

Home Group Notes 2

Psalm 121

In God's keeping

****Context**

Psalm 121 is a popular psalm in this part of the world. It's often chosen for funeral services. Again we'll go *context* then *text* then *application*: The straightforward context is given with the psalm as 'a psalm of ascents'. The ascents refers to 'going up' to Jerusalem. So it's a song for the journey of the OT people of God to the big Jewish festivals.

1. The last part of the journey was particularly dangerous, the uphill road through the forbidding Judean hills. Jesus used this route as an illustration of a likely place to get mugged in Luke 10:30-37. Are there particular times or places where you are especially aware of danger and the likelihood of a need for help?
2. The previous psalm is the first of the psalms of ascents. It is a reflection on how living in this world can be made an unpleasant experience for a faithful person of peace by others who hate peace. Is this a helpful context for understanding Psalm 121?
3. ****Text and application Read Psalm 121**
Who do you turn to for help when you are in danger?
Are you good at turning to God? If the Lord is the maker of heaven and earth (and us!) is there a better person to turn to?
4. How many times is the word 'keep' used in Psalm 121?
So what might be the main theme of Psalm 121?
5. Have you ever relied on someone to keep watch and then found them asleep or absent? Remember Jesus and his disciples in the Garden on their last hour together before his death? Many are not good at staying constantly awake for us 24/7, but in v.3-4 the psalm says God is. Have you been aware of God keeping you 24/7?

6. Have you ever looked for help from someone and found them to be rather at arm's length?
7. Help works much better when people are with us and close to us. How do you try to be close by in your helping of others?
8. How close is God's help described in v.5-6?
9. Sometimes we need help from real danger – e.g. the sun on a journey to Jerusalem. Have you been aware of the Lord keeping you from real danger?
10. Sometimes we need help from imagined danger. E.g. moonshine for those OT pilgrims. Do you have things in your imagination that plague your thoughts at night? Have you been aware of the Lord keeping you from imagined danger?
11. Does the Lord always keep us safe from such dangers?
Does the Lord keep us from all evil (v.7)?
12. Given the violence of this world and the animosity of many people it would be a surprise if this were always true in this world (remember the context of Psalm 120). But maybe the psalm is not just talking about this world. How can God keep us through all our comings and goings, both now and forevermore? Are you aware of this comprehensive keeping from the Lord?
13. Can anyone else provide help as comprehensive as this?
14. Do you sing songs on journeys? Are they songs which minister to you like Psalm 121 ministered to the OT pilgrims 'going up'?
15. What is your favourite psalm and why? Could one or two more of you read it out and tell the group? Is anyone willing to read their psalm at the eagle in church?

Prayer Points

Pray that we will learn songs which minister to our situation however perilous and which genuinely help us be God's faithful people in all sorts of situations
Pray for our nation and her leaders in this time of upheaval and uncertainty
Pray for our musicians and singers who inspire and lead us in praise of God
Pray for our sound and vision operators who enable us to praise together
Pray for all people undertaking dangerous journeys, especially those brothers and sisters fleeing persecution in so many parts of the world