



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

---

Volume 22 Issue 6

February 5, 2023

## The Songs of Ascents God's Care of His Worshippers Psalm 121

There is a dangerous assumption which — like a weed — wells up in our hearts as Christians. It is an assumption I've struggled against in my own walk and have preached against for many years. It is the assumption that because God loves us our lives should be relatively easy, with limited burden, inconvenience, or difficulty.

This is a dangerous assumption because it can bring the Christian to the horrible place of asking accusatory questions of God:

- Why won't you give me a job?
- Why don't you bless my plans?
- Why the failure, loss, and sadness?
- DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT ME ?

And this is the context against which we must interpret Psalm 121.

As you know, each of the Psalms in this section — Psalm 120 to 136 — bears the inscription, “A Psalm of Ascents.” Recall that God commanded His people to travel to Jerusalem three times a year for worship (Exodus 23:14-17). And as most of His people in the exile lived far away from the city — in such places like Egypt, Babylon, Asia Minor, and eventually Greece, Rome, and beyond — God did NOT want them arriving at Jerusalem harried and burdened by the journey. Accordingly, He gave His people fifteen songs which they were to sing over and over again. These are songs upon which they meditated as they made their way to Jerusalem.

Now, the reference to “Jerusalem” begs the question: What Jerusalem are we talking about here?

- The earthly Jerusalem where the earthly temple of the Lord was built? Or...
- The New Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12; 21:2) into which we enter upon our death?

Which “ascent” are we talking about here? The answer is both! The Songs of Ascents were written to shape and mold the worldview of God’s people as they prepared to enter His presence in worship and as they prepared their entire lives to enter His presence upon their death.

As we examined Psalm 120, we found it spoke of the burden resting upon us as we live in this state of sin and misery. Psalm 121 calls us to view this burden in light of the Lord’s covenantal care.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

We begin Psalm 121 with a question raised by the previous Psalm: Does God care for His people? The answer provided by this Psalm is an emphatic “Yes!”<sup>4</sup> This is stated throughout this Psalm, beginning with verse 3.

- v. 3b: “He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.”
- v. 4a: “Behold, He who keeps Israel...”
- v. 5a: “The LORD is your keeper...”
- v. 7a: “The LORD will protect you...”
- v. 7b: “...He will keep your soul.”

- v. 8a: “The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in...”

The word used in each of the verses is **שָׁמַר** (*šāmar*). It clearly is The Theme of this Psalm as it is used six times in its eight verses.<sup>5</sup> It is variously translated as “watch over,” “protect,” “preserve,” “keep,” and “guard.” It is an important word in the Old Testament, used 461 times.

What does it mean? To understand it, we must keep in mind the burden of Psalm 120.

Psalm 120:1, “In my trouble I cried to the Lord...”

The word **צָרָה** (*tsarah*) refers to any state or place that is narrow, confining, or restricted. It speaks of being hampered, hemmed in, and so unable to function fully or freely.

In 2018, thirteen Thai soccer players and coach were trapped in a cave due to the torrential rains which filled their exit route. The footage of the prior expeditions exploring the cave was brutal to watch. It showed the men thousands of feet underground, struggling through openings where they had to hold their head side-ways to get through... with millions of tons of earth above them. They could barely move much less breathe at times. And if you are like me, watching the footage would produce all manner of apprehension, dread, nervousness, and sick feelings. And this is the connotation **צָרָה** (*tsarah*), “trouble.” It speaks of a confinement which produces burden, anxiety, heart ache, sickness, and more.

And that is where God’s people, dwelling in the Diaspora- so often lived! They weren’t able to be who they truly were, for their culture, its people, its mores — *all built on lies* — restricted them, hemmed them in! So, God posted Himself as a guard to protect His people. That is the idea behind the word **שָׁמַר** (*šāmar*). Spurgeon wrote of this:

The word ‘keepeth’ is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch’s head. (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 15)

God’s protection and care for us does NOT take us out of our troubles. This text tells us that God stands guard over us in them! Now in explaining this, the Psalmist began by putting God’s care to the test with a question/answer motif. With each stanza, a facet of God’s care is heralded and explained. The Psalm begins with a personal testimony seeing God’s unthwartable assistance.

[God’s Unthwartable Assistance, vv. 1-2.](#)

Psalm 121:1, “I will lift up my eyes<sup>6</sup> to the mountains; from whence shall my help

come?"

