

Psalm 124-129

When you feel helpless, where do you find hope? If you don't know the Lord the answer is really, "nowhere" because the bible is clear (Eph 2:12) that people who are without God are without hope in the world. But as for you and me (like the psalmist) we place *our hope* in the Lord.

If you look at psalm 124 you'll note that the very 1st verse begins, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," and as you can imagine he will from the statement launch into what *would've* been, what *could've* been a very dismal and devastating situation. But thanks to the Lord's intervention instead of being destroyed He (the Lord) stood in their defense and they survived what would've been an otherwise been an overwhelming if not altogether fatal situation.

But I point that out and say all that to say this: this is one of those psalms that probably any one of us could've written. Because I'm sure we all have that story, that scenario or situation whereby we can say, "If it weren't for the Lord..." "If God hadn't been with me, if He hadn't been a shield about me I'd have most certainly been overwhelmed, washed up and wiped out. If it weren't for His mercy, His goodness, His provision and protection I'd have been undone and done in long ago."

And it's good for us to be reminded of those things, to have psalms like this that remind us of the faithfulness of God to our lives. If God has rescued us in the past when things seemed so bleak, we felt so helpless and things seemed so hopeless it encourages us to trust Him presently and it acts prophetically demonstrating that we can trust Him in the future as well. His past faithfulness serves as comfort for the future. In the book of 2 Corinthians Paul said it like this, "Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us," 2 Cor 1:9-10 He says that God *has*, that God *is*, and he's confident that God *will* deliver him; because of the Lord's *past* faithfulness; there's no reason to doubt His *present* and *perpetual* faithfulness. Some people are a people of many unfinished projects; they got tons of loose ends, all of them *almost* done, none of them ever *getting* done. God isn't like that; if God starts a work He finishes it (Php 1:6). Here's my point; if God's begun a work in you, than no matter how high the flood waters rise or how great the trials may be, He will continue to be faithful and He will finish what He's begun in you. The Lord is on your side.

Vs1-5

It's really, simply another testimony to a common thread woven throughout the word of God, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" Rom 8:31 There are times that God will allow us to be placed in those scenarios, those situations that seem to be (or are obviously) too much for us so as to demonstrate *His* work in *our* lives. That there's nothing too hard for Him and that we can trust in Him.

We could think of David up against Goliath; if it hadn't been the Lord who was on his side he'd have surely been overwhelmed, done in and dead! You don't (as a boy) take a sling shot and a handful of stones and by that slay a 10' tall giant who's renown for his skill as it pertains to the art of war and happens to be covered in armor, having sword, spear and shield in hand. That kind of things simply doesn't happen. But the Lord was on his side. You recall he said to Goliath, "*You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.*" 1 Sam 17:45 Gideon found himself facing 150,000 Midianites with only 300 men; God was wanting to show Himself strong on these guys behalf, because God was for them, nothing and no one could stand against them. Apart from God they'd have been overwhelmed and done in; the swollen waters of affliction and/or warfare would've gone over their soul.

It's a good reminder of who God is and who we're not; we're easily overwhelmed, stressed out and weighed down. But God is on our side, He's for us and not against us, has thoughts of peace and not of evil toward us and is working His eternal plan and purpose through us to His glory, we can trust in Him.

Vs6-8

So he uses the image of the flood and the fowler to portray how helpless he felt; the fowler is the guy who sets the traps for birds. He says in Vs 7, "*Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers.*" Again the acknowledgment is that on our own we're weak and defenseless but God has broken our chains and has set us free.

"Our help (Vs 8) is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth." The point is that there is power in the name of the Lord; that's where our help, our hope is found. The bible says, "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.*" Prov 18:10

Our help is in the name of the Lord. Perhaps you recall Peter and John, there they were going to the temple at the hour of prayer when as they passed through the gate called “Beautiful” there sat a man begging alms, looking for help, for hope and a hand out. Peter said, “Look at us,” and the guy thinking he was about to receive some money gave them his full attention. But Peter said, “*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*” Acts 3:6 We read that he took him by the right hand and he lifted him up and immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength. Here’s the point; there’s power intrinsically, inherently, innately in the name of Jesus. Why do you think that when someone gets up set or is seeking to emphasize a point they never yell, “Muhammad, man what were you thinking!?” Or “Confucius dude!” It’s because there’s no power there, it doesn’t do anything for you; but the name of Jesus resonates in people. So when they want to stand out or say something that they feel packs a punch they invoke the name of Jesus. Our help, our hope is in the name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth.

