

Good help is hard to find. I got a puzzle board for my birthday. It is a large board you do puzzles on with drawers for sorting piece. The best part is that you can put the puzzle away to get your table space back. I love doing puzzles and I have two helpers who are varying levels of help. Neither of them love sorting the pieces even though it makes the process go faster. Calvin, who is four, has surprised me by how helpful he is. If you give him a couple pieces that go together he can figure them out. He often finds pieces on his own in ways I don't know how. Grant is no less enthusiastic but less helpful. He mostly loves to take the pieces I have put together apart and then tries to put them back together. He is only two and he can be forgiven for not being a lot of help in a 1000 piece puzzle of flowers. Sometimes it can be cute and fun when your help isn't quite so helpful. But when you really need help, you need good help.

Because sooner or later all of us need help. We are too sick to get out of bed. We have unexpected emergencies and aren't sure how to pay the bills. Problems at work arise and we need more than just us. We need help but good help can be hard to find. But there is good help always available to us. There is a great tree under which we can always find shade.

This morning we are going to study Psalms 121. This Psalm will show us where we can find good help.

Point 1: Look to God for help (v. 1-2).

Before we go much further I want to talk about the Psalms of Ascent. You may notice that at the top of Psalm 121 it has a small heading.

In the Psalms,

these headings usually give us more background on the song.

They may tell us who wrote it,

or the circumstances under which it was written.

This Psalm simply says **"A song of ascents."**

It is not the only Psalm with this heading.

Psalms 120-134 all being by saying **"A song of Ascents."**

Sometimes they are referred to as the Psalms of ascent.

Four were written by David (122, 134, 131, and 133),
one by Solomon (127),
and the other ten were penned by anonymous authors.

Most likely this refers to the pilgrimage to and from Jerusalem.
Jews would have traveled to the temple several times a year during
festivals like Passover, Unleavened Bread, Weeks, or Tabernacles.
And Jerusalem was located on a hill.
They would have sang and prayed them as they ascended.

Jewish oral tradition says these songs were related to the fourteen steps
between the court of women and the court of Israel.
It is possible the Levite singers sang a psalm on each step as they slowly
ascended closer to the temple.

I want you to keep this context in mind as we look at these Psalms over the
next four weeks.
Imagine yourself walking through the hills of Jerusalem on a journey.

In verse 1 the Psalms says, **"I lift my eyes to the hills."**

You can imagine them singing this

while lifting their eyes and looking at a hill.

But for these travelers, the hills are a place of possible danger.
There are plenty of people who live a long way from Jerusalem.
It will take them days or weeks to travel there.

And they don't know what lies over the next hill.

There will be small challenges like the physical exertion the journey
requires.

There will be the challenge of having enough food and water.

There is the challenge of finding a safe place to set up your tent for the
night.

Anyone who has traveled with children knows how hard that can be.

I can only imagine how much harder it was when you couldn't strap them down in a carseat to keep them trapped.
And there is the very real danger of being attacked on the road.
Robbers and bandits often attacked people.
This is why you wanted to travel in a large group to stay safe.
And festival times whenever everyone is traveling on the road would be especially dangerous.

Maybe you have felt that uncertainty before.
Maybe you felt it before taking a long trip.
Or maybe you felt it when you just look at the future.
You look ahead in your life and see danger.
The unknown of what will happen after graduation.
The unknown of what will happen when I send my son to kindergarten.
The unknown of what will happen if you sell the business or retire.
What will happen when I can't live alone anymore?
When we look to the hills we cannot see the other side.
And what might be on the other side scares us.
We wonder who can help us.

Our Psalm wonders the same thing

"From where does my help come?"

Who is going to help them on the journey?
Who will keep them safe from robbers?
Who will keep their cattle and animals from harm?
Who will keep them from lions or wolves on the road?

Another way to think about this verse is to ask yourself.
Where do you go when you need help?
When you are in trouble, frustrated, or overwhelmed, where do you go?

We go to all sorts of different places for help.

Many of you go to yourself for help.

Or you prefer to say that you don't need help.

You hate asking for help.

Or maybe you say things like, "I don't want to bother or inconvenience someone else."

You might not even want to tell people your prayer request because you don't want to seem like you are in need.

Because every single prayer is a cry for help.

And a prayer request is asking others to join your cry out to God for aid.

But the reality is you look to yourself for help.

You believe that you are strong enough or able enough to help yourself.

