

God is on Our Side

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Well done, Troy. Very well done.

You know, I saw the note in the church's WhatsApp group that Lyndon was supposed to be leading the way, helping you to do that.

And he was supposed to come along and help him. But I have a sneaky suspicion he is pretty much glad that we are live streaming this morning so that he is not put on the spot.

But in two weeks, we're going to review these. Whatever we're doing in two weeks, we're going to go back to these. And Lyndon will have a special recitation to do his three verses consecutively. So please turn your Bible to Psalm 124. We are continuing our sermon series in the Psalms of Ascent.

[1 : 05] And this morning, we come to the fifth sermon in the series, which is Psalm 124. And those of you who have been a part of this series would know that Psalms of Ascent are these 15 Psalms from 120 to 134.

And these are the Psalms that we are told that the children of Israel would sing as they made their annual pilgrimages from wherever they lived to Jerusalem for the three big feasts of the Jewish calendar.

Passover, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version, Psalm 124.

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, then they would have swallowed us up alive. When their anger was kindled against us, then the flood would have swept us away.

[2 : 22] The torrent would have gone over 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. Please pray with me. Father, we bow our hearts in this moment and we thank you for your word.

We ask, O Lord, that you would do for us what only you can do, and that is to grant illumination and open our hearts and our minds that we might hear what you would say to your people.

Lord, you know where each of us is and you know what we need to hear. Speak to us, I pray.

Speak through me, I pray, for your glory. We pray in Jesus' name.

[3 : 35] Amen. Well, with candidates having been nominated on Friday pass for the upcoming general election and with political campaigns in full swing, I was reminded of the five-year-old boy who asked his father, Dad, do all fairy tales begin with once upon a time?

His father said to him, no, my child. In some years, they begin with once I get elected. And that's an important truth to remember.

In the midst of all the political campaigns, we are going to be hearing a lot of fairy tales between now and the 16th of September.

But on a more serious note, introductory words are very helpful. They prepare us for what we are about to hear.

And so when we hear once upon a time or once I get elected, we know what we are about to hear really is not something that is true. Psalm 124 has some introductory words.

[4 : 55] Psalm 124 helps us, as it begins, to prepare our hearts for what we are about to hear.

Psalm 124 begins with the words, If it had not been the Lord who was on our side. Those words prepare us to hear an account of how God helped his people in times of helplessness.

And that's exactly what Psalm 124 is about. The message of Psalm 124 to God's people is a simple one.

But it's an important one. It's a powerful one. And the message is this. The Lord, who has been on our side, is still on our side.

That's the message of Psalm 124, as we make our journey through life, and as we face circumstances for which we know we need divine help.

[6:01] When we consider Psalm 124, we can see that it's a corporate psalm. It doesn't begin the way the other psalms that we have considered in this series begin so far.

The other psalms begin in a personal way. They begin in the singular. But Psalm 124 begins in the plural.

It is a corporate psalm to be embraced by all of God's people. The psalmist David does not begin with the words, If it had not been the Lord who was on my side.

He begins with the words, If it had not been the Lord who was on our side. And so as we consider this psalm this morning, I believe that it calls us to respond in three specific ways.

The first is we are called to remember. Psalm 124 calls us to remember those times when we face problems that were over our heads, which would have overwhelmed us if the Lord was not on our side.

[7:13] To put Psalm 124 verses 1 through 5 another way, the psalmist is saying, If anyone other than the Lord was on our side, when people rose up against us, they would have swallowed us up alive.

When their anger was kindled against us, then the flood would have swept us away. The torrent would have gone over us. Then over us would have gone the raging waters.

The psalmist in Psalm 124 is calling God's people to think back and to remember when they faced powerful personal enemies and daunting circumstances.

The reality is that for Israel, there was a long list of experiences that they could have chosen from, that they could have thought about. There were many times in their history when hostile nations that were much larger than them came against them and threatened them or attacked them.

But God was on their side and he protected them. And so when the children of Israel heard these words, when they considered these words, they had a lot of experiences to choose from.

[8:30] But I think when we consider the words of this psalm, and when we consider the national history of the nation of Israel, there is one national event of hostility and difficulty that stood out above all the others without exception.

And it is the exodus from Egypt. A powerful king, a nation, opposed a small group of helpless people who had been enslaved for more than 400 years.

