



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 22 Issue 12

March 19, 2023

Saving Faith Commended

Psalm 125

Matthew 7 contains what I believe to be one of the more sobering verses in the Bible.

Matthew 7:21a, 22-23, Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

On the Day of Judgment, many will approach Christ's judgment throne confident that they are saved. Notice the language:

Matthew 7:21a, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord'..."

These are NOT people outside of Christianity who don't know who Christ is. These are ones who recognize that Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords! Further, consider their appeal.

Matthew 7:22, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"

These people participated in holy works of devotion and dedication- "prophesying," "casting out demons," and even "performing miracles" all "in the name" of Christ. Yet somehow, they fell short.

Matthew 7:23b, "...I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me...'"

As I said, this is a sobering passage! It makes us appreciate Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 13:5, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you- unless indeed you fail the test?"

That raises a very important question: On what basis do we examine ourselves? Clearly it is NOT based on religious activity. That is obvious from this text! Well, if it is NOT based on religious service, then what is it based on?

Psalms 125 was written both to commend and encourage the genuine servant of God over and against the false servant. We pick it up in v. 3 with the context.

[Psalms 125.¹ The Context, v. 3.²](#)

Psalms 125:3, "For the scepter of wickedness³ shall not rest upon the land of the righteous;^{4,5} that the righteous may not put forth their hands to do wrong."

15 Words of Exhortation for Christian Pilgrims

1. **Psalms 120**: We must ensure that the burdens of this life drive us to Christ.
2. **Psalms 121**: In our burdens, we must know that God will never abandon or forsake us.
3. **Psalms 122**: In Christ our identity is that of a worshipper who exalts in the character of God.
4. **Palm 123**: The love/mercy of God is that which buoys us in life!
5. **Psalms 124**: In light of the darkness of this world, we must be spiritually vigilant to be driven by the person and work of Christ!

The language here is broad, most likely on purpose. There is no way of knowing what specific time, place or situation is behind this description. So, we are left to take this verse as a broad description of God's people living in this state of sin and misery.⁶ With that, notice the specifics.

- The scepter of wickedness: obviously, this is speaking about the rule of a king. But NOT just any king. It is the rule/"scepter" of a "wicked" king- which pretty much applies to all God's people living in this world. Throughout history, a godly throne is a rarity indeed. Most monarchies, oligarchies, democracies, and republics have been and are ruled by men and women who do NOT have God's honor in mind, BUT man's honor, if not their own.
- The word for "wickedness" (רָשָׁע [resha]) is the opposite of "righteousness" (צַדִּיק [tsaddiq]). It speaks of decisions or actions which are NOT in accordance with God's character or will. And so, fundamentally "the scepter of wickedness" speaks of an unrighteous rule which places the agenda, benefit, or honor of man before the Lord.⁷

Now this text gives a prophecy that this "wicked rule" in the end "shall not rest upon the land of the righteous".⁸ Truly, on the Day of Judgment all civil authorities will stand before God and give an account NOT ONLY for what they have done as individuals BUT also as leaders.

One of the things that stand out in the Prophets is that while God might use a wicked nation to bring about His will for His people, nevertheless that wicked nation, most notably the king of that nation, will answer to God for its cruelty, wickedness, and unrighteousness.

Isaiah 2:12-17, "For the Lord of hosts will have a day of *reckoning* against everyone who is proud and lofty, and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased. [Here God identifies these 'proud rulers' metaphorically, using natural descriptions of power instead of naming kingdoms] And *it will be* against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the lofty mountains, against all the hills that are lifted up, against every high tower, against every fortified wall, against all the ships of Tarshish, ad against all the beautiful craft. And the pride of man will be humbled, and the loftiness of men will be abased, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day."

We are talking here about the Day of Judgment when all office bearers will stand before the King of kings and be judged. Until then, God's people will continue to be subject to the godless rule of men and women all the while bound by the call "...not [to] put forth their hands to do wrong." This is an important addition because "bad company corrupts

good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33; cf. also Matthew 24:12).

The temptation is real in the face of trial and difficulty, brought on by a wicked king or nation, to curse rather than to bless. The calling here is for all in Christ to understand that while in this world

1. Satan may have his day,
2. An evil government may have its day, and
3. Evil men and women may have their day, nevertheless the day is coming and fast approaching when God will have His day at which time all accounts of sin will be settled, and we His children will be ushered into a kingdom of righteousness! So, truly, “...the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous [forever; accordingly, in the present] the righteous [must] not put forth their hands to do wrong.”