There is some debate when it comes to this verse, for the connotation of "mountains" varies quite significantly in the Bible.<sup>7,8</sup> It could be viewed POSITIVELY. During the wilderness wandering in Exodus 17 the Amalekites attacked God's people and Moses stood on a mountain overlooking the battle. When his arms were raised in prayer, God's people prevailed. But when he lowered his arm in fatigue, the Amalekites prevailed. Accordingly, Aaron and Hur supported the arms of Moses so that he could leave them raised.

Thus, to "lift one's eyes to the mountains" as a Jewish soldier at this time was to behold the almighty power and delivering hand of the Lord. In addition to this, Jerusalem and the temple were built on one of the mountains in Palestine, Mount Moriah. And so, in their trek to Jerusalem from the Diaspora eventually the Jewish worshipper would look with gladness and relief as they spied this mountain range from a distance. They were almost to the temple, almost home!!<sup>9</sup>

Yet the expression also could denote something quite NEGATIVE. It was in the mountains of Palestine that the Canaanites throughout the Old Testament era erected their high places to worship their pagan gods. Here all manner of evil was perpetrated in the name of their demonic gods, including child sacrifice.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, these mountains were notorious for danger as criminals, thieves, and murderers hid in them, waiting to prey upon lone travelers. Recall the parable of the Good Samaritan, its setting took place in these mountains.

So, does this first verse speak with excitement or dread? Based on the message of this Psalm, IT IS THE LATTER.<sup>11</sup> For the pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem, the mountains of Palestine brought with them the potential for much danger, treachery, and difficulty — just like the rest of their lives in the Diaspora!<sup>12</sup> Yet the Psalmist here is NOT frightened, for he had a glorious conviction.

Psalm 121:2a, "My help *comes* from the Lord..."

So, yes, this world is filled with many Burdens as seen in the Mountains of Palestine, yet the Psalmist's testimony was, "My help comes from the Lord!"

Consider the two key words here. The first is *help*: **עֶזֶר** (*ezer*) — this is the word for "support", "assistance", or "aid". It most often denotes the help provided by military assistance. As such, we are talking here about a need of so great a nature that it warranted the aid of military might, at least conceptually.<sup>13</sup>

The second is *Lord*: **יְהֹוָה** (*Yahveh*); this is God's covenant name. It is used five times in this Psalm and is referenced another five times by the personal pronoun of "He". Now,

as this is God's personal name, the Psalmist was NOT talking about what God does when He helps us, BUT what He is at all times when it comes to His people! THIS IS OUR COMFORT, HOPE, AND HELP. Spurgeon wrote of this:

The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord- these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, and from these our help must come. (Spurgeon, 2004, pp. 14, Vol 3)

Combined, the connotation is akin to the Captain of the Host of the Lord who made His first appearance in Joshua.<sup>14</sup> Do you recall? It was right before the conquest of Palestine where God commanded Joshua to circumcise the nation. Well, when the men were most vulnerable to attack on account of their healing, God appeared to Joshua to assure him of His presence.

Joshua 5:13-15, "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man was standing opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand, and Joshua went to Him and said to Him, 'Are You for us or for our adversaries?' And He said, 'No, rather I indeed come now as Captain of the Host of the Lord.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to Him, 'What has my Lord to say to His servant?' And the Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so."

Do you understand the point of verse 2? We are to live on this earth knowing that at all times and in all places, this Being — the Captain of the Lord of Hosts, the one before whom someday all will bow professing His Lordship (Philippians 2:9-11) — stands guard over us at all times! Now this means nothing if as our Lord He is weak. Accordingly, the Psalmist added this qualification:

Psalm 121: 2b, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."<sup>15,16,17</sup>

This actually is where the Apostles' Creed got its statement, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth..." That is how important this statement is. And yet in spite of its importance, it is so easy to pass over; yet that would be a mistake. Randy Steele wrote of this expression:

The earth with all its diversity, the depths of which man has yet to fully plumb and understand, was created by the Lord. The heavens also were made by God... What did such creation require? It took... authority and power to call 'into being that which does not exist' (Romans 4: 17). This is a capability of which we as human beings, ourselves creatures of God's making, cannot even conceive. How can we relate to such power? What analogies shall we use to attempt to grasp

this kind of otherworldly authority? But more importantly, what are the implications for us of God's capacity for such sheer might?