Israel had no army, no weapons, they were helpless. And yet, they were freed from their slavery, and their enemy was defeated, and they never lifted as much as a finger to fight to gain their freedom and defeat their enemy.

You can read this account in the book of Exodus, starting in chapter 7 through chapter 15. Chapter 15 is the climax of the Lord's deliverance of the exodus out of Egypt.

But when we look at Psalm 124, Psalm 124, verses 2 through 5, seem to zero in at a particular dramatic moment, that moment when Pharaoh and his armies were pursuing Israel after they left Egypt.

[10:00] The children of Israel were sandwiched between the boiling fury of Pharaoh, who was pursuing them, and the raging waters of the Red Sea that was in front of them.

They were hemmed in. And they knew they had no chance of turning back to fight Pharaoh, and they knew they had no ability to cross the Red Sea.

All they could see was two different ways to die, one in front of them and one behind them. And Scripture says, they cried out. They cried out to Moses, and Moses cried out to the Lord.

And the Lord miraculously parted the Red Sea, and the children of Israel walked through on dry land. And when Pharaoh and his army followed, trying to come through after them, the Lord closed up the Red Sea, killing Pharaoh and his armies, and destroying their chariots and all of their weapons of war.

And the people of Israel could rightly say, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side. Even though they were not present at the time, generations later, multiple generations later, they could still say these words, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side.

[11:23] Israel was outnumbered. There was no match. But God was on their side. And he made all the difference.

I wonder what comes to your mind, or even what came to your mind when we read those opening words of Psalm 124. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side.

I wonder if you had to take those introductory words, canvas your life, and share, or if it had not been the Lord who was on my side story, what would you share?

I doubt there's any of us this morning who would share the time when the car tire was flat or the car wouldn't start and someone just came in the nick of time. And it's not likely that we would share about some unreasonable supervisor who was transferred or a difficult neighbor who moved. Instead, I think, when we hear the words, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, the kinds of memories that would flood our minds are those times when we faced situations that were much bigger than we were and we knew that our only way through it, our only way out of it, was divine help.

[12:54] help from out of this world, help from above. It would be situations where the stakes were high and the odds were great. And I know for some of us, what would come to mind is a major health battle when we walk through complex surgery, when we battle cancer.

For some of us, what comes to mind is the devastation of a divorce that we never expected and never wanted. Perhaps for some of us, what comes to mind is a time of drowning in the flood of financial problems that threaten to take us under.

Or maybe it's some other circumstance. But all the same, we think back and we can testify if it had not been the Lord who was on my side, I would have been swallowed up.

But as we consider Psalm 124, I think there's a particular mistake that we can make about Psalm 124 when we try to understand what is its message, what is it saying to us, what is the promise it holds out to us.

Friends, Psalm 124 does not give us a promise that the Lord will miraculously deliver us from every single battle that we face. Psalm 124 is not the so-called prosperity gospel that tells us that if we have enough faith, we will be able to walk in victory at all times and we can live our best life now.

[14:48] The promise of Psalm 124 is not that God will deliver us out of every problem and every battle that we face in this life. Indeed, if you check Israel's history before Psalm 124 was written and after Psalm 124 was written, there were times when Israel was not delivered out of their problems.

There were times when indeed the Lord permitted them to be given over to their enemies. They had many deliverances but it wasn't always the case.

And I think for us, if we want to get a more realistic view of what it means to follow the Lord and to have varied experiences of facing trials and facing difficulties and facing daunting circumstances, a good place to start is Hebrews chapter 11.

Hebrews chapter 11 canvases and catalogs a lot of the experiences of the people of God who served them faithfully. And what you'll find is they're different experiences.

You read Hebrews 11 and you're reminded that there were times when God stopped the mouths of lions and protected his people.

[16:18] You'll also read that there were times when he allowed them to be stoned. He allowed them to be sawn in two. He allowed them to be killed with the sword. But here's the one thing that they had in common.

Whether the lion's mouth was shut or whether they were sawn in two, the one thing they had in common was this. The Lord was on their side. He was on their side.

They were not alone. I want to commend Brother Troy for his selection of the songs suited to this psalm.

We sang this morning the hymn Be Still My Soul. The Lord is on your side. Friends, that's a hymn that we should take to heart. If you don't know it, I encourage you, get to know it.

