

# You Are Not Alone

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Date: 10 June 2018

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So over the last few weeks, well not the last two weeks, but over the last couple of months we've been looking at what are called the songs of ascent, these Psalms towards the end of the Psalter, Psalm 120 through 134. They're songs that God's people would sing as they traveled to Jerusalem for the different festivals as they celebrated God's salvation. But as we've been thinking about in the series, they're also our songs. They're our songs as God's people today, as God's people who are on a journey. They're songs that speak powerfully and deeply into our own lives and our own experiences. The Bible often puts the Christian life into the language of a journey. They were pilgrims, were travelers. And as we've seen in this series, the Christian traveler needs these songs to sing on the way to help us. They're like our road trip playlist for the Christian life. Now tonight we're in Psalm 125. If you have a Bible, you might find it helpful to have it open there. Page 517 of the church Bibles.

And Psalm 125 says, those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore. And if you want an outline for how we're going to look at this Psalm, we're going to think about it like this. First of all, what does it look like to trust in the Lord? And then three things that the Psalm tells us, three results of that trust. First, that trusting God leads to stability. Second, that trusting God leads to surrounding. And thirdly, that trusting God leads to security. So what does it mean to trust? Well, according to a recent survey that I found online, there is a growing lack of cynicism, there's a growing lack of trust across the United Kingdom. Some examples of that would be in politicians. Apparently across the board in general, only 18% of people today would say that they trust political parties to do what is right. Apparently people find it hard to trust bankers, executives. Apparently only one in four people in the United Kingdom trust what they read on social media. We live in a world of sound bites, a world of fake news. And the point is trust is declining across the board, across the UK, and there is a growing cynicism. And apparently, Scotland is where that growing cynicism, where that distrust is at its worst. Apparently we are statistically the most cynical part of the United Kingdom. Champions. The point is for lots of reasons, people find it hard to trust. And the number one reason people felt that trust was difficult was because of the actions of the people around them. Friends, family, loved ones, neighbors, colleagues. But tonight in Sam125, we have a picture of someone who is completely worthy of trust. Someone who is entirely dependable. Someone who will never fail us or let us down. So first of all, what does it mean to trust? Well, in a general sense, to trust someone means to have absolute confidence in them. It means to rely on them. It means to think that they are utterly dependable, that they will deliver, that they will do what they say. And when it's used in the Bible about God, it means to take God at His word. To truly believe in your heart that God will do what God says. And to live in complete dependence on Him. And God is absolutely dependable. God is absolutely worthy of that trust. The Bible says God cannot lie. God keeps every single one of His promises. There is no fake news with God. There is no ulterior motive to what God says. The Bible also says to trust God means more than simply agreeing intellectually to something. It means more than having head knowledge about God. The Apostle James in his letter says, oh, so you believe that God is one. That's great. Even demons believe that. Trust has to mean more than head knowledge. Trust is a response of faith, a response of the heart to God's promises. It is a firm belief and expectation that God will do what He promises. Okay, so Psalm 125. I want to suggest that the first thing that we learn in Psalm 125 about trusting in God is that it leads to a life of stability. Read verse one. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. There's something incredible about mountains. There's something grand and majestic about the idea of a mountain.

Mountains are big. Mountains dominate the horizon. And the Bible often uses mountains as a picture, a metaphor or a simile of stability. Mountains endure. They stand strong. And God tells us here in Psalm 125 that those who trust in Him have that kind of unshakable stability. Maybe some of you have been to Ben Nevis. Ben Nevis is located just outside Fort William. And for a year, I lived and worked in Fort William. And I lived like half a mile from Ben Nevis. So every day when I go outside, it dominates the skyline. And if you've seen Ben Nevis or if you've been to Ben Nevis, you'll know that it is an impressive, impressive beast of a hill.

