



## PSALMS OF ASCENT

### Those who Trust in the Lord - Psalm 125

#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Warm-Up

1. What are some things people today look to for stability and security (e.g., leaders, money, jobs)? How reliable are these?

#### Read Psalm 125

2. What's your initial reaction to the Psalm? Any thoughts, observations, or questions that come to mind?
3. How does the Psalmist describe those who trust in the Lord? What picture comes to mind?
4. Why is a mountain a fitting image for God's people?
5. How does trusting in the Lord give us stability in uncertain or difficult times?
6. Read Romans 8:38–39 and John 10:27–29. How do these verses reinforce the truth of Psalm 125:1? How does Jesus fulfil this Psalm?
7. Can you share a time in your life when you felt “unshakable” because of your trust in God, even though circumstances were shaky?

#### Psalm 125:2-3

8. What image is used in verse 2 to describe God's protection? Why is it powerful?
9. What do you think it means that “the LORD surrounds his people”? Is this physical protection, spiritual protection, or both?
10. Verse 3 talks about “the scepter of wickedness.” What do you think this means, and how does it apply to us today?
11. How do these verses give us comfort when we feel spiritually attacked, weak in faith, or tempted?
12. Have you ever doubted God's protection because of suffering, hardship, or personal failure? How does this Psalm speak to that?

#### Psalm 125:4-5

13. How is God's justice and integrity actually a source of *comfort* to His people?
14. How might knowing that God will ultimately judge with integrity help us to endure present injustice or unfair treatment?
15. When you do feel shaky or unstable in your relationship with God, how could you remind yourself of who you are in him?
16. How can we as a group/church encourage one another to rest in God's stability, security, and integrity?

**APPLY:** What does it practically look like for you to “trust in the Lord” this week?

**PRAY:** *Lord, we thank you that those who trust in you cannot be moved. Surround us with your protection, keep us safe from the evil one, and guide us in integrity. Fill us with your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose hands we are forever secure. Amen..*

**TITLE:** Those who trust in the Lord - Psalm 125

**LOCATION:** St John's Wishart 9AM

**BI:** The Lord protects and gives stability to those who trust in Him

**STRUCTURE:**

- Stability - 1
- Security - 2-4
- Integrity - 4-5
  
- I don't know about you, but I've had enough of elections over this past year and a bit.
- I am a self-confessed election junkie and political nerd - but I think I've found myself a bit worn out lately, and a bit pessimistic.
- Almost every election cycle, in every country, at almost every level of politics - people make promises, say that everything is going to be better under them, and at the end of the day - nothing really changes.
- Now, you might call me a grumpy old cynic, and that could be a fair point!
- But in reality, people aren't that interested in minute details of policy making, I think people really want:
  - Stability, security, and people who lead with integrity.
  - Stability, security, and people who lead with integrity.
- People don't want drastic changes, they want stability. People want to feel safe in all types of ways, they want security. And people want leaders who represent them, who tell the truth, who lead with integrity.
- But if people look to politicians for these things - I think they're looking in the wrong place, and are going to be utterly disappointed eventually.
- If people look to other economic leaders for these things - they're going to be utterly disappointed.
- If people look to their jobs and managers for these things - I imagine that they will be disappointed at some point in time.
- But what if there was somewhere else that we could look for these things? Or rather someone else?
  
- Today, we are picking up again in the Psalms of Ascent.
- These were the Psalms or the songs that were sung by the Israelites as they walked up the mountain to Jerusalem, walked up Mt Zion, to join in the various feasts and festivals laid out for them.
- And in Psalm 125 - we get the answer - that if you want Stability, Security, and integrity, there is only one place to turn to - YHW.
- The Lord.
- Those who trust in the Lord can't be moved, are completely safe, and will be judged with integrity and justice.
  
- **Stability**
- V1 "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever"
- How does the Psalmist describe those who trust in the Lord? Like Mt Zion. Cannot be moved. Abides forever.
  - Mt Zion was the place where the temple of the Lord was under the Old Covenant.
  - This was the place where people were ascending up to.
  - This is where they went to pray, to sacrifice, to meet with God.
  - There was stability in the temple worship and in relationship with the Lord.
- And it was on top of a mountain
  - Recently here at St John's, we've been doing some landscaping, moving of dirt.
  - And It's always surprising how many people it takes and loads it takes to shift a couple of cubic meters of soil and sand.
  - It takes forever!!