Read it. Sing it. The first line says, Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side. The second says, Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.

[17:29] Brothers and sisters, without knowing what's going to happen in that battle that we may be facing even in this moment, what is important to know is this, the Lord is on your side. The Lord is on your side.

Whether it's going to be a mighty deliverance like the lion's mouth being shut or whether it's going to be a situation like almost being sawn in two or killed by the sword, what we know is this, the Lord is

on our side.

And friends, that's enough. the rest of verse one says that we can leave it to the Lord to order and provide because in every change he faithful will remain.

Friends, let us not make the mistake of believing that the Lord is not on our side because we didn't get the lion's mouth shut.

no, he is with us because he has promised that he will never leave us, he will never forsake us, he will always be with us until the end of the age.

[18 : 38] And so Psalm 124 does not promise us that we will be miraculously delivered in every single circumstance. As a matter of fact, Israel's history proves otherwise. There were battles they fought and they lost thousands.

But this epic battle they never lifted a finger. And what this Psalm hauls out to us is the promise that the Lord is on our side. And that is enough.

He faithful will remain. But thank God that we do have memories and we do have reflections that we can bring to mind.

when we can say if the Lord was not on my side I wouldn't be here. My life would be so different.

But he was on our side. And we are grateful that he delivered us out of perilous circumstances and difficulties.

In addition to calling us to remember the truth of the Lord has been on our side and is on our side, Psalm 124 calls us to rejoice in this truth.

[19 : 56] And that is my second point. We are called to respond with rejoicing. When we think of the battles that we have faced, the difficulties that we have faced, and the reality that we are here, there's reason to rejoice.

the Lord brought us through. We were not destroyed. And as we remember how the Lord brought us through, we remember how the Lord miraculously brought us through and preserved us against great odds.

We can't help but rejoice. look again at verses 6 and 7. Blessed be the Lord who has not given us over to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers.

The snare is broken and we have escaped. Brothers and sisters, when we rightly remember how God was on our side and how God delivered us, how God brought us through, through.

And remember, God's deliverance is not just out, God's deliverance is also through. Sometimes we want God to just come and deliver us and rapture us out of the problem and sometimes in His sovereign purposes He does that.

[21 : 27] But you know the norm is for most of us, the norm for most of us is He is right there on our side and He brings us through. But if we rightly remember that, it will be responded to with rejoicing and blessing of the name of the Lord.

And the more we understand this, the more we will rejoice and we will bless His name. I want you to see this morning how in verse 6 we're able to see the psalmist pointing us to the sovereignty of God.

as much as the enemies of God's people wanted to destroy them and was doing all in their power to destroy them, verse 6 tells us God did not give His people over as prey to their teeth.

God didn't give them over. God didn't give them over. Now again, this is this is this epic situation in Israel's history, the Exodus that is that is clearly being talked about in these verses.

God didn't give them over. God did not give them over to Pharaoh. He didn't give them over to the raging sea that was in front of them. The Lord preserved them.

[22 : 55] It was in His power to do that. He did not give them over. But again, when we read Hebrews 11, we see that God in His sovereignty, for His own purposes and own reasons, not all had the same outcome.

Some were sawn into. Some were given to the sword. We're talking again about Israel in verse 7. And it says that God's people escaped the snares, the traps that were set for them.

And there in verse 7, we're reminded of God's power, that God was able to break the snares. God was able to remove the trap that was set for them.

The snare was broken not because His people could break it. the snare was broken because God Himself broke it. Notice how the people of God are likened to helpless birds.

Helpless birds who are ignorantly going after what they think is food, but they're going into a snare, going into a trap, and God breaks the snare. And no doubt, Pharaoh thought, with the Red Sea in

front of the children of Israel, there was no escape for them.

[24 : 17] That was the snare. But the Lord opened the way, and they went through on dry land. And here they are as they remember that.

They bless the Lord who has not given them over to the teeth of their enemies. And brothers and sisters, if we truly remember God's intervention in our lives, and how God has rather brought us out of or through the difficulties that we face, we truly will rejoice, and likewise will bless his name. So Psalm 124 calls us to remember, it calls us to rejoice, and third, finally and briefly, Psalm 124 calls us to reaffirm. It calls us to reaffirm the truth that the Lord who has been on our side is still on our side.