This kind of attitude might make you a great independent person,

But it will not make you a good Christian.

Because you cannot be a follower of God if you think you don't need Him.

Verse 2, ***"My help comes from the LORD,"***

This is our answer.

This is the one who can help us.

If you are a Christian, then your help should come from God.

You should be looking to Him for help.

Don't depend on your own abilities, depend on God.

Other times we might just depend on others.

We look to people or organizations to help us first.

We try to problem solve instead of praying first.

Or we can look to our addictions or idols to help us.

We run to food to make us feel better.

We run to alcohol or drugs to numb us when we feel overwhelmed.

Pornography becomes our helper when we feel lonely.

There is no end to the place we look to for help.

But as Christians, we should look to the LORD.

God is our helper.

The word for help here does not just mean an assistant.
It doesn't describe Grandma's little kitchen helpers.
It also describes when you are in a life or death situation.
When everything is falling apart and you need help.
That is the kind of help that God is.
He is our helper in our most dire and extreme circumstances.

And who better to help than God?
Look at the rest of the verse.

"My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

If you are a Christian, then your help comes from the LORD
The word LORD is in all caps to demonstrate that this is the YWH.
Our help comes from the I AM.

And the I am is the Creator.
The God who made heaven and the earth.
Our help comes from the God who fashioned us in our mothers womb.
Our help comes from the God who has numbered the hairs on our heads.
Our help comes from the God who made the sun and the stars with His hands.
Our help comes from the God who designed every line in your fingerprints.
Our help comes from the God who created every flower and tree.
The God who created each color that gives life to our world.
The God who created sounds.
 Who made the sound of a baby's laugh.
 Or of a symphony.
The God who wrote your DNA.
The God who made the light shine with just a word.
That God is your help.
Why would you look to anyone else?

But how can we do this?

How can we look to God for help.
Quite simply we do this by prayer.

Prayer by definition is a cry for help.
Every single prayer is admitting that we need help.
For some of us the reason we don't pray enough is because we don't think we need help.
We need to pray.
You don't have to have long flowery prayers filled with great theology.
You can simply cry out, "Jesus help!"
Or "Christ have mercy."
Some of my shortest ones are just saying, "Jesus."

Prayer is how we lift our eyes.
We lift them up above the hills of our troubles.
We lift them above the horizon.
And lift them to the heavens to petition our Savior.
Our God who is our help.

[transition] Because He is the only one who provides true help.

Point 2: **Because He is a good helper (v. 3-7).**

It can be hard to find good help.
If you have ever run your own business,
Or if you have ever had to hire people before,
Then you know how difficult it can be to find good help.
But God is a good helper.
He is the best you could ever find.

And the rest of the Psalm tells us why.
Some scholars believe there are two speakers in the Psalm.
We have the pilgrim in the first two verses looking up at the hills worrying about his journey.

And then the rest of the verses are the priest encouraging and reminding them of the truth about God.

Verse 3, **"He will not let your foot be moved;"**

Picture the image of God keeping us from slipping.

He will walk with you as you climb up that hill.

It will be like your cane or walking stick that keeps you from falling.

God will hold your hand like a parent holds a toddler's hand so they can make it up the stairs.

Your foot will not slip while God watches.

And if you're climbing up a mountain,

whether it is the one Jerusalem sits on or the mountains that you have to climb in your own life,

God will not let your foot be moved.

Notice how he says that.

It is not just that God will hold your hand.

It is that God will not allow your foot to go where He doesn't want to go.

Proverbs 16:9 tells us that, "we can make our plans but God determines our steps."

God will not let you put your foot down anywhere that he doesn't want to go.

Our God is a good helper.

Verse 3, **"He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel, will neither slumber nor sleep."**

Now why all this talk about sleep?

And what does it mean that our God does not need to take a nap?

In their day when you were on a journey you needed someone to keep watch.

Someone had to be willing to be the Watchman.

And their job was to keep everyone safe.

They would do so by keeping their eyes at the horizon.

They would be on the lookout for robbers thieves or other armies.
They would scan and look for Bandits.
So that if they saw them, they could Shout and yell and arouse everyone.

Now that isn't a particularly difficult job.
It's a lot of standing around.
But it does require that you are awake.
And the time you most need someone to keep watch is at night.
Especially when you're traveling because that is when you are most vulnerable.
And it would be hard to stay up all night looking out in the darkness just in case someone came.

