



## 2. Psalm 121: What It Means That Yahweh Is Your Guardian<sup>1</sup>

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Psalm 121 is a treasure of promise for the suffering believer. This treasure centers on a massive truth: Yahweh stands guard over his people. The psalmist celebrates the *fact* of Yahweh's guardianship in verses 1–2: "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth." The psalmist declares the *nature* of Yahweh's guardianship in verse 3–4: "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Perseverance of the Saints**

I was surprised to find that the Hebrew word combination depicting the stumbling step in verse 3 (translated into English as "He will not let your foot be moved") is never used in Scripture of *physical* falling. Rather, all four of its other occurrences use this combination of Hebrew words in a *figurative* sense. In their other appearances, these words speak of someone who is (or anticipated being) overcome by divine judgment (Deuteronomy 32:35), personal sin or weakness (Psalm 38:16), or enemy oppression (Psalm 66:9; 94:18). When the psalmist declared, therefore, "He will not let your foot be moved," he was most likely speaking of the *perseverance of the saints*.

The psalmist is not promising the absence of pain or even failure. But he is promising that, amidst seas of adversity, the elect will remain upheld, not because of their own doing, but because of the preserving hand of God. No one can snatch God's sheep out of his hand (John 10:27–30), and the one who has justified will never again condemn (Romans 8:33–34). What mercy! What promise! The sure confidence we have today that we will remain with God tomorrow is God himself. Thank him. Remain dependent on him. Plead for his sustaining grace.

## He Watches Over Our Souls

Along with ensuring our perseverance (“He will not let your foot be moved”), the LORD’s guardianship also means he is *constantly watching over our souls* (“He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”). The Hebrew of verse 4 suggests a development from what precedes. Whereas verse 3 suggests “your Guardian” will *not* slumber now, verse 4 stresses “Israel’s Guardian” will *never* slumber nor sleep. God “gives to his beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:2), and we are able to rest only because we know God never does. “The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary” (Isaiah 40:28). Yahweh is always awake, always aware, and always watching over his children.

Do not put your hope today in yourself, for were it not for God, you would surely slip. But because of his ever-sustaining mercy, your faith will remain. As asserted in Psalm 94:16–18: “Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? If Yahweh had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, ‘My foot slips,’ your steadfast love, O Yahweh, held me up.”

It is the steadfast love of the LORD that sustains. It never ceases but it is replenished every dawn (Lamentations 3:22–23).

## Look to Your Guardian

Whether your sleepless nights are filled with tears and prayers, diaper changing, or paper writing, God is with you with all the energy and grace you need. Don’t forget him. Look to him at any hour — in the light or in the night. Yahweh’s guardianship means that he ensures our perseverance. He constantly watches over his own.

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<sup>1</sup>This study is adapted from Jason S. DeRouchie, “Psalm 121: What It Means that Yahweh Is Your Guardian,” *Desiring God*, 27 January 2012, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/psalm-121-what-it-means-that-yahweh-is-your-guardian>.

<sup>2</sup>Evidence of the psalmist’s confidence in Yahweh’s guardianship may be seen in the overall outline of this psalm. In verses one and two, the psalmist speaks of his own beliefs about Yahweh’s guardianship. In verses three through eight he encourages others in similar situations.

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