The psalmist within context is declaring that God brings his unlimited authority to bear upon our lives as our keeper. (Steele, 2014)

So, how capable is our Captain of Hosts at helping us in our need? The answer of this Psalm is, "God at all times and in all places brings to bear upon my needs the power that created the universe"!<sup>18,19</sup> Alec Motyer wrote:

In short, [God] is always in full, detailed, executive management of the world He created. He leaves nothing to chance; nothing falls outside His care and attention. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor is there a hair on the head of His children that He does not protect. He is God. (Motyer, 2009, pp. 34-35)

You say, "Why then does God NOT remove all burdens?" The answer as we'll see throughout "the Songs of Ascents" is this: *You do NOT forge a metal tool in paradisal conditions. Rather, it must be heated, pounded, and so reshaped to be all that it can be.*<sup>20</sup> As one commentary put it:

[God's] protection doesn't mean, however, that the traveler may never stub his toe, get injured, suffer, or even die. It means that God's purposes can't be thwarted. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:18–39). He will watch over us throughout this whole life, and ultimately he will take us to glory. (J. Josh Smith, 2022, p. 192)

Truly, God is "a very present help"<sup>21</sup> whose assistance is unthwartable!

With that personal testimony, the Psalmist next gives a series of exhortations and encouragements to his fellow Pilgrims<sup>22</sup> as they march to Zion! Which brings us to the second stanza in this Psalm which speaks of God's constant stability.

#### [God's Constant Stability, vv. 3-4.](#)

Psalm 121:3a, "He will not<sup>23</sup> allow your foot to slip..."

Notice the Psalm has switched to second person. Having expressed his own conviction in vv. 1-2, the Psalmist spends the rest of this song proclaiming the care which God extends to all His children in their trek to Jerusalem.

That being said, when the Jewish pilgrim in his journey arrived in Palestine regardless of the direction from which he came (north or south), before them stood the Central Mountain Range on which was built Jerusalem and the Temple. That meant hiking up a mountain which, depending on the route as well as the conditions, could be quite treacherous. First one had to contend with the mountain itself with its steep and

narrow paths, loose stones and gravel, and unsure footing. Then one had to contend with the elements. Was it raining? Snowing? Windy? Accordingly, were the paths wet, slippery, and so unsure?

Then you had to contend with your own weakness and fatigue. You could have been on the road for months such that, depending on your nutrition, your legs would be tired and shaky, making the climb that much more treacherous. Yet what does the Lord of Glory promise here? That His care brings stability, “He will not allow your foot”- regardless of how shaky it might be- “to slip” and so “totter,” “stagger,” or “slide” (all of which is the connotation of Hebrew word- **וִתְנַשֵּׁךְ** [mot]).<sup>24</sup> In the words of Joseph Caryl we read:

The foot by a *synecdoche* is put for the whole body, and the body for the whole outward estate; so that, ‘he will not suffer thy foot to be moved,’ is, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down. The power of thine opposers shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Many are striking at thy heels, but they cannot strike them up while God holds thee up. If the will of thine enemies might stand, thou shouldst quickly fall; but God ‘will not suffer thy foot to be moved.’ (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 19)

Now with each stanza in this psalm (as we just saw in vv. 1-2) the Psalmist references a facet of God’s character which reinforces the point being made. In the first stanza it was the fact that God is “the maker of heaven and earth.” Here the focus is on The constancy of God’s care.

Psalm 121:3b-4, “...He who keeps you<sup>25</sup> will not slumber. Behold<sup>26</sup> He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”<sup>27,28</sup>

I find it hard to read this without thinking of the account of Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal. It genuinely was a dark time in redemptive history when God’s people had given themselves to the worship of the Canaanite gods, most significantly Baal. So, Elijah challenged the Hebrew prophets of Baal to a competition to determine which God was real: Baal or Yahweh.

As Baal is the Canaanite god of thunder, lightning, and so fire, Elijah weighted the competition in favor the Baalists, so there could be no excuse afterwards. They and he were to erect an altar of wood on which they would place an ox for sacrifice. Yet neither were to light the pyre. Instead, they were to pray to their respective God and ask that he might light the pyre with fire from heaven (cf. 1 Kings 18:22-24).

