

God for us- Psalm 124

A Bible teacher did two sermons on this Psalm. One was entitled “Eternal Security” and the other was called “Narrow Escapes”. Because God is for his people, they are eternally secure, yet they often narrowly escape.

In the first paragraph of this Psalm (1-5), God’s people are led to remember what has almost happened to them and would have happened to them, if the LORD had not been on their side. The first two verses of this Psalm begin with “if”, and the next three begin with “then”. The Song leads God’s people to reflect like this, “if this had been the case, when this happened, this would have been the consequence.” If the LORD had not be on our side (if this had been the case), when people rose up against us and their anger was kindled against us (when this happened), we would have been swallowed up and swept away (this would have been the consequence). Yet, the name used four times in this Psalm for God, LORD, is God’s covenant name. It means that his love is “locked on to us” (his people) in unending commitment. This means that God could never, not be on our side. Israel as a nation had experienced “God for us” many times in the past.

C. S. Lewis once said, “never read a book without pictures”. He meant by this that good writing used word pictures to make what is being said vivid and impactful. David does this in our Psalm. As he talks about what would have been the consequence if the LORD had not been for his people, he uses initially two pictures of the nature of the destruction they would have experienced. First, he seems to indirectly refer to an earthquake as a metaphor of the kind of devastation they would have experienced. The language in verse 3, points to the earth opening and swallowing up people alive, as is often the case when there is a major earthquake. The second picture used here is of a flood (4-5), that goes over and sweeps away people who are in its path. Their devastation would have been like being swallowed up by an earthquake and being swept away by a flood.

In the next paragraph (6-7), there are two more pictures of what it would have been like if the LORD had not been on the side of his people. In these verses we are prompted to rejoice that God is for us, “blessed be the LORD...” The first picture is of a predator and its prey. God’s people would have been like a prey in the teeth of its predator, torn to pieces. Then, there is another image, the hunter or fowler who lays a trap and a bird that is caught in the trap. In these two, as well as the first two, these pictures make it clear that God’s people are helpless and powerless on their own in these circumstances apart from God’s help. When we realize we are helpless before our enemies, we realize we are totally dependent on God for our salvation from beginning to end.

The fact that God was for his old covenant people, points to its fulfillment in God begin for those who are his new covenant people through faith in Christ. Paul uses language like what we find in Psalm 124, when he says in Romans 8, “If God is for us, who can be against us... nothing will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God’s preservation of Israel points to the believer’s security and is also a foreshadowing of his preservation of the church. Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Enemies of the church have risen up in anger against her and sought to destroy the church but have failed because God is on our side.

Finally, in the last verse of this Psalm, we are led to reassert the fact that the One who is our helper is the maker of heaven and earth. He can’t fail as he works for us, he is the all-powerful creator.