

Psalm Genres (Part Seven): Trust

Supreme Confidence in God

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Religious people talk a lot about faith. That is pretty obvious. It is only to be expected that religious people would talk about faith, and many of the sayings that we use about what we believe come directly from the Bible, obviously, since it is the source of our beliefs. And some of our favorite phrases and quotations from Scripture contain that word faith. I am sure you will recognize all of these.

The just shall live by faith. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed. The weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. A man is justified by faith apart from the law. His faith is accounted for righteousness. Therefore, it is of faith that it might be according to grace. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And now abide faith, hope, and love.

And I could go on and on. I am just going to leave it at eight or so that I just said. There are many more.

We even call our system of belief, that is, Christianity, the faith. It is the faith that we adhere to. So we can see very easily that faith is a central and very necessary concept in our religion. But what do we mean by faith? It is all good and well to bandy about a word here and there in various phrases, but what does this word faith mean?

Of course, many sermons could be preached on that word, and many have. But for our purposes, perhaps a simple answer to the simple question is best. In common parlance, faith is strong belief or confidence in someone or something. Now that is a very broad definition, just having strong belief or confidence in something. I mean, you can have faith in a light switch. That was my dad's illustration of what faith is when he was teaching teenagers in Worldwide Church of God all those many years ago.

You walk into a room and you have a strong belief, you have confidence that if you hit the light switch, that the lights are going to come on. Now it does not always come on. You might be going through a power outage. But you do have a belief that your house has been wired. It is still working, and if you hit the light switch, you are going to have light. Well, you can have faith, too, in a dog like Craig does. And she kept quiet. I think that was good.

You can have faith in your spouse, and that is a good thing, or a good friend that you have palled around with for years. You can have faith in a set of political beliefs, that you believe that this particular way of thinking about how your city, county, state, nation should be run. That is fine. That is your belief on that, on that secular idea of how we rule ourselves, and so, fine. You believe that that is the best way. Or of course, let us take this up to where it needs to be here. You can have faith in God and I hope you do. You can have faith in His way of life and in the doctrines that He has revealed.

So we see that faith is one of those things that can go from the ridiculous to the sublime. It covers any kind of confidence that we might have in a certain thing or a person. Of course, in Christianity, it is spiritualized, and that is my next point. True faith is mostly about spiritual belief, the faith that I am going to be talking about for the rest of the sermon. Faith can be differentiated from, let us say, science in several ways. The most obvious being that faith, this true spiritual faith, transcends the five senses, transcends the way we observe the world and also the scientific method. True faith transcends that, that which we can prove by experimentation.

Faith is based, according to my *New Oxford American Dictionary*, on spiritual apprehension rather than physical proof. We have faith because we apprehend, we understand things on a spiritual level, not necessarily a physical one. But even so, the things of faith rest on evidence. We have that famous scripture, which I have turned to here in Hebrews 11:1. You do not have to turn there. Many of us know it by heart.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

So there is evidence, and faith itself is the evidence.

The things of faith are known through revelation. And we have to believe that they are true without physical evidence and so the faith becomes the groundwork, the foundation of what we believe, that we have faith in God and we have faith in His Word and so we believe, trust, have confidence in the things that come from God, things that He has told us to do. And so behind faith, of course, is God Himself. God stands at the base of faith by various means. As He says in Hebrews 1:1, in many different ways at different times, He has made His invisible attributes and purposes known. Those are the things that are not seen. We cannot see the Kingdom of God right now. We cannot see the Holy Spirit working in us. We cannot see a lot of things that are going on because they take spiritual discernment, that spiritual apprehension I mentioned a little while ago.

We do not see them with our eyes or hear them with our ears or in any way observe them through our senses, but because we have the Holy Spirit, God has opened our mind to these things and produced faith that they are true. Belief.