It's the highest mountain in the United Kingdom. And it's, I think, around four and a half thousand feet. No idea what that is in mirrors. It's big. Ben Nevis is big. And apparently over a hundred thousand people go up Ben Nevis every year. People go walking, climbing, skiing, abseiling, all different kinds of things. And Ben Nevis experiences all kinds of weather. It's battered by storms in the winter, by snow and hail and ice. But Ben Nevis isn't going anywhere anytime soon. People will come and people will go. But Ben Nevis will always be on the horizon. See, a mountain is a picture of something that endures, a picture of something that lasts, a picture of something that holds firm. And you can imagine as God's people make their way to Jerusalem. They're doing this three times a year. They're celebrating these great feasts. And they see in front of them the sheer vastness of Mount Zion. Mount Zion is this hill that Jerusalem is built on. And they see in front of them. And they're singing in the Psalm.

[ 6 : 55 ] This is what God's people are like. This is what we are like. Unshakable, stable, firm. And so they're singing this simile. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. I have to confess, I had to google the difference between a metaphor and a simile. A simile is like as. It's a comparative thing. And the point is that mountain stand firm, God's people are like a mountain. We live in a world that is constantly changing. We're always going through changes in our lives, in different forms, in different shapes, whether we're a Christian or not. I think everyone has a deeply rooted desire for some form of stability. Some form of security. Some people look for that stability in their career or in their finances. Other people will look for that stability in people, in family or friends. Many people find stability in material possessions. But the problem is none of these things, even the people around us, none of these things stay the same forever. Circumstances change. People move. I gather one of the toughest things about St. Columbus is the regularity of people leaving. People come for a few years, people become part of the place and then they move on. And that's tough. Change is tough. Change is hard. But change is a part of life. Sam 125 is a great reminder that there is a source of stability that never changes.

Trusting God means grounding ourselves in the one who never changes. The one who in himself is the same yesterday, today and forever. The one who endures. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion which cannot be shaken but endures forever. Jesus told a parable in the New Testament about foundations and how important your foundations are. He tells us that two men were each building a house. A wise man built his house on the rock. The rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house. But it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And a foolish man built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell. And great was its fall. And you see that in both stories, in both images here, the rains fall and the floods come. The wind battered both houses. Jesus doesn't say that building your house on the right foundations means the storms won't come. He doesn't say that your life won't be full of trials and difficulties. What he does say is that you will endure. You will stand firm. And in the same way, Sam 1-5 is not saying to us that if we trust God enough that we won't have any problems. It's not saying that if we trust God enough we won't experience any storms, any difficulties, any trials. What Sam 1-5 is saying that those who trust in the Lord will have a mountain-like stability. Those who trust in the Lord will be able to face the worst things in life and endure. So trust in the Lord leads to stability. Secondly, I want to suggest that Sam 1-2-5 is teaching us that trust in the Lord leads to surrounding. Read verse 2. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore. Maybe tonight we're here and we're worshipping God and we don't feel like an immovable mountain. Maybe we don't feel this kind of stability in our lives. Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed, so battered by the winds, battered by all the things that are coming our way, that it's hard to trust God. It's hard to take God at His word. It's hard to believe His promises. Maybe you're going to do a tough spell at work. Maybe there's problems you can think of in the week ahead that are weighing you down. Maybe some of us are struggling with ill health or maybe we've had a bad diagnosis in

the family. Maybe we've had a broken or strained relationship. There's all a host of different things that we can go through that can batter our faith, that can make us feel like we're being attacked and our peace is shattered. The point is God knows there are times like this. God knows He says to His people in the Bible, there are times when your faith feels weak and your trust is shaky. So we have this wonderful picture painted here in verse 2, as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people. So a little bit of sketching the geography of Jerusalem. It's a city that's founded on a mountain roughly 2,500 feet, but it's actually not the biggest mountain in the range. Jerusalem is actually surrounded by other higher mountains and in terms of a defensive position, that's the dream.