Ps 125

The previous psalm highlights the fact that our help comes *from* the Lord; psalm 125 points out the strength, stability and safety that’s found *in* the Lord.

Vs1-2

Note the confidence of Vs 1; the strength and/or stability that’s ascribed to the one who trusts in the Lord. He doesn’t say that you *should be* like Mount Zion, or that as you mature you *might* be like Mt Zion; but that if you trust in the Lord you *are* like Mt Zion. This is your position in Christ, founded upon the solid rock, the idea being that as a people of faith you will not be moved. It’s like when Paul the apostle was confronted with the reality of his coming trials in Jerusalem and everyone was trying to keep him from going and he was all. “You guys are breaking my heart, why are you doing this?” He said, “I don’t know what’s going to happen to me except for the fact that chains and tribulations await me as the Holy Spirit has testified in every city.” He said, “*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*” Acts 20:24 Now it’s not some incredible will power that causes us to stand; it’s the Lord, our strength, our stability is found in Him. He’s the One who causes us to be anchored on solid ground. Of course He utilizes His word, time spent in prayer, fellowship with our brothers and sisters, personal devotions; things of this nature to strengthen and fortify us.

Now notice Vs 2, “As the Mts surround Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds His people.” This speaks of safety, that He is a shield all about the one who trusts in Him. The Lord encamps round about us; you are not going to escape the presence of the Lord. It’s in Him (Acts 17:28) that we live and move and have our being. “The Lord surrounds His people.” The night of Belshazzar’s demise Daniel told him, “...*the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.*” Dan 5:23 God holds our breath in His hands and owns all our ways; in Him we live and move and have our being, He surrounds His people...

Vs3

Or as we’d read in the NT vernacular, “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*” 1 Cor 10:13 God’s not going to subject you to something that will cause you to turn from Him and enter into sin.

Vs4-5

Again the NT counterpart, “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*” Gal 6:7-9

Ps 126

Vs1-3

Obviously what we have here is a little portion pertaining to praise. He says that when the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion (out of Babylon), man it was like a dream. It was too good to be true; he says (Vs 2) we were singing and laughing and making such a big deal out of it (and appropriately so) that the other nations took note and said, “The Lord has done great things for them.” I suppose the obvious application here is that it would great if people could see the joy of the Lord, the obvious work of the Lord in our lives such to the extent that they would declare, “The Lord has done great things for them.” That they would see it, and want to be a part of it, to enter in to the goodness and the grace of the Lord.

In Vs 4 he utters a little prayer, he goes from praise to prayer, notice.

Vs 4

As great as the work was not everyone entered into it, the cry, the request here is that all those who'd been taken captive would take advantage of the freedom with which the Lord had made them free. We would pray for the same thing, there is freedom in Christ that's available to all of the captivity, everyone who's ensnared by sin, but not everyone will take advantage of that.

Vs 5-6

A quick attitude check...Jesus is in our hearts, in our lives, a great cause for joy and celebration. Yet we also represent Christ to the world; and the way in which we do that is critical; we should never forget that we're nothing; we're clay pots, earthen vessels. The treasure is Christ in us, we're to move in humility. The bible is clear that to the one who exalts himself he will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted. Sowing in tears, reaping in joy...

It's like the minister who graduated *magna cum laude* from a top ranked seminary. It was his 1st Sunday behind the pulpit and he was prepared to blow people's minds with the treasure they'd obtained in him through all the preparation and education he'd obtained. But when he stood there and looked out at the people suddenly his mind went blank, his thoughts were incoherent, he panicked broke out in a sweat, stuffed his notes in his bible put his head in his hands and left the stage weeping and humiliated. A dear old saint turned to her friend and said, "If he'd have come in like he went out, he'd have went out like he came in." We're just clay pots, broken vessels; no room for pride or arrogance, God honors humility.