This is the context against which we are to read the Psalm before us. That brings us to the concern.

The Concern, vv. 1a, 4b.

Psalm 125:1a, This Psalm begins with a reference to “Those who trust^{9,10} in the Lord...” (Psalm 125:1a) — with that, skip down to v. 4.

Psalm 125:4b, “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.”

Each of the descriptions refer NOT to the false Christian whom I referenced earlier, BUT the genuine child of God (the focus of this Psalm¹¹) whom the Lord both loves and will receive on the Last Day. This we read about in Matthew.

Matthew 25:31-34, “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

Based on this, we are back to the question I posed at the beginning: What is it that separates the genuine child of God from the false Christian? Again, we know what it is NOT... it is NOT these things:

- Religious effort.

- Doing good things.
- Moral excellence.
- Attending church.
- Praying.
- And the like.

It is not because these things are evil, but they leave out one essential element, look at v. 1 again.

Psalm 125:1, "Those who trust in the Lord..."

This is what separates the genuine child of God from the false believer. The genuine Christian is one who NOT ONLY trusts the Lord in the moment, BUT their trust alone is the Lord — as Jeremiah put it.

Jeremiah 17:7, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord."

As we approach the Day of Judgment, on what basis do we hope that Christ will accept us? If we say, "Because I am a good person... I do good things... I do religious things" our trust will be shown to be in ourselves... IN WHAT WE DO OR THINK OR SAY! BUT if our trust is Christ alone, we will say, "There is nothing in me that merits God's acceptance or approval. I am a sinner who deserves death. BUT Jesus/God came to the world, lived a perfect life, and then gave up His life in exchange for mine. So, I am acceptable to God NOT because of what I have done BUT because of what Christ has done on my behalf." Listen to...

Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

That explains Paul's response to the Philippian Jailer who wanted to know what was necessary to be saved. Speaking of the jailer who at that moment was releasing Paul and Silas from prison:

Acts 16:30-31, "And after he brought them out, he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in [trust in/rely upon] the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.'"

Bryan Chapell continued:

The question of whether I am okay with God cannot be answered by an assessment of anything about us, but only by acknowledgement of the sufficiency of Christ's provision. His work alone can make us right with God. And when we believe His work applies to us, that's the good news of God's unlimited

grace! (Chapell 2021)

See, our problem is that we have a BAD RECORD and a BAD HEART. As to OUR RECORD, we have sinned and therefore must be judged as guilty and so die.

Romans 6:23a, “For the wages of sin is death...”

We also have a BAD HEART. Speaking of you and me, Paul put it this way:

Romans 3:13-18, “Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

So, what did Jesus come to do? He came to give us His record of perfect obedience.

2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

He also came to give us a new heart.

Ezekiel 36:26-28, “...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers [ultimately speaking of Heaven]; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.”

That is the focus and so the concern of this Psalm. It is on those whose trust is NOT in themselves or their religious efforts (like many who in the end will perish). RATHER it is on those whose hope, trust, and life is in Christ. Look at verse 1 again, “Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.”

Now if that is the case — if our trust resides exclusively in Christ- what is the result? That brings us to the consequence.

[The Consequence, v. 1b.](#)

Psalm 125:1b, “Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved,^{12,13} but abides forever.”

The focus here is on the Central Mountain Plateau¹⁴ (which spans the length of Palestine) specifically on ONE MOUNTAIN, “Mount Zion” on which Jerusalem was built.

With that, do you understand the point? This mountain is that upon which Abraham walked with his children. This mountain is that in which Jesus and His disciples walked in the New Testament era. AND it is this mountain that still remains unchanged though it has witnessed hundreds of wars, thousands of leaders, and multiple kingdoms and nations who have made claim to it.

Talk about permanence! Talk about stability! Talk about being unmoved! That is the point here. When our trust is in the Lord and is the Lord, no man, devil, evil, bitter providence, tragedy or even death can move us!

Romans 8:35-39, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So, yes, we live in a hostile world filled with many a burden and ruled by many a wicked, self-serving king.¹⁵ Yet, let the winds blow and the nations rage, our house/lives are built on the Rock.

Matthew 7:24-25, as Christ said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them [that is, trusts them and so trusts Christ], may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.”^{16,17}

This is how we live in a world ruled by an oppressive, wicked government or king. We look NOT at the things which are perishable, BUT upon Him who is imperishable! (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18) — and this makes us immovable! How so? Because of OUR great faith and confidence in God? NO! It has everything to do with the Lord who strengthens us.