- Now imagine me telling you to go shift Mt Cootha by a meter across. Or Mt Gravatt. Or Mt Kosiosco...
- You'd think I was being ridiculous!
- Because mountains just can't be moved just like that. Even in extreme weather events, cyclones, storms, dumping flooding rains, mountains cannot be shaken!
- In times of war - the mountains are the strongholds to have the high ground - they can't be moved!
- And everyone who puts their trust in YHW, in the Lord, in Jesus - is like this. We have stability. Nothing can touch us or move us from our relationship with him.
  - If we are in relationship with God through the Lord Jesus, there is nothing that can knock us down from that.
  - Romans 8:38-39 "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."
  - Nothing can take us away from God's care or love.
  - No matter what happens, no matter what challenges we face, no matter even if we are in the shadow of death - not one thing can touch us.
  - Because we are IN CHRIST.
- And if we truly are IN CHRIST, nothing can take us OUT of CHRIST.
- When we respond to Jesus' command to us to repent and believe in him - and give our lives completely over to him - it's almost like we are concreted in place in him.
- Once we are on plane Jesus - there's nothing that can take us off that plane.
- Nothing can shake us from our identity of being in him.
  - No amount of sin or disobedience can.
  - No external factors can.
- And not even death.
- We will (end of V1) abide forever!
- Hear the words of Jesus from John 10:27
  - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
- If we are Jesus' sheep and hear his voice and respond to it in obedience and faith, he gives us eternal life and we will never perish and no one can snatch us from his hand.
- That's the guarantee.
- There's nothing so sure, nothing so stable as our standing before God and our future with him.
- And it's totally secure!
- **Security**
- V2 "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore."
- As the mountains that surrounded and protected Mt Zion - God surrounds US his people, now and forever.
- We have total stability and total security.
  - *I remember when growing up and living at home, when I was around 19 or so I think, Dad and mum went away for a holiday or conference and I was home alone overnight for the first time.*
  - *And it was so strange, because when it was time to go to sleep, I found it hard to settle - but I kept on getting up to make sure that the front door was locked, back doors locked, garage door down...*
  - *And so it went on in my disturbed sleep.*
  - *I didn't feel all that secure!*
- But we can rest in God's security and God's guardianship of us.

- Just stop and think about this:
  - The Lord who created all things, knows all things, commands all things, sustains all things, who is all powerful, who doesn't slumber or sleep or clock off, is surrounding and protecting YOU!
  - He is in YOU by his Holy Spirit!
  - He is always there and always near as we saw in Ps 121
  - Nothing can take us from him and nothing can harm us
- But what does he protect us from?
  - We still see Christians being attacked around the word,
  - We still get sick, and we still face troubles
  - We sometimes feel stale in our relationship with God; we sometimes feel distant and disconnected...what is he protecting us from?
- V3 "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong."
- He protects us from the evil one
- The sceptre was a rod and the psalmist uses it as a symbol of the power and rule of the wicked one.
- But because the Lord is protecting us and surrounding us, because he is our stability, we can be confident that the evil one can't touch nor harm us. Satan can't lay his rod or hand on us, because Jesus protects us.
- Remember again from John 10 - nothing can snatch us from Jesus' hand. Satan can't.
- Yes, we can be tempted, yes, we can be caused to doubt, yes, we will still sin - but plucked away from the Lord? No.
- Sometimes there can be a little voice in our head that seems to suggest otherwise.
  - We can be tempted to think that we don't deserve God's protection. That we are unworthy of God's love because of our continual disregard of him. Or because of our continual sin. Or because of our lack of bible reading or prayer life, or because of other things...
  - Sometimes we can really think - 'Does God really care about me or want a person - a wretch - like me?'
  - It seems almost impossible! Unbelievable!
- And yet - it's true.
  - God loves and protects and cares for you in a way that we can't really understand right now, and probably won't be able to fully understand until he comes again!
- He loves us so much - that he sent his eternal son into this mess of a world, to redeem us back to him. To take the punishment for our wickedness that we deserve, to reconcile us back to him.
- And so - if he's gone to this measure, will he let anything take us away from him after all that? No.
- He surrounds us from this time forth and forevermore.
- The rod of Satan can't rest on us while we are in Christ.
- The wicked, and the evil and those who promote injustice won't prevail!
- Lest we turn to wickedness ourselves.
- Because In Christ we have:
  - Stability
  - Security
  - And we have a Lord who judges with integrity:
- **Integrity**
- V4 "Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts! But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers! Peace be upon Israel!"
- If we do face injustice or potential harm from others - God will judge with integrity and Justice!
- Here, the Psalmist is expressing their longing for God's justice, and trust in God's justice.