So we can also actually see things in the physical world that bolster our belief. It says in Romans 1 that creation has clearly revealed God's invisible attributes. You look at a beautiful sunset. You say that cannot have evolved, you know, just by chance, that all these things have come together on this beautiful earth and made that possible. So we know Him as Creator and Designer and the First of everything and He made all of these things come to pass. And we then have faith that He is there. That He is aware. That He is working. That He is cheering for us and a lot more because He has called us to a great purpose. And we have faith that He is going to bring all of that to pass.

I mean, nature, from micro to macro, provides more than enough proof to conclude that God exists, and it should convict us that a greater, higher, supreme Power exists that made all of these things. And *us*. And also crafted the purpose and the means by which we can have eternal life.

But the kernel of His revelation of Himself and His way revolves around a single truth. And that is, God is reproducing Himself. He wants others of His kind. Whether one speaks of it in terms of having children in His image, or

bringing us into the New Covenant, or making us all one in Christ, it all boils down to God wanting to have a relationship with His human creations. The ones He made specifically and told that they could have dominion over all the rest. Whom He said He had made in His image, male and female. And He obviously wants us to fulfill a great purpose. He desires the closeness and loving unity of a divine Family. And He is going to do everything He can to bring that to pass, and because He is God, *He will bring it to pass*. There is no doubt about that.

But central to that relationship that He desires so much with individuals and with all humanity, all who will believe and will also do the things that need to be done in order to grow into the image of Jesus Christ, is faith—from both sides. Not just from our side. We have faith in Him and faithfully follow His instructions. And then He proves faithful to us. He keeps all of His promises. That is the covenant that we have made with Him. He says, "I'm going to do all of this for you. This is where we are going. Here is the law, follow these instructions. And you will make it to this end, which is the Kingdom of God." But He also says, "If you do those things, then I will promise you to do these things." So He promises to heal. He promises to save. He promises to help and guard and protect and care for and bless and do all these things that we have a difficult time doing for ourselves, or cannot do ourselves.

And so it is a two-way street. We have faith in Him. He has faith in us and proves faithful when we do the things that He has said we need to do.

Now, maybe I am just switching words on you here, but the basis of this faith that we show Him especially is trust. Faith and trust are very similar concepts. But we must have trust or confidence in God. And that becomes the basis of our faith, our spiritual faith. Our faith is based on the fact that we trust God to do what He says He is going to do. We cannot see Him or hear Him. But we must trust that He is there and He is caring for us.

We have to trust His judgment and that He is working to complete us in the character image of His Son. We have to trust Him to save us from our enemies. We have to trust Him that He will keep us from natural disaster or protect us within them. We have to trust Him that He will help us to avoid accidents or keep us safe and well within them. We have to trust Him that He

will heal our diseases or help us to endure them. You know, we have to trust Him to save us from our own folly. Because we do a lot of foolish things. We have to trust that we are indeed the apple of His eye. And that He is going to do the best for us in every situation, in love. Trust in this relationship is key. You cannot take it out. If you take out trust, the relationship falls apart.

This has been a long introduction. Today we will be covering the seventh genre of the Psalms that I am going to give you, and that is psalms of trust or confidence. And in these psalms of trust, we will see psalmists crying out to God in the midst of the trials of life. But unlike other psalms where it seems like the psalmist is saying, "Woe is me, I can't take this. I need You to help me." the psalmists in psalms of trust are positive and confident in the midst of their trials. They trust God to hear and act on their behalf. They become affirmations of faith in which the psalmist trusts that his ongoing relationship with God is strong enough to weather any storm because God is going to respond.

Now let me give you a list of the psalms of trust that are in the 150 psalms of the book of Psalms. This is not a very long list. There are eight here. Psalms 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 91, 121, and 131. And these are the ones that are consistently classified as psalms of trust, eight of them. I will give you seven others that are often put or considered to be psalms of trust, but not always. And those are Psalms 4, 26, 63, 116, 125, 138, and 146. So, fifteen of them altogether. The first eight are more sure as being psalms of trust, and the final seven are sometimes classified differently.