[The Confidence, v. 2.](#)

Psalm 125:2, “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.”

“Mount Zion” is only one of many mountain peaks in Palestine- and at that, lower in elevation to the ones surrounding it!^{18,19} In this regard, consider if it were possible that

a mighty explosion could take out Mount Zion, there is no way it could take out the entire Central Mountain Range of Palestine. And that, according to this verse, is what the Lord is to His people- NOT ONLY in His strength and so His omnipotence, BUT ALSO in His purpose, plan, and will.

Malachi 3:6, “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

If our God were the hand-wringing deity of so many churches and religions, we could never hope to be saved or secure either in this life or the next. BUT, because God is our Rock — which means He NOT ONLY is unthwartable BUT ALSO will never change His mind or plan for us — we have confidence and hope! David wrote when once he was delivered from Saul who sought his life.

Psalms 18:30-33, “[God] is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God, the God who girds me with strength, and makes my way blameless? He makes my feet like hinds’ *feet* [a ‘hind’ is a mountain goat] and sets me upon my high places.”²⁰

That is the focus of the Psalmist here. It is this Being who NOT ONLY has saved us, BUT also “surrounds His people” unto their protection “from this time forth and forever.”²¹

Yet, in the words of Paul, “...For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants...” (Romans 9:6b-7a). In other words, being religious or going to a church doesn’t make you a child of God (any more than walking into an auto shop makes you a car). Accordingly, the Psalmist issued an important warning; the caution.

The Caution, v. 5a.

Psalm 125:5a, “But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways,^{22,23} the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity...”

This is directed at the religious person amongst God’s people whose trust is NOT in Christ BUT in themselves. When that is the case, notice what happens... they “turn aside to their crooked ways.”

The language speaks of much more than a lapse in morality. As we’ve seen so many times, the difference between the Christian and non-Christian is NOT their morality, NOR their religious activity (or lack thereof), NOR even their trust, BUT the object of their trust. Speaking of Christ, Luke wrote this:

Luke 18:9-14a: “And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ‘Two

men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee [in their culture, the religious Green Beret who was the epitome of moral virtue], and the other a tax-gatherer [which at the time was the epitome of wickedness and lostness]. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man [the tax-gatherer] went down to his house justified rather than the other..."

Of the two — the Pharisee or the Tax Collector — which was the most wretched before God? The Pharisee! How was his wretchedness or "crooked ways" manifested? NOT in acts of immorality BUT pride — which of all sins is the most repugnant to God! Notice the first sin mentioned in Proverbs, in the list of the Top Seven Worst Sins,

Proverbs 6:16-17a, "There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes..."

Pride!

James 4:6b, "...God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

And so, though the Pharisee excelled in his morally upright behavior as well as great acts of religious sacrifice, because his trust was in himself/his performance, he was most loathsome to God. In contrast, the Tax Collector knew that he was morally bankrupt and so he turned to God and pleaded for mercy!

All hearing this heed the warning of the Psalmist before us. Though it heralds the security of the genuine child of God, it also issues forth a sober warning to all who trust in themselves that they are good enough: If any remain in the wickedness of self-trust, on the Last Day "the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity."^{24,25} Derek Kidner wrote of this:

Carnal religion will fasten on what seems sacrosanct, and will shelter behind Mount Zion from even God himself (see the 'den of robbers' sermon in Jeremiah 7). True religion starts at the centre, *the Lord* in whom all things- Mount Zion included- hold together. The phrase, *Those who trust in the Lord*, shows one of the several facets of our relationship named in the Old Testament, along with the mention of those who 'fear', 'love' and 'know' Him... (Kidner 2014, 473-474)

So, heed the warning:

- You are saved NOT because you do religious activity or are morally better than most. You are saved because of the life and death of Christ credited to your

account by grace through faith.

- If you approach God on any other basis, on the Last Day you will be “lead you away” to hell along with all other “doers of iniquity.” With that warning, the Psalmist ends with a prayer which brings us to the cry.

The Cry, vv. 4a, 5b.²⁶

Psalm 125:4a, “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.”

As God is good, this only is what God could ever do for His people!²⁷ So, why pray for this? As we’ve seen many times prayer is NOT the means of changing God’s mind or informing God of something He does NOT know. RATHER, prayer is the means by which we tune our hearts and minds to the Lord!

