

Sunday September 18^h 2011 – Surrounded by The Lord

Psalm 125:1-2

1 Those who trust in the LORD Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.

2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this time forth and forever. (NASB)

Beloved in Christ,

Three blessing enjoyed by God's people are stability, security and peace. When we live a life of faith and trust in God, then through that relationship we receive from Him, stability, security and peace. Outside a relationship with our Heavenly Father, we simply do not have abiding stability, security and peace. People try to find them in all sorts of things but apart from God they cannot and will not have these fully.

In this Psalm, the Psalmist uses the mountains that surround Jerusalem as an illustration, that reminds how God surrounds His people. Jerusalem is completely surrounded by mountains. That gives the residents a certain amount of security, because to get to Jerusalem you have to come via the mountains.

In another great Psalm 121 we read:

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?

² My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.

⁸ The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.

In times of distress, the Psalmist looks to the mountains around Jerusalem and asks, where is my help to come from? The Psalmist does not expect the mountains to help him, but they remind him of the one who made the mountains. He is all powerful!

The mountains merely remind one of the power of God. His arm is strong and stable and faithful. Nothing is too difficult for Him. During times of trial, during times of stress it is very easy to lose perspective. It is very easy to slide into despair and depression.

In times of trial, it is very important to lift up one's eyes, and to realise that there is help available. God is able and willing to help in all things. He like the mountains is strong and unchangeable.

Our security is to be found in His promises which are wonderfully laid out for us in the Bible. Our text for today says it so well: **“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this time forth and forever.”**

The Lord surrounds His own. He puts His arms around His children. He is always awake and nothing catches Him unawares. In fact nothing ever happens without His prior knowledge and consent.

We live in a very unstable world, in difficult and testing times. Life can change in an instant. One moment you are cruising along just fine and the next you have problems and difficulties.

Let us be clear – there is a place to turn. There is help readily available. There is one who is greater than our circumstances, whose hand is Almighty and that is God.

One day Jesus was in a boat with His disciples. He was very tired from ministering to many people and He took the opportunity to have a sleep in the back of the boat. We read in Mark’s Gospel account: **“On that day, when evening came, He *said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.”³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they *took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.³⁷ And there *arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.³⁸ Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they *woke Him and *said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”³⁹ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.⁴⁰ And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (MK.4;35-41)**

The sea of Galilee was a very unstable stretch of water. One moment it would be flat and calm and the next the wind would pick up and the seas would become rough. We must assume that this was a very fierce storm that arose for the disciples for the most part were experienced fishermen used to the waters, but here they are terrified. By simply stilling the storm with a spoken command Jesus demonstrated to His disciples that God’s power is above all.

Our lives are like the sea of Galilee at times. The storm can hit suddenly and be very fierce. The ship of our lives may get tossed to and fro, the water may start to come in and threaten to sink the ship. The place to turn is Jesus. As a great hymn says: “The waves and wind still know, His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.”

We should, however, not only turn to Him in times of trouble, but should be walking with Him every day in peace or trial. If our lives are firmly anchored in Him and His Word, then we have security, stability and peace at all times no matter what.

This is precisely why it is so important to study the Bible. To get to know God's Holy Word. The more we do, the more our house is built on the rock. We build a great wall of protection around ourselves, that shelters us when Satan attacks. We could say that every promise in the Bible is like a stone block that we cement into this wall. The more we acquire the stronger our wall.

The Bible is rich with the promises of God and we need to learn them and learn to trust in them. To base our life in faithful trusting of God and His Word.

I will share with you a few of my foundation promises that help me in my daily walk with The Lord. They come from the book of Isaiah. The first one is 54:17:

“No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me,” declares the LORD. “

As I begin each new day, even before I roll out of bed, or in the shower, I remind myself of this promise and make it mine. I proclaim it as my protection. If we stay close to God and believe His Word, then this promise is for us. It does not say that there will not be problems or tests, but they will not succeed against us if we stay close to Jesus. This is spelled out even more in Isaiah chapter 43: ¹ **But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!**

² **“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. ³ “For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; “**

These words are so comforting. God promises to be with us through all sorts of trials and tests. Again He does not promise that we won't experience trials and tests but promises to be with us and to lead us through. It is important to note that God says *when* you pass through the waters and *when* you walk through fire. Did you notice that it said when and not if? All of us have trials, some more some less. They are a part of life.

Please understand that we do not have to and should not try to deal with life's problems on our own in our own strength and wisdom. We have a Father in Heaven who loves us and who desires for us to trust in Him. His promises are effective in us when we trust in Him. The safest, most secure place in the world, in this life is in the arms of Jesus, leaning on the Father's breast. When we are near to Him then He revitalises us and strengthens our faith. He gives us new strength. This is spelled out in Isaiah 40:28ff:

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

**³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,
³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with*
wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. “**

We become tired and weary in the day to day battles of life. When we are tired we are more susceptible to the enemies attacks. If we trust and wait upon The Lord, He then renews our strength. Through The Holy Spirit He strengthens us through the Word, and with His presence.

Let us learn to trust daily on Him, in all things at all times.

I close today with the words of Psalm 124:

**¹ “Had it not been the LORD who was on our side,”
Let Israel now say,
² “Had it not been the LORD who was on our side
When men rose up against us,
³ Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their anger was kindled against us;
⁴ Then the waters would have engulfed us,
The stream would have swept over our soul;
⁵ Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.”

⁶ Blessed be the LORD,
Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.
⁷ Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper;
The snare is broken and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.**

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.