I wanted to thank Jared because he did give us one of those psalms that we sang, and that is Psalm 23, "The Lord Is My Shepherd." That is a psalm of trust, and so if you begin thinking about, you know, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He restores my soul, and on and on. You can begin to think, you can begin to understand what psalms of trust are like. They are a lot like Psalm 23.

Now, in each of the psalms of trust, the psalmists declare their personal or national trust in God. And they provide declarations of assurance in God's ability to protect, deliver, or save them, or to do some good thing for them, whatever it happens to be. Now with psalms of trust, the emotion of the

psalm is very important, just as it would be in the more sorrowful of the psalms. In psalms of lamentation, the emotion is very important. In psalms of trust the dominant emotional tone is trust. It is confidence. It is positive and upbeat, and the psalmist expresses little or no fear or doubt. But you can tell that even in the midst of the trial, the psalmist is at peace. He is content because he trusts God. He just knows that God is going to help him.

Psalms of trust typically exhibit three elements. Not all the time; as a matter of fact one of the ones we are going to go through a little bit later does not have but one of these, but, typically they have these three elements.

1. Descriptions. A description or descriptions of the threat to him or to the nation. So descriptions of the threat.
2. They are full of expressions of trust in God. You would expect trust psalms to have a lot of expressions of trust.
3. Descriptions of God's care.

And in these specific psalms, these elements are not laid out in any regular structure. This is a more free form genre, unlike others. One thing that they do have that others may have, but it is particularly evident in psalms of trust, are the striking metaphors that reveal intimate awareness of God's presence and character. So in the poetry of the psalm, David or whoever the psalmist is, brings up these very interesting, insightful illustrations of God in one of His traits, one of His characteristics. One will see today, God is our refuge. He is talking about a stronghold, a tower. And you get that in mind and then you fit it with God and what He does, it becomes very striking. It is very memorable and something that one can rely on, just remembering the illustration. These psalms of trust have a lot of those things in it, and I hope we will see some of those as we go on.

So trust psalms are markedly different from the run of the mill prayers for help in a crisis. I mean, we look at some of David's psalms in the early part, in the first 12 or so, and he is always running from Saul or he is always in trouble and he says, "God, I need your help." Well, trust psalms tend to be very different from those ones. There is one in the midst of all those, or two, actually three might be put in that (Psalm 4, Psalm 11, and Psalm 16) where

he is not complaining or showing his fear or down in the dumps, but he is confident. God is going to save me, you know, God is this, God is that, and I am going to come out on top. Rather than spending most of the psalm complaining or talking about how bad things are, and then he said, "I will trust in God" in the last verse. No, these are pretty much from beginning to end, very positive about where he stands with God, where the psalmist stands with God, and very confident that God is going to come through for him.

They are, they feel confident and trusting, not fearful, not uncertain. So we can say that the defining characteristic of trust psalms lies in their positive outlook and positive response to adversity. They are not only hoping very confidently that God is going to come through, they are going to positively work toward that end. It is not just the *feeling* of confidence, it is actually the doing of something confident or courageous. That they are going to come out of this sitting pretty.

So while they vividly describe the fearsome dangers that they are facing, they counter those dangers, they counter the fear that those dangers may bring in others with the reality of God's proven faithfulness, His divine power, His purpose, His mercy. All those things that God has shown in the past, He knows that God can bring to bear on his particular situation. And so you come away from a psalm of trust with the feeling that God will prevail, whatever happens! He is God and He is on my side!

We also learn from them when we read them that deliverance does not depend on courage that we muster from inside to face these powerful enemies, but deliverance comes by trusting in God's known abilities and promises. There is a lot of this idea of *knowing* in these psalms. You know them, you have seen God either personally or in a pattern of history to have done these things or to have said these things or made these certain promises and because you know God is God, that He keeps His promises, then you can be confident. You know He will come through because He has done it in the past and because He loves us.