You have a city on a hill surrounded by other hills. You imagine Enborough Castle as a pretty hard location to attack, to occupy and history has shown us that settlement cities built on hills are notoriously hard to capture. If you see Lord of the Rings, there's a fortress Helms Deep, never been taken. It's built into the hills. It's surrounded by a ring, by protection. Apologies if you thought you were done with Lord of the Rings illustrations. So the image being painted for us is this idea of God surrounding His people with His protection, like the mountains that surround Jerusalem. And again, you can imagine God's people coming up to Jerusalem and seeing these hills and saying, that's us. God surrounds us in this way. We are absolutely surrounded by His presence. So the point is whatever storms you might be going through in your life, however you might be feeling, however far from God, however distant, God promises His people, He surrounds them in the midst. And we read in the Bible that God's people go through some terrible experiences. They go through times where it maybe feels like

[13:08] God's presence is absent, where God is far away. They go through slavery in Egypt, they go through the wilderness wanderings. There's times where they have evil kings and foreign rulers and they exile into Babylon. There are times in our lives where it can feel like God is absent. And God doesn't tell us that trusting Him takes all these difficult experiences away. Even in our Christian lives, we can feel spiritually unstable. So we come to Psalm 125 and God says, He surrounds His people in the face of all the storms of life. The message of the prosperity gospel, trust God and everything will be great. Trust God and you'll experience health and wealth. Trust God and good things are in store for you. If your trust is strong enough, you won't be ill, you won't be poor. God will bless you and you'll prosper. But I want to think about what Paul says in 2

Corinthians chapter 11. We might have it on the screen. Verse 24, this is Paul's experience of the Christian life. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 40 lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked. At night and a day I was adrift at sea. On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. Paul experienced danger in toil and hardship through many sleepless nights in hunger and thirst often without food in cold and exposure. So it's clear from God's people in the Old Testament, from Paul's experience in the New Testament, from our own experiences as Christians that our lives are not always going to be smooth sailing. We know that. So whatever our circumstances are, God says to you in the gospel, you are not alone. You're surrounded by my presence like the mountains that surround Jerusalem. So the Lord surrounds his people. So trusting in God leads to stability. Trusting in God leads to surrounding by his presence. And thirdly and finally I want to suggest that trusting God leads to security. If you read verse 3 in Psalm 125 you'll see the Psalm goes on to speak about the reality of opposition.

It says, for the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous. And what does that mean? It's a bizarre expression. Well the scepter really is just referring to rule. It's referring to power. It's referring to who's in control. And I think the point of this part of the Psalm is that sometimes it can seem like the world is out of control. Sometimes we can look at the world and we can think God cannot be in control here. God's rule is nowhere to be seen. The reality is that there are enemies in the Christian life. We see that in the Bible. We see that in the experience of God's people in the Old Testament. They had many enemies, external enemies, internal enemies.

[16:18] Sometimes they're under the rule of a foreign superpower whether it's a Syria or Babylon or Egypt. Sometimes they're under the rule of an internal enemy, a king who's evil and wicked. That's what you read in most of the Book of Second Kings. And today for us as Christians, God's kingdom exists in a world of other kingdoms. Kingdoms that are in opposition to God's rule. We can

see this when we look at our own nation, the values of our country. And God's promise here in Psalm 125 is the scepter of wickedness shall not remain, shall not rest, shall not endure. God's promise is ultimately He is the one in control. God's people sang that. How do they know? They trusted in God to do something about it. They trusted that God ultimately overcome all opposition. He will overcome all evil, all wickedness. We're told that one day every knee will bow before Jesus Christ.

But verse 3 also contains a warning for us I think. There's a danger that when we're living under the scepter of wickedness, there's the danger of God's people falling into temptation. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest and land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong. Lest, good word, not word we use very often, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong. And I think really this verse is painting a picture of the dangers of temptation and compromise in a world that has rejected God. God's people are called to be different. We're called to be those who follow God, who live for God. And the reality is we live in a land that has rejected Him. Maybe there are moments in our own lives and our own experiences where we felt temptation to conform, to be just like the world, to be just like those around us. I think Psalm 125 is a good reminder that we need to get back on track, that there's a danger of turning aside on this great journey.

