

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel
Brighton, Sunday morning, 2nd January 1966.

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore".

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Psalm 121. v 7-8:

This is one of those Psalms that you can hardly take a verse out from the context. The Psalm is one beautiful text. The New Year is a time for resolutions, but for the most part resolutions are broken. This Psalm commences with a resolution, but it is the resolution of faith. In the preceding Psalm the Psalmist was among enemies, he was among the sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper. He was in the midst of false tongues, was under the scourge of tongues and he has this lamentation, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar ! my soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war" Therefore, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills".

We have said, and will say again, and if we are under divine teaching we shall know the truth of it, that real religion is not automatic, and therefore, it is well to consider the background of things. There was a reason why David lifted up his eyes unto the hills, and if we take close notice of the exercise of our soul we will find that there is a reason for everything that takes place in our hearts. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills". Jehosophat did the same thing when there was that great host that came against him; he was not able to go against that great host, but said he, "Our eyes are unto Thee". And again in the 25th Psalm, David said, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord". Therefore you will find that everything outside of Christ and the Gospel is in opposition to the life of God in the soul, and the Lord Himself alone will be a Refuge.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help"; and in the second verse he tells us what these hills are - "My help cometh from the Lord" from Jehovah, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. He interprets the hills he speaks of in the first verse. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord". That Lord which made heaven and earth, there was his consolation, there was his hope, and you will trace this same path and this same glorious object of faith, this same refuge for sinners throughout the Word of God. There were those who looking away from the Lord, looking at themselves, at their difficulties, at impossibilities, to their enemies, who came to wong conclusions. They said, "My way is hid from the Lord, my judgement is passed over from my God". They concluded they were in a place now where the Lord did not see them, and that He would not take up their case, their judgement had passed over, the Lord had passed them by. O but the Lord said to them, "Hast thou not known, ..that the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary, there is no searching of His understanding". And that is the same Lord here. "I will lift up mine eyes" away from self, away from this poor crazy world and all its confusion. What a mercy to have a living faith, to have the true light to shine in the understanding. It is to behold things as God sees them. For this world to be made what it is, a dead place, it is full of death, since the fall of Adam. Its pleasures are dead pleasures, its riches are dead riches, there is nothing beneath the sun that can do us any good for eternity; and if we have that wrought in our hearts it will be one reason for faith to lift up her eyes unto the hills, unto the Lord, There is something different there. That which is above the sun and as we were saying lately, everything here below must be dissolved. Everything is in a state of decay, a state of confusion, a state of desolation. A truth that a natural man does not want to believe, he cannot see that that is the condition and therefore he never looks above himself. He

wants no other pleasures or joys than what this world can afford. What a solemn thing it is to live and die in that state. But to be brought to the end, to see the end of all perfection in the flesh, to be brought to the end of self and yet to the beginning of that which is so much greater than self. We need, and I speak this for young people's sake, we need human wisdom and intellect for the things, the duties of this life, and we should be thankful if we have got it, there are many poor creatures that have not got natural intelligence or health and strength. We should be thankful for it, but health and strength will decay, it must whether you want it to or not, and the attainments of this world, although we would wish our young people that sufficient success in life to fulfil their duties, yet whatever we attain to, those attainments must end, and when we are brought to that and faith realises that we must know something different to that which the world can give us. We shall not be here long, and O if the blessed Spirit teaches us our need of salvation and teaches us the vanity of this world, and teaches us and brings into our hearts a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom, a heavenly authority and true riches, not imitation riches.

I have sometimes thought, of course the point we are on is lifting up our eyes to heaven, and these are the things that will bring us to look up, away from the earth. I have often thought that our life is very artificial, especially in these modern days, there is very little that is real. Money is not really real, it is only a token. £1 note or a golden sovereign for that matter, you cannot eat them, you cannot wear them. Take a sackfull of sovereigns for a starving man, it would be mockery to him. It comes to the text, what then, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills", where there is enduring substance, true riches and righteousness, a life that will live when we die. A treasure which is in heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal. "I will lift up mine eyes".