So trust then is the proper response to God's proven faithfulness. Like I said, whether we have gone through something similar in the past or we have heard of another example from God's people of Him coming through for

them or we read it in the Bible where He has come through for those people in the past and helped them out of very dire straits. So we know then that trust is a basic but necessary and crucial attitude toward God. *We must trust Him.*

Let us do a little word study for the next minute or two. The word that we are going to encounter in terms of trust in the Old Testament is *batach*, without all the diacritical marks. It is in Hebrew, it is *Strong's* #982 if you want to look it up and study it on your own. But it is a very important word in the Psalms. As a matter of fact, *batach* is found 45 times in the Psalms. You say, well, that does not seem very much, but it is only used 64 times in the rest of the Old Testament. So, that is closing in on a half, two-fifths, I do not know of all of its uses are in the Psalms. But it is a very basic word, *batach*. It means depend on or trust or rely on.

Now in the Psalms, the way that the psalmists use it, this word brings out the implication, as I have used the word many times, of confidence. Or you could even say it brings out the idea of conviction and hope because you trust Him. You trust Him and that makes you convicted that He will do something, confident that He will do something. Or you can say, you hope that He will do something depending on just your level of trust and understanding of how He might work in your particular situation. And this is why the mood of the trust psalms is so positive and expectant. Because you trust Him to be a faithful God, and He does not disappoint. And so you can be happy, you can be hopeful, you can know that He is going to do what is right for you, whether it seems right to you at the time, well, that is a different matter. But He is going to use His judgment to make sure that He responds to you in a way that is best for you at that time. He can consider a whole lot of other things that are going on, details of your situation that you cannot, but He will always respond in love and in mercy.

So the psalmist knows God because he has a relationship with Him. And he knows God will come through for him because that is simply how God is. He is a faithful God and His promises are sure. So even though the world seems to be coming to an end around him, he trusts God. He is confident in God. He is willing to wait for God, as we will see in one of these psalms, because God is going to do what is best. And one can take great comfort from that.

Let us look at one of these. We are actually going to look at two before the end of the sermon. But I want to go to Psalm 62. Twelve verses here. First I will read it. I thought I would start with one of David's psalms of trust. I have been bashing him a little bit about his other psalms where he seems more fearful, but this is one of his psalms of trust. One commentary I looked at called it his testimony of trust in God.

Psalm 62:1-12 Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapor. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them. God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God. Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to His work.

I do not know if you were thinking about it as we came through here, but this is has a chiastic format, that is, it is like a A/B, A2 or A prime, and then B prime, and then it goes back to A again. It has got a strange format in five parts, but it also has two parts. It is another way, another structure, a framework to break it down, but I will just give these to you. Two major sections, if you want to divide it in two, are the verses 1 through 10 which address others like he is speaking to them like a preacher or something, and then the other section is verses 11 through 12, which he actually turns and

prays to God or speaks directly to God. So you have that structure. Within that structure is also this five paragraph structure in which the first, third, and the fifth focus on his trust in God and the second and the fourth between them touch on the actions of his enemies and the carnal traits of humans in general. So, not all that confusing or anything, but it is just kind of interesting the way David structured all this.

Now the psalm begins with a very plain statement. There is not a lot here, I am sure we could break it down more, but it is very plain that he is showing his trust in God. If I can paraphrase, he is saying, "I will wait silently for God to act, to save me. He has shown that He is my rock, my deliverer, and my refuge, so I know I will not be shaken too badly. I will not be beaten too severely [if you want to put it that way]. I'm going to come through this okay. It's just a passing trial. I know that God is with me, and He is all these things, rock, salvation, refuge, or defense. I've seen it before. It's happened time and again, and I always come out of these just fine. So I'm just going to wait here. I'm going to be silent. I'm not going to rail against my enemies. I'm just going to wait for God to act, and He'll act soon, soon enough." So he is very quietly, patiently just showing his faith. He is not going to do anything. He is just going to let God act and fight his battles for him.

