

## Comforting Assurances For The New Year.

Text: Psa 121:1-8

1) A List Of Such Divine Assurances

Suggested Hymns:

2) Laying Hold On Such Assurances

552, 161, 556, 802LSB (Sheet), 554

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 121:1-8 *<sup>1</sup> I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- From whence comes my help? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup> He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. <sup>4</sup> Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup> The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. <sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. <sup>7</sup> The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. <sup>8</sup> The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are reminded of the fact that life is indeed a going out and a coming in. We go out of an old year, and we enter a new year. We go out of one experience, and we go into another experience. Constantly we are facing changes.

As we stand, facing a new year, many questions arise within us. Christians should be thoughtful on this occasion. We wonder what the new year will bring. We hope for better things. We wish for certain things most ardently. And with relief we think that the new year may bring us new gifts and new successes.

But if we wish to be truly confident, if we wish to enter the new year with a real basis for our faith and hope, we need the comforting assurances of God Himself. We shall find all this in our text, Psalm 121. Let us dwell upon its *Comforting Assurances for the New Year*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. A List Of Such Divine Assurances

This Psalm is one of those which especially meet the desires of the Christian heart. The Psalms are so appealing because they express the deep-seated feelings of the heart, and especially of the Christian heart, and they give expression to the Christian's faith. This Psalm gives us those comforting assurances with which we should enter the new year.

God is our Comfort and our Hope for the new year. He is, first of all, the almighty omnipotent God. He can help. He created heaven and earth with His all powerful Word. Our text says, <sup>2</sup> *My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.*

All willingness to help means nothing at all, if someone does not have the power to help. Many people may stand beside you wringing their hands; they may want to help you when you are sick, or in financial straits; but they cannot.

Not so our God, our Help in ages past and our Helper for the year ahead. He made heaven and earth. This was not the only demonstration of His power and ability, nor the greatest, but creation is an act of God which means something to the human mind, since we grasp concrete matters better than those more abstract.

The heavens, the earth, and all that is in them, the visible and invisible, are all the handiwork of God. Yes, such a God can also help us. Heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He can make, and He can destroy. Scripture says in John 1:3, <sup>3</sup> *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* And in Hebrews 1:3, *upholding all things by the word of His power.* Surely God is the almighty Helper. That gives weight to all the assurances which follow in this Psalm.

This God and all His power is for you. Of what value would all this power be if it were not for you, but turned against you? Great energy can be a blessing, but also a curse. It can build, and it can destroy, as has been shown over and over again in the history of the world and in the affairs of men. All depends on the attitude of him who wields the power.

Blessed are we, for God is kindly disposed toward us. All the way through this Psalm one finds the words "my," "you," "your," and always in an encouraging sense, in the sense that all the help is just for you.

We derive much comfort from this fact. This mighty Helper is for us. He is for us because we are His children. We are His children because He has adopted us as such. Through the coming of Christ, through His suffering and death for us, through His obedience to the Law, we who were under the Law have been redeemed, so that we are adopted as His children.

We do not fear, but cry: *Abba, Father*. Having received Christ we can be certain that God is for us. This assurance gives personal meaning to every comfort of the text. Just listen to Romans 8:32, <sup>32</sup> *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

This God is called "Help." He stands by you and supplies all your needs. He watches every step you take, and without His knowledge and will, your foot will not be moved. You will not slip and fall. This Helper is never asleep. He is always watchful. Often people who watch over children become bored and grow careless, or even drop off to sleep, only to be awakened by the cry of the child they were to watch as he was harmed.

It is not so with God. He sees all, and misses nothing. He is the perfect Watchman, and therefore the perfect Helper. He is your Keeper.

As the shade is a refreshing thought, though often a mirage to the Oriental traveller, when he treads on the parched sands of his country, so God's help is a shade, but not a mirage.

He protects you against the bright sun and the piercing moon-beams. To appreciate shade one must know the intensity of the sun and the moon in Palestine. In a demonstration a man once reproduced the exact colour and intensity of the sun at different times of day in Palestine and cast it over a large relief map. Then one could begin to imagine how fierce the rays of the sun are and can be, as well as those of the moon. Therefore this illustration of the protection of God meant much to the Oriental.

God is also spoken of as the Preserver. He shall preserve you from all evil. There may be many evils we must face and encounter during the new year, evils of body and soul, property and honour. But we are assured in Psalm 91:10 that *No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling*. He will keep everything truly evil from you.