Maybe we know people who have followed Christ for a time and who've been drawn away by various temptations. Maybe some of us ourselves have felt like we're slipping. God is always calling His people back to Himself, to trust Him, to give ourselves over to Him. The true King of this world, whatever it might look like, is Jesus Christ and He is seated on His throne. So we have this certainty here in Psalm 125. The scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous. And there's a great security here. The land allotted to the righteous. We know from the New Testament this is the true home for God's people. It's the place where we truly belong. The new heavens and the new earth, a place where there is no evil, no wickedness, no sin, no temptation. And in the meantime, the Bible says we are pilgrims. We are those who are journeying. And Psalm 125 is a great song and great help, a great encouragement for us as we journey. It's a song of complete confidence and trust in God. It's a confidence and trust in the face of challenge, of opposition. It's a firm belief that God will do what He says, that God will make things right. So we have to ask ourselves, do we believe Him? Do we believe in our hearts that God is going to make all things new? Do we look to Him for our ultimate security? Today in Edinburgh, in our own experience, most of our enemies are spiritual. Remember, we were thinking a few sermons ago in the series about the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three great enemies in the Christian life. And trust in the Lord is our great security against all of these things. We might be attacked in all different kinds of ways. Corey said a few weeks ago before he left that the songs of the journey aren't here to stop the danger. They're not here to remove the opposition. Therefore, when you're in an unsafe place, they're for finding safety and security in the heart. The reality is that the Christian life is a battle. And it's naive, I think. It's dangerous to ignore that. It's dangerous to live our lives not recognizing that we are in a battle each and every day. Last time we looked at a couple weeks ago, Derek was looking at Psalm 124, and it's such a powerful reminder of this fact. It says in verse 1, if it had not been the

Lord who was on our side, when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive. The flood would have swept us away. But Psalm 1-5, we have this firmness, this endurance for those who trust in God. And as we come to the end of the Psalm, we see in verse 4 that this trust, this confidence leads to prayer. It says, do good, O Lord, to those who are good and to those who are upright in their hearts. Commentators say that those who are good, that the Psalm refers to, is really referring to those who trust in the Lord. It's not the idea of those who are perfect, those who are somehow sinless. Verse 4 isn't asking God to be good to us because we've been good to Him. Really, it's saying those who are good, those who are upright in heart, is generally used to refer to those who trust the Lord, who love the Lord and who have a relationship with the Lord. So the Psalm is asking God to be good to those who follow Him in a world that has rejected and turned away from Him. So this kind of trust, this confidence leads to prayer. We need to be people who pray. We come to God with our battles, with our struggles, even when our faith seems weak and fragile. Jesus says to us in John chapter 10, if your faith and trust are in Him, then your security, your safety, is not determined by your hold of Him, but His hold of you. Verse 27 says, my sheep listen to my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish,

and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My

[ 22 : 34 ] Father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. So just to wrap things up and bring it to a close, Psalm 125 is a Psalm that speaks about an unshakable stability that we have in God, a deep sense of surrounding in the midst of the storms of this life, and the eternal security we have through trusting Jesus. I just want to conclude with this from Tim Keller. He says, trusting God means connecting yourself to the one person who will endure forever, and that means you will endure as well in a world in which seemingly everything changes and nothing lasts. Fix your mind on that promise. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank You and we praise You for what You've done for us through Jesus Christ. We thank You that we can come to You, Lord, with our burdens and our difficulties. Lord, help us this week in all that we do to know the surrounding of You through the Holy

Spirit. Help us, Lord, to live in light of Your promises. And Father, we pray for those here this evening who might be going through a storm. Lord, we pray that they would know Your presence, that they would know Your surrounding. Lord God, we recognize that we are in a battle each and every day, and Lord, we recognize how much we need You, how much we need You to equip us and protect us. Father, we pray that we would know the security and the safety and the comfort of knowing Jesus Christ each and every day. In Jesus' name, amen.