

“The Hope of our Perseverance”  
Psalm 125  
(Preached at Trinity, July 14, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The great comfort of God’s people is the doctrine known as the Perseverance of the Saints. Although shaken they shall not be moved. In spite of intense trials and sometimes fiery persecution the true believer presses on.
  - a. Paul expressed this:  
**2 Corinthians 4:8-9 NAU** - "*we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*"
  - b. Again Paul wrote:  
**Romans 8:35 NAU** - "*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*"  
**Romans 8:38-39 NAU** - "*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"
  - c. True Christians remain firmly planted in Christ. Jesus said,  
**Matthew 7:24-25 NAU** - "*Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."*
2. This is the essence of **Psalm 125**  
**Psalm 125:1 KJV** - "*They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*"
3. We are continuing with the series of **Psalms 120-134**, each designated by the title, “A Song of Degrees,” or “A Song of Ascent.” They picture the ascent of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the various feasts. They begin in a distant land and move closer and closer to Jerusalem.
4. We’ve seen so far in these psalms the reality of the hardship God’s people face as they travel through this world—But God is our never-ending source of comfort and deliverance. In this psalm we continue this theme. God’s people are wonderfully preserved. Like a solid rock they cannot be moved but will abide forever.
  - A. In the context the psalmist is speaking about the pilgrims, God’s people on their ascent to Jerusalem. God has always provided for His faithful remnant even during the most troubled times.
  - B. But in a fuller sense this speaks to the reality of the perseverance of God’s people of all ages. The psalmist describes those who trust God as a rock—solid and unshakable.

5. The perseverance of the saints is a wonderful comfort for God's people. We can rest in comfort and assurance that God will keep us. Tonight I want to speak on this blessed hope shared by all of God's people.  
I believe we can see in this psalm three reasons why God's people persevere.
- I. The righteous persevere because of God's grace upon them – **Verses 1-2**
- A. God grants unto us faith  
**Psalm 125:1 KJV** - "They that trust in the LORD"
1. Faith is a great confidence in the unseen  
**Hebrews 11:1 KJV** - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
  2. It is this confidence that allows us to embrace the promises of God as absolute. It is to look at God's power as being unshakable. It is to rest in God's loving kindness and Divine favor.  
The word here is פִּיטָּחַ batach which refers to a high confidence – 161 times in the OT
    - a. It is the word used in the great proverb found in Proverbs 3  
**Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV** - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
    - b. It is a frequent word in the Psalms  
**Psalm 25:2 KJV** - "O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me."  
**Psalm 37:3 KJV** - "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."  
**Psalm 52:8 KJV** - "But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."  
**Psalm 56:11 KJV** - "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."
  3. Faith enables us to look to God with confidence and assurance
    - a. These people of faith endure through every fire and flood. They continue to endure unshaken
    - b. The psalmist compares them to Zion – the mountain and city of God. It stands firm and resolute.  
**Psalm 125:1 KJV** - "*shall be* as mount Zion, *which* cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever."
  4. The question is what is the source of this faith? Saving Faith is a Grace from God
    - a. The Reformers embraced Sola Fide—by faith alone  
And Sola Gratia – grace alone
    - b. 1689 Confession – "The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts. . ."
    - c. For those who possess saving faith they have trusted their eternal soul into the hands of God. They have rested in Christ. Their confidence is in Him.

- d. Not only have they trusted their soul, their eternity, they have trusted their life. They endure life's storms knowing that God has ordained all things so that He might display His glory upon the earth and the greatest desire of the saints is that they might display His glory through their trials.
  - e. They rest with confidence in God's power and His presence. This is the essence of **Verse 2**
- B. Not only does God grant His people a lively faith, He powerfully sustains them  
**Psalm 125:2 KJV** - "As the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, so the LORD *is* round about his people from henceforth even for ever."
- 1. The picture is of a mighty fortification that cannot be penetrated – God surrounds His people and secures them.
  - 2. This strength of perseverance does not flow forth from within the believer but from God Himself who surrounds us and protects us.
  - 3. Those who have met and have a relationship with Christ shall never fall away. They know His love. They experience His care. Their hearts are forever attached to Christ.  
**John 6:64-69 KJV** - "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. <sup>65</sup> And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. <sup>66</sup> From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. <sup>67</sup> Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? <sup>68</sup> Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."
  - 4. Where else would we go? Whom else would we follow? Whom else do we love? Who else is worthy of our lives?
- II. The righteous persevere because God limits the extent of their suffering – **Verse 3**  
**Psalm 125:3 KJV** - "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity."
- A. Gods people are not immune from affliction and distress
- 1. The psalmist is referring to the scepter of wicked nations seeking to overthrow Jerusalem. But on a larger scale it can refer to all powers of wickedness that threaten God's people.
  - 2. It does not say that the rod of the wicked shall not "come" but shall not "rest" upon the righteous – the word for "rest" means to "settle down and remain."
  - 3. There are countless types of affliction that can come upon God's people
    - a. There are the afflictions that come from the wicked. God's people have always been the objects of the hatred of the people of this world.
    - b. There are the afflictions that come from living in a fallen world.  
 Sickness and infirmities of the flesh  
 Famine and financial distress  
 Natural disasters
  - 4. These are often the very things that cause religious pretenders to fall away.