See, it is so easy to veer from the path of righteousness in our minds such that we set our focus and glory (when it comes to the Lord) on things that are NOT God’s will:

1. *Lord, make our nation a Christian nation.*
2. *God, heal my sister.*
3. *Lord, give me that job.* While there is NOTHING inherently wrong with these petitions, they may or may not be God’s will for you or me.

What confidently can we pray to the Lord for one another that we know God will answer in the affirmative? “Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts.” This is a prayer we want to pray because NOT ONLY will it realign our expectations to God’s will, BUT ALSO it is a prayer that God will always answer it in the affirmative. How can we be so sure? Because of such passages like these:

Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

With that, the Psalmist ends with a final petition:

Psalm 125:5b, “...[May] Peace be upon Israel [that is, the people of God²⁸].”

This Song ends with a longing — NOT that we have nice days, full bank accounts, or easy deaths. BUT simply that in and through all things we might know and so experience “...the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension [such that it] guards [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus.”²⁹ That is the longing of the genuine child of God living in a fallen world. It is NOT that God changed the world, BUT that He changes us!

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End Note(s)

¹ “The psalm may be divided into three stanzas:
Expression of trust (vv. 1–2)
Expression of trust moving to petition (v. 3)
Petition moving to a declaration of peace (vv. 4–5)”
(Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 910)

² “The mention in v. 3 of the scepter of the wicked being over the land allotted to the righteous likely refers to enemy occupation of the land of Israel. This would fit the postexilic period well, when the people who had returned to Jerusalem were under foreign domination or threatened by it. Nehemiah 6 would represent a plausible background for the psalm, as the people experienced external threats and internal traitors as well as plots to destroy and discredit Nehemiah. It was a time of physical insecurity and psychological instability.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 469)

³ Thomas Cahill, the director of religious publishing at Doubleday in New York, has written a book about the role of the Irish in preserving classical learning in the Middle Ages. Early in that book he has a chapter on the breakdown of Roman civilization. The elements of that breakdown are almost exactly what we are dealing with today: ‘The changing character of the native population, brought about through unremarked pressures on porous borders; the creation of an increasingly unwieldy and rigid bureaucracy, whose own survival becomes its overriding goal; the despising of the military and the avoidance of its service by established families, while its offices present unprecedented opportunity for marginal men to whom its ranks had once been closed; the lip service paid to values long dead; the pretense that we still are what we once

were; the increasing concentration of the populace into richer and poorer by way of a corrupt tax system, and the desperation that inevitably follows; the aggrandizement of executive power at the expense of the legislature; ineffectual legislation promulgated with great show; the moral vocation of the man at the top to maintain order at all costs, while growing blind to the cruel dilemmas of ordinary life.” (Boice 2005, 1102-1103)

⁴ “The person who wrote this psalm knew that it is not under perfect conditions that we have to trust God, but in an evil and wicked world. Therefore the next two stanzas acknowledge the presence of the wicked in Israel and their threat to righteous persons. ¶ What is the situation here? H. C. Leupold and J. J. Stewart Perowne think the psalm fits the age of Ezra and Nehemiah best, and perhaps it does. It reflects a time when the Jews were in their land but the land was ruled by or at least dominated by a foreign power, called ‘the scepter of the wicked’ (v. 3). This verse could refer to Persia, the dominant world power at that time, or to the small surrounding kingdoms of Samaria, Ammon, Arabia, or Philistia, which did everything they could think of to hinder Nehemiah’s work.” (Boice 2005, 1106)

⁵ Linking v. 3 to the previous verse, Reynolds observes, “Though they feel defenseless, they are in fact surrounded by God’s protective hand. A mere glimpse of Jerusalem’s surrounding mountains will function as a perpetual reminder of the psalmist’s point.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 471)

⁶ “Now emerges the bleak situation in which these bold words have been spoken: one in which evil has apparently the upper hand and the righteous are wavering. This may or may not point to foreign domination: the heathen have no monopoly of sin.” (Kidner 2014, 474)

⁷ G. Herbert Livingston said that “...[wickedness] denotes the negative behavior of evil thoughts, words and deeds, a behavior not only contrary to God’s character, but also hostile to the community and which at the same time betrays the inner disharmony and unrest of a man.” (R. Laird Harris 1999, 863)