And then he goes on in verses 3 and 4 to describe the actions of his enemies. It is kind of badly translated here in verse 3, especially that second line, "You shall be slain, all of you." The ESV has it better. What it means there is that David himself has been battered by his enemies for a long time, like one would batter down a leaning wall or a tottering fence, you know, you try to get it and rip it out, and he is putting himself as the fence. He has been taking beatings from these people, his enemies who have been battering at him for a long time, trying to make him fall down so that they can replace him. This is something happening in the court, probably. His enemies have risen up against him in court. And he goes on to say here that they get together in secret. They consult to cast him down from his high position. But to his face they give him praises and pat him on the back and say, "You're a great king, David," but in their hearts, their black hearts, they wanted nothing but to curse him. So he is saying, this is what I am facing, God, essentially. I am still going to wait silently, but this is what they have been doing for a long time. It almost seems like, well, I have gotten used to it. I will just wait till God passes judgment on them, and I can get back to doing what he does.

Verses 5 through 8, then, is his response to thinking about his enemies. And really, thinking about his enemies has riled him up a little bit. He is thinking about how unfair it is and how badly they are treating him. And so, I want to read this so we can get it again as a response to this, knowing what we know.

Psalm 62:5-8 My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Now you might say, well, verses 5 and 6 look a lot like 1 and 2. What is the difference? How have things changed? Well, they are very similar, but there are significant differences here, probably not well enough brought out in the translation. But there are three, again, differences here than what he had said earlier in verses 1 and 2.

For instance, the first one. The verb wait. He does say that he waits in verse 1, but this time the verb is a command. It is now imperative. It is not that he said that my soul silently waits for God. Now he is saying, "My soul waits silently for God," and for God alone. He is giving himself a command. He is bolstering himself to remain confident in God. The second thing, in verse 5, the psalmist waits not for salvation from God, but now he waits for hope. Notice that in verse 1, he said, "From Him comes my salvation." That is what he is waiting for. But in verse 5, he says, "For my expectation is from God." Or hope, my hope comes from God. I do not know if we could say that his trust is slipping a little bit. I do not know, but he is giving himself a pep talk actually here and he is doubling down, you might say, on his trust and confidence in God. "Soul, wait for God. Wait for His salvation. No, wait for hope that He is going to work for me!" And he gets it.

The third thing that is different in this little section (I do not know if you had noticed this when I was reading through it earlier, I did not notice its meaning earlier when I was putting my notes together, but a commentary brought it out), but the adverb in verse 2 has been removed. In verse 2, it says, "I shall not be greatly moved." That is a modifier. I will not be moved

that much. I will not be severely moved. But in verse 6, he says, "I shall not be moved," but much more confident, much more positive. It really suggests I will not be moved *at all*. I am going to be planted right here. I am going to wait for God, and He is going to do what needs to be done. He will be my hope.

So, those three changes make this section a confident exclamation of hope that God will fight his battle. Like I said, he has given himself a pep talk and now he is absolutely sure that God is going to work for him.

Verse 7 then builds on this confidence as he repeats that God is with him and He is all these things, my salvation, my glory, the rock of my strength, and my refuge. He is giving himself these images again, these illustrations of what God is like. That He is a Savior. He is his light and glory. He is indomitable like a rock. He is the rock of his strength, and He is a refuge to run to in times of trouble. So you can see how he is using this to convince himself and bolster himself that God is going to act, and He is going to act in his behalf, for his benefit.

And then in verse 8 we get to an exhortation to those who are around him, those who are listening to him, those who may be going through the trial with him. "Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah." Consider this. Think about this. You can apply this to yourself in your life as well. So he says, trust in Him always, never fail in your trust in God. Pray for His help. He is listening. He wants to hear you. He wants to hear what you are going through. And He equally wants to provide refuge and safety for His people. He is on our side. Trust Him. He says it; His promises are sure.

