



Firwood Church

These are the notes of a sermon preached at Firwood Church by Ronnie Evans on the morning of the 8 March 2009; these notes are, therefore, intended to be read in conjunction with the sermon. To download sermons and other free resources, visit www.firwoodchurch.com or subscribe through iTunes.

SONGS OF ASCENT - PART 6, THE LORD MY PROTECTOR

Psalm 125

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

**1 Those who trust in the LORD are like 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 forevermore.**

**3 For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest
on the land allotted to the righteous,
lest the righteous stretch out
their hands to do wrong.**

**4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good,
and to those who are upright in their hearts!**

**5 But those who turn aside to their crooked ways
the LORD will lead away with evildoers!
Peace be upon Israel!**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Songs of Ascent are a series of fifteen Psalms (120 through to 134) that were sung by pilgrims as they went up to the temple in Jerusalem to observe the major festivals and to worship the living God.

Last week we considered Psalm 124 and the plight of the Israelites as they were assailed from all sides by those opposed to the people of God. The Israelites recognised that if God had not been with them, then they would have been overcome by their enemies. We saw

that the attack they faced was not purely physical, but also a spiritual. The Israelites came to understand that had the Lord not been on their side, then they would have been completely overwhelmed, 'then over us would have gone the raging waters' (Psalm 124:5).

In Psalm 124 we saw that David's confidence is ground in his understanding that the Living God is indeed Israel's Rescuer.

As we reach Psalm 125, we see that the Psalmist turns his attention to those who trust in the Lord God, not only in the small things, but in **all** things. The Psalmist encourages the people to have absolute trust in the God who is faithful and unshakable. He entreats *this* God to look upon his people with compassionate,

**...to those who are good,
And to those who are upright in their hearts! (verse 4)**

In Psalm 125 we see the Lord God as Protector: '...to those who trust in the Lord...'

2. GOD SURROUNDS HIS PEOPLE

a. How can Christians be sure that God is with us and for us?

The testimony of the Bible illustrates that God's people are surrounded, protected and rescued by the Lord.

In Psalm 125, the Psalmist uses the geography of the city of God, Jerusalem, to illustrate the way in which God surrounds his people (Andy Evans addresses this more fully in the third part of this series, The Lord my Dwelling Place). Jerusalem is built securely on a mountain surrounded by mountains.

In this same way, David understands the people of God are 'surrounded' by God,

**As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people (verse 2)**

The Lord God indeed protects the people of God. Consider the charge against Job,

Job 1:10

Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Similarly, the Scriptures testify that our God is a God who rescues and saves his own,

2 Timothy 1:8-9

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us...

In times of great loneliness and disengagement with the world and fellow believers, we can feel abandoned and isolated. Scripture reminds us and assures us that God surrounds his people with his angels,

Hebrews 1:14

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

And,

Psalms 34:7

**The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.**

Throughout history, many Believers have testified to the presence of angels, protecting and guarding those doing the Lord's work.

One testimony in particular involved a youth project on an inner city estate. It was considered normal for houses to be burgled, not only while the properties were empty, but while they were occupied. Eventually it became apparent that the houses on the estate occupied by Christians were untouched. A Christian worker visiting the area testified that he had seen men in white outside each of the houses occupied by the Christian workers (for other similar testimonies, see 'Angels on the Walls' by Wallace & Mary Brown).

The Bible testifies that God is with His people and that He chose us in spite of ourselves. He did not choose us for our good works. The Bible tells us that we have all fallen far short of what God requires of us. Yet God chose us and reached out to us in kindness and mercy. Our confidence is grounded upon the truth of who God is and all he has done for his people. He chose us before the ages began,

2 Timothy 1:9

[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...

3. HE SENDS HIS HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:15-26

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

²⁵These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

As Christ was with the disciples, loving, teaching, sometimes disciplining, but always encouraging and loving them, so the Holy Spirit will be with all believers. We are told that those whom the Lord has chosen, the Holy Spirit is not only with them but also dwells in them. In addition, Jesus himself, and the Father himself, is indwells within believers,

John 14:17b-20

“You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

4. JESUS PRAYS FOR US

John 17:6-19

6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Jesus is clear that it is not his intention to remove believers from the trials and tribulations of this world, but rather,

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one

Jesus is seen here praying for our spiritual welfare, which is of far greater importance than our physical wellbeing,

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Here we see that the Lord is again praying for believers. Whatever tribulations and trials are encountered, or in the times when believers feel alone, deserted and the whole world seems to be against them, there is this amazing picture of Jesus praying to the God the Father on our behalf.

With Christ's prayer and what he achieved on the cross, we know that we are more than conquerors and that '...nothing can separate us from the love of God...'

Romans 8:35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

5. WE ARE CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Romans 8:17

and if [we are] children, then heirs-heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Christians are assured that that heaven is our inheritance and that all true believers will inherit all things. All those who are faithful and are partakers of the Spirit of Christ shall be partakers of His glory.

6. THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:3-11

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

The word 'disciple' merely means 'training', the outcome of this 'discipline' is to produce disciplined followers of Jesus. For the Christian, discipline is imperative - it is the key to a life of dying to self and leaving the old life behind: our former self-interested, proud, arrogant and

selfish ways. Christian discipline leads to a life where our eyes are fixed only on the Lord Jesus.

Discipline by the Lord can at times be uncomfortable and unpleasant. Believers are called to receive this discipline as evidence that God is indeed our loving Father. Those who continue on the journey discover that their Christian life and witness becomes more fruitful as they become more and more disciplined and, as such, more and more Christ-like.

7. INPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

**3 For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest
on the land allotted to the righteous,
lest the righteous stretch out
their hands to do wrong.**

**4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good,
and to those who are upright in their hearts!**

**5 But those who turn aside to their crooked ways
the LORD will lead away with evildoers!
Peace be upon Israel!**

Man's righteousness is not enough. The only true righteousness is that of Christ, won for us on the cross, where Christ became sin and imputed to us his righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5: 21

**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him
we might become the righteousness of God.**

Martin Luther described this as 'the great exchange'.

In this Psalm it can be clearly seen that God is protecting those who are righteous and leading the evil doers away,

**But those who turn aside to their crooked ways
the LORD will lead away with evildoers! (verse 5)**

As in Psalm 124 last week, it is clear there is no fence on which Christians can sit; there is a clear choice: we must stand with either the righteous or the evil doers. The Lord will lead away many of the 'fence-sitters' with the evil doers.

8. PEACE

The consequence of completely trusting in the Lord is being surrounded by the Lord and having the imputed righteousness of Christ which leaves the Christian with complete peace.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

And, in Psalm 125,

Peace be upon Israel!

We pray that believers everywhere would see God for who he truly is; that they would understand all that he is for them and, as they see and understand, that they would know, with a surety and profound peace, that the Lord is indeed their Protector.