

Assignment 1 - Sermon

DML970: Preaching Psalms – Spring 2023

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Assignment 1: Sermon

1. Write a sermon on the psalm that is assigned to you during our first session. Aim for about 25 mins, which equates to approximately 12 pages of double-spaced pages. This must be the result of your own work (do not try to adjust a sermon that you have heard, or one that you have pulled from the internet). Please complete this assignment before reading Lawson. After writing the sermon, submit it via dropbox.

Sermon Message Title: The Lord is Your Keeper

Scripture: Psalm 121:1-8 *NASB, with color highlight as by Original Hebrew Text (biblehum.com)

A Song of Ascents.

1. I will raise my eyes to the mountains;

From where will my help come?

2. My help comes from **Yahweh** (the Lord),

Who made heaven and earth.

3. He will not allow your foot to slip;

He who **keeps** (watches over) you will not slumber.

4. Behold, He who **keeps** (watches over) Israel

Will neither slumber nor sleep.

5. **Yahweh** (The Lord) is your **keeper** (protector);

Yahweh (The Lord) is your shade on your right hand.

6. The sun will not **strike** (beat down) on you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

7. **Yahweh** (The Lord) will **keep** (protect) you from all evil;

He will **keep** your soul.

8. **Yahweh** (The Lord) will **keep** (guard) your going out and your coming in

From this time and forever.

Introduction / Background

Good morning, Brothers Sisters and Friends! As we just read, let's go through the key words, by the Background and Hebrew Original Text of Psalm 121 with 8 verses:

- **A Song of Ascents: Psalm 120-134**

- With total 15 psalms collected by an editor using the title "Psalms/Song of Ascent" forming a psalter, like a concise set of psalters as Songs of Praise. They are used for pilgrims going to Jerusalem/Temple to Worship God, sung on the three required festivals (Song of Degrees in Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary). The Songs of Ascent is to remind the people of God's grace, mercy, provision, protection, and salvation through the Israelite history recorded in the Old Testament, that the Lord led His people out of bondage from Egypt, developed the Messiah Kingdom by King of David, Solomon, then restored them from the Captivity and until the glorious Kingdom of God coming!

- Some theologians relate such "Pilgrims into Journey to the Holy City" as "Christians into Journey to our Life Sanctification", and let's share about this view later.

- **Yahweh ... Keeper/Keep**

- **Yahweh** (Shown 5 Times in Ps121): Means the Lord as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). This then gradually reveals from the Old Testimony that God is to **keep Covenant** with His People, embraced by His Redemption Plan through the act of the Promised Messiah – Jesus Christ!

- **Keeper/Keep** (Shown 6 Times in Ps121): Means to Watch Over, Preserve, or Protect

So, I would share today message, **The Lord is your Keeper**, by the following four points:

1. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Helper (v1-2)

2. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Savior (v3-4)

3. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Protector (v5-6)

4. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Shepherd (v7-8)

1. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Helper (v1-2)

v1-2. I will raise my eyes to the mountains; From where will my help come?

My help comes from **Yahweh** (the Lord), Who made heaven and earth.

- Mountains in the Old Testaments symbolizes the residence and thorn of the God Almighty, like noted in Ps.48:1, Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, His holy mountain.
- Indeed, our Lord – Yahweh, I AM who I AM is the one who made heaven and earth, He is the Creator, noted in Genesis Chapter 1: v1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. By Day 1-6: Light; Atmosphere / Firmament; Dry ground & plants; Sun, moon & stars; Birds & sea creatures; Land animals & humans: wherein by v27. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” By v31. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.”

- Then by Day 7, noted in chapter 2:1-3. “And so the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their heavenly lights. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 **Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it**, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” From After all the work of creation, God rested (the root meaning of the word sabbath). **And because God rested, we human beings, who are created in the image of God, must also rest.** However, when we continue the story line to Genesis Chapter 3, that concluded from Romans 5:12a, “Therefore, just as through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, ...”
- **Application:**

Dear Friends, Brothers & Sisters, that’s the reason, the psalmist calls to the Lord – **“my help comes from Yahweh – I AM”**, **who not only the Creator but the Savior!** We praise our Lord Jesus proclaims that “Truly, truly I say to you, **before Abraham was born, I AM.**” (John 8:58) Dearest ALL in here today, from where will our help come? from where will we find the true Rest in the mist of the chaos of the darkness world? Thank God, by Genesis 2:3 stated before, **“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”** From here, practicing the Sabbath into the Lord’s presence & sanctification is the way to find our ultimate help and true rest. Let’s focus and always find Rest in our one and only one true Helper, Jesus Christ, our Life Keeper, as noted in “Therefore let’s approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for **help at the time of our need.**” (Hebrews 4:16) Let’s practice our prayer life at the time of our need for help, solely from our Lord – I AM – Jesus Christ!

2. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Savior (v3-4)

v3-4. **He will not allow your foot to slip**; He who **keeps** (watches over) you will not slumber.

Behold, He who **keeps** (watches over) Israel, Will neither slumber nor sleep.

- The Lord here in v3-4, is Your Keeper, is by using the metaphorical image of the sleeping or slumbering in a way to contrast that the **Yahweh will keep us from our foot to slip away!** In fact, in 1 King 18:27 recorded the ancient Near Eastern tradition, the gods were described as sleeping, that emphasizing our **Yahweh is to keep, to watch over us all over the time 7 days by 24 hours, every moment, every single second!**
- From the Hebrew meaning **slip** of **“He will not allow your foot to slip”** (slip: 6 times shown in OT): a pole or yoke is solidly kept from moved around or shaking one to another direction. By God’s grace in watching over us all the moments, our Lord - **Yahweh keeps the covenant with His People Israel – “Behold, He who keeps Israel!”** Yes, let’s behold – our Lord Yahweh keep **His faithful promise through the covenant**, since Adam... Abraham... Moses... David... to Jesus, as revealed by the following passages:

- Genesis 3:15. “And I will make enemies of you and the woman, And of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel.” This passage points out that once after the fall of humanity, **the promise of Messiah - Jesus’ birth will gradually revealed in the Redemptive History from OT to NT:** “The Word Became Flesh” (John 1:1-18) finally reveals God’s redemption act and His victory over Satan by the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Further then, Genesis, 17:4-8. “4 As for Me, behold, **my covenant** is with you, **and you will be the father of a multitude of nations.** 5 No longer shall you be named Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 **I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their**

generations as an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8

And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

- Indeed, by Galatians 3:16. “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.”

- Yes, we thank God that through His redemptive promise ultimately abided in Jesus Christ’s New Covenant by His Body and Blood. (Luke 22:20). With this said, the psalmist reminds us

that “The Lord is to keep us from slipping”, through His everlasting and unfailing love through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord – Yahweh – I AM who I AM, Jesus Christ!!

Application:

- Dear Brothers & Sisters, let’s always remember Christ Alone is to keep us from slipping – our faith being shaken around to our old self and the world; just as noted in 2 Peter 3:17-18. “You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unscrupulous people and lose your own firm commitment, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

From this valuable scriptures, on one hand, we are to truly trust that Jesus is our Savior by His grace, but on the other side, Jesus is our Lord – who is also to sanctify us by the Truth, through our knowledge of Him, and the power of Holy Spirit, as noted in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” We thank God, since pandemic and right into this year, many of our brothers and sisters have been dwelling into the Words of God through group devotions, bible study and reading groups in either Zoom or In-Person at church or home. Let’s keep it up

to experience **the Lord is our Keeper – Savior by His Truth and Grace to protect us from slipping away by the error of unscrupulous people and lose your own firm commitment.**

3. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Protector (v5-6)

v5-6. **Yahweh** (The Lord) is your **keeper** (protector); **Yahweh** (The Lord) is your shade (**shadow**) on your right hand. The sun will not **strike** (beat down) on you by day, Nor the moon by night.

- Yahweh – Our Lord is Your Keeper. He indeed is our Shade. The Original Text, Shade means **shadow**, that by v6 that the **shadow protects us from the “strike” or means “Beat Down”, with like by the Sun and Moon.** From the background context of the pilgrimage Worship Trip to Jerusalem/Temple traveling on foot by days and nights exposed as image reflection to the strike by Sun and Moon, **to release the heat struck by the sunlight.**
- Along this thought, the same original Hebrew word – Shadow (shown in OT 49 times) appears in Jonah Chapter 4, the end of this book:

¹ **But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.** ² Then he prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was this not what I said when I was still in my *own* country? Therefore, in anticipation of *this* I fled to Tarshish, since I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, and One who relents of disaster. ³ So now, Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” ⁴ But the Lord said, “Do you have a good reason to be angry?”

⁵ Then Jonah left the city and sat down east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the **shadow** (shade), until he could see what would happen in the city. ⁶ So **the Lord God designated a plant**, and it grew up over Jonah to be a **shadow** (shade) over his head, to relieve him of his discomfort. And Jonah was overjoyed about the plant. ⁷ **But God designated a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered.** ⁸ And when the sun came up God designated a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head so that he became faint, and he begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, “Death is better to me than life!”

