

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 125 — An Immovable Mountain

1.0 Introducing Psalm 125

- As the third psalm in the second set of three psalms of the Psalms of Ascents, Psalm 125 speaks of the security of standing within Jerusalem's walls — a city under God's protective blessing (cp. Ps 122).
✓ *Troubled travelers turn to God with a trust that results in tranquility.*
- Consider the nature of the times in which we now live. Is anything secure? How can God's people cope with the increasing evil, the instability of the economy, and the uncertainty of the future?
- "My feelings are important for many things. They are essential and valuable. They keep me aware of much that is true and real. But they tell me next to nothing about God or my relation to God. My security comes from who God is, not from how I feel. . . . The image [in Psalm 125] that announces the dependable, unchanging, safe, secure existence of God's people comes from geology, not psychology." — Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 83.

2.0 Reading Psalm 125 (NAU)

125:1 A Song of Ascents.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are as Mount Zion, which **cannot be moved** but abides forever.

125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

125:3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous,
So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong.

125:4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good

And to those who are upright in their hearts.
125:5 But as for those who **turn aside** to their crooked ways,
The LORD will lead them away with the doers of iniquity.
Peace be upon Israel.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 125

3.1 Outline

- Psalm Heading (v. 1a)
- I. Protection from the LORD (vv. 1b–3)
 - A. Comparison with Mt. Zion (1b)
 - B. Comparison with the Mountains (2)
 - C. Confidence in the Outcome (3)
 - II. Petition to the LORD (vv. 4–5)
 - A. God’s Good for the Godly (4)
 - B. Waiting Woe for the Wayward (5a)
 - C. Promised Peace for the People (5b)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Those who trust in the LORD”
 - The trust that God desires of His people does not focus on things, a city, fortresses, armaments, or man, but on the Lord Himself.
 - Compare Psalms 9:10; 21:7; 28:7; 37:5; 62:8; 112:7; Proverbs 3:5.
- **v. 1** “as Mount Zion”
 - Read Psalms 46 and 48, two of the “Psalms of Zion.”
- **v. 1** “cannot be moved”
 - “Moved” possesses an acoustic assonance similar to “turn aside” in verse 5. These two similar sounding words form an envelope (or, inclusio) around the psalm.
 - See Psalm 46:5. Why is it that Mt. Zion cannot be moved?
 - Compare Isaiah 54:10.
- **v. 2** “As the mountains surround Jerusalem”
 - The highest point of Mount Zion is approximately 215 feet lower than the Mount of Olives and nearly 250 feet lower than Mount Scopus.
 - Thus, the mountains surrounding Jerusalem overshadow it and enclose it.
 - Compare Isaiah 31:5.
- **v. 2** “the LORD surrounds His people”
 - For other Old Testament passages speaking of the security that God provides for His people, see Psalms 34:7; 91:4; Zechariah 2:5.

- **v. 3** “the scepter of wickedness”
 - What does this “scepter” represent?
 - ✓ A foreign power oppressing Israel?
 - ✓ A wicked ruler over Israel?
 - Compare Isaiah 14:5.

- **v. 3** “shall not rest”
 - “Rest” here carries the idea of settling down, remaining (cp. Gen 8:4; Exod 10:14; Isa 25:10).
 - James Montgomery Boice (*Psalms*, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 3:1106–7) observes that the psalmist offers four significant responses to Israel’s critical situation:
 - ✓ A promise (v. 3): The rule of the wicked will not last forever.
 - ✓ A prayer (v. 4): May God “do good” to His people.
 - ✓ A warning (v. 5a): Even believers can get off the right path.
 - ✓ A blessing (v. 5b): May Israel experience God’s wholesome peace.

- **v. 3** “the righteous”
 - Who are the righteous?
 - ✓ Those who have a right relationship to the Lord through the covenant He has established with them. In other words, those “who trust in the LORD” (v. 1) and who are “His people” (v. 2).
 - ✓ Those who live in conformity with that covenant. In other words, those “who are good” (v. 4) and “who are upright in their hearts” (v. 4).

- **v. 3** “So that the righteous will not”
 - Evil’s overwhelming power can corrupt even the righteous. How?
 - ✓ Despairing over the absence of any deliverance.
 - ✓ Desirous of its attractive power and apparent success.
 - ✓ Drained by its irresistible pressures.

- **v. 4** “upright in their hearts”
 - True righteousness is not outward, but inward.
 - Compare Psalms 7:10; 36:10.

- **v. 5** “their crooked ways”
 - See Proverbs 2:6–15 for a description of what these crooked ways are all about and how God guards His people from such ways.

- **v. 5** “Peace be upon Israel”
 - See Psalm 128:6, another pilgrim song ending in the same blessing.
 - Compare Galatians 6:16. Paul might be alluding to this psalm.
 - Compare John 14:27.
 - “A colloquial, but in the context accurate, translation would be, ‘Relax.’ We are secure. God is running the show. Neither our feelings of depression nor the facts of suffering nor the possibilities of

defection are evidence that God has abandoned us.” — Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, 86–87.

4.0 Singing Psalm 125

“Who Place on Zion’s God Their Trust”

(Tune: “O for a Thousand Tongues”)

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| <p>1 Who place on Zion’s God their trust,
Like Zion’s rock shall stand;
Like her immovably be fixed
By His almighty hand.</p> | <p>2 Look how the hills on ev’ry side
Jerusalem enclose;
So stands the Lord around his saints,
To guard them from their foes.</p> |
| <p>3 The wicked may afflict the just,
But ne’er too long oppress,
Nor force him by despair to seek
Base means for His redress.</p> | <p>4 Be good, O righteous God, to those
Who righteous deeds affect;
The heart that innocence retains
Let innocence protect.</p> |
| <p>5 All those who walk in crooked paths
The Lord shall soon destroy;
Cut off th’ unjust, but crown the saints
With lasting peace and joy.</p> | |

— Words: N. Brady and N. Tate, 1696

5.0 Praying Psalm 125

- Thank You, Lord, for the security You give to me. [v. 1]
- How I praise You for Your protection around me. [v. 2]
- Father, keep me from doing wrong. [v. 3]
- Lord, help me to be upright in heart. [v. 4]

6.0 Applying Psalm 125

- The believer’s security rests in the Lord alone.
- God is in control no matter what our circumstances might be.
- We must avoid the temptation to engage in evil for what we think is good — trust the Lord completely.

Those who suppose themselves to be righteous because they are living among God’s people but are not actually his—those “who turn to crooked ways”—the writer warns are not really among the regenerate and says “the LORD will banish with the evildoers.” Remember, mere formal membership with the people of God counts for nothing. We must actually be trusting and obeying God.

— James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols.
(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 3:1107