⁸ “It is important to notice the difference between the writer’s *prediction* of God’s sure judgment on the wicked and his *petition* for blessing on the righteous. He does not need to ask that the wicked will be judged, because their judgment is certain, sometimes sooner than either we or they expect! The church father Athanasius said of Julian the Apostate, the last major persecutor of the church, when he heard that he had died, ‘That little cloud has quickly passed away.’ The wicked are devoted to destruction.” (Boice 2005, 1107)

⁹ “The word translated *trust* is the Hebrew *bāṭah*, the first occurrence of the word in the Songs of the Ascents. Its basic meaning is ‘be confident in, feel secure, be unconcerned.’” (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 910-911)

¹⁰ “To ‘trust’ (*bāṭah*) is to have confidence in or rely on. It is only as good as its object, whether in oneself, in other resources, or as here, in the Lord.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 470)

¹¹ “In v. 3, the psalmist speaks first of the *wicked* and then the *righteous*. In vv. 4 and 5, the order is reversed, addressing first the righteous and then the wicked. The reversal places the righteous ones in the middle of the literary structure of vv. 3–5, a focal point for the message of the psalm.” (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 911)

¹² Peter had biblical grounds for understanding Jesus’ teaching this way [that the profession of ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ is the ‘rock’ upon which the Lord would build His church, cf. Matthew 16:16-18]. He indicates it by three Old Testament quotations [in His epistle 1 Pet. 2:4-8]. 1. *Isaiah 28:16*. Isaiah speaks of God’s laying ‘a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone.’ Peter added, ‘The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame’ (1 Peter 2:6). We build on Jesus by faith. We are to ‘trust in him.’ By believing on Jesus we become stones worked into the great spiritual temple God is constructing. 2. *Psalms 118:22*. Jesus applied Psalm 118:22 to himself during his earthly ministry, so Peter probably learned to interpret the verse this way from Jesus. Jesus told a parable about farmers to whom the owner of a vineyard had leased a field. They tried to appropriate the field for themselves, eventually killing the owner’s son, who had been sent to collect his profits. ‘When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ Jesus asked. ¶ They answered, ‘He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.’ That was the right answer. Jesus then applied it to himself by quoting from Psalm 118: ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone”?’ (Matthew 21:33–42). ¶ God is the owner of the

vineyard. The leaders of Israel were the evil tenant farmers. The servants were the prophets, and the son who was killed was Jesus himself. Therefore, he is also the stone rejected by the builders who was to become the capstone of religion and the only sure foundation for his people. Psalm 118:22 must have meant a lot to Peter because he cited it not only here but also in his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:11). 3. *Isaiah 8:14*. Peter used Isaiah 8:14 to add the thought of stumbling to the prior thought of rejecting Jesus. 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall' (1 Peter 2:8). Peter meant that rejecting God's anointed Messiah is no small matter. It has a fatal consequence, which is to fall down spiritually, or be lost forever." (Boice 2005, 1104-1105)

¹³ "...(*yimmôt*, from the verbal root *mût*). The same word is translated in Psalms 121:3 as 'stumble': 'He will not allow to stumble your foot.' God grants to those who trust stability, security, and confidence." (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 911)

¹⁴ Cf. Psalms 121:1.

¹⁵ "The vast majority of pilgrims who made their way to Jerusalem for the festival seasons in the postexilic period were not the rich and privileged. They often were the victims of injustices in their daily lives. They most likely felt crushed. As they gathered in Jerusalem, the holy city, and worshipped together at the temple, perhaps some measure of confidence was restored. God *does* do good to those who are good, to those who are *upright in their hearts* (v. 4), despite the circumstances that surround them each day. And at the end of the appointed time, the pilgrims could return home with hope restored and with new energy for the days ahead." (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 912)

¹⁶ "Early in this chapter I mentioned Thomas Cahill and his study of the role of the Irish in preserving learning during the Dark Ages. I return to him here because of what he has to say about St. Patrick, the young Roman who brought Christianity to Ireland. Patrick had been captured in England by Irish pirates when he was only sixteen years old and had been put to work as a slave for an Irish chieftain. He escaped after six years, returned to his family, but was then called by God to return to Ireland as a missionary. ¶ What a task Patrick faced! Behind him lay the collapsed wreck of Roman civilization. Before him were the fierce, wild natives of Ireland. Patrick had no outward security, but he persevered at his calling, dying at last at the age of seventy-six. In thirty years of ministry Patrick changed Ireland so thoroughly that, as Thomas Cahill reports in his study, "As the Roman lands went from peace to chaos, the land of Ireland was rushing even more rapidly from chaos to peace." Instead of viewing the collapse of his culture as an unmitigated tragedy, Patrick seized it as an unprecedented opportunity to propagate Christ's gospel. ¶ Where did Patrick find strength in such times? He gives his answer in a surviving prayer known as 'St. Patrick's Breastplate.'