- Do good to those who do good. And judge those who do bad.
- Is this some kind of works based righteousness?
  - No - this is the Psalmist speaking in generalisations about how the Lord works!
- Those who trust in the Lord in humility, and do good and serve him - will be vindicated!
- And the wicked who try to uproot the faithful people, or try to destroy them, will be judged.
  - God will exalt the humble, and humble the proud.
  - Where human leaders so often disappoint, hiding scandals, bending truth, God judges with complete fairness. No corruption. No bias. No backroom deals. Only integrity
- The judgement and justice of God is a good thing - as we saw in our final week in the book of James.
- And it will ultimately lead to peace for God's people. Both Jew and Gentile - all who put their trust in Jesus, will have that amazing peace.
- The Hebrew word here is Shalom.
- This type of peace that we can have - is not just an absence of troubles, but a fullness of the peace and presence of God. A satisfaction in our relationship with him. Something that we can rest in - eternally!
- Yes, this side of eternity, we will face some opposition, and we will face criticism.
- But here we have the great hope that:
  - No earthly thing can take us from God's hand; and
  - God will judge those who oppose him.
- At the moment in our culture, there are so many people looking for security and stability and leaders who will lead with integrity.
- In our cultural moment more than ever, young people are searching for something deeper and more significant.
- In the face of rising costs of living, a housing market which prices people out, a social media addicted society, a society where women are still objectified and men don't know what it is to be a man, where domestic violence is still rife and gambling addiction is not slowing...
- People are longing and yearning for some security and stability.
- People are longing to find their identity and find 'their people'
- And in this world - we have this hope
  - "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mt Zion which cannot be moved, but abides forever"
- We have security and stability in YHW - BUT will we invite others in to also have this?
- Can you see how lost people are, harassed and helpless without a shepherd - but we know the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep. Will we tell others about him??
- This news should comfort us. It should give us great joy and confidence.
- But it should prick us also into letting others know about the opportunity for life security and stability that we have in him!
  - If you don't know where to start - bring a friend along to Alpha! Bring them here on a Sunday!
- This news is too good to hold for ourselves. It's news to be shared.
- We have the answers.
- If you want this stability - this relationship with the Lord - please come and let me know after the service. I'd love to chat and share more.
- But maybe you have put your trust in Jesus but instead of feeling like an unmovable mountain - you feel a bit like a rotted fence that's ready to be blown over in the next storm.
- Maybe you're facing a hard health diagnosis. Maybe you're not confident of God's love or forgiveness. Maybe life hasn't turned out the way that you expected or hoped.
- Well - isn't it great that our faith isn't dependent on how we feel - but on what God has done for us? It's not about how we feel - it's about what we **know** and **who we trust in**.

- And I know that sometimes our experiences may not always align with the reality that we see in God's word - that's sadly part of living this side of eternity! Our eyes are veiled to what's going to be!
- But that's why we need to be soaked in God's Word. Pray the psalms, sing the psalms, cry tears of sadness through the psalms, tears of joy through the Psalms. Urge our souls and hearts to be lifted up to the Lord! Remember what we know and who we trust in!
- Remember that we have stability, and security in the Lord.
  - Remember that we are like a mountain that Can't be moved in Him
  - Remember that the Lord surrounds us and protects us
  - Remember that the Lord won't allow the power of the evil one to rest on us
  - Remember that God will judge with justice and integrity!
  - All we need to do is trust in Him! Trust in Him.
  - Not work for him, not prove ourselves worthy of him, not go to church for him, not give money to him, not preach for him - simply give our lives over to him as our Lord and saviour who died and rose for us and loves us and gave us his Spirit to seal us AND
- Nothing can take us from his hand. Nothing can separate us from his love. Nothing can take his Spirit away from us. We're safe in his loving and powerful and awesome hands.
  - He is...as Issac Watts wrote -
  - "Our God, our help in ages past,
  - Our hope for years to come,
  - Our shelter from the stormy blast,
  - And our eternal home:"