He will preserve your soul. He will preserve all of you. He will preserve you in every way. *The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in.* Certainly these are comforting assurances for the future, for the new year.

Finally, it is comforting to know that these assurances are not limited as to time. They never expire. This means that they will be true not only in the new year, but until the end of time and forevermore. We are adequately provided for in every way and forevermore.

Understanding these assurances leads the Christian to praise God as the hymnist writes,<sup>1</sup>

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.*

As we hear these glowing, powerful, personal assurances of God's help for the future, we certainly should feel a warm comfort heartening us. We feel prepared to face the future. We are encouraged to attempt great things for God and in the name of Jesus.

The Gospel for New Year's Day takes us to the Temple, and we hear the name Jesus given to the newborn Babe of Bethlehem. That was a great event in history, for this name expressed the purpose of the coming of Jesus. He was to be the Saviour of the world. The name and the shedding of blood then, and later during the great Passion, are the assurance from God that He loves us, that our sins have been atoned for, and that we shall be armed with wisdom and power to battle against sin in the new year that it may be truly a new year in our Christian lives, spiritually above all things.

As we ponder these assurances we may ask, but how can I lay hold on these blessings? Let us consider this point also.

## **2. Laying Hold On Such Assurances**

These assured blessings are ready for us. They are ready for the asking. To lay hold on them we must do as the Psalmist did, first of all, believe in them. The fact that the Word of God tells us that these blessings are there for us should be sufficient to cause us to believe in God, to trust in Christ.

The fact also that God is behind these assurances should fill us with unwavering faith. God who created all things, God who redeemed the world, God who has called us by the Gospel and made us Christians, surely can fulfil all the promises and the comforting assurances of this text. Then also, God has an unmarred record of being the Helper tried.

In your life you can point your finger to many an instance in which the help of God was obvious. You have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. God's kind attitude and His love, together with His willingness to help, should inspire faith in our hearts. By faith we can appropriate all these blessings to ourselves.

Then, let us learn from the Psalmist. When he was in trouble, and yes, when he was not in trouble, he always he lifted up his eyes believingly, in prayer, to the hills, that is to the Lord. The hills of which he was ever conscious were the hills of Zion, where stood the ark of God, the mercy seat. He prayed to the Lord. As we enter the new year, may we resolve that this is to be a new year of faith and prayer. Let us *lift our eyes to the hills -- From whence comes our help?*

Whom have we in heaven but God? As we look upward, we may think of the angels, but they mean nothing without the love of God. We may see the saints, but they do not hear us.

Finally, we can see none other than the Lord. Whom have we on earth besides God? There are friends and their assurances, but they are of doubtful value and cannot help us without God.

There is the bank account, the insurance policy, the church organisation, all blessings, but after all, again, you have only God left on whom you can depend absolutely.

Look within yourself. Your heart fails. There are by nature many doubts and many fears there. Without God all is dark within. Finally, again, God is the Strength of our heart, and our Portion forever. God, after all is said and done, is the only Helper, the one on whom we can rely with all our heart, and soul, and mind.

Surely this knowledge about God should cause us to trust and to pray to Him and lay hold on Him. May God grant us faith in a greater measure and the gift of

prayer to lay hold on all these blessings and assurances, so comforting, and so heartening.

Let us resolve this day that in the new year we shall lift up our eyes to the hills, to the Lord, from whom comes our help. He is a true Helper, day and night, and forevermore. He provides the right help at the right time. He is always mindful of us. We are worth more than all the sparrows. He takes care of them. He will take care of us, blood-bought, redeemed, and sanctified souls. Let us enter this new year hopefully, confidently, zestfully, and actively.

Let it be a year of faith and prayer. May it be a new year of devoted service to this great Helper. Let us direct others to the hills from whence comes all help. Let us help others by applying the Law and the Gospel, especially the Gospel, the Word of comfort, to them and their lives.

May we use the hours of trouble, of sorrow, and of suffering that may come to us, as a refiner's fire to purify our faith and life by means of the Word of God. May the forward look be the upward look, the look to where our true treasures are and our affections are fixed, namely in heaven.

When the expedition which was on its way to scale Mount Everest was lost, the report was received: *"When last seen, they were going strong for the top."* May that be the last report concerning us by the friends we leave behind: *"When last seen, they were going strong for the top,"* that is, heavenward.

Now we lift our eyes to the hills, and before us lies the prospect that someday we shall scale these hills and enter heaven by the grace of God, to enjoy the eternal year. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 802 LSB T392