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, *even* to the point of death!” ¹⁰ Then the Lord said, “**You had compassion on the plant, for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.** ¹¹ Should I not also have compassion on **Nineveh**, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people, who do not know *the difference* between their right hand and their left, *as well as* many animals?”

- As most of us knowing the context of book of Jonah, the Lord - Yahweh called Jonah to prophesy in Nineveh to repent from its wickedness. However, in the whole book, Jonah with his own sense of will is running opposite of God’s will to flee to opposing direction. **Then the Lord designated a plant incident as a shadow to protect from the heat, but also designate a worm to attack the plant, to convey a strong message on Lord’s heavy compassion on Nineveh.**

Application:

- Dear brother and sisters, in the complex dimensions of daily life, we of course praise to our Lord in times when things are working out by His providence and protection, like our sickness being healed, our next job hunting smoothly transited once being layoff from our old job, our all kinds of relationships being working out... **But how about things become messy? We probably quickly ask – Where is our Lord? Why isn’t He protecting us?**

- Dearest, from Jonah’s example, let’s all remember that our **Ultimate Protection** is in our Savior Lord Jesus Christ, who is bringing all God’s children unto **His Eternal Protection under His Cross to the Glorious Kingdom of God – expecting into the New Heaven and New Earth!** With this said, our Lord calls us “If anyone wants to come after Me, he **must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**” **As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to deny ourselves, take up our individual cross to follow our Lord – Yahweh, who is our Keeper, our Helper, our Savior, and our Protector under the will of God!**

- This recalls me one of my favorite classic hymns – “Beneath the cross of Jesus” by Elizabeth C. Clephane, the 4th Stanza:

I take, **O cross**, **Thy Shadow** for my **Abiding place**;

I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face;

Content to **let the world go** by to **know no gain or loss**,

My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the Cross.

- We should all thank to our Lord: **Under the Shadow and Protection of our Lord’s Cross**, He is our Abiding place where we seek His face to shine upon our darkness... **our worldview value and sinful self are in the progress of Un-Protected under the Shadow of Cross** to wash away all our shame, and only the Cross of Jesus is our Glory!!

4. The Lord is Your Keeper, as Shepherd (v7-8)

v7-8. **Yahweh** (The Lord) will **keep** (protect) you from all evil; He will **keep** your soul. **Yahweh** (The Lord) will **keep** (guard) your going out and your coming in From this time and forever.

- Here, the last two verses of this Psalm confirm us the Lord – Yahweh is Your Keeper, to keep you from all evil, to sanctify us into goodness against evil. He is to Keep your **Soul**, as noted in Genesis 2:7, “Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a **Living Soul**.” **Our Lord will keep you going out and your coming** – i.e., our daily living in from this time and forever!

- All these highly relate the similar message by Psalm 23, that **The Lord is our Keeper, as Shepherd:**

¹ **The Lord is my shepherd,**
I will not be in need.
² He lets me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me beside quiet waters.
³ **He restores my soul;**
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 For the sake of His name.
⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
 Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
 You have anointed my head with oil;
 My cup overflows.
⁶ Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life,
 And **my dwelling will be in the house of the Lord forever.**

- Thank to our Lord, we are as the sheep and He is our **Shepherd**, who is to faithfully **keep and protect us from evil and restores and preserves our soul**, and so bring our **dwelling into the house of the Lord forever!**

Conclusion & Application

As we conclude this Psalm, the Lord is our Keeper, as is our Helper, as is our Savior, as is our Protector, He in fact is our Shepherd: as Jesus proclaims, **“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, so then to grant us having life and having it abundantly!”** John (10:10b-11)

Last, let me share a Pastor’s testimony as an inspiration to end this message. He is my shepherding pastor when I was young in Hong Kong; and now he serves as vice president in Alliance Bible Seminary in Hong Kong. Recently. I am so encouraged and struck by reading his

deep reflection of losing his young son in 2021. During the three years serious illness of his son, he shares that God allows him to experience that He is the Shepherd. He learn that God kind of Un-protects his son but under His Eternal Salvation Plan – He is his personal Keeper, who is to help, who is to maintain his sole faith in Jesus Christ at Savior, and who is to protect His whole family in His Eternal plan embraced into His glorious Kingdom. And truly, He is his one and only one Shepherd, to lead him experience that he will not be in need anything!

Dear brothers and sisters - let's bless each other in our daily prayer to convict that the Lord – Yahweh, Jesus Christ is our Keeper!