

September 13, 2020

“Secure in the LORD’s Care”
Psalm 125

FCF: Fear of not making it

PROPOSITION: (anchor) We are safe in the LORD’s care.
(magnet) And we must live out of that.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

There are many things that cause anxiety. Terrorism - we just had another anniversary of 09/11. COVID-19 - its physical, emotional, and economic impact. Cultural decline - felt in a way by folks on both the Right and Left. FOMO - the fear of missing out, that others are having fun in your absence, exacerbated by social media and evidenced by our compulsive checking.

I have a new cause for you - FONMI - the fear of not making it. It’s an insecurity felt by many Christians, a terror of backsliding and falling away. Let me be clear. That’s not something we should do. But, because of the Lord’s grace, it is also not something that we should fear.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Psalm 125](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

If you ever wondered what it would be like to experience the balloon ride from *Up!*, ask David Blaine. Using 50 helium balloons, the illusionist recently floated over the Arizona desert at an altitude of almost five miles before skydiving and parachuting back to the ground. That stunt got me thinking about others who have walked across tightropes without a net - between the Two Towers in NYC, over the mouth of a volcano, and even between two hot air balloons.

Such stunts as these then got me to thinking about how many have the idea that this is what the Christian life is like. “It’s precarious but, with a bit of skill and luck, we might make it across.” Friends, that perspective is not only grossly mistaken but it is potentially paralyzing.

Which brings us to Psalm 125 - another of the Songs of Ascents, part of this collection of psalms to express and shape the hearts of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. And they are meant to do the same for disciples today. It is still a journey full of many dangers, toils, and snares. Some come from the outside and some come from the inside. The message of the psalm is clear. We are safe in the LORD’s care. We are safe in His care. And we must live out of that.

What would that mean? What would it look like to live out of such care? To get at that, we need to drill down into three things in our text. First, an immovable mountain. Second, a broken scepter. And, third, a praying people. Those three show us how to live out of this care.

I. AN IMMOVABLE MOUNTAIN

The psalm begins with this image of an immovable mountain ([READ Psalm 125:1-2](#)).

A) The Security

1. Standing firm

This is an image of security, a people and a mountain standing firm. Mt. Zion - the elevated site of Jerusalem and the Temple, the destination of the pilgrims - could not be moved or shaken.

2. Surrounded

Why? Because it was encircled. From a military perspective, there is no better position for a city than to be surrounded by mountains. Which Jerusalem was. Which God's people are - not by mountains but by the LORD himself. The topography and geography inform our theology.

B) The Secured

Such is the security. But we need to ask, "To whom is this assurance given?"

1. Not to everyone

And we have to say, "Not to everyone." This assurance is not for all. It is not for those who have no heart for God. It is not for those who follow Him only if it's convenient or without cost.

2. But to the trusting

This assurance is for those who trust in Him, those whose hope and confidence is in the LORD for this life and the next. It is not for the double-minded but for the pure in heart. It is for the one who truly loves, fears, and knows Him. For that person, there is this promise of security.

The security of the secured is like Mt. Zion, like an immovable mountain.

Application:

Note I said "the security of the secured". There is an active and a passive part here. They trust and persevere in that trust because they are preserved. (READ [Philippians 1:6](#)) What God starts He always finishes. Which means that if you have genuine faith, you will never lose it. And if you lose it, you never actually had it. That is not to say a true Christian cannot have a radical and serious fall. But he or she will never have a total and final fall from God's grace.

It's grace. We persevere because He preserves. This is not in our strength or faithfulness to Him but His to us. This is not grounds for presumption or arrogance but praise and assurance.

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II. A BROKEN SCEPTER

That said, this secure city faces threats, from without and within (READ [Psalm 125:3](#)).

A) Reign of Wickedness

1. A symbol of rule

This is a reign of wickedness. The scepter is a symbol of political and military rule - whether of an occupying force or the abusive power of an ungodly Israelite King, of which there were many.

2. A position of influence

And such a ruler was in a position of influence to shape not just policy but people, the subjects of his kingdom. This is a situation of evil getting the upper hand. Beliefs and commitments have been twisted. Ethics and convictions corrupted. This is not the way things are supposed to be.

B) Surely Overthrown

The situation looks bleak. It's on the brink. But such a reign will surely be overthrown.

