

Psalm 125 | “Surrounded by the Lord”
Preached on December 15, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Psalm 125, as we continue our study through the ‘songs of ascents’. *[pauseeee]*

We all desire to feel stable and secure. [pause]

We see this everywhere as there are security cameras all over the place.

Some houses have a whole security alarm system.

Some places have security fences, and still others even have security guards and security dogs. *[pauseee]*

Now I’m not saying that’s necessarily wrong, but I’m pointing out that it reveals that we like to feel secure. [pause]

No one enjoys being vulnerable and in a place that’s insecure. *[pause]*

Instability flusters us because there’s nothing solid or firm to stand upon, and so we become fearful, constantly looking for something firm to hold onto. [pauseeee]

Think of a trampoline with lots of kids jumping on it, what do you see? *[pause]*

You see that poor little kid trying to get up, but everytime they stand up, another kid jumps onto the trampoline, so that the child topples over. [pause]

You see this happen again and again—the poor kid can’t get any solid footing because the trampoline won’t stop bouncing up and down.

There’s nothing to stabilize the child from the instability of the trampoline. [pause]

So also, instability or insecurity in life is the same type of thing...

There’s no rest, no durability, no settledness—but it feels like you are that little child on the trampoline, just trying to stand up. [pause]

Well the psalm this morning shows us that amidst a world of insecurity and instability, there is a way to be secure and stable.

*Let’s find out what that way is by **READING** the psalm. [READ]*

As we consider the message of this psalm, the first thing we discover is that...

I. Those who trust in the Lord are secure. (1–4)

Fort Knox is considered by many to be the most secure place on earth. *[pause]*

On the outside of the building, it is surrounded by a steel fence, as well as helicopters, guards, and alarms. *[pause]*

Now that's only *some* of the security on the outside, and then there's also the security on the inside...

You are met by more guards, as well as a 22 ton vault door that some say is 27 inches thick. *[pause]*

You think you could crack that vault?

Good luck, for you need different people to punch in their own unique codes to even open it. *[pauseeee]*

We'd all love to feel the security that Fort Knox has in our own lives—well let me tell you that you can. *[pause]*

In fact, you can be even more secure than Fort Knox, for those who trust in the Lord are secure. *[pause]*

Verse 1 says, “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.” *[pause]*

So the Bible is saying that there's a way to be and feel secure, so secure that you are like Mount Zion. *[pause]*

Think about mountains—they are stable, secure, and they endure. *[pause]*

While trees and vegetation die off, mountains remain.

While buildings come and go, mountains are still the same. *[pauseeee]*

Let's say that we lived near a mountain. *[pause]*

Time travel isn't possible, but let's just say that someone time traveled here from 300 years ago.

And they would see so many differences, and much wouldn't be recognizable to them because so much changes, but the mountain would be recognized, for it's stable. *[pauseee]*

A mountain doesn't just topple over, but it's firm. *[pause]*

It's not like a game of Jenga, where with any false move, it falls over—no, mountains don't waver.

So also, for those who trust in the Lord, we are secure like that. *[pause]*

We don't move, totter, shake, or tumble down, but we can be unwavering in Him. *[pauseeee]*

The key is *trust in Him*. [pauseeee]

A big thing among people is that they try to find a sense of stability and security by looking inward and finding strength, but that's a fool's errand. [pause]

You cannot find security within yourself.

Just because you can be *like* a mountain doesn't mean that you can *make* yourself like a mountain. [pause]

No, we don't become secure in ourselves by just trying harder.

We don't become secure by grasping onto certain things in this world.

We become secure by trust *in the Lord*. [pause]

It's because the object of our faith is immovable, so we become immovable by trust in Him. [pauseeee]

It's like we become a mountain because we are on the stable ground of the Lord.

But once again, the key is trust in Him. [pauseeee]

To trust in Him, we must look outside of ourselves. [pause]

To trust in Him, we must fully depend on Him. [pause]

To trust in Him, we must see that *He* is the answer to the instability that we feel. [pauseeee]

Sometimes we partly trust in Him, and then partly trust in ourselves—kinda like a 50/50 deal.

But that won't do, we must trust Him fully.

We must put all of our weight upon Him to be secure. [pauseeee]

It can be scary trusting someone outside of yourself, I understand that, but realize that God can be trusted with everything.

He is the most reliable, faithful, loving, strong, and secure Being in the universe! [pauseeee]

Now the security we have in Christ doesn't mean that we won't face hardship and trials, for even mountains face winds and storms, but they remain steadfast in the midst of the tempest. [pause]

So also, when the winds and waves of trial come our way, we can stand firm and secure like a mountain.

