

## My Help Comes from the Lord

### The story of the trapeze artist...

I find that there are many things that we are uncertain about in our lives. No doubt, this includes many aspects of our Christianity. However, there are solid places for us to stand. Living the Christian life is not about swinging on the trapeze without a safety net to catch us should we fall. In many ways the Christian walk is more like sitting secure in a fortress.

### Listen to Psa. 125.

Isn't this a great Psalm?! Jerusalem was set in sort of a bowl. Jerusalem is essentially surrounded by hills and was the safest (or least among the safest) of all cities because of the hills that provided a natural fortress.

City life in the ancient world was a pretty dangerous place. City structures were always being surveyed by wandering strangers (spies) ready to sack a city at the first sign of weakness. So you can imagine how much effort (time and resources) there was to keep and maintain solid city walls.

Here's something to consider... What is true of Jerusalem (its protection) is true for the person of faith (God is our fortress). In fact our protection is better than a city wall and a fortified military structure.

Last week we talked about how we can trust things like walls and fortresses rather than God. Yet Christian people have the same needs for protection and security as anyone else. After all, we are human. The difference for the Christian is that we don't have to build our own walls and fortresses. **Psa. 46:1**

**God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. (NASB)**

**God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when we need him. (MSG)**

Also **Psalm 125:2** As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

We don't have to live life always looking over our shoulder. We don't have to always be looking down on our footsteps lest we slip and fall.

• I know a young man. A good man. He's sincere and loves God. Several years ago I baptized him twice in about a 2 year period. Since I've known him he's been baptized at least five times. Why? Well, let me illustrate. I'm reminded about one particular mountain I've climbed a couple of times over the years. Mt. Flume is a beautiful mountain but a very dangerous one to climb. There is a long section toward the top third of the mountain that is rocky due to the erosion of packed ice and water. This rocky stuff is called scree. One mistake on this stuff could leave you hundreds of feet down the trail, or perhaps leave a climber severely hurt. **Sometimes it's easy to get so caught up in not wanting to trip in our faith (backslide) that we miss living life to its fullest.**

Here's a good man-- been baptized 5 times in the last 7 years. So worried about slipping. So worried about falling and getting hurt that he keeps trying to start over again.

**I like what David says: Psalm 139**

**1 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.**

**2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

**3** You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

**4** Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

**5** You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

It's easy to become anxious, or to be fearful—to be uncertain and insecure. This is ok. Not all the time... Not every day... But I think that a healthy faith is shaped by these realities. Security is to first understand that we could lose our security. Singing Psalm 125 is a great way for the Christian to develop confidence and overcome insecurity.

Do not hear this Psalm ignorantly whistling how great life is when darkness comes seeping in. However, I encourage you to hear this Psalm helping us to honestly face the insecurities that come our way and put them in their place.

What a great Psalm! Threats that come our way come from doubts and depression. Yet the psalm says:

**Psa. 125:1** Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

But the truth is--I am moved!

One day I'm confident and riding high on faith and the next day I'm in the valley of despair, empty and filled with doubt.

I mean one morning I can wake up with a song on my heart and filled with all this spiritual energy-- and the next day I can be spiritually lethargic-- having a sense of hopelessness and just down right moody. **I've come to realize that I can be moved by many things in life:** Sadness, joy, success and failures. It's like I'm on this rollercoaster... up and down and all around!

I'm reminded about how Israel was also like a rollercoaster... up and down and all around. I mean one day Israel is marching in triumph through the Red Sea, singing songs of victory... and the next day they miss their gardens and eating cucumbers and pomegranates back in that despicable place God rescued them from--Egypt!

One day Israel is marching around the walls of Jericho blowing their trumpets and shouting and watching the mighty wall crumble and the next day they are engaging in Canaanite fertility ceremonies.

One day the disciples are with Jesus in this upper room, listening intently to his commands and receiving his love... and the next day they are scattering and cursing in the courtyard denying that they even know Jesus.

As we read about this "roller coaster history" we come to realize that there is something solid and steady. The whole time they are still God's people!

- God is still with them
- God's love is steadfast
- God's love endures!
- God is a God of mercy
- God is a just God
- God continues to remain insistently gracious.

God is the God who redeems his people. And as we learn the truth about God's redemption we learn to live not by our feelings about God or our lives--but by the facts of God.

- I refuse to believe that depressed voice that says--there's no other way out.  
-Instead, I choose to believe in God
- I believe that when my faith stumbles and shifts around under my feet, God does not cast me off.

Don't get me wrong... my feelings are good and valuable. Much of my feelings help me to be aware of what is true and real. But I'm convinced that they tell me very little about God or my relation to God.

- My security comes from who God is, not from how I feel.
- Following Jesus is a decision I make--to live by what I know about God and not by what I feel about him, myself or for those around me.

**Psalm 125:2** As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

The image that announces the dependable, unchanging, safe, secure existence of God's people comes from the fact that he declares us his people and we do not have to rely on whether or not we feel like his people.

### **Song- Where does my help come from (John Gerstenlauer)**

Here's the problem--there's a constant threat to our relying on feelings rather than fact. There's a constant threat because unpleasant things will happen to us.

We lose what we think we cannot live without.

- Pain and hardship comes to those we love.  
-And we can easily conclude that there's no justice.  
-We struggle with why God permits this!  
-Anxiety seeps into our hearts.

We can't help but feel like we're living under a Damoclean sword.

• The term Damoclean sword comes from a legend that dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Damocles it seems was excessively flattering in the court of Dionysius II of Syracuse Italy. Damocles enthusiastically expressed that as a great man of power and authority, Dionysius was truly fortunate. Dionysius offered to switch places with him for a day, so he could taste first hand that fortune. In the evening a banquet was held, where Damocles very much enjoyed being waited upon like a king. Only at the end of the meal did he look up and notice a sharpened sword hanging by a single piece of horsehair directly above the throne. Immediately, he lost all taste for the fine foods and beautiful maidens, saying he no longer wanted to be so fortunate.

Sometimes we can feel the same way--like a sword is just hanging there by a thread waiting to break at any time. But then we hear a Psalm like Psalm 125!

Psalm 125 tells us that life is not like living under a sword that's waiting to break loose on us.

Don't miss the good news in this message today. Being a Christian is like sitting in the middle of Jerusalem, fortified and secure!

PSa. 125:1-2 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

Oh... don't forget the last sentence in the Psalm: *Peace be upon Israel.*

Do you know what that means? God is our strength and fortress. Like the trapeze artist story, God is our net and it really works.

- We are secure.
- We can relax
- God is the one running the show.

Neither our feelings, nor the facts of suffering and loss are evidence that God has abandoned us.

Three times Jesus repeats a reassuring phrase:

Matt. 6:25, 31, 34- *Do not worry*

The Hebrew writer says in 12:1-3 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

**(NLT)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. 2We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.[a] He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven. 3Think about all he endured when sinful people did such terrible things to him, so that you don't become weary and give up.*

The good news is our life with God is a sure thing! It's true that we may slip and stumble and fall, but God is our strength and he will not let go of us.

The Palmist ends Psalm 125 with *Peace be upon Israel.*

Let me end this lesson this morning with these words-- *Peace be upon you!*

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