The Baal prophets ranted and raved all day in the hopes of appeasing Baal. Yet nothing happened. Elijah then soaked the pyre he erected with water and uttered a simple prayer. Then fire from the Lord came down and consumed the altar erected by Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39).

With that remember how Elijah criticized the 450 prophets when their false god did NOT act.

1 Kings 18:27, “And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.’”

One of the characteristics of the false gods of the ancient world was that they were subject to fatigue and so at times slept. In this regard H. C. Leupold gave the explanation that the Canaanites offered for why vegetation died:

(The gods] were thought of as having gone off duty or as being asleep for a period. (Leupold, 1970, p. 869)

NICOT wrote,

The ‘sleeping deity’ is a literary motif found in numerous texts in the ancient Near East. The words of Psalm 121, which state that God will never slumber, stand in sharp contrast to the texts accusing God of sleeping and thus not paying attention to the cries of the psalm-singer. (Nancy L. deClasse-Walford (Author), 2014, p. 897)

In contrast, the only wise God, our Lord, Yahweh, “neither slumbers nor sleeps.”<sup>29</sup> The idea behind this is that God is never off-duty! He never is distracted. He never takes a break. The care He provides when it comes to you and me is Constant!

it is as another Song of Ascents put it this way:

Psalm 127:2b, “...He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.”

For God to give to His beloved in their sleep implies that while we sleep, God is ever awake and so ever and always watching over us! Boice wrote:

When a person asked the Greek general Alexander the Great how he could sleep soundly when he was surrounded by so much personal danger, he replied that Parmenio, his faithful guard, was watching. How much more soundly should we sleep when God, who never slumbers nor sleeps, is guarding us! (Boice, 2005, p. 1077)

## Where We Live

Brothers and sisters, in the words of Isaiah:

Isaiah 46:4, “For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.”

In other words, go back as far as you can in secular history, read every available manuscript from the Sumerians (the oldest civilization known to Archaeology), the Chinese, the Egyptians, Mayans, Greeks, or Romans AND you will NEVER read of a false deity that can compare with God when it comes to the care, love, and commitment that He has for you and me!

Yes, “in the world [we] have tribulation” (John 16:33)- living in the world as aliens and strangers there are many Burdens- “but be of good cheer, Christ has overcome the world” and so is able to guard and protect us at all times and in all places!

The Psalmist is NOT finished and so neither are we. As convinced as we might be of what the Psalmist said in vv. 1-4 of this Psalm, there is more to learn when it comes to God’s care- which we’ll look at next week.

Until then, we need to add to our music repertoire the truth of the Psalm before us. In the world we are burdened, yet have the glorious option to cry out to the Lord. This gives a sense of peace and security which then emboldens us to endeavor to introduce others to the peace that is only found in Christ. And lest you think that God has abandoned us when we encounter pain and difficulty, the second song we sing proclaims the glorious truth that God works His redeeming grace in our lives NOT by saving us out of this world, BUT by saving us in it! So as one commentator put it,

Asaph wrote in Psalm 73, ‘But as for me, my feet almost slipped; my steps nearly went astray’ (73:2), but the Lord was there to uphold him and bring him peace by granting the wobbly worshiper an eternal, God-centered perspective (73:23–28). We too may feel like our faith is weakening and our hope decreasing, but the Lord has his grip on his people (John 10:29). We need to cast our burdens on him and trust him (cf. Psalm 55:22). (J. Josh Smith, 2022, p. 192)

## References

- Boice, J. M. (2005). *Psalms: Psalms 107-150 (Expositional Commentary)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Dr. Daniel J. Estes, P. D. (2019). *Psalms 73-150: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Volume 13) (The New American Commentary)*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group.
- J. Josh Smith, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1-50 (Volume 1) (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary)*. Nashville: Homan Reference.
- John Calvin (Author), J. A. (2017). *John Calvin's Bible Commentaries On The Psalms 93 - 119*. North Charleston: Jazzybee Verlag.
- Kidner, D. (2014). *Psalms 73-150 (Kidner Classic Commentaries)*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- Leupold, H. c. (1970). *exposition of Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Motyer, j. A. (2009). *Journey: Psalms For Pilgrim People*. London: IVP UK.
- Nancy L. deClasse-Walford (Author), R. A. (2014). *The Book of Psalms (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Spurgeon, C. (2004). *Treasury of David, Psalm 120-150*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic.
- Steele, R. L. (2014). *Are You Ready to Worship?: Preparation from the Psalms of Ascent (Kindle Edition)*. Las Cruces: Deo Volente Publishing.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> "Protection by God, under the watchful eye of God, is the dominant idea in the psalm." (Boice, 2005, p. 1076)