- a. The Psalmist describes it as “putting forth their hands unto iniquity.”
  - b. Jesus described such falling away in the Parable of the Sower  
**Matthew 13:20-21 KJV** - "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; <sup>21</sup> Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."
- B. But God restrains the trials of His people  
**"For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous"**
- 1. In other words, God limits the extent of the trials of His people  
 Spurgeon – “If the rack be too long used the patient sufferer may at last give way; and therefore the Lord puts a limit to the tyranny of the wicked. We may therefore expect that he will set a bound to the suffering of the innocent, and will not allow them to be pushed to the uttermost extreme.”
  - 2. God will not allow a trial or temptation to consume us  
**1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV** - "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
    - a. None of our temptations are unique – we are sharing the same life’s experiences that every other human being has faced
    - b. But the same temptations that cause some to fall into corruption serve to strengthen us
    - c. God brings adversity but enables His people to bear it.  
 That should bring you great comfort as you suffer affliction.
- III. The righteous persevere because of God’s merciful goodness upon them – **Verses 4-5**
- A. **Verses 4-5** open as a petition to God  
**Psalms 125:4 KJV** - "Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.*"
- 1. Do good to those who *are* good. Who are the “good?”
    - a. On one hand it refers to the positional righteousness that comes by faith through Christ’s imputed righteousness.
    - b. On the other hand, this is referring to the goodness of conduct that characterizes God’s people. It is those who are good at heart. It demands a change of heart and the indwelling Spirit.
    - c. Who are those that are good? Ultimately God knows as He searches and knows the hearts of man  
**Psalms 139:23-24 KJV** - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: <sup>24</sup> And see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"
  - 2. The pure in heart know and experience the covenantal goodness of God that He bestows upon His people – joy and peace and contentment
  - 3. The goodness of God continually encourages and sustains God’s people.  
 God is working all things for the good of His people – **Romans 8:28**.

B. **Verse 5** gives the terrible contrast

1. **Verse 5** speaks of those who “turn aside.” The concern of the psalmist was that not all of the Israelites were true followers of God.  
And this is the concern of pastors; that not everyone in their congregation is a genuine believer.
2. And how do you know the difference?  
The genuine persevere in the uprightness of their heart  
The counterfeit turn aside in their crooked ways. They expose themselves by the lust of their wicked flesh.
3. What about those who do not persevere?  
**Psalm 125:5 KJV** - "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity"
4. John Bunyan wrote: “There is one that hath taken up a profession of the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but this profession is only a cloak; he secretly practices wickedness; he is a glutton, or a drunkard, or covetous, or unclean. Well, saith God, I will loose the reins of this professor, I will give him up to his vile affections. I will loose the reins of his sins before him, he shall be entangled with his filthy lusts, he shall be overcome of ungodly company. Thus they that turn aside to their own crooked ways”
5. Those who turn back are joined with the workers of iniquity  
Remember our Lord’s words in Matthew 7  
**Matthew 7:21-23 KJV** - "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Conclusion:

1. But the righteous endure forever. We find great comfort in our perseverance. It is one of the means of our assurance—we are pressing on.
2. While the counterfeit continue in their iniquity God’s people press on in righteousness.  
**Psalm 125** ends with a marvelous note of blessing - "*but peace shall be upon Israel.*"
3. God’s people continue, they press on in the sweet peace of Christ.  
For the Christian this all finds its fullness in Christ.  
God’s people are built upon a Rock and that Rock is Christ  
**Isaiah 28:16 KJV** - "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."
- Psalm 118:22-23 KJV** - "The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner. <sup>23</sup> This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes."
4. For those who trust and rest in Christ they find a firm foundation, a solid ground and they shall not be moved from it.

**Psalm 125:1 KJV** - "They that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which* cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever."