

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

### “PILGRIMAGE: A ‘KEEPER’ THROUGHOUT OUR JOURNEY”

For individual study or discussion

DATE: July 20, 2025

SPEAKER: Frank/John Mark

SERIES: Summer in the Psalms

PASSAGE: Psalm 121

### Family Dinner Table

#### A Long Obedience in the Same Direction

Eugene Peterson

Eugene Peterson wrote the following commentary on the Christian life while considering Psalm 121: “*The Christian life is not a quiet escape to a garden where we can walk and talk uninterruptedly with our Lord; nor a fantasy trip to a heavenly city where we can compare blue ribbons and gold medals with others who have made it to the winners’ circle.... The Christian life is going to God. In going to God, Christians travel the same ground that everyone else walks on, breathe the same air, drink the same water, shop in the same stores, read the same newspapers, are citizens under the same governments, pay the same prices for groceries and gasoline, fear the same dangers, are subject to the same pressures, get the same distresses, are buried in the same ground. The difference is that each step we walk, each breath we breathe, we know we are preserved by God, we know we are accompanied by God, we know we are ruled by God; and therefore no matter what doubts we endure or what accidents we experience, the Lord will preserve us from evil, he will keep our life.*”<sup>2</sup>

- What does this psalm reveal about God’s character? How does it shape your understanding of how God relates to you?

#### PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Hope for the Inner City, strategic partner ministry

#### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Third Millennium Ministries, world missions partners

Identified as a *Song of Ascent* sung by pilgrims journeying to Mount Zion, Psalm 121 was written as an encouragement for travelers on their way to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Today, the psalm continues to offer deep assurance that the Maker of heaven and earth will guard all those who place their trust in him. Our Keeper throughout our journey is ever near, and our trust in him is never in vain.

#### The universal anxiety about our security (v. 1)

For the Jewish pilgrim, “*the hills*” could mean different things, and commentators offer various interpretations: a metaphor for the divine realm where foreign deities dwell, a fear of passing through the hill country where bandits hide, or symbols of hope in their covenant God whose dwelling is in Mount Zion.<sup>1</sup>

- Deuteronomy 12:2-4 and Jeremiah 3:23 describe how foreign nations would worship their gods in the high places on mountains or hills. Read Psalm 2:6, 9:11, and 48:2. On what mountain does the Most High dwell and from where does the Messiah-King come? (cf. Zechariah 9:9)

#### The only source of true security (v. 2)

The psalmist answers his question from verse 1, “*From where does my help come?*” with verse 2, “*My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*” Recall our study of Psalm 115. Israel’s God is not one of the powerless gods of the surrounding nations, but the Creator God “*who does all that he pleases*” (Psalm 115:3). Therefore, he is the only source of true security and solid ground for the author’s faith.

- Read Isaiah 37:15-16 and Jeremiah 32:16-17. In what context is the phrase “*who made heaven and earth*” used by Hezekiah and Jeremiah? How does the phrase suggest God’s sovereign supervision and superiority?
- What circumstances cause you to question God’s ability to meet you in your struggles? How might remembering that he is the Maker of heaven and earth strengthen your faith when trials feel overwhelming? Meditate on Psalm 146 this week.

#### The unchanging character of our “Keeper” (vv. 3-8)

Verses 3-8 emphasize the truth that God’s people are kept secure by his wisdom, strength, power, and sovereignty. God’s watchfulness and protection keeps them “*from all evil*” (v. 7). Even though bad things happen in a broken world, when we look at the overall big picture of God’s work in human history, we see that one day he will make everything right again: “*He will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore*” (vv. 7-8).

- Read Isaiah 61:1-7 and Matthew 11:3-5. Discuss how God’s promises (vv. 3-8) were fulfilled through Jesus Christ.
- How can the truth that God watches over you constantly—day and night—help you face your fears? Why is it reassuring to know that he is always alert and never off duty in his care for you? In 1 Kings 18:20-40, how did God demonstrate to Elijah and the prophets of Baal that he neither slumbers nor sleeps?
- How many times does the psalmist use the words “*keep*” or “*watch*”? Why do you think these words are repeated so many times?
- Read Genesis 2:15. How is the word “*keep*” used? In what ways did Adam and Eve fail in their duty to keep the Garden?

<sup>1</sup> Ash, Christopher. *The Psalms: A Christ-Centered Commentary, Volume 3*. 2024, Wheaton, IL. Crossway. 343-44

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, Eugene. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. 2000, Downers Grove. IVP. 40-41