Let us move on to verses 9 and 10. This is that small section here where he contrasts God's people essentially to the rest of humanity.

Psalm 62:9-10 Surely men of low degree are a vapor; men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapor. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Here he is talking to the people again. Do not compare yourself to those people out there. Essentially, he is talking about his enemies, but he says this is actually broader than that. This is all uncalled humanity that act like this. And he is taking, well, Solomon probably took the cue from him, but this is kind of Solomonic language about vanity and vapor. He says, Those people out there, they are nothing. Jesus called them dead. This is kind of the same thought. God has not begun working with them yet and so they do not mean as much. They mean actually very little to God compared to what He thinks of us and what He is doing with us. Their time will come in the resurrection. But right now, those people out there do not matter.

I do not want you to take this too far, but it is this sense that God is not working with them, He is working with you, so God's eyes are on you far more than His eyes are on them. To God, they do not mean very much right now, but they will in time.

So He is saying they are living lives of futility because they do not have a covenant with God. They do not have a relationship with God. So in the imagery, they are a puff of air, they are a vapor, they are a smoke. Or as, as Solomon said, they are vanity. The ways which he describes here as oppression and robbery and seeking out money, those things do not work. They are not good saviors. They they fail in the end. So he says do not even think about those sorts of things because they will not save you. Even if you have billions of dollars, in the end they cannot save you. They might make your life a little bit more comfortable but in the end, all the the most wonderful things, the things that we should be seeking are from God or come through God. So do not trust in those things. Trust in God. It is always coming back around to that. Trust in God. He is the only one that can really save you, help you, give you the things, the blessings that you desire.

Let us finish this out in verses 11 and 12.

Psalm 62:11-12 God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God. Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his work.

This is the part where the second section of that structure comes in. Now he turns to talking directly to God, and he declares here in the first line that he understands that God is the only one with true power. That makes a big difference. His enemies thought they had power. They thought that they could overthrow David. They thought that if they did their conspiracy or their whisper campaign or whatever that they could take him off the throne and replace him. But David dispels that. He says, "No. The only real power in this world is God. He alone has true sovereignty."

And then he goes on in verse 12 to show that one of the ways He shows His power most obviously in the world is through His judgment, through His position as righteous Judge. So He renders to one justice and to another mercy. The word here is *chesed*, that lovingkindness, that covenant love, and he is showing that there are two sides. God shows His power on the one hand against those who deserve justice because of the way they treated their fellow man, or specifically in this case, he is talking about how they treated David. But on the other hand, He also uses His judgment to show mercy, kindness, love, to those whose side He is on—because they are on His side and they are working together in this covenant relationship.

And so, what you get out of these two verses is that David is saying, "Look, God holds all the cards. Just get that through your thick skull. God is the one with all the power even though the people out in the world don't think that it's the truth. It's reality that God is the only legitimate power. Power belongs to Him. He has it and He could give it or withhold it at His discretion."

So, how do we react to the fact that God holds all the cards? He has all the power? Well, let us not forget another salient fact here and that is, the covenant. We are in covenant with this most powerful God, which means that we are indeed the apple of His eye if we have been keeping up with the terms of the covenant. So this means that if God has the power and God loves us because He has a relationship with us and He wants to make us into His children, what can we conclude? What I have been saying through this whole sermon: Trust Him! Do not doubt! He will work for you because He loves you and He will bring you through these trials.

To me, it seems an ideal trust psalm, so that we can get the feel of what the psalmists are trying to get us to think and conclude about our relationship with God. And it all comes down to: everything is on your side. Trust Him. He has proven Himself. Trust Him. He has written it in the covenant. Trust Him. Why doubt? Why be so uncertain?