<sup>2</sup> "The word 'keep', or 'keeper', comes often in this psalm. Protection is a burning issue for a pilgrim who is travelling arduously and through lonely country." (Kidner, 2014, p. 467)

<sup>3</sup> "The reassuring speaker has a dominant theme: trust the Lord's watch care. He encourages the anxious traveler to remember that God is always looking out for his followers." (J. Josh Smith, 2022, p. 191)

<sup>4</sup> "The word guard (*šāmar*) occurs six times in the eight verses of Psalm 121 and thus can be considered something of a theme for the psalm." (Nancy L. deClasse-Walford (Author), 2014, p. 895)

<sup>5</sup> "Several commentators have suggested thematic statements for this psalm that seek to capture this truth. James Montgomery Boice (1998) has written, 'Protection by God, under the watchful eye of God, is the dominant idea in the psalm' (p. 1076). Bob Becking (2009) suggests 'the assurance of divine assistance' (p. 3) as the theme. Samuel Cox (1874) says it is a psalm that concerns 'the sleepless providence of God' (p. 24)." (Steele, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> "In contrast to the future-tense rendering of the verb '*eššā*' in the KJV, NKJV, and NASB, the CSB rightly translates it as an instantaneous present, 'I lift my eyes toward the mountains.'" (Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, NAC, p. 450)

<sup>7</sup> "*The hills* are enigmatic: does the opening line show an impulse to take refuge in them, like the urge that came to David in Psalm 11:1, to 'flee like a bird to the mountains'? Or are the hills themselves a menace, the haunt of robbers?" (Kidner, 2014, p. 467)

<sup>8</sup> "The 'mountains' are enigmatic. Do they represent refuge, danger, and/or anticipation of arrival in Jerusalem? Regarding refuge, the mountains surrounding Jerusalem conveyed a peaceful image of the Lord's protection of Israel (125:2; cf. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 456)." (J. Josh

Smith, 2022, p. 190)

<sup>9</sup> "When we remember that there were no real roads in those days, only well-trodden paths across the valleys, along the rivers, and over mountain passes, it is easy to imagine how this psalm might have been sung by a hopeful but very weary pilgrim. He has been traveling for days. His feet are sore. His muscles ache. Jerusalem, the end of his pilgrimage, seems very distant. Suddenly he sees the hills of Judah in the distance, and he breaks into song..." (Boice, 2005, p. 1075)

<sup>10</sup> "The mountains, with their high places, had been centers for Canaanite religion. Their gods were identified with the mountains, and they were worshiped there with cultic prostitution. These "high places" are mentioned seventy-eight times in the Old Testament, where we are told that the Jews did not destroy them when they occupied Canaan and that they often worshiped there themselves." (Boice, 2005, p. 1077)

<sup>11</sup> "The tone in the rest of Psalm 121, however, indicates that the psalmist views the mountains as a formidable and intimidating obstacle, and perhaps also as a place of danger that threatens his survival, in contrast to the ANE pagans who viewed the mountains as the homes of their gods (cf. 1 Kings 20:28). He realizes he does not have the personal resources to meet this challenge and that he needs help on the difficult terrain ahead of him. Therefore, he asks rhetorically, 'Where will my help come from?'" (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, p. 450)

<sup>12</sup> "...I think it's best to read the hills conveying the danger that exists along the journey. While he may have indeed had a mixture of emotions in his heart, I think his primary thought was that the hills were part of the problem." (J. Josh Smith, 2022, p. 190)

<sup>13</sup> (Steele, 2014)

<sup>14</sup> "By adding to the covenantal name Yahweh to the appositional phrase, 'the Maker of heaven and earth,' the psalmist views the Lord as both the God of covenant and the God of creation. Because the psalmist has an intimate relationship with the infinite ruler of the universe, his Lord is both willing and able to help him in his time of need. No human problem is beyond the Lord's purview." (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, pp. 450-451)

