

Psalm 125

God surrounds his people
A Song of degrees.

Psalm 125: Security in the Lord is the keynote of this psalm, and appropriate theme for pilgrims. It includes a description of security (verses 1-3), a prayer for prosperity (verse 4), and a warning of judgment (verse 5).

Verses 1-5 (see note on Psalm 120:1-7). The author and circumstances are unknown, although the times of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:27-35), or Nehemiah (Neh. 6:1-19), have been suggested.

- I. The security of Jerusalem (125:1-3);
- II. The Spiritual Purity of Jerusalem (125:4-5).

“Crooked ways” are twisted, remote paths, away from the highways; hence the term also means paths of sin, deviations from the straight road that people should travel (Matt. 7:14). The psalmist contrasts those who continually walk the devious route with those who walk in God’s ways. The former will be driven “forth” and separated from God’s people, while the latter will remain for eternity.

Verses 1-2: “For ever”: More than a temporal promise is involved here.

Psalm 125:1 "They that trust in the LORD [shall be] as mount Zion, [which] cannot be removed, [but] abideth for ever."

“Mount Zion”: The southwest mount representing Jerusalem and an emblem of permanence, supported by God’s covenant promise.

Mount Zion is symbolic of the church. This is not only showing the steadfastness of the mount, but is showing the steadfastness of the church, as well. Mount Zion cannot be removed. The gates of hell shall not prevail against God's church. The church may shake, and shake out a few of the lukewarm believers, but the true church cannot be moved. The rain may come, but it will not wash away the foundation of the church, because it is built on the Rock. Abideth means continues to abide forever. Who is the church? They that trust in the Lord are the true church.

Psalm 125:2 "As the mountains [are] round about Jerusalem, so the LORD [is] round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

There was Mount Zion on the side of the north, and the mount of Olives on the east, and other mountains on the other sides of it. So that it was encompassed with them, and was naturally as well as artificially fortified. Tacitus describes Jerusalem as inaccessible, walls and mountains, rocks and towers, surrounding it. Yet, as Kimchi observes, this did not hinder the enemy from taking it; wherefore the Lord is a greater security to his people.

"So the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever": He encompasses them with his favor and lovingkindness as a shield. He encircles them in the arms of everlasting love. He guards them by his providence all around, and keeps a wakeful and watchful eye over them, that nothing hurts them. He keeps them, as in a garrison, by his almighty power. These are the walls that are around them, yea, he himself is a wall of fire about them, and the glory in the midst of them (Zech. 2:5). And so he continues; he never leaves his people, nor forsakes them, but is their God and guide even unto death.

"His people": Those who trust in the Lord (compare verse 1).

If you have ever been to the city of Jerusalem, you know that it is surrounded by small mountains on every side. This is saying, that the Lord is not just in front of you, but is behind you and on either side of you. The true church has the Lord dwelling within them and they are dwelling within Him. He is our strong fortress. We have spoken before about trust going beyond faith. Trust is when you place yourself in His hands, and then know that all is well. There is a steadfastness with God that cannot be moved by the wind, or the storm, or the shaking. To be established in God is to be like the mountain here. Whatever comes or goes, our trust is in the Lord. The longer we know Him the sweeter He grows.

Psalm 125:3 "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity."

"Rod of the wicked": Assyrian rule if in Hezekiah's time, or Medo-Persian rule if in Nehemiah's day.

"The lot": This would be the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21).

There is tribulation for all, and that includes the righteous. This is saying that God will not allow the tribulation to go on so long that the Christian will not be able to bear up under it. There is a breaking point for almost anyone.

Mark 13:20 "And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."

Even the elect, suffer tribulation, but they will not see the wrath. In the Scripture above, it says the rod shall not rest on the righteous. It may come to them, but not continue on them. It seems every day, that wickedness is increasing in the land. Those who truly love God can hardly bear to hear the slander on God's good name. It seems those who promote wickedness are increasing and getting worse and worse. This is the time for the righteous to stand against these evils.

Verses 4-5: The outcome of the upright (verse 4), is contrasted with the crooked (verse 5). The true Israel is distinguished from the false (compare Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-7).

Psalm 125:4 "Do good, O LORD, unto [those that be] good, and [to them that are] upright in their hearts."

That are made so by the Spirit and grace of God; for none are naturally good, but evil. Only such who are regenerated and made new creatures, who have a good work of grace begun in them. Who have the good Spirit of God, and his good graces, and the good word of God in them, and are filled with all goodness. And which is known by the good fruits which they bear, or the good works done by them. For these the psalmist prays the Lord would do good to them. Not only in a providential way, as he does to all. But in a way of special grace, bestowing the blessings of his goodness on them, and causing all things to work for their good. And as saints should pray for one another, or supplication should be made for all saints. Such a prayer as this may be the prayer of faith. For it is not to be doubted but God will do good to those he makes good. Aben Ezra says this may be considered either as a prayer or a prophecy. It may have respect unto the church in the latter day, and to the good things spoken of concerning it; which God will accomplish in due time, and should be prayed for (see Psalm 51:18).

"And to them that are upright in their hearts": Which is a further description of good men, from the integrity and sincerity of their hearts. Who do all they do before God and men, in the uprightness of their souls, cordially and sincerely, from right principles, and with right views.

There is only One Good and He is God. Many Christians are upright in heart. We are what our heart is. If we are to do any good, it must originate in the heart. The psalmist here, is asking God to bless those with an upright heart.

Psalm 125:5 "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: [but] peace [shall be] upon Israel."

The ways of sin, immorality, or error. Which are crooked ways, not agreeing with the word of God, the rule of faith and practice. This seems to design not openly profane sinners, who have always lived in a course of sin and wickedness; but carnal professors, who, through affliction and persecution because of the word, are offended, and desert the good ways of God. And turn from the holy commandment, word, and ordinances, they have professionally embraced. The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; the Targum adds, "to hell."

"Lead them forth": Eternal rather than temporal judgment seems to be in view.

"Peace": God will one day institute a lasting covenant of peace (compare Ezek. 37:26).

These have been on the side of the Lord and have turned away to crooked ways like the people around them. This does not tell us whether they turned aside because of hardships, or whether the lust of their flesh led them astray. The main thing is, that they left their godly way of life and turn to evil. They are no better than the workers of iniquity, if they have given up what they had and gone back into the ways of the world. This is speaking of those who had made a confession of faith, and then, later on thought the grass was greener on the side of the wicked. The way of the wicked and the fallen away is the same. It is the broad way that leads to destruction. Those who remain with God, shall inherit peace that only the Lord can bring.

Psalm 125 Questions

1. What is mount Zion symbolic of?
2. Why can the church not be washed away?
3. Who is the church?
4. Where does the true church dwell?
5. Who tastes of tribulation?
6. Do good, O Lord, on those that ____ _____.
7. Who are upright in heart?
8. Who is verse 5 speaking of, when it says such as turn aside unto their crooked ways?