that might look like in practice. Jesus taught us well to pray that God's will be done. We can bring anything to God, big or small, but whatever request we make to him we always want to attach the thought and acknowledgment that God knows better than we do. Think of the man traveling to Jerusalem. What if he fell into the hands of robbers, was left for dead, and then did, in fact, die? Did

God abandon him? Did God fail to do what he had promised? No. This was simply how God brought that believer to eternal life with him. The same goes as we pray for healing for a disease. Healing may be the answer. Strength to endure pain and discomfort may be the answer. Help and support from people you would not have expected may be the answer. Or in severe cases, death may be the answer because God knows what is best for us. The promise that **he will not let your foot stumble** may not always feel true from our perspective, but from God's perspective, it always is.

And the same holds true for the other promises the psalm writer holds on to. You may feel like God is asleep at the wheel when it comes to directing the affairs of your life, but he's not. You may feel like God is letting the harmful blast of heat from the sun of problems and hardships cook you beyond recognition, but he's not. You may feel that he's abandoned you in the thick of problems, but he hasn't.

That's some shallow comfort in the heat of the moment, though. "Oh, God hasn't left me? Great. But I still very much feel like he has." And this is where we need to turn to God's clear promises to us in his Word. He has not promised a life free from trouble. He has not promised a life without difficulty. He has not promised an existence without sorrow or pain. But he has promised that, in the end, we will be safe with him.

As Jesus taught Nicodemus at night, he reinforced that. He brought up the account of Moses lifting the bronze snake in the desert. You may remember that account from Numbers 21 where God sent venomous snakes among the people because of their rampant sin and discontent against him. Then, when they called out for help, God directed Moses to make a snake out of bronze and lift it up. God promised that anyone who looked at that snake would live. And that's exactly what happened.

This promise of protection and help goes well beyond this life. The psalm writer assures us: **The Lord will watch over your going and your coming from now to eternity.** *Eternity.* That's God's goal—not a happy-go-lucky life here, but a life of perfection forever with him. Jesus, too, showed that goal when he taught Nicodemus. He told him that God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, not to make life here a pleasure trip, but that we do not perish in hell but have eternal life—that we and all people be saved eternally through Jesus. That's what happened when Jesus was lifted up on the cross. That's God's "help" for us—or better, his *complete rescue*—of us. Our sins condemn us to hell but Jesus' love for you lead him to his death on the cross, where he paid for your every sin. In him you are forgiven all your sins. Eternal life is yours.

Where Does My Help Come From? Whether it feels like it in the moment or not, your help **comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.** He is never dozing and not paying attention. He does not make mistakes. He does not forget. He has your best interests in mind, especially your eternal best interests.

In good times and challenging times, lean on him. When Satan tempts you and brings doubt to your mind and heart, flee to the comfort of God's Word that assures you of God's eternal love. And as you go through the mountains of this life, as you face the wild animals and robbers of pain, sorrow, misery, disappointment, and heartache, take your Savior at his Word. He helps now and for eternity. Amen.