'I arise today through God's strength to pilot me: God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me, God's host to save me from snares of devils, from temptations of vices, from everyone who shall wish me ill... ¶ 'Christ to shield me today against poison, against burning, against drowning, against wounding, so that there may come to be abundance of reward. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise... ¶ I arise today through a mighty strength...'

That is true security, a security we need. It is the same security given to the people of God throughout the ages so that they could be 'like Mount Zion which cannot be shaken but endures forever' (v. 1)." (Boice 2005, 1107-1108)

¹⁷ In contrast, the man or woman whose trust remains in their own efforts or religious activity, notice what happens to them. Christ continued, "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:26-27)

¹⁸ "While Jerusalem itself sits on a hill, it is actually surrounded by higher mountains, particularly to the east. The pilgrim celebrating a festival in Jerusalem looks out at the surrounding mountains and likens them to the way God protectively surrounds God's people." (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (Author) 2014, 911)

¹⁹ “The city of Jerusalem is surrounded by mountain peaks, and the psalmist uses this concrete phenomenon to picture the abstract truth that the Lord is a protective hedge around his people. This was an object lesson the pilgrims approaching Jerusalem would immediately grasp. As Jerusalem’s location made it difficult to besiege and attack, so the Lord provides secure protection for his people (cf. Exodus 14:19–20; 2 Kings 6:15–17), and nothing will compromise or terminate it.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 470)

²⁰ Consider Psalm 46:1-3, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, [and now he speaks in extremes and so references things that could never happen] though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar *and* foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.”

²¹ “Mountains are not only stable but also protective. In a world concerned with security, this psalm helps us remember where our ultimate security rests- namely, in the Lord. ¶ Mount Zion wasn’t the highest peak of the mountain range around Jerusalem. The surrounding mountains protected the city. Invading armies would have to march up the mountains or through the mountain passes (leaving them vulnerable). Jerusalem was thus defensible. The hills served as a great wall. The psalmist is saying that God similarly surrounds his people (cf. Psalm 34:7). Nothing will come into our lives that isn’t permitted by God, for the good of the person trusting in him, and for the glory of God. He will protect you.” (Daniel L. Akin 2021, 206)

²² “The *crooked ways* bring back a reminder of Judges 5:6, when travellers had to take to devious routes; but these men are devious by choice. It is their way, no doubt, of pursuing peace, as they see it.” (Kidner 2014, 474)

²³ “The expression *pō ‘ālê hā ‘āwen* (lit. ‘doers of evil’) speaks of those who want to harm the people of God by misusing the power and opportunity they have been given.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 471-472)

²⁴ “Those who suppose themselves to be righteous because they are living among God’s people but are not actually his- those ‘who turn to crooked ways’- the writer warns are not really among the regenerate and says ‘the Lord will banish with the evildoers.’ Remember, mere formal membership with the people of God counts for nothing. We must actually be trusting and obeying God. We must belong to Jesus Christ.” (Boice 2005, 1107)

²⁵ “Beware of a false faith. James says even the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). Trust in the Savior alone for life and salvation. And also commit your life to him. Cling to him. Have confidence in him. All other ground is sinking sand.” (Daniel L. Akin 2021, 206)

²⁶ This parallels what we saw in Psalms 122:6-9.

²⁷ “...there is no end to the good things God has prepared for those who have been made righteous by the work of Christ, and it is proper for us to pray for an abundance of good things, as the psalmist does. We have a good God, and we can ask him to be good to us and to others who know and love him too. The apostle Paul expressed this boldly when he wrote, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).” (Boice 2005, 1107)

²⁸ “Although in the short run the wicked may appear to prevail, in the long run true peace comes to those who find their security in the Lord.” (Dr. Daniel J. Estes 2019, 472)

²⁹ “The writer concludes fittingly with this word: ‘Peace be with Israel.’ This is really the theme of the psalm. If you trust God, you can know his peace. If you don’t trust him, you will freak out and worry. You will be restless. But you can rest when you rest in him.” (Daniel L. Akin 2021, 208)