

Psalm 125.¹⁻⁵

Security

Background

This psalm is a helpful and necessary sequel to the previous one. As a manual on what's involved in being a follower of Jesus, the 'songs of ascent' make it clear from early on (Psalm 124) that the believer is 'born into battle': the hostility of a sinful world towards Jesus is targeted on and directed against His followers – with an intensity and persistence such that only the fact that the Lord is on their side preserves them from destruction.

This next psalm, therefore, brings a re-assuring promise of *security* to the believer, and serves to amplify the specific ways in which the Lord is indeed 'our help' in the 'battles' to be faced (Ps.124.8).

The psalm begins with a clear statement of the believer's security, and gives a graphic picture to show what constitutes the essence of that security (vv.1-2); it then goes on to point to two regular contexts in which believers are (or can certainly *feel*) very vulnerable, and in each case sets out the basic and abiding truth which ensures the believer is secure (vv.3-5).

The first context is the believer's exposure to a godless culture and an essentially secular society (v.3): such a society seeks to 'squeeze believers into its mould' by the incessant pressure from every quarter to conform them to its values and perspective. It's this that is meant by 'the sceptre of the wicked': a culture which has rebelled against the rule of God and where a self-centred, self-indulgent outlook holds sway – and increasingly demands that society as a whole adopts such a way of life as well.

The psalmist recognises the effect which that can have on followers of Jesus, and provides the necessary antidote in the reminder of a truth stressed by, for instance, Psalm 73 – "*how suddenly are they destroyed*" ([Ps.73.16-20](#)).

The second context (vv.4-5) has to do more with the pressures from *within*, rather than the pressures from a godless society 'out there': a 'guerilla warfare' rather than open battle. For all that sin no longer holds sway in our hearts, there are still the dregs of sin within us which can erupt at any time if we're not vigilant: will that be our downfall? Not so!

The psalmist underlines two related important aspects of the gospel call to 'repent and believe'. First, an encouragement: the Lord to whom you turn and look for mercy is the Lord who looks on the heart and does His people good. But, secondly, a warning: if your falling into sin becomes the path you stubbornly choose to follow, then, you'll find it is a dead-end road.

Start with the psalm, **days (1) and (2)**, and use **day (7)** as a third key set of questions. In some ways that final part of Isaiah 40 picks up on some of the themes of the psalm. I've included additional CG questions for those 3 days.

1) Monday 7th February – security

Read [Psalm 125.1-2](#)

“.. so the LORD surrounds His people both now and for evermore” (Ps.125.2)

Believers are not exempt from the many varied challenges and trials which life may bring: but they cannot be shaken or ‘derailed’ by them. They are eternally secure. Not because of anything in them, but because of the Lord’s all-encompassing love in Christ.

The assurances given in the psalm relate to ‘those who trust in the LORD: what’s entailed by that trusting in the LORD?’

What examples have there been in your own life of the Lord preserving you through times of trial?

What difference does it make to your day-by-day living to know that the Lord surrounds His people permanently?

Have a read of [Psalm 16](#), a psalm which speaks similarly about our being secure: what insights does that psalm give in terms of how you can cultivate such a sense of security?

Prayer: *Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge. Lord, You have made my lot secure .. because You are at my right hand I shall not be shaken ([Ps.16](#))*

2) Tuesday 8th February – righteousness

Read [Psalm 125.3-5](#)

“.. The sceptre of the wicked will not remain ..” (Ps.125.3)

Evil may be allowed its head in the sovereign providence of God, but it is inherently impermanent, and has within it the seeds of its own destruction. God is sovereign in His rule, faithful to His covenant, and righteous in His judgments. Trust Him!

In what ways is ‘the sceptre of the wicked’ evident in our land today?

Are you aware of being tempted to lower your standards when you see how others around you behave?

How have you seen the Lord honouring those who honour Him ([1 Sam.2.30](#))?

The final couple of verses (vv.4-5) could be construed as a ‘religion of works’ and a recipe for despair – who after all is truly ‘good’? How are the verses to be understood as expressive of God’s grace?

Prayer: *Keep me from being envious, Lord, when the godless seem to thrive. Help me to be patient in the face of frustration, and looking to You to right all wrongs.*

3) Wednesday 9th February – comfort

Read [Isaiah 40.1-11](#)

“See the sovereign LORD comes with power ..” (Is.40.10)

These verses are a comfort to those who have trusted in the Lord and explain why they are so lastingly secure. Your God is both the sovereign Lord who rules wisely and well, and the gracious Shepherd who gathers His wayward sheep.

‘Your sins they are many, His mercy is more’: in what ways does the knowledge that your sin has been paid for (v.2) change things for you?

John quoted v.3 as he preached ‘a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ ([Mk.1.2-4](#)): are there things of which you need to repent today?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, that Your plans for Your people are to do us good not harm, to give us hope and a future. Help me today to live into that future.*

4) Thursday 10th February – Creator

Read [Isaiah 40.12-17](#)

“.. before Him all the nations are as nothing ..” (Is.40.17)

A series of questions obliges you to recognise the overwhelming majesty of the Lord as the one, true Creator God. He is wise, good, strong and sovereign, and the nations in all their power are as nothing before Him. Learn to fear Him alone!

What are the headlines today which would make you afraid for the future?

How do these verses provide an antidote to such fears?

Prayer: *How great You are, O Lord! How wonderful are all Your works! In all the many challenges I face today help me to rely on You t*

5) Friday 11th February – King

Read [Isaiah 40.18-24](#)

“..He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth ..” (Is.40.22)

The rulers of the world are as nothing before the Lord. Their authority and power is only ever delegated, and not a match at all for His. They may strut and fret their hour across the stage of history, but they are soon gone. Your God reigns forever!

In what ways have you seen princes and rulers reduced to nothing?

What should you be asking for when you pray for those who are ‘the rulers of this world’ today?

Prayer: *Your Majesty, I can but bow. I lay my all before You now. In royal robes I don’t deserve, I live to serve Your Majesty.*

6) Saturday 12th February – order

Read [Isaiah 40.25-26](#)

“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: who created all these?” (Is.40.26)

The vastness of the universe is the ‘shop-window’ of the great Creator God, to which we are bidden to look. He summoned all the stars into being, called each one by name, and ensures that none is missing. You can trust Him to order your life well!

Read [Romans 1.20](#): since the creation of the world what does Paul say has been clearly seen?

Why were the people being exhorted to look to the heavens? What are you taught by so doing?

Prayer: *O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works Your hand has made, then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to You – how great You are!*

7) Sunday 13th February – renewal

Read [Isaiah 40.27-31](#)

“.. those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength ..” (Is.40.31)

As a tree planted by the river draws on the endless flow of water to yield its fruit in season, so those whose lives are rooted in Jesus draw continually on the boundless reservoir of His restoring grace and find their strength being wonderfully renewed.

Many do feel that their way is ‘hidden from the Lord’ and their ‘cause is disregarded’ by God (if there’s a God at all): from what you learn in the earlier part of the chapter as well as from these verses, how would you answer someone who complained in these terms to you?

What does it mean for you to ‘hope in the Lord’ (v.31)?

How will your joining with others in worship today help you to ‘renew your strength’?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, that though I can often falter and flag in Your service, You never grow weary at all. Refresh Your people today in our gatherings for worship.*