

Stability in an Unstable World

We're looking at the confidence that Psalm 125 gives to God's people. In my last article we saw that the author of this Psalm is making an obvious comparison between the stability of Mount Zion, to the rock-solid stability of those who trust, by grace, in the Covenant God of Holy Scripture. "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever." (Psa. 125:1) Christians have all the stability we could ever need in Jesus Christ. Along with stability, let's look next at security.

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore." What an amazing truth! Mount Zion is not the highest mountain of the many mountains in the area around Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives that lies to the East (as well as other lesser known mountains) is higher than Mount Zion. But the height of the mountain is not the primary point that we want to see from this Psalm. Mountains give us a picture of something solid and stable which makes the Psalmist's simile very compelling. In this verse, God's people are pictured as Jerusalem which God loves, while God is pictured as the wall of high mountains surrounding his covenant people, i.e., the fullness of stability and security, "both now and forever." The next verse shows us that the enemy's authority and rule over us is ultimately governed by God's love and his perfect will for our lives. Notice verse 3:

"For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous..." The "scepter" was a staff or rod that symbolized the authority of a ruler. In this case the authority of wickedness and wicked rulers to have a certain measure of rule and reign over God's people in the place where they live. Many biblical scholars believe that this Psalm is most likely connected to the time just after the release from captivity of the children of Judah from Babylon by the Persian king, Cyrus in 538 B.C. We know that they were released to go back to the land of Canaan that God had promised them. Although the children of Judah were no longer held, strictly speaking, in captivity, they were still—in some measure—under the rule of foreign kings for years to come. Yet, God had not left them alone and unprotected.

Scripture often reminds us of our complete dependence on God and this Psalm supports that truth. In this world where wickedness abounds; in this world where suffering and pain will certainly come; God's covenant relationship with his people has always included his promise to protect us as only He can do. The Hebrew word that our author uses that's translated "rest" also carries a connotation of "remaining." No matter how wicked a ruler in this life may be, he or she can never find a place to "rest" or "remain" permanently over us—even though Satan still has a measure of power in this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). God is sovereignly protecting us—notice the next phrase in verse 3—"lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong." Interestingly the Psalmist, in this last phrase, is teaching the biblical truth that, if it were not for God's complete, sovereign control, the reign of wickedness over the righteous would be such that we would be left vulnerable and completely helpless. But, because of God's protection, his

covenant children (all Christians), cannot be forever ruled by wickedness nor can we ever be totally or finally separated from God's love, mercy and grace.

There's one other aspect of this truth of God's sovereign protection that deserves our consideration. Because of God's provision for us and protection over us, when we sin we can never honestly say that we're lacking anything that we need. We will sin, but we should never believe that it couldn't be helped or that it's God's fault. God never tempts anyone or forces anyone to sin (1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:13). In addition to that, there are many times in our lives that people will sin against us. But their sin does not require that we sin against them in return. When we sin, we're showing what was already in our heart to begin with (Luke 6:43-45). God's children never enter into a situation where sinning is our only choice. That's a promise from God! He fully surrounds us with his love and protection from evil according to his perfect plan for our lives. This Psalm reminds us again of the stability that we need in an unstable world. Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.