Now, let us go on to another one. This is 121. You can see why if you are going through a period of where you are feeling down and a little faithless, find a trust psalm, please, and understand what the psalmists are trying to do and hopefully you will be picked up.

Psalm 121 is only eight verses long. This is one of the earlier psalms of ascent. This is actually the second of the fifteen psalms of ascent. This one does not have a format like the other one. Those things that I said that are often in the trust psalms, not here. This is just one big "I trust God" psalm. Remember years ago I gave a sermon on the psalms of ascent and I said that they could be one of several things, a pilgrimage song, a song that was sung at the feast where the priests would go up one step every time up to the court of Israel and that sort of thing. Well, this one really fits the idea that it was sung on the trip up to Jerusalem, on the pilgrimage from wherever they were, and they sang this song because it is all about God guarding them and protecting them on the road. So it fits that pretty well.

But let us read it and you will see that it speaks extensively about God guarding and preserving them as they go to worship God at a commanded festival. We do not know which festival it was. It was probably any of the three pilgrimage festivals: Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the fall festivals beginning with Trumpets. They may not have come up for Trumpets, they certainly came up for Tabernacles.

Psalm 121:1-8 I will lift up my eyes to the hills [See, does that not seem the thing? You always went up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was up on the holy hill of Zion, so it fits.]—from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right

hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

What a positive, uplifting song! I can just imagine them singing this song in joy as they were going up to the Temple from wherever they were in the land of Israel. One little thing, just an odd scrap of information. The end of verse 2, "who made heaven and earth," it is actually found 456 times in the Old Testament, but this is also in the Apostles' Creed, if you know the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." And it is very interesting that that is the way it is written. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. We will get to that in a minute.

Sometimes, and I do not know why, commentators consider this psalm a psalm of thanksgiving. But I do not get it. I do not see how they could say that. It relates far better to the trust category as far as I am concerned because it is so positive about God doing all these things for us. Besides, there is not one word of thanks in the whole thing. No showing of gratitude, no appreciation, no thanks or thanksgiving. It is all about what *God does*. I am sure they were thankful for those things, but in the specific words of the psalm that idea is not there.

We need to do another little word study. And this is the word *shamar* in Hebrew and that word means guard. It occurs six times in this one psalm, in these eight verses, and so we can say that guarding is the central motif of the song. I think that was pretty clear. It is about God protecting us and being on guard, watching, observing, and that is what this word means. That we see that God sets Himself up as the guard, the protector, the preserver, the One who watches over His people. The help of God's people is God. I mean, ultimately, even though He sets people in places to help guard and protect other people, ultimately the protector is God. He is the One that is in charge, and one cannot have a more powerful protector, more powerful guard than the Creator of the universe, which is what the end of verse 2 says. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He made everything. Top that. You cannot.

There is no one more powerful than the Creator of heaven and earth. And He is our guard. He is right there, protecting us and guarding us and keeping us through every moment of life.

Now in its various forms, *shamar* includes the idea of keeping, watching, observing, protecting, securing, preserving, caring for, and this is the one I like very well, maybe not the best, but I like it very much—clinging to. Very interesting to think of God clinging to you. He is the ultimate clinger, I guess, but in a good way. And the psalmist does refer to several of these meanings or implications in these short eight verses.

So let us start in verse 3 because this is where it really begins to get moving. First, he tells us in the first two verses that my help comes from God. Okay? That is his opening statement. "He will not allow your foot to be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber." I will read verse 4. "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Now this is where the idea of clinging comes in, especially in this first line. The New King James translates it kind of clunkily. "He will not allow your foot to be moved." It is better, "He will not allow your foot to stumble." It probably is in your margin. But what it means, what it implies is God walking next to you with His hand or arm around you. And He will not let you stumble on the road. He has got you in such a good grip as you are walking through the rugged territory of Judah, going up to the Holy Place there on Mount Zion that your foot will never stumble. That is how much He clings to you. That is how closely He protects you.