Ps 127

The 127th psalm is a wonderful psalm that reminds us that it's by the grace of God that we succeed at anything and that apart from Him we can do nothing. That's what Jesus said; He basically took these 1st few Vs of this psalm and reiterated them like this, "...*without Me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5

Vs1

Vanity of vanities says the preacher; all is vanity (Eccl 1:2). This is the lesson that Solomon spent his whole life learning; apart from God things are a waste of time, any work done independently of God will be futile. He *sought* fulfillment in every arena of life and in the end he concluded that the only thing that *brought* fulfillment was having a life that was right with God. Eccl 12:13, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*”

Unless the Lord builds the house; not just a structure to live in, but in reality we’re talking about the home. How many marriages end in divorce, how many houses fall apart and don’t go the distance? Believe me when I tell you that the most solid of marriages get tested and tried, and fall under attack. Satan is seeking to destroy the picture of Jesus Christ and His love relationship with His bride (the church).

That’s why the Lord must build the house, the family; anything less is in vain. You can get up early or stay up late; eat the bread of woe and worry wondering if your kids are going to turn out ok; it’s all in vain unless the Lord is in the middle of it. Jesus said it like this, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” Matt 6:33 Unless we prioritize the kingdom our efforts are pointless; not claiming any mastery of it myself but the best investment you can make with your family is time together in prayer, time in devotions. You don’t need books and seminars on how to have a healthy marriage if you’re not willing to do the foundational/fundamental thing in seeking the Lord together. Fun times won’t be a solid foundation, vacation and recreation won’t make for a good footing; Jesus Christ will.

You might make a note or draw attention to Vs 2; in an age of sleepless nights, tossing and turning, worries and anxiety; learn to give it to the Lord in prayer and go to sleep. Sleep is a gift from God; we can’t function appropriately when we’re all groggy and not thinking clearly; God gives His beloved sleep.

Vs3-5

Listen to me because this is very important for some of you to understand. Your children are not a trial; they’re not your tribulation; they’re your *treasure*; they’re not burdens they’re blessings, they’re not *hindrances* they’re your *heritage* from the Lord. It’s the mindset of the world that says, “these kids keep me from my life goals, that get in my way

The world looks at children today as a burden, a hindrance to their life's goals. The truth is they're instrumental in God's life goals for you; my kids teach me exactly how self centered I am. I thought God would give me kids to train and develop; the truth of the matter is that they train and develop me. I don't get to do everything I want, whenever I want, there's more than me in the picture now. Here's the thing; it *"kills me"*; that is, it mortifies my flesh.

Our children are one of the ways the Lord teaches us to lose our lives for His sake, to no longer live for Kids our own ease, our own pleasures, our own pursuits. They're heritage, a reward from the Lord.

Ps 128

If the previous psalm spoke the vanity of doing things apart from the Lord, the present psalm speaks of the blessing found in fearing the Lord.

Vs 1-4

This is sort of the OT equivalent to what we just read in Matt 6:33; that as you seek the Lord; prioritize the Lord He's going to make your life and your labor fruitful and provide for your needs. Apart from the Lord it's all in vain, in the fear of the Lord it'll be fruitful.

I just want to point out 1 thing here it's found in Vs 3 in the words, "All around your table." It's something that's dying in our culture today but trust me when I tell you that you do well to do it. Take the time to sit down around the table in your home with your family and eat together, talk together, share with one another about what's going on and encourage one another in the Lord; it's a healthy thing. It's an aspect of involving the Lord in the building of your house.

Vs 5-6

If you get to see your grandkids, you're blessed of the Lord. If you get to see your grandkids kids, you're incredibly blessed of the Lord.

Psalm 129

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12).

Vs1-4

There is no other nation like Israel in the history of the world that has suffered and been afflicted like they have. They've been treated "like dirt" and plowed upon; the furrows have run long and deep. But the Lord is righteous, has cut the cords of the wicked and returned them to their homeland.

Vs5-8

May those who bless Israel be blessed and those who curse Israel be cursed. There are times that people will treat you like dirt because you belong to Jesus. In such case we do what the psalmist did; accept it, benefit from it, and commit it to the Lord.

Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You for being on our side; for keeping us from being overwhelmed and done in; for encompassing us about and being our shield. Help us God that we reflect You rightly to the world around us and help us to keep You in the center of our homes.