



PSALM 124

What if the Lord Had Not Been on Our Side?

This is Holly Culhane with Presence Point and welcome to our *Psalms for Shepherds* series. We continue this week in the Psalms of Ascent, with *Psalms 124*, a psalm that remarkably describes what it would be like if God had not rescued the Israelites and, as we apply it today, what it would be like if God did not rescue us over and over and over again.

Psalms 124

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.

¹ What if the Lord had not been on our side?

Let all Israel repeat:

² What if the Lord had not been on our side when people attacked us?

³ They would have swallowed us alive in their burning anger.

⁴ The waters would have engulfed us;
a torrent would have overwhelmed us.

⁵ Yes, the raging waters of their fury would have overwhelmed our very lives.

⁶ Praise the Lord, who did not let their teeth tear us apart!

⁷ We escaped like a bird from a hunter's trap.

The trap is broken, and we are free!

⁸ Our help is from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

This psalm of ascent is such a beautiful expression of thanksgiving describing what happened to God's people and how God saved them.

This psalm begins with "What if the Lord had not be on our side? And then repeats that same question to require the singers not to pass over what David is teaching in that sentence. As the New Living Translation (NLT) Study Bible states, "The negative rhetorical questions emphasize the positive idea that the LORD was indeed on their side."

... and, dear fellow under-shepherd, no matter how it feels right now in your life, our Lord is on our side, as well.

Let's personalize and camp on this question for a moment: What if the Lord had not been on YOUR side? Who or what would have swallowed you alive in their burning anger? What waters would have engulfed you and the torrent overwhelmed you? Whose teeth would have torn you apart? What trap did our Father break to set you free?

You probably thought of specific circumstances as I asked those questions, circumstances that, as you look back upon them, you sing your own song of thanksgiving because God DID save you, and the situation is behind you! There certainly are circumstances in my life that I thought about as I read *Psalms 124* and, with a deep exhale, I thanked the LORD again that He intervened and that His presence overwhelmed the situation, that His provision supplied a way out, and that His protection ruled the day.

I wonder if, when David wrote this Song of Ascent, he was remembering also how God rescued him from Saul, who desperately, wickedly, and with jealous rage wanted David dead. He had to be thinking about his time shepherding his father's flock when God provided the ability for him to kill lions and bears. And he could not have forgotten Goliath, the giant he downed with a slingshot and one smooth stone. Although it was David's faith in God that led him to stand in front of such a formidable opponent, it was God who provided the skill for David to make that shot. It was God Who saved David from Goliath, it was God Who saved the Israelites from the Philistines.

The truth is those are the circumstances David knew about and the situations you thought about as I asked those questions, are situations you know about. Just think of how many times the Good Shepherd has rescued you and me, and we're not even aware of it!

Ecclesiastes 11:5 says, "Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things." He is infinite. We are finite. He is omniscient – all knowing. We know only what He has chosen to give us the brain power to learn, remember, and understand and what He has chosen to reveal to us.

Dear fellow under-shepherd, is there a sudden attack, a deepening flood, a menacing beast, or a hidden trap that is exposing itself in your life right now? Or is there a circumstance like that in your future that you fear? Allow me to encourage you to bring that situation before the Good Shepherd, to praise His holy Name for saving you in the past. (After all, "What if the LORD had not been on your side?") and acknowledge, in the words of David, "My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Then, rely fully on and bask in His provision, His protection, and His presence this week. Thanks so much for joining me.