You can understand why somebody might fall asleep.
Or why they might just rest their eyes.
They're not sleeping they just closed them for a moment.

But God will not fall asleep.
He will be awake the entire time.
He will keep you.
He will guard you.
He will watch over you with an attentive eye.

It'll repeat it twice.
The God who keeps Israel, does not slumber, does not sleep, does not close his eyes just for a moment, he does not look away, he watches you.

My children are at the age now where they often shout out watch me
Daddy.
And it's fun the first couple times.
But by about the 15th time they want me to watch them do the same thing
I'm trying to get out of it.
They ask if I'm watching,

that as soon as they're back turns I look away and get back to the work I'm doing.

That is not what God does with us.

God Is Watching You.

His eyes are on you.

He will keep you safe.

Verse 5, **"The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand."**

This picture is not just God being our right hand man.

It seems to be a military image.

Most people right handed which means in the right hand they would hold the sword and in their left hand they would hold a shield.

It's not that their left side was protected well but the right side could be vulnerable.

Here this is saying that God will stand at your flank to protect your weak side.

God will watch over your blind side and your blind spots.

God will watch your back and will keep you safe.

Verse 6, **"The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night."**

Our God is our keeper and our watchman.

He is also our shade.

If you've ever been outside in the heat of the summer you know how important it is to have shade.

Shade can be the difference of 20 or 30 degrees on some days.

We just spent a couple days at the beach with Brianna's family and it reminded me of the importance of shade.

Brianna's working one morning so I packed up and got the boys ready to go down to the beach just us men.

We got all the chairs and the snacks and everything we needed.

And so I began to set up this fancy thing that they have for shade.
It's one long tent pole that curves and sticks into the sand.
And then the wind blows it and keeps it up so that you have lots of shade
and plenty of room for the boys to build their sand castles for me to lay
down.
There's only one problem in that morning.
It wasn't any wind.
And because there wasn't any wind,
we didn't have any shade.

This verse tells us that God is our shade.
We don't need to depend on the wind the weather or her own ability to
plane correctly for going to the beach.
God himself will keep us safe from the Sun.

It won't strike us or hurt us or burn us.
It is a picture of God standing over us holding an umbrella.

He will also protect you at night.
Evil often reigns in the dark when the moon is out.
Night is the most dangerous time.
It is also just cold out in the wilderness at night.
But God will keep us safe.

Verse 7, **"The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life."**

It's promises that God will keep evil at bay.
He is the one who will fight it and resist it.
He is the one who holds our lives in his hands.

An objection that we have is that sometimes evil does find us.
Sometimes death comes to those we have prayed for God to save.
Sometimes sickness and it's evil comes.
Sometimes Satan gets into our families and we can watch as he wrecks
lives.

So how can this verse be true?

Well, first we need to recognize the genre that we're reading.

These are the Psalms.

These are prayers and spiritual reminders.

But also we need to recognize the end of the story.

We are only in the middle chapters.

Even if you're older and you wonder if you might be getting to the end of your life, you are only in the middle stages.

Really your story is not yet even begun.

The promise that we have in Jesus Christ is that death does not win.

God will keep us from all evil because when we die, those who have put their faith in Jesus will be kept from hell and sins grasp.

You'll be set free from wickedness and evil forever.

And God will keep your life.

Death itself will not be able to take you out of God's hands.

To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ.

In our lives it might look like evil is winning.

God has not kept his promises.

But he has

and he will.

Because our God is a good helper.

Point 3: He always has been and always will be (v. 8).

God has always been a good helper to His people.

It is a part of His very nature.

It is just who He is.

From the very beginning of time He has helped His people.

And He has not changed and He will not stop.

Verse 8, **"The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."**

I think the going out and coming in refers to Jerusalem.

It describes the journey to and from the temple to make sacrifices and to worship.

It is a prayer that God will watch over those pilgrims.

Now we may not make pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

Though many of you have been to Israel and may hope to go again.

But every Christian is a sojourner.

We are strangers here.

We are citizens of another kingdom.

We are just passing through.

And as we pass through this life we need help.

We will need help with our work.

We will need help with our kids or grandkids.

We will need help with the evil in our world.

We will need help knowing how to have hope.

We will need help as we try to resist the pulls of our culture.

We will need help resisting temptation to sin.

We will need help as we die.

And the promise is that God will do so from now to forevermore.

He watched over us as we came into this life.

He will watch over us as we go out of it into the life to come.

We can trust our God to be faithful to us in the future because this is what He has always been.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

I want to remind you of some of the times God has kept His people.

Because each story in the Bible of God's faithfulness and help to his people reminds us that that same help is available to us.

It reminds us of who the God that we pray to is.

It reminds us of what the God that we pray to does.
It tells us what we can expect when we look to our God for help.
Remember Abraham who was a wandering pilgrim.
God called him to leave his family his people his place and everything that he knew behind.
God said come follow me and I will be with you and you're coming and you're going now and forever more.
And Abraham never saw the city that was coming,
Yet, God kept his word.
And now people an Ocean away are blessed because of Abraham's faith.

God kept Israel safe as they grew in captivity.
God redeemed them out of slavery in Egypt and he said I will take you to a Promised Land.
And even though they had to wander to and fro in the wilderness for 40 years God watched over them.
God fed them and gave them water daily.

Let me remind you of some different places in scripture where people lifted their eyes to look to the Lord for help.
When Abraham had to sacrifice his only son he lifted up his eyes, and he saw a ram caught in the thick.
He saw a substitute sacrifice that could die in the place of his son.

In Exodus 14 Israel lifts up their eyes to the hills and they see Pharaoh in his army coming to drag them back to slavery.
Even though they are trapped with the Army on one side and the Sea on another they lift their eyes again and see that the Seas have parted.
They walk across on dry land while Pharaoh and all his armies drown.

While Joshua is outside the famed City Jericho, with its impassable walls and it's impressive gates.
He lifts his eyes and sees the commander standing with a great sword.
He sees the angel of the Lord which I think is Jesus before His incarnation.

Jesus tells him that those walls are going to come tumbling down. They just have to March around a couple times blow their trumpets lift their eyes and see the kind of help God will bring.

Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride was cursed to live like an animal and to lose his mind for many years.

But when he finally humbled himself and lifted his eyes to the heavens, then he was restored.

He not only got his mind back but he got his kingdom back because he lifted his eyes to God for help.

When the prophet Zechariah lifted his eyes he saw incredible visions the future.

When Jacob lifted up his eyes after sleeping on a rock he saw angels descending and ascending up to heaven.

The prophet Elisha was surrounded by chariots for the king of Aram.

And his disciple looked at him and said what do we do Master?

Elisha told him they are far more on our side than on theirs.

And then Elisha told us disciple to lift his eyes to the heavens.

When he lifted his eyes up they were opened and he saw the Chariots of Fire and the angel Army that was around them.

Now lifting your eyes to the heavens,
looking to God for help might not always save you from harm.

The Chariots May Come,
the diagnosis maybe what you feared it would be,
but our God's help does not stop in this life.
Because our God can save you even from the grave.

This is what Stephen knew.

Stephen was the first Christian martyr.

He was stoned for his faith by the man who would become the Apostle Paul.

He gave an incredible sermon

instead of an invitation he got a lynch mob.

But as those rocks pelted his body.

As they hit his head and the blood Spilled Out.

As he lay on the ground dying he lifted his eyes to the heavens.

And he saw Jesus at the right hand of God.

With his dying breath he forgave those people who were murdering him and he fell asleep and went to Jesus.

Perfectly at peace because his help came from the Lord.

That same help is available to anyone who would look to Jesus and to Jesus alone.

There is no other place that can save you from death.

There is no other God that can save you from your sins.

There is no other religion or personal Improvement program that can save you from yourself.

All of us desperately need Jesus.

You need them for your salvation and you need them for everyday after that just to survive.

He is here and he is ready to help if you would just look.

If you're not a Christian I invite you to lift your eyes to the heavens and to look to Jesus for help.

Ask him to save you.

Admit that you cannot do anything on your own.

Admit that you are a sinner who is in need of Salvation and you will find it.

And if you are a Christian stop trying to do it on your own and look to Jesus.

Look to Jesus.

Lift your eyes to the heavens and let God help you.

Because he's just waiting for you to ask.

And he's not mad at you.

He will not condemn you for making such a mess of it instead of asking for help.

As soon as you ask for God's help in faith.

He will smile at you his face will shine upon you and his help will come.

Just ask.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Look to God for help. Because God is a good helper. He always has been and He always will be.
2. Psalms 121 has reminded us that good help is actually not hard to find at all. If we are just willing to look up. Lift your eyes up to the heavens, because your help comes from the LORD.