1. A cause for grief

Yes, it is cause for grief. Times of corruption in the church are real. Orthodoxy and orthoproxy can be under threat and the remnant barely holding on. That is real and it is truly a time for grief.

2. But not for despair

But not for despair. The LORD, in His holy jealousy, will not allow this to stand. Such a scepter may come but it will not “rest”. It will not be allowed to settle in and make a permanent home.

Such scepters may come. But they will eventually and always be broken.

Application:

Here’s an example - the state of the evangelical church in America today. The results of a new survey were released last week which reveals our beliefs about God, sin, salvation, heaven and hell, the church, and the Bible. Let me give a few. These are approximations. Again, these numbers refer to the American evangelical church and not the broader culture ([READ quotes](#)):

- 1/3 said “Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.”
- 1/5 said “The Holy Spirit can tell me to do something which is forbidden in the Bible.”
- 1/2 said “Most people are good by nature.”
- 1/4 said “Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it’s not objective truth.”

Granted, none of those were the majority but they were each sizable minorities. Which is very troubling. For damaged doctrine damages people. We should grieve the reign of this scepter.

But we should not despair. We should not despair. For there is another scepter and it is held in the hand of the one true King. And He is on His throne and can see all of this quite well.

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III. A PRAYING PEOPLE

So what happens as God’s people take this to heart? Prayer ([READ Psalm 125:4-5](#)).

A) Laying Hold with Confidence

1. Blessing upon the good

This is a praying people laying hold of God’s promises with confidence. Praying for blessing upon the good, the upright in heart. Not that we are saved by works but a faith that is at work.

2. Justice upon the evil

There is a laying hold of God’s promises, praying for blessing upon the good and justice upon the evil. “O God, do not turn a blind eye to the injustice, unrighteousness, and corruption of this world. Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Is vengeance not yours to claim and bring?”

B) Lifting Up with Urgency

This is a laying hold of God’s promises with confidence in prayer. And lifting up those prayers with urgency. Knowing that He works through prayer, we then pray with great urgency.

1. Hearts transformed

For our hearts are being transformed. Such prayers lifted up and laying hold of the promises of God are a mark of the people of God who are increasingly able to share the passion of God.

2. Foretaste in this life

Our hearts are being transformed so we long for a foretaste. We know that one day all will be made right. We know this but are not satisfied to simply wait but to wait and work, to wait and pray. We long to glimpse a foretaste of God's kingdom rule now, for this great deep peace.

As we lay hold of the LORD's promises, we become all the more a praying people.

Illustration:

Let me give you an illustration from Moses' day. The people of Israel had experienced deliverance from Egypt. This was all of God's mercy. And they had been told, with the giving of the Ten Commandments, how they were to respond, what it would look like to grasp what He had done for them and how to live in relationship with Him. They then proceeded to spurn that, making and worshipping a golden calf, in clear defiance of what the LORD told them. His holy jealousy burned. The LORD's jealousy burned. And Moses prayed (**READ Exodus 34:5-9**).

Do you hear what Moses was doing? He was praying God's promises back to Him. He was laying hold of them with confidence and lifting them up with urgency. And God answered.

Application:

We're to do the same thing. We are to step into His promises like footholds. We are to grab hold of them like ladder rungs. With humility and boldness, patience and certainty, we are to go to Him and say, "I don't know what is best here. But I know I trust you. O Lord, change this. Change me. I know what you have said you will do. And I know who you have said you are. May your kingdom come, your will be done." Assured of the immovable mountain and the broken scepter, we to lay hold of God's promises with confidence and lift them up with urgency.

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CONCLUSION:

Thinking of His care, the most strenuous climb I've taken was likely the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. This was years before it was moved, restored, and they began to charge admission. It was a family vacation and my brother and I decided to do it - all 257 steps, about 12 stories.

Obviously, there are other climbs that are much harder and higher. Some mountain trails are made of sedimentary rock. The foot traffic and erosion make for loose, crumbling footing. Which can present a real danger of slipping, falling, and sliding hundreds of feet down below.

Tougher climbs will take you to sheer cliffs, going straight up. How do you sanely make that kind of ascent? Often it demands a team of climbers that is roped, each one together. One person may fall but not all at once. And, with any group, there is always a lead climber, an experienced veteran who knows the way and is determined to get the group safely to the top.

Thinking about the fear of falling away and the longing to persevere, Christian, you have a lead climber. It is Jesus. If you are His disciple, you are roped to Him. All the way to the end.

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