

- ***READ Psalm 125*** A couple of weeks ago, we considered **Psalm 121** and how it is a Song of Ascents that was most likely sung by the people as they went up to Jerusalem for different yearly feast. We discussed that these songs were often sung as a source of motivation and reminder for why it is that they were willing to go through the effort to make the long and difficult journey up to Jerusalem.
- Many of the songs played on the characteristics of Jerusalem. **Psalm 121** talked about where our eyes looked to, and we considered how we need to keep our eyes looking up to God like the people would've looked up towards Jerusalem. **Psalm 125** does something quite similar in the fact that this Psalm focuses in on the the fact that Jerusalem was a stronghold in regards to war. Jerusalem, being on a hilltop was a prime strategic location. It was often looked at as almost unbreachable because it was strong like a mountain and could be easily defended against lesser armies and even many stronger ones. Thus, the people would sing songs bringing these ideas to their minds.
- This is exactly what we see in this **125th Psalm**. It begins with the description of those who trust in the Lord. The Psalmist writes that this person would be as Mount Zion and not be moved. (**Psalm 125:1**) He would be strong like Mount Zion in all that he does. Now, you might be wondering why we began talking about Jerusalem, but now we are talking about Mount Zion. Throughout Scripture, we can see different inspired writers referring to Jerusalem as Mount Zion. The word "Zion" itself essentially means fortification, so for Jerusalem to be referred to as Zion would be most appropriate considering its location. It is first referred to as Zion back in **II Samuel 5:7**, when it is recorded that "*David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David*" from the Jebusites. We could also look to prophecies concerning the Kingdom of Jesus being established and see connection between Zion and Jerusalem. (**Isaiah 2:3; Joel 2**)
- So with this picture in our minds of Jerusalem being this strong fortress of Zion, how is it that we can be made to be like that? How is it that we can come to be strong like Mount Zion? Furthermore, what will we be like if we are made to be like Mount Zion in regards to our strength of spiritual character? These are questions we will consider this evening as we consider **Psalm 125**.

I. To be strong like Mount Zion, we must first trust in the Lord.

- A. Jerusalem wasn't just randomly a stronghold, but it had characteristics that made it strong, and the same thing must be true for us.
 1. Remember, Jerusalem's location made it ideal for protection and defense against attacks from invading armies. It sat much higher in elevation than the surrounding area with valleys on nearly every side. It wouldn't be difficult for the defending people to spot an attack coming from any side. This isn't to say that it couldn't be overtaken, but the effort that would have to be put in would be extraordinary. Certainly having the God of heaven on your side probably made things a bit easier for David when he sought to capture it as Israel's capital city.
 2. The point still remains that Jerusalem had something about it that made it this stronghold of a city, and we must recognize that being strong in our faith and spiritual character doesn't just happen by accident. Something must take place within each of us that leads us to a place where we can be strong like Mount Zion, and that foremost thing that we must do is mentioned at the beginning of this Psalm...we must put our trust in the Lord.
- B. Those who trust in the Lord make great efforts in their lives.
 1. Those who trust in the Lord will give great effort to intimately know the Lord. Think for just a moment about those people that you trust the most in your life. Now, those people you are picturing in your mind, are these people that you would consider to be people that you know well? I'd be will to guess that no one here is imagining a person that you don't know the name of. Most all of us trust those people whom we know the best. And the same thing must be true

about our trust in God. If we are truly to trust in God as the one who will strengthen us to make it through this life unscathed, then wouldn't that demand that we come to truly know the God in whom we are putting the safety of our souls? I would certainly hope that is the case, and if that is the case then we need to begin to grow our trust in the Lord by becoming intimately familiar with Him through much reading of and meditating on His Word and prayer. We cannot come to know God if we are not in constant communication with Him.

2. Furthermore, those who desire to trust in the Lord must believe the Lord. But what are we to believe if we don't know Him, right? Again, we must know the Lord and His will for us if we are to believe what it is that He has revealed to us in His Word. We cannot believe and have faith in that which we have not heard or come to know. That's pretty basic right? **"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)** I need to know what is contained within God's Word and then I need to truly believe from my heart what is written. I need to believe that God truly wants what is best for me, and that he has my best interest at heart. I need to believe that God actually knows what is best for me.
3. If I claim to be a person who knows and believes in God and that He knows and wants what is best for me, then my life will look a certain way. My life will reflect the life of a person who has put his full confidence and trust in the One who created me and continues to sustain me day by day. Certainly, my life won't look like the life of an atheist, but my life won't even look like the life of the run of the mill religious person that might be on every aisle of the grocery store. No, no...my life will look a very particular way because I will have truly been **"transformed by the renewing of my mind."** (Romans 12:2) I will look different and I will be different.
4. So what does this look like? When we fully trust in the Lord and we are willing to put in the effort to know, believe, and live in the Lord...then what will that strength allow us to be able to do? Consider the following three things that our trust in the Lord will allow for us to do.

II. Being strong like Mount Zion will all us to:

A. Stand in faith. (Matthew 7:24-27)

1. We talked this morning about the blessings that come with relying upon the wisdom of God, and we're going to build upon that by considering that our willingness to trust in God will lead us to a place where we can truly stand in faith regardless of the difficulties that we might come up against. No matter what this life or Satan throws at us, we can stand like the wise man who set out to build his house upon the rock.
2. We all understand that Satan will pull no punches when it comes to His efforts to defeat us. In fact, it isn't even only he who is against us, but Paul says in **Ephesians 6:12** that we are fighting against rulers, powers, world forces, and the spiritual forces of wickedness. Let's be honest, that is a terrifying thought to get our minds wrapped around. I don't know about you, but I don't think I have much of a clue about what that means. I'm not quite sure at all what these things might be, but I believe that Jesus describes them as floods and winds in **Matthew 7:24-27**. Regardless what comes at me, if I truly trust in the Lord and I go on to arm myself as Paul later says in **Ephesians 6:13-17**, then I can have faith that whatever comes at me...I can stand firm and strong because just **"as the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever."** (Psalm 125:2)
3. But notice from our verses back in **Matthew 7:24-27**, that these things don't just come to anyone. This strength to be able to stand in faith is only given to those who build their faiths upon the rock that is God and His Son. If I can remember this and put my whole heart into trusting the Lord, then I can stand firm in my faith and be strong like Mount Zion.

B. Stand in pure doctrine and knowledge. (Ephesians 4:14)

1. More specifically in regards to our stronger faith, we can also stand strong in pure doctrine and knowledge. If we are committed to trusting in God and His Word alone then we can stand strong when we are confronted with strange teachings.
2. Paul gave a warning to Timothy in **II Timothy 3** that difficult times would be coming his way soon. Not only would people be acting wickedly (**II Timothy 3:2-6**), but they would also be seeking to teach things that against the truth. (**II Timothy 3:7-9**) Paul's solution to Timothy was simple: Hold fast to that which you have learned and have been convinced of, and that which he had been taught was the simple Word of God that was able to complete Timothy and others in all ways. (**II Timothy 3:14-17**)
3. In just the same way, we can be strong like Mount Zion by holding fast to God's Word as the only true standard for doctrine and knowledge. When we do that, and when the entire church works together to make sure that all of the saints are properly equipped then we will be strong like Mount Zion and we won't be tossed about by every wave or wind of doctrine that might be put forth by men who seek to lead the faithful away from the truth. (**Ephesians 4:11-14**) Our trust in God will lead us to be able to stand firm in our faith, our doctrine and knowledge, and it will also allow us to stand strong in our confidence in God.

C. Stand in Confidence. (James 1:5-8)

1. This goes back to our first point where we discussed the need for us to trust in God so that we can be strong, and that strength He supplies us with can lead us to live a life of confidence before Him. James really shows us the importance of being a people who are strong and able to stand in their faith with confidence.
2. Just before the verses on the screen, notice that James gives a different perspective on the trials of life from the way that most people might look at life's difficulties. Instead of giving up at the difficulties of life, James says that we can look at them as a source of benefit. He says that the trials of life can build up within us endurance that can help us to become strong, more perfect and complete. (**James 1:2-4**)
3. However, if we find ourselves still lacking in anything (he gives wisdom as an example) then we need to go to God and ask that He will bless us with what we are in need of. We also need to take note that James gives a qualifier for how it is that we ought to ask. He says that when we ask of God for His blessings, that we need to make sure that we are asking from Him in faith and confidence. The one who doubts is like someone who again is tossed about by the sea and driven anywhere by the wind, but we must be and can be a people who ask everything of God in confidence if we are willing to trust fully in Him because we believe that He knows best and will do what is best for us. Living in this way allows us to live without fear and to have our hearts full of joy from knowing that God is always with us and that He will never forsake or leave us as long as we trust in Him completely. Our enemies will have no power over us and God will continually do good to us. (**Psalms 125:3,4**) This is what we ought to desire, to be strong like Mount Zion, but we must also recognize that it is possible to be made weak.

III. To turn away from our trust in the Lord will only lead us to a place of weakness.

- A. As long as we keep our trust in God we will be made strong, but the opposite is true if we refuse to trust in Him...we will instead be made weak.
 1. This is what the Psalmist focuses on in the last verse to talk about those who are not strong like Mount Zion. These are people who instead of being strong, they are made weak because they have turned aside to crooked ways, and the Lord will allow for them to have their place with the "*doers of iniquity.*" (**Psalms 125:5**)

2. These are the same kinds of people that we saw in **II Timothy 3**. They were a people who were lovers of self instead of lovers of God and they trusted in themselves instead of trusting in God. How foolish they would be to think that they could live their lives this way and be anything but weak for the fact that they were seeking to stand against God.
- B. I think if we are honest, we will recognize that it is our lack of faith and trust in God that has allowed for our defenses to become weakened to the point of defeat.
1. If it is true that our faith and trust in God leads us to a place of strength...to a place where we are strong like Mount Zion, then we must also consider that our lack of faith and trust in God will lead us to a place of extreme weakness.
 2. Whereas Timothy would be a strong example of someone who stood like Mount Zion, we can look to a couple of guys found in **I Timothy 1:19,20** as examples who allowed for their faiths to be shipwrecked because they didn't keep their faith and trust in God. When we feel ourselves becoming weak, our first move must be to reevaluate our faith and trust in the Lord and whether or not they are where they ought to be. We need to make sure that we know, believe, and are living as we ought to so that we can truly be strong like Mount Zion.

As the Jews made that long and difficult journey up to Jerusalem, to Mount Zion... they could sing this **125th Psalm** and be reminded of fact that they could possess a faith that was as strong as the great mountain they were climbing up. While we might not sing this Psalm, we can certainly come to be reminded of the same things as we read these incurring words preserved for us through God's Word. May we all trust in the Lord with all of our hearts so that we might truly be strong like Mount Zion.

PRAYER *Our heavenly Father...we approach you at the close of this study recognizing that You are the great God of heaven who rules from Your throne on high. We recognize Your strength and power and we pray that you would lead us to be a people of great strength as we go through this life seeking to serve You and glorify Your name. Help us, Lord, to trust in you with all of our hearts. Help us to always seek to know, believe, and live for you, and may we be able to stand strong against the evil one. Help us to seek your will in all that we do as we go throughout this week, and may you continue to bless our shepherds as they strive to lead this flock in Your ways. Thank You Father for Your love that was shown through the giving of Your Son, and it is in his name we pray, amen.*