We become an immovable mountain because of God. [pause]

As Psalm 112 says, "For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever..."

He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord...

His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.”¹ *[pauseeee]*

We are secure like mountains, but the second thing that the psalm tells us is that we are secure like being *surrounded* by mountains. *[pause]*

Verse 2 says, “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.” *[pauseeee]*

Mount Zion was actually surrounded by other mountains and hills, and so the psalmist is saying that that’s like the Lord surrounding us. *[pause]*

He’s like our fortress wall, who encircles us, so as to protect us.

And what’s interesting is that the mountains that surrounded Mount Zion were actually higher than Mount Zion itself.² *[pause]*

That’s somewhat like us and God—we are secure like a mountain because of Him, but the Lord is higher still, and surrounds us like a high wall. *[pauseeee]*

Isn’t it amazing that even though we have sinned against Him and fail Him time and time again that He doesn’t surround us to attack? *[pause]*

If He did, we would deserve it, for we sinned against the holy God, yet for those who trust in Jesus, He is *for us*, which we just saw in the previous psalm. *[pause]*

Now we see once again here that He is for us because He surrounds us to protect, and not to attack.

He does so because we are His people, and what a blessing it is to be His! *[pauseeee]*

Praise God, we don’t have to fear being encircled by the enemy and defeated, for we are already encircled by the Lord.

He stands in between. *[pause]*

Because of Christ, we don’t have to face the enemy of eternal death, for Christ has stood between us by dying and rising for us. *[pause]*

Because of Christ, we don’t have to face the burdening weight of guilt and shame before God, for He stood between us and took the wrath of God for us. *[pause]*

¹ Psalm 112:6–8.

² Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 788.

Because of Jesus, Satan's fiery arrows can be extinguished with the shield of faith in Him.³
[pauseeeee]

Sometimes it feels like darkness surrounds us, and we can't always see the light through the darkness, but know that God is still there. *[pause]*

When darkness *feels* like it's surrounding you, remember that God is *for sure* surrounding you.
[pauseeee]

For the Israelites, they could have looked for their security in the physical mountains around them...

...But the psalm pushes them to see that their true security is found in the Lord, who is *like* those mountains, only better! *[pause]*

So also, it's easy to try to find security in the things of this world, thinking that they will bring us what we need.

But the key is to look beyond them to God. *[pauseeee]*

The things of this world cannot bring true security...

Financial security isn't 100% reliable because something could happen in an instant. *[pause]*

Physical security is only good to a limit, for there are ways around it. *[pause]*

Security in relationships can be gone quickly too, if there's some sort of conflict or issue, and the other person chooses to walk away.

So the only true security can be found in Jesus Christ our Lord. *[pause]*

Look past those "little mountains" that aren't really mountains at all and look to the high, certain big mountains of the Lord surrounding you. *[pauseeee]*

Our true security is not found in the things around us, but it's in the God who surrounds us.
[pauseeee]

A big piece of comfort in what the psalm says here is how it says that "the Lord surrounds his people, *from this time forth and forevermore.*" *[pauseeee]*

Let's say that someone told you that they would protect you for 1 second. Would you be comforted by that? *[pause]*

What about for 1 minute? Any comfort there? *[pause]*

No way, for that's very temporary, and short-lived protection.

³ A reference to Ephesians 6:16.

And thankfully, the text doesn't say that, rather, it says that He surrounds His people "from this time forth and forevermore". *[pause]*

That is, His protective presence never leaves! It's forever!

And when I hear this, I can't help but think of Jesus saying, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."⁴ *[pauseeee]*

God's protective presence is always with us, no matter what.

There are no time limitations, but it's always encircling us. *[pauseeeee]*

Do you trust in the God who surrounds you in love? *[pause]*

He cares for you, and wants you to trust Him more, so lean into Him! *[pause]*

Know that He's there, know that He cares, know that He loves you. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Now as we move on, we see more evidence for our security in the Lord.

And in verse 3, it says, "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." *[pause]*

Now what exactly does that mean?

It's a very interesting, intriguing verse. *[pause]*

Well the scepter of wickedness is an image of a wicked ruler, and so it's saying that a wicked ruler will not rest on the land of the righteous.

And I believe it's saying that a wicked ruler will not rule the land forever. *[pauseeee]*

There is a land allotted to the righteous, and this points to Israel's allotted land that God has set apart for them.