Notice how Psalm 124 ends in verse 8. It concludes with these words, Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

verse 8 is an affirmation, a reaffirmation of trust in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, who is on the side of his people.

[25 : 45] If we look at Psalm 124, we'll see that up to verse 7, from 1 to 7, it was all looking back. It was thinking about what the Lord had done.

If he had not been on Israel's side, all that he had done, they were thinking back. But now in verse 8, they're thinking in the present, they're thinking in the present and indeed in the future.

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Now again, when we think about how this Psalm would have been used by the pilgrims as they made their journey to Jerusalem, these annual pilgrimages that they did, when we consider that, we can see how appropriate this Psalm is.

It was no easy journey. It was a difficult journey. It was a dangerous journey. There would be hostile territory that they had to go by or go through.

There would be robbers and other criminals who would be there to take advantage of a moment to rob and to kill.

[26 : 57] people. And it's fitting that they were reminded that God has been with us and God has been on our side and indeed God is on our side and indeed our help is in the name of the Lord who has made heaven and earth, the all-powerful God for whom nothing is too difficult.

No doubt some of them as they made their journeys and we know how this is, they were commanded to go to Jerusalem those three times. And life being what it is, you can rest assured that the times that they had to go, they were not convenient times.

Perhaps they were going when they were leaving behind problems in their homes or problems in their work, their work situations, in their fields or whatever the case may be.

When the time came to go, they had to go and they had to remember, God is with me, God is on my side. My help is in the name of the Lord, the one who made heaven and earth.

Brothers and sisters, we need to reaffirm this every single day. We need to remind ourselves that that is where our help is, our true help is in the Lord, the all-powerful God who spoke and this world came into being.

[28 : 21] That's the one who is on our side. And it's the one that we need to reaffirm. I think we need to especially remember this as we navigate this very difficult and uncertain period of this pandemic in which our nation and the world is facing.

When lives and livelihoods are under constant threat and under so much uncertainty when those would hold themselves out as having the best minds and the greatest abilities, they are themselves in great uncertainty.

And we must remember that our help comes from the Lord. Our help is in the name of the Lord, the one who has made heaven and the one who has made the earth.

When we think of the introductory words of Psalm 124, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, I want to encourage us this morning that although it is proper to think about some life circumstance where God helped you, where God intervened, where you are aware if God had not done this, where would I be?

What would my life be like? What would our family's life be like? Totally legitimate to think about those. But friends, here's what I want us to consider this morning. Above those circumstances that we face in this life, the primary consideration that we should all have if we belong to Christ is this.

[30 : 11] We should remember, if it had not been for the Lord, where would we be in terms of the life we used to live when we were dead and trespasses and sins, when we were in this world

enslaved to sin and enslaved to Satan, and the Lord rescued us out of the kingdom of darkness and he translated us into the kingdom of his own son.

Brothers and sisters, that is the greatest deliverance, the greatest rescue that we can ever think about because it not only applies to this life, it applies to the life to come.

But for the Lord, we would all be lost. And it matters not that we may not have been strung out in this world and on sin, in sin, even the white collar sinner, even the one who would not classify himself as very, very sinful, even that one needs to be rescued, and even that one cannot rescue himself and is in need of divine rescue.

And so when we consider these words of Psalm 124, these introductory words, friends, let our hearts go back with great remembrance and great rejoicing and gratitude that the Lord has delivered us and set us free from a life of sin.

And remember the promise of Scripture that if God has done that for us, then what will he withhold from us? He will withhold nothing from us.

[31 : 52] He will do for us all that we need because he's made us this promise. I'll never leave you. I will never forsake you. I will be with you to the end of the age.

let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning. We thank you that we are able to say with all the people of God, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side.

Oh, Lord, you have been merciful to us in ways that we cannot count, but Lord, you have been most merciful to us in sending Christ and rescuing us from our sins.

Would you help us to remember that? Would you help us to rejoice in that? Would you help us to reaffirm that because you have done that, you'll always be with us, always on our side, helping us as we make our journey through this life?

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. And now unto him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we are able to ask or think according to the power at work within us.

[33 : 15] To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. Amen.

Thanks for joining us for our live stream this morning. The Lord bless you. Have a wonderful afternoon. Yes, good afternoon. Thank you.