<sup>15</sup> "This phrase reoccurs several times in the Songs of Ascents (see Pss. 124:8; 134:3). To worship the gods of the mountains or any other gods or even the mountains themselves is idolatry, and it is as useless as it is wicked. What we need is not the gods of nature, but nature's God. We need the Creator." (Boice, 2005, p. 1077)

<sup>16</sup> "The thought of this verse leaps beyond the hills to the universe; beyond the universe to its Maker. Here is living help: primary, personal, wise, immeasurable." (Kidner, 2014, p. 467)

<sup>17</sup> "The phrase *maker of heavens and earth* appears three times in the Songs of the Ascents (v. 2; 124:8; 134:3) and in Psalm 146:6. Its earliest occurrence in the biblical text is in the blessing of Melchizedek in Gen. 14:19. As stated above, the phrase was incorporated into the Apostles' Creed: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.'" (Nancy L. deClasse-Walford (Author), 2014, p. 896)

<sup>18</sup> "One can hear this verse in the opening line of the Apostles' Creed, which Christians have recited for hundreds of years." (J. Josh Smith, 2022, p. 191)

<sup>19</sup> "...although all the helps of the world, even the mightiest, should offer themselves to us, yet we ought not to seek safety anywhere but in God; yea, rather, that when men shall have long wearied themselves in hunting after remedies, now in one quarter and now in another, they will at length find from experience, that there is no assured help but in God alone." (John Calvin (Author), 2017, p. 63)

<sup>20</sup> With a slight change to the metaphor, Peter wrote speaking of the 2nd coming of Christ, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials [these are The Burdens of life], that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 46:1

<sup>22</sup> "The rest of the psalm leads into an ever-expanding circle of promise, all in terms of 'he' and 'you' (the 'you' is singular)." (Kidner, 2014, p. 467)

<sup>23</sup> "In verse 3 the word for not is the one used normally for requests and commands. So this verse should be taken, not as a statement which verse 4 will virtually repeat, but as a wish or prayer (cf. TEV60), to be answered by the ringing confidence of 4 and of all that follows. I.e.

'May he not let your foot be moved, may he ... not slumber!'—followed by the answer, 'Look, he who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.'" (Kidner, 2014, p. 467)

<sup>24</sup> "The sliding of the foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, Psalm 38:16, 66:9, and a very natural one in mountainous Canaan, where a single slip of the foot was often attended with great danger. The language here naturally refers to complete, lasting misfortune.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*" (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 19)

<sup>25</sup> "One night, when all were quietly asleep, there arose a sudden squall of wind, which came sweeping over the waters until it struck the vessel, and instantly threw her on her side, tumbling and crashing everything that was moveable, and awaking the passengers to a consciousness that they were in imminent peril. ¶ Everyone on board was alarmed and uneasy, and some sprang from their berths and began to dress, that they might be ready for the worst. ¶ Captain D. had a little girl on board, just eight years old, who, of course, awoke with the rest. 'What's the matter?' said the frightened child. They told her a squall had struck the ship. 'Is father on deck?' said she. 'Yes; father's on deck.' The little thing dropped herself on her pillow again without a fear, and in a few moments was sleeping sweetly in spite of winds or waves. ¶ 'Fear not [sic] the windy tempests wild, Thy bark they shall not wreck; Lie down and sleep, O helpless child! Thy Father's on the deck.'

*"The Biblical Treasury,"* 1873. (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 21)

<sup>26</sup> "This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word 'Behold' is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body-guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenceless man was safe as in a castle." (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 15)

<sup>27</sup> "'Slumber.' 'Sleep.' There is no climax in these words, as some have supposed. Etymologically, the first is the stronger word, and it occurs in Psalm 76:5 [6] of the sleep of death. In this instance there is no real distinction between the two. Possibly there may be an allusion to the nightly encampment, and the sentries of the caravan.- *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*" (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 20)

<sup>28</sup> "This form of expression, he will not slumber nor sleep, would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber: but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep.- John Calvin." (Spurgeon, 2004, p. 20)

<sup>29</sup> "The description of the Lord as the one who watches over Israel echoes Joshua 24:17, when the people of Israel recalled the Lord's preservation of the nation through the wilderness before the entrance into Canaan." (Dr. Daniel J. Estes, 2019, p. 452)