It is theirs, for God has given it to them, and He will not allow a wicked ruler to rule it forever. *[pauseeeee]*

God has "allotted" things to His people that will not be forever given over to the enemy, but we can rest assured knowing that the things allotted to us will someday be given to us. *[pause]*

In Romans 8 it says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us *all things*?"⁵ *[pauseeeee]*

Isn't it a comfort to know the security of God's providence? *[pause]*

⁴ Matthew 28:20.

⁵ Romans 8:32 (italics is mine).

The wicked do not just have free reign, but they have restraints on them from God.

He does not allow them to go beyond where He says, “Stop here.” *[pause]*

The wicked will not prevail forever, for our God reigns!

In His providence, we can rest secure! *[pause]*

Yes, there may be times of wickedness, where it seems like they are prevailing, but they will not ultimately prevail, for God is in control. *[pause]*

When and where God decides to put His foot down, no evil can coexist there.

So you can rest in the security of God’s providence! *[pauseeee]*

Just think of the rest you can feel, the peace you can have, and the joy that can overtake you when you rest in His providential hand. *[pause]*

What security we can have in Him!

But that’s only one part of that verse 3, for you also have the ending where it says, “lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong.” *[pause]*

What the psalmist is saying is that God does not let a wicked ruler rule the land for so long that God’s true people are led into great wickedness, due to temptation or despair. *[pauseeee]*

Isn’t that such an encouraging thing to know?

It’s showing us that God cares about His people so much that He doesn’t allow us to be tempted beyond our limits.

As 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” *[pauseeee]*

God knows our limits, do you realize that? *[pause]*

God only permits us to go through situations that He knows that we are able to resist through His help. *[pauseeee]*

We have a God, who is knowledgeable of our frame.⁶

He takes into account our limitations, and cares so much for us that He knows when to say, “That’s enough.” *[pause]*

He doesn’t want our faith to falter, but to strengthen.

⁶ A reference to Psalm 103:14.

Therefore, rest in the security of God’s providence. *[pause]*

His providence surrounds you like encircling mountains, do you ever remember that? *[pause]*

Even in the hardship, even in the trials, even in the darkness, we can know that ultimately, as the Bible says, “all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”⁷ *[pauseeee]*

There’s security in the providence of the Lord, but there’s some more in this psalm, for we can also be secure *in His goodness*. *[pauseeee]*

Look at verse 4, “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good.” *[pause]*

The psalmist knows that God is good, and prays that God would show that goodness towards him all the time. *[pauseeee]*

Do you truly believe that God is good? *[pause]*

In the midst of hardship, or when the darkness feels like it’s surrounding you, it sometimes *feels* like God is not good.

Yet that is not true, for God is always good, and He does good to His people.

As that verse says that I quoted earlier, “all things work together *for good*, for those who are called according to his purpose.”⁸ *[pauseeee]*

He is good and His goodness flows down to us, and we certainly need it, don’t we? *[pause]*

In His goodness, He gives us blessing upon blessing...

Grace, mercy, salvation, life, forgiveness, help, strength—they all come from the goodness of God. *[pause]*

We need His continual goodness to flow into our lives.

We need it everyday, for where would we be without the goodness of God? *[pauseeee]*

Do you feel the security of knowing that God is good?

Fall back into the rest-inducing comfort of knowing that the Lord is good. *[pauseeee]*

When those hardships assail you, run to the refuge of the goodness of the Lord. *[pause]*

When you become overwhelmed with the situation that you are in, cry out to Him and say, “Do good, O Lord, do good!”

⁷ Romans 8:28.

⁸ Romans 8:28 (italics is mine).

And then rest in knowing that He *is* good, and will do good—the ultimate good that He knows is best. *[pauseeee]*

We can also find security in the *peace* of God. *[pause]*

There at the end of the psalm he says, “Peace be upon Israel!” *[pause]*

The psalmist knew that true peace could only come from God, so he prayed for it.

And that is what we ought to do, too—we should pray for peace. *[pause]*

Thankfully, we have peace with God through Christ, but we can pray for peace in our relationships or to have more inner peace. *[pause]*

We also look forward to the day of everlasting peace that will come from Jesus, the “Prince of Peace”⁹, when He comes again. *[pauseeee]*

God is the God of peace, and we can lean into Him, who gives us true peace. *[pause]*

That’s how we can be so secure in this life, for we can have the security of peace that comes from God. *[pause]*

Amidst life’s trials, it’s His peace that stabilizes us. *[pause]*

Amidst our failings, it’s the peace we have with Him through Christ that helps us to not run away in shame. *[pause]*

His peace can surround us, and help us through even the most horrific trials of life. *[pauseeee]*

Have you been feeling insecure or unstable lately? *[pause]*

Have you felt like darkness or hardships have surrounded you, they keep feeling like they are closing in more and more, and you just feel so vulnerable? *[pause]*

Remember that those who trust in the Lord are secure. *[pause]*

Amidst that hardship and darkness, we must look with eyes of faith outward to see that the Lord surrounds us, and hasn’t gone anywhere.