But we need our eyes to be lifted up. They are not natural eyes, the eyes of faith which belong to the new man, "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature", he has new eyes, new ears, a new heart, new affections, he sees anew, he has a new end in view, he lives a new life and these are the eyes of that new creature. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help". So that this resolution is not based upon self, as a natural resolution is, "My help cometh from the Lord".

We read in the 115th Psalm concerning idols; they have mouths but they speak not, they have noses but they smell not, they have feet but they walk not, they have hands but they handle not; and then he declares this, "But our Lord is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased". Faith knows Him. And another thing, "For our help cometh from the Lord" and if our help cometh from the Lord we shall be brought to the end of our own strength, this is spiritually. A man need not be made weak in his personality or in his character, a man may have a strong and a noble character naturally and yet so far as spiritual things are concerned and his soul's salvation, he can do nothing. O I do like to point this out to our young people, the Lord does not reduce people to idiots when He calls them by grace, but He does give them to know this, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches", because they are a wrong kind of riches, they are riches that you cannot buy salvation with, you cannot buy yourself out of hell with them. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom", for the wisdom of a natural intelligence cannot penetrate that which is spiritual. We need a different kind of wisdom, therefore says faith, I will lift up mine eyes where wisdom is, there is my wisdom, my righteousness, my strength is in heaven. A wonderful thing my friends, that through the exalted Redeemer, He of God is made unto His people wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. So that you see the background to this resolution. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth". O what a sight the Psalmist had of the sovereignty of the Lord! of the immutability, of the fullness that is in God in Christ. It is for this reason that he also says in

an earlier Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd". This same Lord, He made heaven and earth, He is my shepherd, the fullness of creation is His, I shall not, I cannot want. Jehovah is my shepherd. He leads me into green pastures and beside still waters, His omnipotent power defends me His grace saves me. "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth".

In the third verse is a change of person. In the first and second verses it is singular number, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills", first person, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth", that is spoken in the first person. But then in the third verse it seems as though there is another person speaking. "I will not suffer thy foot to be moved, He that keepeth thee will not slumber". Well, may the Lord ever deliver us from speculation, but this will have a proper application in two ways as I view it. It was the faith of David that by the Spirit lifted up his eyes unto the hills, and in the third verse there is the response of the Spirit in the heart, His answer to this gracious resolution. As though David would say, "I will lift up mine eyes", the Spirit's response in his heart is this, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," you have lifted up your eyes unto the hills, trusted in the Lord, you look to the future, you have committed your way unto the Lord, He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.

Another application may properly be this, that where this faith is there is an encouragement to others, O that we may encourage one another, especially if we have received help from the Lord, and have we not in looking back to confess with thankfulness, "Having obtained help of God I have continued unto this day" ? and may we not encourage pilgrims, help each other on the road and say, I have received help from the Lord, therefore, He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber. But for personal experience and encouragement I feel that this is the Holy Spirit's response to that resolution of faith, and what a mercy it would be if that resolution is wrought in our hearts.

Some of you may look forward to this year if you are spared, differently, each one according as things happen to you and what you are given to expect, but it will be a mercy if we can so trust in the Lord and lift up our eyes, and as David said, "Unto Thee O Lord do I lift up my soul". If we are enabled to look at this present year and to feel with the hymnwriter,

"I would not long to see
My lot with curious eyes,
What gloomy lines are writ for me
Or what bright scenes may rise;

In Thy fair book of life and grace
O may I find my name,
Recorded in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord the Lamb."

That is the great consideration and that is what faith says when it looks forward, it may be with much fear and trembling. "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth". "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved."

Well, Asaph felt his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped, and again, "When my foot slippeth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up". Well, life is an uncertain path, it is a rough and thorny road to heaven, and we are beset with snares on every hand, but here is a promise, in fact the whole of this Psalm is a promise to those who are walking by faith and living by faith, by lifting up their eyes unto God in the heavens.

You can discern the whole of the 91st Psalm in this Psalm. O what a beautiful Psalm, how safe are the godly ! Those who are in the

secret place of the Most High. Great thing if we are there. The secret place of the Most High is in the bosom of God really. If we were there when, according to His foreknowledge, He loved a people and chose them for Himself, that was the secret place of the most High, and those who were there are in the covenant of grace, in the secret decrees of Jehovah and they shall abide there. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow", under the protection, under the guidance, under the security of divine sovereignty, so that, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. Well, it would be moved -

"If ever it could come to pass
That sheep of Christ might fall away
My fickle, feeble soul, alas
Would fall a thousand times a day"

but He keepeth the feet of His saints. Hannah declared that from her experience, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved". And it is the foot of faith. It looked as though Peter's feet were well nigh gone when he denied his Lord and Master, and under such conditions. There was his Lord, suffering reproach in the judgement hall, His judgement taken away from Him, there He stood, a Substitute for Peter while Peter was denying Him; and yet this was true, He did not suffer the feet of Peter's faith to be moved, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not". What a mercy! Really it was a mysterious way and method by which the Lord eventually strengthened Peter's faith.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved, He that keepeth thee will not slumber". You will notice in the remainder of this Psalm that there is keeping and preservation emphasised. He that keepeth Israel, and He that keepeth thee, will not slumber. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord shall preserve thee, the Lord shall preserve thy soul, the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, and all this, to my mind, is a gracious response in the way of promise to that man whose faith looks away from all and looks up unto and trusts in the living God.

"Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep". Well, He made as though He would, and that at a time when He was mostly needed for when His disciples were in the ship He was asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship. How can we reconcile that with this word? "Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep", He was asleep on a pillow and there were the disciples in jeopardy, the ship likely to be wrecked, and He was asleep. He was as to His humanity, His deity could not sleep, this was for the trial of their faith, and they awoke Him. O what a mercy to have a faith that can awake the Lord Jesus. It is not the faith of a Pharisee. A Pharisee needs no help, he needs no strength, he needs no righteousness, he possesses it all. But it is the prayer of faith that awakens the Lord. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep". "The Lord is thy keeper", and therefore, we read of those who have an inheritance reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation. "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the Father and His glory". O the ability of the Lord Jesus. It is not merely naked omnipotence but it is the ability of His grace. Everything of the Lord is omnipotent, but His omnipotence is exercised through His love, through His grace unto His people.

"The Lord is thy keeper". "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand Here we have Him as He is set forth in Isaiah, "Behold a man shall be a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Now if He is to be that to us we must be in those positions. If we are not in a weary land with a scorching sun, we have no need of the shadow of a great rock. If this is not a thirsty land where there is no living water, we shall not need Him to be as the streams of living water to our souls. O it is important to take notice whether in our profession, in our experience, we can give a reason for everything that

we profess. You will see a reason for everything through this Psalm. "The Lord is thy keeper". O what a mercy! He was the keeper of Jacob at Bethel. I have thought of that Scripture concerning our young people. The text really is, "The Lord will preserve thy going out and thy coming in", but all this leads up to it. You look at Jacob going out, and we read twenty years later of his coming in, and you see how the Lord preserved his going out and his coming in. But this was the promise, the point in the text is this, "The Lord is thy keeper"; "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." What a promise. O I think of our young people, our children and our grandchildren in their goings out and their difficulties. If they go out with that promise it will be well.

"The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night", and we would rightly divide this word if we are able. You remember that there were those who were wayside and thorny ground hearers, and when the sun was risen, the sun of reproach, of persecution, they were scorched, and withered away. But here is a promise to those whose trust is in the Lord, who lift up the eyes of their faith to His fullness, who are seeking unto His grace, that it might save them. Well, the sun of persecution, or reproach shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. There are the dangers of darkness and the wicked love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil; and therefore, it sets before us every kind of danger, every kind of evil, whether it is by day or by night.

And there is this too, "The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night", the sun here might well represent prosperity. O how the sun of prosperity has been made a curse to some, it needs as much grace to live in prosperity as it does in adversity. We need prosperity to be sanctified to us. Or it might also intend prosperity in a way of health and strength. We read of one of old that he was strong until his heart was lifted up and the Lord left him to try him. You take the case of Samson, in his strength. He was enticed by Delilah you remember to give away the secret of his strength and when his hair was shorn he thought he would go out and shake himself as at other times. That is self confidence, O I have thought of this, if we go on carelessly because we think we are strong and because things are prosperous, the sun of prosperity, health and strength is shining upon us, we might take this into religious things, if a man in preaching becomes self confident and thinks to himself, will I have never been put to confusion, I shall find something, and he goes out to shake himself as at other times, but he wist not that the Lord had departed from him, his strength had gone.

"The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night". Adversity, afflictions, disappointments, trials, no, but "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose". Well, this is a long way to come down to the text, but it is a beautiful Psalm if the Lord would put us inside of it and lead us. This is the right way, lead us the right way to a city of habitation.

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil". It does not mean that the Lord shall preserve us from affliction, for many are the afflictions of the righteous, it does not mean that He will preserve us from the evil of adversity, for many of His people are in adversity. It does not mean this, that we shall be immune from sin in our thoughts, in our hearts, it may be in our ways and actions, but it does mean this, The Lord shall preserve the life He has given. Preserve the faith of life in our souls so that evil, sin, shall not have dominion over us to our ruin. As it may well be rendered, The Lord shall preserve thee in all evil, not continue you in it, but preserve you from being altogether dominated by it. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil". "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace". O what a precious promise this is! And if we look down this Psalm and see the

commencement of it, it is the response of the Spirit in the heart to a life of faith. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, He shall preserve thy soul". This seems to take in, to embrace everything, as David said, "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul", therefore, says the Lord to David, "He shall preserve thy soul". Preserve it in life. Preserve thy soul in godliness, preserve thy soul in the authority of His kingdom within. Preserve thee in His ways, lead thee in the ways of righteousness. Preserve thee by supplying thy needs, to lead thee into green pastures and beside still waters.

"He shall preserve thy soul", not from the temptations of the devil, O his temptations are fiery, but preserve thy soul from being overcome so that the Lord, throughout this Psalm is that same Refuge with which the Psalmist was strengthened in the 90th Psalm. "I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God, in Him will I trust". I just name these things and if you are exercised and just look at these two Psalms, you will see a very blessed similarity. We said just now that the 21st verses in the 120 Psalm are in the first person, so they are in the 91st Psalm. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God, in Him will I trust". The remainder of the Psalm is the response of the Spirit and the promise of divine safety and security, of that man that says, "The Lord is my Refuge" and so you will see the state, the safety of the godly through that Psalm under all conditions.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore". O if we had the eyes to see and hearts to feel the love of the Lord in this promise, O how our hearts would breathe out, and seek that the promise might be made over to our dear young people. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in", not one day, not in some things, but "From this time forth and even for evermore. I will be with thee in all places", every one of them, "whither thou goest". And so this takes in every movement of His people. "In Him we live and move and have our being" That is true naturally, it is true of the wicked, the sovereignty of the Lord is over the wicked, in a very solemn way it is against them. "If this God is for us, who can be against us?" If this God is against us, who can be for us? and if this promise is ours then we have a promise from Him who knows the very end from the beginning. He who has appointed all things for us. He who knows the way that we take. He in whose sovereignty, sets every obstacle before us, He who alone can give us faith to submit to every obstacle.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in". We can reverse it, it will still stand good. The Lord shall preserve thy coming in and thy going out and from that point of view with respect to His people, He preserves their coming in at the day of their birth. There is a special providence over His people when they are born. O if we could but consider these things, "The lot is cast into the lap" and a new born baby in its mother's lap, the Lord shall preserve that coming in into this world and thy going out, and every movement, all movements of His people are under the direction and conduct of the covenant of grace. The Lord shall preserve thy coming in and thy going out, and He shall preserve thy going out and coming in, and is this not the order of our lives, a constant going out and coming in. O what a covering there is here. "He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust". And what are those feathers? why, those exceeding great and precious promises, and under the shadow of Thy wings, "Cover thy land, O Emmanuel," from everlasting to everlasting does His wings stretch.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore". O that the Lord, in His mercy would preserve us in our going out this year, conduct us according to the 91st and 121st Psalms, what a year it would be.

Amen.

Transcribed verbatim and
not edited for publication.