

If It Had Not Been the LORD

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[0 : 00] Psalm 124, I'll read it out loud for us. Then over us would have gone the raging waters.

Blessed be the Lord who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and we have escaped.

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. So this psalm is divided into two parts.

You can see it's verses one to five has to refrain, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side.

So that first half is about remembering, remembering how God has helped us in the past.

And then verses six to eight, it begins with blessed be the Lord. So this is the response, that second section, response to remembering how the Lord has delivered us in the past and responding with praise to God.

[1 : 29] And so that's really the two main points. First part is, if it had not been the Lord. The second part is, blessed be the Lord. So let's look at the first part together, verses one to five. It begins with, by repeating that phrase, that clause, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, let Israel now say, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when people rose up against us.

Just the repetition by itself is very powerful. Just asking ourselves, if it weren't for the Lord, where would we be? And it's a good question to ask ourselves, where would we be if it weren't for the Lord?

If it weren't for the Lord Jesus, if it weren't for God, where would we be today? And it has a really neat contrast in verse two, because it says, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when people rose up against us.

The word people is the Hebrew word for man, which is Adam. So that's literally Adams. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when these men rose up against us.

So the men are rising up against us, but it's contrasted with the fact that the Lord is on our side.

Right? And how much of our life can be described that way, when people conspire against us, when men rise up against us, when the things of this world conspire against us.

[2 : 50] But you remember that it's still the Lord who is on our side, and he's able to help us. But if it weren't for the Lord, we would have been overwhelmed. And that's what verses three to five described.

And they would have swallowed us up alive when their anger was killed against us. The phrase swallowed us up alive is the language that is often used to describe Sheol, or the realm of the dead, in Hebrew conception.

And Sheol is sometimes associated with water, kind of the watery depths. So if you look at Jonah, chapter two, he says in verses one or two to three, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me. All your waves and your billows passed over me. So this is a very similar image, being swallowed up by death itself in the depths of the sea. And he describes it as the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us, then over us would have gone the raging waters.

[4 : 07] I don't know if you guys have ever been swept away in a current before. I was a little tiny kid growing up. I'm still tiny, but it's a, so that happened to me a lot, playing in the rapids and stuff growing up.

And then I remember one of my friends just literally being swept away in the current, carried away. And then one of, one of our dads went in to grab him and save him. And, and just, it's such a helpless, scary feeling, just being overwhelmed, swept away.

The waters come over you, can't breathe. And, and that's what we were. We were being swallowed up by death because of sin. Because of what we had done, the penalty of death was, was inevitable.

And it was unavoidable. It was coming to us. But the Lord had been on our side. The Lord was on our side. And then, so the response is, blessed be the Lord who has not given us as prey to their teeth.

We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and we have escaped. Again, this one uses the image of hunting and a prey that is hunted by the predator.

[5 : 24] And, and we, once again, we're like that. We were stung by the sting of death. We were being hunted down by our enemies. And, and yet, it is the Lord who was with us, who was by our side as our helper.

And, and because of that, we were delivered. We were able to escape. And then, the psalmist concludes in verse 8, our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. It's very similar to the first, first psalm in the Songs of Ascents.

In chapter 121, verses 1 to 2, I lift up my eyes to the hills from where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. I described that last time I preached it as like kind of the credentials.

God kind of establishing his credentials as, as one who is sufficient to help us. Why is God enough to help us? Because he's the one who made heaven and earth. Right? He's the one powerful, more powerful than anyone else.

He's the one who is Lord over heaven and earth. And he is our help. And that's the powerful assurance we have from this psalm. And this psalm, like any other psalm, is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus because we know that we were in the throes of death, that we were in the grip of death.

[6 : 44] And we had no way out from it because of sin, because of our rebellion against God. And the penalty that was due was death. But because of what Jesus Christ has done, it says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 54, 57, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus that God was ultimately with us by our side to be our help.

And because of that, we don't even need to fear death. We will have the ultimate victory. Death will not have the ultimate victory. And we'll be delivered from Sheol, delivered from our predators.

And we will be able, in the end, to praise God forever in response to what He has done. So let's remember that, and then maybe sing a song and pray together.

[8 : 06] Each time remember and fun begins, as such