

Psalm 124

Praise for deliverance from enemies
A Song of degrees of David.

Psalm 124:

This psalm reflects on deliverance from danger.

From a realization of the Lord's help (verses 1-5), the psalmist moves to the appropriate response to the Lord's help (verses 6-8).

Verses 1-8

See note on Psalm 120:1-7.

A Davidic psalm which generically recalls past deliverances, possible the Exodus (verse 5).

- I. God's Protection (124:1-5);
- II. God's Provision (124:6-8).

Here is affirmation of God's eternal vigilance for His people.

The danger was so great, their helplessness so obvious, and deliverance so unlikely that if God had not intervened, utter ruin would have been inevitable.

Verses 1-2:

God has preserved Israel from extinction.

Psalm 124:1 "If [it had not been] the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;"

Unless it was Yahweh who was with us. The idea is, that someone had been with them, and had delivered them, and that such was the nature of the interposition that it could be ascribed to no one but Yahweh. It bore unmistakable evidence that it was his work. The deliverance was of such a kind that it could have been accomplished by him only. Such things often occur in life, when the intervention in our behalf is so remarkable that we can ascribe it to no one else but God.

"Now may Israel say":

May well and truly say.

The danger was so great, their helplessness was so manifest, and the deliverance was so clearly the work of God, that it was proper to say that if this had not occurred, ruin would have been inevitable and entire.

This is certainly not a complete statement, but means so much.

Out of all the peoples of the world, God chose Israel to be His.

On the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God went with them and helped them.

He subdued their enemies, who in many instances were mightier in battle.

The countries around them realized right off that God was on Israel's side in battle.

They were aware of the Red sea parting for Israel and then drowning the Egyptians.

They were not afraid of Israel, but they were afraid of Israel's God.

Israel had not been trained for war.

They had been slaves in Egypt.

Only the mighty hand of God brought them out, and then preserved them in the wilderness and against their enemies.

Had it not been for the LORD, they would have died.

Psalm 124:2 "If [it had not been] the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:"

This he repeats both for the confirmation of it, and to excite the attention of the Israelites to it.

As well as to observe that it was not once only, but again and again, many times the LORD appeared to be on their side.

The Targum renders it, "the Word of the LORD;" the essential Word, the Son of God (and so in Psalm 123:1) that's in the king's Bible.

"When men rose up against us":

Wicked men; though no hard epithet is given in the text, however just.

"The enemies of God's people are only called "men" by them, to show both of their meekness and patience.

It is in the singular number, "when man rose up"; hence Aroma interprets it of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and R. Obadiah of Haman.

But it might be better interpreted of the man of sin, the man of the earth; who, at the head of his antichristian party, has rose up against the saints, oppressed them, and threatened them with utter ruin (2 Thess. 2:4).

Though it is best to understand it of a body of men.

Of men not mean, but mighty.

Not few, but numerous.

And who united as one man against the people of God, and rose up against them in a hostile manner; being full of enmity to them, and bent upon their ruin.

You must remember, the land they went into had belonged to someone else.

The countries around Israel hated her.

The battle they did attempt, without God's instruction to fight, left Israel the loser.

Psalm 124:3 "Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:"

Or "alive"; as the earth swallowed up Korah and his company.

Or as the fish swallowed up Jonah; or rather as ravenous beasts swallow their prey; to which the allusion is.

The people of God are comparable to sheep and lambs, and such like innocent creatures.

And the wicked to lions, tigers, wolves, bears, and such similar beasts of prey that do devour most creatures.

"When their wrath was kindled against us":

Which is cruel and outrageous.

There is no standing against it, nor before it.

It is like a fierce flame of fire that burns furiously, and there is no stopping it.

None but God can restrain it.

This one little group of people would have been no match for the evil countries around them, if God had not stepped in and fought their battles for them.

This is like the church today, if God were not standing between the world and His church, the church would not be able to stand.

God will even protect an individual who is doing His will in the midst of all the trouble.

If it were not for God, we would not have a chance.

Verses 4-5:

“Waters ... stream ... proud waters”:

The Red sea crossing (Exodus chapter 14), and/or the Jordan crossing (Joshua chapter 3), are here pictured.

Psalm 124:4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

People, comparable to waters for their multitude, strength, force, and impetuosity.

Which bear down all before them, and against which there is no standing.

Which, like the waters of the flood, overflow and destroy all they pass over.

These are the floods of ungodly men, which are very destructive and terrible (see Rev. 17:15).

Together with all those reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, which come along with them.

Which the presence of God only can bear up his people under, and carry them through (Son Of Solomon 8:7).

"The stream had gone over our soul":

And so deprived them of life.

The whole force of the enemy; which, like a stream, flows in with great strength and rapidity, when a breach is made and spreads itself.

Arama interprets it of the stream of the Egyptians, and restrains it to them, their armies and also their forces.

But it rather designs others, and the enemies of God's people in general, which threaten their ruin, even their very souls and lives.

It may be applied to the stream of corruptions, the flood of temptation and flow of persecutions, such as the flood the dragon cast out of his mouth after the woman.

Which, were it not for divine grace and assistance, would destroy the saints, who have no might against this great force (2 Chron. 20:12).

The flood of opposition to the church would be such an overwhelming flood that it would overcome the church, if it were not for God.

The strangest thing to me, is that the church seems to grow the most, when it is under the greatest opposition onto it.

Always the underground church in countries where it was forbidden to have churches, has been very strong.

There were so many enemies of Israel, that if the LORD had removed His protection, they would have fallen as they did to Babylon.

Psalm 124:5 "Then the proud waters had gone over our soul."

The wicked, who, through their pride, persecute the poor saints.

These proud tyrants and persecutors would prevail over them, to their ruin and destruction.

Who, for their number, force, and strength, and especially for their pride and haughtiness, are like to the strong, boisterous, and swelling waves of the sea.

Were they not stopped and bounded by him who has said, "thus far shall ye go, and no farther" (Job 38:11).

In the opposition to the church, the oppressors have not only classed us as religious fanatics, but they arrogantly proclaim their contempt for the believers and the church body.

It seems to come like waves on the sea, but then the Lord speaks to the sea, and it calms down.

The devil and his crowd can roar and try to threaten and scare us, but if we stand against the wiles of the devil, He will flee.

Psalm 124:6 "Blessed [be] the LORD, who hath not given us [as] a prey to their teeth."

Here begins the church's thanksgiving for deliverance from all their enemies, their proud persecutors; and from all afflictions and troubles by them.

Which they could never have been delivered from, had not the LORD appeared for them.

And therefore, it is but just that he should have all the glory of it, and be blessed and praised on account thereof.

"Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth":

The teeth of wicked men are like spears and arrows, like swords and knives, to devour good men.

Their passions are strong, and their desires very vehement after their ruin.

And, if suffered, the saints would fall an easy prey to them.

But God will not give them up to them, either to Satan, which is the devouring lion, or to any of his emissaries.

Nay, when they have seized them, and got them in their mouths, they shall be snatched from them, as the lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear by David (Psalm 57:4, 1 Peter 5:8).

The Lord will protect us from such heavy onslaught.

They may rattle their weapons at us, but the LORD has built a hedge of defense around us.

In the 58th chapter of Psalms, you remember, the psalmist asked the LORD to break out their teeth and render them harmless.

That is just what He does.

The devil is defeated.

Jesus defeated him at Calvary.

Blessed be the name of the LORD.

We cannot praise the LORD enough for the things He has done on our behalf, and is still doing.

Psalm 124:7 "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

The people of God are like little birds, being harmless and innocent, singing forth the praises of God for his goodness to them.

As also because weak and unable to resist their foes; and worthless in themselves, like sparrows, as the word here used signifies.

And are fearful and timorous, and flee at the least apprehension of danger (Psalm 102:7).

Satan, and wicked men under his influence, are like fowlers who lay snares for them, to draw them into sin, into immorality and error, in order to bring them to ruin and destruction.

Hence, we read of the snare of the devil and of wicked men (1 Tim. 3:7; 2:26).

And who form plans and lay schemes to oppress and destroy them.

But through the wisdom given them to discern these devices and stratagems, and through the power of divine grace, accompanying them, they escape what was intended for their hurt, and particularly in the following manner:

"The snare is broken, and we are escaped":

Measures concerted by wicked men are broken, their schemes are confounded, their devices are disappointed, so that they cannot perform their enterprise.

And by this means the saints escape the evils designed against them, the afflictions of the world, and the temptations of Satan.

The snare was the curse.

Jesus took the curse, that we might be set free.

Galatians 3:13 "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree:"

We have escaped from that curse like the bird who gets out of a trap and flies away.

Our soul is free like the bird that escaped.

The psalmist is speaking of being free from the wicked people who had set a trap to get them.

The Lord is our help and our strength.

Psalm 124:8 "Our help [is] in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

This is the conclusion the church draws from the scene of Providence in her favor.

This is the instruction she learns from hence, that her help is in the LORD only, and not at all in any creature.

And that it is right to put her trust and confidence in the Lord for it, and only to expect it from him whose name is in himself.

And is a strong tower to flee unto for safety (Prov. 18:10).

The Targum is, "in the name of the Word of the LORD".

In the Messiah; in whom the name of the Lord is, his nature and perfections.

And in whom help is found, being laid upon him (Exodus 23:21).

"Who made heaven and earth":

And therefore, must be able to help his people, and to do more for them than they are able to ask or think.

For what is it he cannot do that made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them?

Compare (Psalm 121:1-2).

The name of the Lord for the Christian is Jesus.

All believers in Christ have been given the authority to use that name.

You should read (all of John chapter 14), but I will give a couple of verses that show what we can do in that name.

John 14:13-14 "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]."

How much power does the name have and where?

Philippians 2:10 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;"

Psalm 124 Questions

1. What small nation did God choose out of all the nations to be His?
2. What miracles, that God did for Israel, influenced the people around them?
3. What were the joining nations afraid of?
4. What happened in the battle the Israelites fought that God had not sent them to?
5. What keeps the waters of opposition from overwhelming the church?
6. When does the church seem to grow the most?
7. Who did Israel fall to?

8. What are the proud waters?
9. What must we do to cause the devil to flee?
10. What did the psalmist in chapter 58, ask the Lord to do?
11. Our soul is escaped as a _____ out of the snare.
12. What was the snare symbolic of?
13. Our help is in the _____ of the _____.