

ASSURANCE

Psalm 125

June 28, 2009 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church

“Those who trust in the LORD...” One of the most difficult things in living the Christian life is to believe God, to trust in Him and His promises. There are a number of factors involved in robbing us of our assurance of what we are and what we have in Christ: our sin that causes doubt and Satan’s attempts to distort God’s promises. But when we boil it all down, our lack of assurance is a manifestation of unbelief. We don’t believe that God is who He says He is and therefore He is not One in whom we can simply trust. However, the psalmist attests that our assurance rests in our confidence that God is God and will be what he will be for His people and that He is faithful to keep the promises He has made to His people—all of them! So when we prosper, we trust God. In times of difficulty, we trust God and love Him as much as when we prosper, believing that both prosperity and persecution and times of suffering are equal blessings.

We in our culture often get this wrong, and when we do, we might struggle with our assurance. Our measuring rod for God’s blessings is often pragmatic, focusing on increase. But this leads us only to thank God for His prosperity, a prosperity that we have pragmatically defined. That is why I have asked some of you when thanking God for His blessings, “On what basis are you thanking God for His blessings? What do you consider to be God’s blessing?”

I believe this to be an important question as we look at **“Those who trust in the LORD...”** It might be that some of you need a new measuring stick. It could be that some of you need to understand the promises of God for both the righteous and the unrighteous for the first time. What the psalmist sets forth in this psalm is the very foundation for our assurance, that being the promises of God and his belief that God will show Himself faithful in keeping His promises. He alone is the God that can be trusted!

I. Our Faith in Him (125:1)

1. Saving faith (v. 1a)

Foundation – God is beneath you

Psalm 89:14; 97:2 – Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. His throne is His place of authority, of ruling, of judgment, and the psalmist writes that the foundation of that throne, the foundation of God’s royalty, is righteousness and justice. His judgments are always right!

Therefore, **Proverbs 10:25** – When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation. What is this “everlasting foundation” the righteous has?

1 Corinthians 3:11 – For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 – ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole

building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Matthew 16:13-18 – ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

How did the hymn writer put it? *Our hope (assurance; confidence) is built on nothing less (foundation) than Jesus blood and righteousness. On Christ the solid Rock, I stand.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 – ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Acts 16:30-31 – ³⁰ “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?:” ³¹ They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Psalms 89:14; 97:2 – Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

Romans 4:5 – But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

2. Persevering faith (v. 1b)

“**Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.**” Those who have truly come to Christ by faith are compared to Mount Zion on which Jerusalem was built. Not only was it a bedrock, but as we have seen in these Psalms of Ascent it was high and as we will see again in a moment, it was secure. And notice here that the psalmist describes a certainty. When “**those who trust in the LORD**” face adversity, they “**are as Mount Zion.**” This is a picture of steadfastness, of persevering through attacks from the adversary and tests of our faith given to temper us, make us stronger, and remove all the junk that is so much a part of our lives. Trials are given to test our trust and grow our assurance and hope. But again, our assurance is not something in us or of us, but in Christ, who is the anchor for our soul.

Hebrews 6:17-20 – ¹⁷ In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰ where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 12:25-29 – ²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will* we *escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. ²⁶ And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.” ²⁷ This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

“**The righteous will live by his faith.**” Do you remember when those words were first written? Habakkuk 2:4.

II. His Protection of Us (125:2-3)

Fortress – God is about you as a defense against danger.

1. Personal promise (v. 2)

“**As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.**” The psalmist speaks of the mountains that surround Jerusalem to illustrate the impregnable fortress that God is. Psalm 34:7 – ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.

What the psalmist is saying here is this: there is absolutely nothing that can break the promises of God. He is always faithful. I don’t want you to be anxious; I don’t want you to be distressed; I don’t want you to be fretful, because God is saying ‘My arms are wrapped about you. You’ve got nothing to fear. You’ve got nothing to be alarmed about.’ It’s not as though you’re walking, as it were, all alone in this world, because you’re in communion with Jesus Christ, because you’re in fellowship with the Son of God, because the love of the covenant of grace is wrapped all around you! (Gen. 3 – God walking in the cool of the day and Adam and Eve hiding having covered themselves)

And notice those two words, will you: *Forever*, at the end of verse 1; *forever*, at the end of verse 2. How long will God’s arms surround you, people of God? *Forever. Forever.* Because there’s nothing, there’s absolutely nothing—not death, not life, not angels, not principalities, not things present, not things to come, not powers, or heights or depths, or anything in all the created realm. There’s absolutely nothing that can separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Peter 2:9 – The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.

2. Covenantal promise (v. 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.**” This Psalm was probably written during the time of the Babylonian exile when the Babylonians, the Persians, the Chaldeans, were occupying the land of Israel and Judah. What the psalmist is saying here is this: that because

God had made a promise to Abraham (and part of that promise was the promise of land), the psalmist is drawing now the inference that because God's promise is true and can be depended on, there's no way that the wicked are going to be in the land forever (Habakkuk!). That cannot be, because that would violate the promise of God. ¹

2 Kings 6:15-17 – ¹⁵ Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Heb. 12:1 – *Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us.*

III. Our Faith in His Protection of Us (125:4-5)

Sufficiency – Jude 1:24-25 – ²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

1. The prayer of the faithful (v. 4)

Having seen the promise of God, and having teased out that promise of God from the covenant of grace that God made with Abraham, the psalmist now turns that promise into prayer. **"Do good, O LORD, to those who are good and to those who are upright in their hearts."**

Psalm 34:7-8 – ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 18:15ff

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 – ⁹ "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. The prospect for the unfaithful (v. 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."

Psalm 18:7-15

¹ Derek Thomas,

http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Derek%27s_SERMONS/Psalms%20of%20Ascent/psalm_125.htm
accessed 07/04/2009.

Isaiah 65:11-15 – ¹¹ “But you who forsake the LORD, who forget My holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune, and who fill *cups* with mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight.” ¹³ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. ¹⁴ Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, But you will cry out with a heavy heart, and you will wail with a broken spirit. ¹⁵ You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, and the Lord GOD will slay you. But My servants will be called by another name.”

Luke 6:47-49 – ⁴⁷ “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who has heard and has not acted *accordingly*, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Conclusion

1. Worship

Suppose you were asked by someone as you made your way to the House of God this morning: “Do you trust in Him? Do you have confidence in the Lord? Are you manifesting that confidence by seeking to do what pleases Him and does that confidence remain even when adversity comes?” What would you say? What *could* you say given the present condition of your walk with Him? When you arrive here each Sunday morning, do you come after having finished another week of life in which you trusted in the Lord, another week of life in which you lived as if His way is best and as if your duty is that of a servant? Those who trust in the Lord, those who have confidence in Him, do so at all times and that is what makes the hour of worship so meaningful to them. In worship, they are coming into the presence of the One who has protected them and provided for them, the One who has held them up and relieved their burdens, the One who has provided guidance when they were unsure of their way. The worship of the Lord is a result of the fact that we trust in Him; worship is the occasion we have each week to give thanks for the manner in which God has responded to our trust in Him. *Worship is not where that trust and confidence begin; worship is where trust and confidence in the Lord are celebrated.*²

2. Prayer

3. Giving

4. Repentance

5. Forgiveness

² Jim Bordwine, ThD, http://www.solochristo.org/sermons/Songs_of_Ascents/125_Psalm_125.html, accessed 07/04/2009 (emphasis mine).