

Sermon Precise of "Journeying Mercies" based on Psalm 121 preached by Rev. Jack Archibald, August 19, 2018 at Lake Joseph Community Church

Psalm 121, which is popularly called the Pilgrim Psalm paints a picture of the Pilgrim making his way to the Holy City of Jerusalem. We can only imagine the challenges of walking alone by foot over long distances through treacherous and dangerous places in those days. The Pilgrim reflects, remembers and then prays "I 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". These words restore the faith of the pilgrim and gives him encourage to complete the journey.

In our personal journey of life, we can look down the road and see many potential dangers and difficulties. We are largely powerless against the trials and tribulations of life and it is at those times of trouble that we can ask, like the Psalmist, where will my help come from?

The Bible often speaks of God as the Helper of His people and Jesus speaks of God's providential care and redemptive grace in the Sermon on the Mount. Psalm 121 promises that God will be our "keeper" or "guardian" on our life pilgrimage. The psalmist confidently declares that God's watch over us is constant, comprehensive and His care is complete.

But that does not mean that we will be free of suffering. Throughout the Bible, we see the suffering of Old Testament figures like Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, and Joshua and the New Testament has many martyrs including Peter, Stephen and Paul. And today countless Christians suffer anguish and pain. So what does it mean that God will be our guardian on the pilgrimage of life?

The answer is how the word "life" in verse 7 is understood. In some texts, it is translated as "soul" meaning our true essence or true self and that's what God protects whatever may happen in our circumstances, or to our possessions or even to our body. This is the message of grace that comes out of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who suffered painfully, not only to death but to the place where he cried out in anguish "my God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?" But God had watched over His soul and His life and raised Him from the dead on the third day. Therefore, we, like Paul should confidently declare "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us... that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future... or anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Summary for Facebook

Psalm 121 speaks to the confidence a pilgrim on the road to Jerusalem has that he will receive help on his treacherous journey "from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth". The personal pilgrimage of life is also filled with dangers and difficulties and both the Old and New Testament are replete with examples of God's people enduring suffering. How does this square with Psalm 121's promise that God will be our "keeper" or "guardian" on our life pilgrimage? The answer hinges on the meaning of "life" in verse 7, which can be translated "soul" or our true self, which is what God protects whatever happens to our personal circumstances. Like Paul, we can be confident that "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" and that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord".