

TOTAL PROTECTION (Psalm 121)

By Samuel Pan

Today we live in an unsafe world that is full of harm: either the natural ones, such as flood, earthquake, tsunami; or the non-natural ones, such as wars, accidents, and diseases. They may cause the loss of properties, health, or even lives. Having security thus becomes our main concern from day to day.

In order to acquire security men have sought various ways: such as money, insurance, religion, etc. Where does your security come from?

Ps 121 is a song of ascent that addresses men's security; its theme is **total protection**. Let's see how you and I can have total protection in our unsafe world.

*"Where does MY
HELP come
from?"
Does our
protection come
from any
creation, or any
gods, or from the
God who made
the heaven and
earth?"*

The Content of God's Protection

First of all, let's see what the content of God's protection includes.

Verse 3a says, "He will not let your foot slip." When our foot slips, we fall. But the implication here is more than our physical falling; it could also be the falling in our morality, or in our spiritual life. God's protection assures that though we may fall, he will not let us keep falling--he will uphold us from falling down.

Verse 5b says, "The Lord is your shade at your right hand." "Shade" is a metaphor of protection. "Right hand" represents one's most vulnerable side, because in ancient battle the shield is usually held on the left side, so the right

side is open to attacks. "Shade at your right hand" thus symbolizes where one most needs protection. Though we are vulnerable to harm, God is always at our side to protect us.

Verse 7 says, "The Lord will keep you from all harm--he will watch over your life." "All harm" means all the possible harm. "Life" here includes both body and soul--our entire life, both temporal and eternal.

Lastly, v. 8a says, "The Lord will watch over your coming and going." "Coming and going" represents all aspects of our activities. It means that God will give us his peace in all our coming and going.

What is expressed here indicates that God's protection covers all aspects of our life: physical, mental, and spiritual, including both our temporal and eternal life.

As we may face all kinds of harm in life, the insurance company thus provides various insurances to cover all the possible harm that can occur: such as fire, flood, earthquake, accidents, health, etc.... But even the best insurance policy cannot give us total protection. Only God can give us total protection.

Where does your protection come from? From insurance or from God?

The Characteristics of God the Protector

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TOPPING-OFF January 31, 2006



BSOP Board members leading the topping-off ceremony.



Faculty and Students Retreat at Ciudad Christia



Clockwise from the top, three blind (mice?); games and fellowship, and doing the walk.

FACULTY ON THE MOVE

- ☞ Dr. Joseph Shao conducted the Westminster Student Church Family Retreat last November 30, 2005, and on January 7, 2006, he was the speaker during the Church Council Retreat of the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines. On February 1-3, 2006 he attended the annual convention of the Asia Theological Association in Singapore.
- ☞ Dr. Tan Chiu Eng attended the Biennial Conference on Ethnic Religion on January 9-13, 2006 in Davao City.
- ☞ Prof. Rosa Shao was invited to speak at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Women’s Fellowship of Cebu Gospel Church on February 14, 2006.

VISITING PROFESSORS

The visiting professors who came this third quarter included: Prof. Huang I Ming (January 9-26, 2006), teaching Worship Liturgy; Dr. Stephen Chang (January 30-February 19, 2006), teaching Hermeneutics; Prof. Chen Yung Khun (February 15-March 24, 2006), teaching General Epistles and Family Ministry. The Seminary warmly extends her gratitude to all who give their time and energy to train God’s future leaders and missionaries.

Theological Education by Extension

June-December 2005

Quezon City Evangelical Church	<i>Nehemiah Basic Apologetics</i>	Dr. Joseph Shao Rev. Dennis Yam
Gerizim Evangelical Church	<i>Jonah: Inductive Study</i>	Dr. Samuel Pan
UEC Philippines	<i>Spiritual Gifts Christian Ethics Theology I, II, III</i>	Dr. Jane Chuaunsu Dr. Chiu Eng Tan Rev. Dennis Yam

January-March 2006

Quezon City Evangelical Church	<i>Philippians</i>	Rev. Wilson Go Kiao
Gerizim Evangelical Church	<i>Romans Introduction to Missions</i>	Rev. Dennis Yam Dr. Chiu Eng Tan
Grace Gospel Church	<i>Prison Epistles</i>	Prof. Jay Hallowell
Westminster Student Church	<i>Pentateuch</i>	Dr. Joseph Shao

CONGRATULATIONS

The Seminary is proud to announce that the following faculty members have successfully defended their dissertations during different periods last year: Prof. Rosa Shao (Ateneo de Manila University, Ph. D. in Clinical Psychology); Prof. David Go (Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Doctor of Ministry) and Prof. Florentino Lim (Singapore Bible College, Doctor of Ministry).

“Hindi Kawawa”

The 2005 edition of the *Ang Biblia Para sa Makabagong Filipina* published by the Philippine Bible Society features a devotion written by Mrs. Amor Hallowell, OMF missionary, and wife of our faculty member Jay Hallowell.

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Today each one of us must ask the same question: “Where does MY HELP come from?” Does our protection come from any creation, or any gods, or from the God who made the heaven and earth?

If you and I want to have God’s protection, we must fulfill one condition. That condition is given in Ps 91: 1: “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” “Resting in the shadow of the Almighty” means “having God’s protection.” “Dwelling in the shelter of the Most High” means “living in God.” Only those who live in God will have his protection. Ps 91 testifies that truth. A preacher thus said, “The closer we get to God, the more secure we are.”

That is what Ps 121 teaches. Each one of us must make a personal choice. If I want to have God’s protection, I must trust him, and let him be my protector. Only when I trust God totally, will I have God’s total protection.

Where does your help come from? Do you trust God totally? Are you living in God? Is God your total protection?



Secondly, let's see what the characteristics of God the protector are.

First, he is God of all power.

Verse 2 says, "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." As Creator, God is more powerful than all creation and all gods. As God is all powerful, so is his protection.

When you encounter troubles in life, where does your protection come from? Does your protection come from any creation, or from any gods, or from the God who made the heaven and the earth?

Second, he is God of all time.

Verses 3b-4 say, "He who watches over you will...neither slumber nor sleep."

1 Ki 18: 16-40 records the event of Prophet Elijah confronting 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal were first to choose a bull, cut it into pieces, and put it on the wood. Then they called on the name of Baal to send fire to burn it. Though they shouted from morning till noon, there was no answer. At noon Elijah taunted them: "Shout louder! Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." (1 Ki 18: 27)

It was believed that the pagan gods sometimes would sleep, so they did not always answer men's calling.

Living on BSOP campus is quite secure, because it is enclosed by high walls with barbed wire, and its main gate is guarded by two guards, each taking a 12-hr. shift. It has two shifts of guards because each one needs sleep. With two shifts of two guards, those of us who live on campus thus have 24 hour, round-the-clock protection.

Though the pagan gods and the human guards need sleep, God never sleeps. As God never sleeps, his protection is for all hours. God's all-hour protection gives us the real security.

Third, he is God of all places.

Verse 5b says, "The Lord is your shade at your right hand," implying that wherever we are, God is at our side ready to protect us. And v. 6 states, "The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night," symbolizing that wherever we are God will protect us from all the possible external harm day and night. Ps 91: 4-6 affirms the similar assurance of God's protection:

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

In the tropics, umbrella is used as a shade both from the rain and from the sun. Since the Philippines is either in the rainy or in the dry season, some always carry their umbrellas with them as a ready protection from either the rain or the sun.

Thank God, as he is always at our side, he is ready to protect us wherever we go. Verse 8a so affirms, "The Lord will watch over your coming and going."

Fourth, he is God of all ages.

Verse 8b ends, "Both now and forevermore." He is God not only of all power, of all time, of all places, but also of all ages.

All the security that the world offers is temporary. For example, there is no permanent relationship. Even our family ties will end one day--eventually, parents, siblings, and spouses will one day pass

away.

Also there is no "permanent job." With unstable economy worldwide, one can lose his job at any time. So jobs cannot provide us long-term security.

And there is no insurance that can give us permanent protection. Even "the life insurance" does not insure how long we live, but only provides some income for our surviving family members after we die.

But thank God, though nothing in the world can give us long-term security, God can. As he is eternal, his protection is also eternal. Therefore, only in God can we have the real long-term security, because his protection is eternal.

Do you want to have the one true, long-term security? Then you must come to God, for he is the only one who can give you total security.

The Way to Have God's Protection

The question is: how do you and I get God's protection? That leads to the next main point: the way to have God's protection.

Traditionally, hills and mountains have been the locations where men worship the gods. Even today, men still view hills and mountains as holy grounds; many pagan temples are still built on the hills or on the mountains. Sadly, that was where the Israelites also worshiped idols (Jer 19: 5).

Jerusalem is built on the highland surrounded by hills. As the pilgrims walked toward Jerusalem, they would first see those hills. When a pilgrim saw those hills, he asked, "Where does my help come from?" Is it from the hills, or from the gods? His answer was, "My help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and earth."

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