

If It Had Not Been for the Lord

The Songs of the Children of God

November 22, 2026

PSALM 124

A song of ascents for David.

Were it not the LORD Who was for us
-let Israel now say-
were it not the LORD Who was for us
when people rose against us,
then they would have swallowed us alive
when their wrath flared hot against us.
Then the waters would have swept us up,
the torrent come up past our necks.
Then it would have come up past our necks-
the raging waters.
Blessed is the LORD,
Who did not make us prey for their teeth.
Our life is like a bird escaped
from the snare of the fowlers.
The snare was broken
and we escaped.
Our help is in the name of the LORD,
maker of heaven and earth.

REFLECTION

God our helper: vs. 1-2, 6, 8
The life-destroying forces
- -The nations around us: 2
- -Compared to a flood: 4-5 (think Noah, Red Sea collapse)
- -Compared to wild beasts: 3, 6-7 (think Daniel)

"They would have swallowed us alive..."
In the third person conditional tense
An action that did not happen but is imagined as having happened under different conditions.
The condition of ubiquitous grace
The thousands of unthanked-for divine gifts and interventions
Angels watching over me: Amy Grant
The surprise of grace in Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* (pp. 236-237)
Grace in the story of Esther
A praise rooted in faith: Habakkuk 3:17-18
The *Footprints* poem
The grammar of conditionality expresses the extravagance of God
The Passover Liturgy's *Dayenu*: "It would've been enough"
Each of us has a litany of *dayenu*
The God of more than enough: 2 Corinthians 9:8

Such and Such

And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. 2 Samuel 12:8 (KJV)

Some say you are a miser,
that you dole out in pinches and specks,
that your storehouses are double-locked
and inventory checked by the grain.

But how would one explain my backyard ivy,
plush and wildly overtaking the fence?
And how to account for the allocation
of more birds here than my space deserves,
so many songs crowding this tiny parcel of world?

Because the leaves are waving at me
in unrationed lavish bunches,
I dare pray for some of that extravagance today,
for some of that profligate touch.

O to be awash in the spillage of your mercies,
in the flood of your such and such.