And then He goes on to say that He sleeplessly watches over and protects us day and night, and not only us but over all His people. We have a God who is right there beside us, and you will never catch Him napping at His post. His eyes and His ears are open all the time, 24/7, and He is always watching out for us.

Let us go to verse 5. We will read verse 6 as well.

Psalm 121:5-6 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

Now the Lord is not only our guard, the one who keeps us safe, but He is also our shade. This is tied to the idea that He creates a shadow over us. And that idea is tied to the way a mother bird acts on the nest for her chicks. She puts her wings out to protect her chicks from whatever comes against them, be it sun or wind or rain or predators, you name it. And God acts the same way with us. When God stands watch, He is all encompassing in His care for us. He covers us in every way so that we will not be harmed.

The psalmist goes on saying the sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. This is a pair of merisms. Remember merisms? We learned about that several years ago, but it is pairs of words, usually on the opposites of a spectrum. And when we see these, we are not just to think about the opposites, but everything in between too. So when it talks about sun nor moon, that is daytime and nighttime, obviously, but it also stands for anything that could harm us during that time. And then he says at the end here of each one of these lines, by day or by night. So God protects us from everything at all times. He is never off the job. And there is no danger that comes up against us that He is not fit to put down, to fight off.

Let us go on to verse 7. "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul." He not only protects us from physical dangers, He will protect and preserve your *nephesh*. That is the word here, soul or life. And a lot of commentators that I looked at thought that this was not just your life, but your innermost being. And they were thinking of, you know, the immortal soul, but I think it is more like your spiritual life. That He not only cares for your physical life, but He protects your spiritual life because of what He protects you from here, He says, from evil. This is the word *ra* in Hebrew. It means evil, wicked, malicious things, things that are evil and corrupt and morally and ethically bad and lead to destruction. So He is not just saving you from a rock slide on the way. He is not just saving you from brigands and bandits coming out of the holes in the hills. He is also saving you and preserving you, protecting you from any kind of ethical or moral evil. Now He does let these things tempt us from time to time. But it makes you think how many of these things He wards off. Because He is all encompassing. He is going to protect us from the things that may harm us, and it does not just include physical things, but spiritual as well.

Verse 8. "The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." The psalm ends with another merism, this time focusing on our every movement and activity. Your going out and your coming in. That is two things on a spectrum. You go out and you do a lot of stuff and you come back in. Everything included between the time you went out and the time you came in. That means everything, all your activities. But He goes on from there. He says not only all your activity going out and coming in, but from this time right now into eternity. He never takes a day off, and He is not going to even stop at Christ's return. He is going to be doing the same function for us in the Kingdom when we think could do the same. But that is how He is. He is a Father of His children and wants the best for them. And He protects them and guards them and keeps them from the time He calls them to infinity and beyond. I mean, that is the kind of God He is.

So what do you think when you read all this stuff about what He does, how unstinting He is in His care for us? I can trust Him! He never leaves my side, in fact, He is clinging to me right now, so I do not have bad things happen to me unless it passes Him. And He does whatever it is for my good.

Now, did you notice, just as an offhand question here, not really offhand, but just something for you to think about as you maybe go through more psalms of trust. Did you notice all the positive terms in this? God is my rock. God is my salvation. God is my refuge. God is my help. Or He *will* do this or He *will not* do this. God *shall* do this or God *shall not* do this. All these psalms of trust do not contain a shred of negativity, especially this one. This one is quite positive. There is not any doubt. And from this specific psalm shines the psalmist's absolute trust in God as a guard and as a protector of Him and all His people. It really picks you up, I think, when you read it. It makes you say, "Yeah, that's my God!"

Let us end in I Corinthians 1. Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians in this fashion. We are going to read verses 3 through 9.

I Corinthians 1:3-9 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that

you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Why?] God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You can trust Him to keep you, guard you, protect you, and preserve you all the way to the end—and beyond.