

HOW SECURE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PSALM 125

Introduction:

Read the Scriptures with imagination. Let yourself join the company of Pilgrims moving toward Jerusalem for one of the three annual festivals.

Some are able to spot the peaks of the mountains that surround Jerusalem. It is the first sign of their destination. They pause in their journey to sing together this moving little hymn about the security of God's people. Can't you feel the excitement and anticipation that is in the company? I get goose bumps on my skin just thinking about it.

The little psalm helps us identify the people of God. They are the ones who trust in the Lord. They make much of their covenant relationship with the Lord, and depend upon him utterly to meet the needs that they have. They are the "righteous in heart." They are not perfect, but they sincerely desire in their hearts to do the right thing, to live in harmony with the revealed character of their God. Then they are "good"—not sinless, but good. Just how secure are they?

This little psalm answers this question. However, before we consider the answer, we should notice that the focus of this psalm is upon the people of God, upon Israel. It is not a psalm for the individual to sing, but a psalm for

the congregation. In our emphasis on the individual, we have almost lost all sense of the congregation. I do not stand secure alone, but rather I am secure as I stand with the people of God. I am part of a secure people. But just how secure is the church—which can surely claim this psalm that was first put on the lips of Israel.

I. THEY OCCUPY A SECURE POSITION.

It was their secure position that first captured the attention of the psalmist.

Their relationship to the God of the covenant made them secure.

1. They are secured by the presence of the Lord.

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved and abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, from this time forth and forever.”

The beautiful mountains that gave security to the city of Jerusalem represent the presence of the Lord to the Psalmist. The security of God’s people is not a physical security, but rather a spiritual security—made real by the saving presence of the Lord that is always there.

The New Testament personalizes this—the people of God are a people “in Christ.” No enemy can ever get to the people of God unless it can break through the protecting presence of the Lord.

2. They are secured by the providences of the Lord.

But there is more! “For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.”

In His sovereign and good rule over His world, God controls the circumstances that surround His people. While the wicked may invade the land of Israel, they will not utterly conquer the land. God will not allow the wicked to finally steal away from His people their inheritance. The “land” was their inheritance from the Lord.

The Lord will limit the power of the wicked so that they will not test His people beyond their limits to the point that they give themselves to evil in despair of anything good ever coming to them. The sure providences of the Lord add to the security of God’s people.

The “lot” of the New Covenant People of God is heavenly and spiritual—but just as real as the Promised Land. God will not allow us to be tempted to the point that we lose our inheritance in Christ.

Our security rests in the Lord and our relationship to Him. It does not rest in us individually or corporately. Our security abides forever!

II. THEY NEED SINCERE PETITIONS.

Even though the people of God occupy a place of wonderful security, they will need the sincere petitions of the people of God. Even while they sang of

the security of God's people, they still offered petitions for Israel as they sang.

1. They need petitions for the goodness of the Lord.

“Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.” The “good” for which they petition is a manifestation the generous provisions of God, a revelation of His inmost character. It is as natural for God to do good as it is for you to breathe. His goodness is actually His glory.

Even though the people of God are good, they still need the goodness of the Lord to be upon them in its richness and blessedness.

While we rejoice in the security of God's New Israel, we must not become lax in our petitions for the goodness of the Lord to be upon her. While she is surely destined to spend eternity with Him, she has a ministry to perform here before she arrives there. Her ministry that she is to perform here makes her dependent on the goodness of the Lord which comes in answer to prayer.

All of this stands in contrast to the fate of those who turn away from the Lord. “As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity.” The pilgrims do not pray for this;

rather they simply acknowledge it. Nothing good will come to those who are unfaithful to the covenant.

Nor does anything good come to the backslider in our day. O how earnest we need to be for the goodness of the Lord upon the congregation.

2. They need petitions for the peace of the Lord.

“Peace be upon Israel.”

The concern of the pilgrims is for the welfare of the people of God, for Israel. They petition for the peace of the Lord to be upon her. The peace of the Lord is more than the absence of hostility. The peace of the Lord includes the unity of the people of God, the prosperity of the people of God. It is a petition that the people may be one, and that they may live under the prosperity, the wholeness of the Lord.

They may be secure like Zion, but they still need the peace of God upon them.

Is it not so with us? We may have eternal security, have our names written in heaven, but we still need the manifest peace of God upon the church. Do you realize how important the state of the church is to your own spiritual prosperity? Have you not learned that the state of the church has a profound impact upon your spiritual walk?

How secure are the people of God? We are so secure that nothing can harm us. But this security does not exclude the need for the daily prayer for the prosperity of the people of God.

All that we need is in the Lord—either in our position in Him or available through our petitions to Him.