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## Psalm 125: A Song of Ascents.

Walter E. Keller

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**Psalm 125**  
**A Song of Ascents.**  
(NRSV)

- <sup>1</sup> Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,  
which cannot be moved, but abides forever.**
- <sup>2</sup> As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
so the LORD surrounds his people,  
from this time forth and forevermore.**
- <sup>3</sup> For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest  
on the land allotted to the righteous,  
lest the righteous stretch out  
their hands to do wrong.**
- <sup>4</sup> Do good, O LORD, to those who are good,  
and to those who are upright in their hearts!**
- <sup>5</sup> But those who turn aside to their crooked ways  
the LORD will lead away with evildoers!  
Peace be upon Israel!**

**Psalm 125** expresses confident trust in the LORD, who surrounds Mount Zion like the mountains that surround Jerusalem. It is not clear in verse 3 whether the wicked king shall never rule in Zion, or whether his rule will not last forever. In either case, the Psalmist is fearful that with a wicked ruler over them, the People of God will be tempted to adopt wicked ways and put their hands to evil. But he is confident that in the end the LORD will show goodness to the good and will lead the wicked away.

The final benediction, “Peace be upon Israel,” can be used today with regard to the modern State of Israel, just as we pray for peace in every land and nation. But its deeper meaning is brought out by St. Paul in Galatians 6 when he closes the Epistle: “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is everything! And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” By “Israel of God” he means all those who have been baptismally united in faith to Israel-reduced-to-one, namely, Jesus Christ the Crucified. Jesus Christ now defines the borders of the new Israel, no longer circumcision or the Sinaitic Covenant of the Law.

**Prayer to accompany Psalm 125:**

Lord, surround your people with your presence. Do not let us stretch out our hands to evil deeds, nor be destroyed by the snare of the enemy, but bring us to share the land prepared for the saints in light, where you live and reign, God, now and forever. Amen.