Look to Him and you become as secure as a mountain. *[pauseeee]*

So will you trust Him? *[pause]*

In our chaotic, unstable world, we *can* be stable and secure in Him. *[pauseeee]*

Now we saw a lot about those who trust in the Lord being secure, but now we see the truth about those who don’t trust in Him. *[pause]*

⁹ A reference to the title of Jesus found in Isaiah 9:6.

In verse 5, we see that...

II. Those who turn aside to crooked ways are not secure. (5)

Verse 5 says, “But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers!” *[pause]*

Here is the opposite of those who trust in the Lord. [pause]

Remember how those who trust in the Lord are like mountains and surrounded by the Lord like mountains?

Well here we see the word, “But,” which is important. [pause]

In contrast to those who trust the Lord, there are those who turn aside to their own crooked ways. *[pause]*

It is truly their crooked ways because it doesn't come from God, or reality, but from their own mind and heart. [pause]

To turn aside to crooked ways is to not trust the Lord.

It's like trust in the Lord is the way, and people are choosing their own ways, the crooked ways. [pauseeee]

They are crooked because they divert away from God's path to self-made paths.

Therefore, when a person turns away from the Lord, it's like they are bending away from the true and right way. [pauseeee]

This seems to be talking primarily about people, who appear to believe, but have since “turned away” from the Lord. *[pause]*

We see this a lot in our time—there are many people who have grown up in church, but who have walked away from the faith altogether. [pauseee]

Often when someone walks away from the faith it's because they don't *feel* it is true anymore.

But leaving the faith based on feelings is just an example of turning aside to the crooked ways. [pause]

Instead of following objective truth (God's truth), they are turning aside from it to the twisty paths. *[pauseeeee]*

Now what's the result or consequence of turning away from the Lord?...

The Lord leads them away with evildoers. *[pauseeee]*

Our world doesn't like this message, but the Bible is ultra-clear: if you turn away from the Lord, there are eternal consequences. *[pause]*

If you turn away from the Giver of life, you can't expect life. *[pause]*

If you turn away from the Giver of all blessings, good, peace, joy, etc. you can't expect those things as a result. *[pause]*

If you turn away from the one way of Jesus to the crooked paths that cannot save, you will not find life or salvation there. *[pauseeee]*

That's why those who do not trust in the Lord are led away.

It's God who is the ultimate judge, and He will lead people away to their eternal destination. *[pauseee]*

So you walk the crooked path, God will lead you away with the other ones who have turned from Him. *[pauseeee]*

This is both a warning and a comfort...

It's a warning to us, for it should cause each of us to consider: are any of us turning away to the crooked ways? *[pause]*

In Hebrews 3:12–13 it says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." *[pause]*

We cannot think too arrogantly, but we must be careful and exhort one another to live faith-filled lives. *[pauseeeee]*

So there's a warning here, but also a comfort. *[pause]*

The Lord only leads those away that turn to crooked paths, but for those who trust in Jesus, who is the one way to Heaven, they can be assured eternal life. *[pause]*

Praise God for His grace, for He doesn't have to give us life, yet gives forgiveness and eternal life to all those who simply trust in His Son. *[pauseeee]*

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for your sins and rose again?

Do that today, if you haven't, and find eternal security in the Father's hand.¹⁰ *[pause]*

And for those who trust in the Lord, this text is reminding us to...

¹⁰ John 10:29.

Keep trusting in the Lord, who brings security to His people!

What is your trust in? *[pause]*

Do you bend to the crooked paths as the places of security?

They won't provide you with what you need.

Instead, you need to cling to the One true place of security, the Lord God. *[pause]*

When we do so, we become like mountains: firm, stable, and enduring—and He surrounds us with His protective, providential, loving care. *[pauseeeee]*

We were sinners, who *deserved* to be led away in judgment.

Yet the Lord did good to us through Christ, who came, died on the cross, and rose again for us. *[pause]*

Now through faith in Him, we gain eternal security, and we shall never be moved. *[pause]*

We have been surrounded by His love, and will be surrounded by it forever.

And we have an inheritance “allotted” us in Heaven, so what peace we can have in this life. *[pauseeee]*

It is truly worth it to trust and follow the Lord.

So will you keep trusting Him, who brings security and stability to our lives, no matter what life may bring.