

PSALM 124

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 124

A Song of degrees of David.

Some think this psalm was written by David, after the conquest of the Philistines and Ammonites, and other nations that rose up against him and Israel, like the proud waves of the sea, and spread themselves like a flood; and whose destruction was like the breach of many waters, (~~HEB~~ 2 Samuel 5:18,20 10:19). Others, after his deliverance from the persecution of Saul, or from the conspiracy of Absalom. Theodoret is of opinion that David wrote this by a prophetic spirit, concerning the enemies of the Jews, upon their return to their own land, from the Babylonish captivity; who envied them, and rose up against them, but the Lord delivered them. And others apply it to the times of Antiochus, when the Jewish church and state were threatened with ruin; but the Lord appeared for them, in raising up the Maccabees. Kimchi interprets it of the Jews in captivity; and drama of the deliverance of the children of Israel at the Red sea. It may be applied to any time of distress the church and people of God have been in, and he has wrought salvation for them.

Ver. 1. *If [it had not been] the Lord who was on our side*, etc.] Or, “was for us”^{f1756}. The Syriac version is, “that rose up for us”; against their enemies, that rose up against them, as in (~~HEB~~ Psalm 123:2): or, “was with us”, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; to help and assist, support and supply, strengthen and defend: or, “was among us”, as the Arabic version; as their King, Protector, and Saviour. This implies that he was on their side; was for them, with them, and among them, and took their part against their enemies; (see ~~HEB~~ Psalm 118:6,7); which if he had not done, their case would have been miserable and deplorable; or if any other had took their part, and not he, let them be who they would, angels or men. If God is on the side of us, it matters not who is against us; but if he is not on our side, or against us, it signifies nothing who is for us; (see ~~HEB~~ Romans 8:31). It suggests that the case of Israel now was so very forlorn and distressed, that none but the Lord himself could help them. Jehovah is on the side of his people in a spiritual sense, or otherwise it would be bad for them: God the

Father is on their side; his love and relation to them engage him to be so; hence all those good things that are provided for them, and bestowed on them; nor will he suffer any to do them hurt, they being as dear to him as the apple of his eye; hence he grants them his gracious presence, supports them under all their trials and exercises, supplies all their wants, and keeps them by his power, and preserves them from all their enemies; so that they have nothing to fear from any quarter: Christ is on their side; he is the surety for them, the Saviour of them; has took their part against all their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and death; has engaged with them, and conquered them; he is the Captain of their salvation, their King at the head of them, that protects and defends them here, and is their friend in the court of heaven; their Advocate and interceding High Priest there, who pleads their cause against Satan, and obtains every blessing for them: the Spirit of Jehovah is on their side, to carry on his own work in them; to assist them in their prayers and supplications; to secure them from Satan's temptations; to set up a standard for them, when the enemy comes in like a flood upon them; and to comfort them under all their castings down; and to work them up for, and bring them safe to, heaven: but were not this the case, what would become of them?

now may Israel say; this was a public case the psalmist here records, in which all Israel were concerned; and whom he calls upon to take notice of it, and directs them what to say on this occasion.

Ver. 2. *If [it had not been] the Lord who was on our side*, etc.] This he repeats both for the confirmation of it, and to excite the attention of the Israelites to it; as well as to observe that it was not once only, but again and again, many times the Lord appeared to be on their side. The Targum renders it,

“the Word of the Lord;”

the essential Word, the Son of God; and so in (<sup>^{303E}Psalm 123:1), in the king's Bible;

when men rose up against us; wicked men; though no hard epithet is given in the text, however just. The enemies of God's people are only called “men” by them, to show their meekness and patience; it is in the singular number, “when man rose up”; hence Aroma interprets it of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and R. Obadiah of Haman: but it might be better interpreted of the man of sin, the man of the earth; who, at the head of his antichristian party,

has rose up against the saints, oppressed them, and threatened them with utter ruin, (^{<314>}2 Thessalonians 2:4 ^{<910>}Psalm 10:18 ^{<615>}Revelation 13:5,6). Though it is best to understand it of a body of men; of men not mean, but mighty; not few, but numerous; and who united as one man against the people of God, and rose up against them in an hostile manner; being full of enmity to them, and bent upon their ruin.

Ver. 3. *Then they had swallowed us up quick*, etc.] Or “alive”; as the earth swallowed up Korah and his company; or as the fish swallowed up Jonah; or rather as ravenous beasts swallow their prey; to which the allusion is. The people of God are comparable to sheep and lambs, and such like innocent creatures: and the wicked to lions, tigers, wolves, bears, and such like beasts of prey that devour living creatures;

when their wrath was kindled against us; which is cruel and outrageous; there is no standing against it, nor before it; it is like a fierce flame of fire that burns furiously, and there is no stopping it; none but God can restrain it.

Ver. 4. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us*, etc.] People, comparable to waters for their multitude, Strength, force, and impetuosity; which bear down all before them, and against which there is no standing; which, like the waters of the flood, overflow and destroy all they pass over. These are the floods of ungodly men, which are very destructive and terrible; (see ^{<675>}Revelation 17:15 ^{<210>}Isaiah 8:7,8 ^{<914>}Psalm 18:4); together with all those reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, which come along with them; which the presence of God only can bear up his people under, and carry them through, (^{<210>}Song of Solomon 8:7 ^{<601>}Psalm 69:1,2 ^{<312>}Isaiah 43:2);

the stream had gone over our soul; and so deprived them of life; the whole force of the enemy; which, like a stream, flows in with great strength and rapidity, when a breach is made and spreads itself, Arama interprets it of the stream of the Egyptians, and restrains it to them, their armies and forces; but it rather designs others, and the enemies of God’s people in general, which threaten their ruin, even their very souls and lives: it may be applied to the stream of corruptions, the flood of temptation and flow of persecutions, such as the flood the dragon cast out of his mouth after the woman; which, were it not for divine grace and assistance, would destroy the saints, who have no might against this great force, (^{<102>}2 Chronicles 20:12 ^{<319>}Isaiah 59:19 ^{<616>}Revelation 12:16).

Ver. 5. *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*] The wicked, who, through their pride, persecute the poor saints: these proud tyrants and persecutors would prevail over them, to their ruin and destruction; who, for their number, force, and strength, and especially for their pride and haughtiness, are like to the strong, boisterous, and swelling waves of the sea, were they not stopped and bounded by him who has said, Thus far shall ye go, and no farther, (^{<3881>}Job 38:11).

Ver. 6. *Blessed [be] the Lord,* etc.] Here begins the church's thanksgiving for deliverance from all their enemies, their proud persecutors; and from all afflictions and troubles by them; which they could never have been delivered from, had not the Lord appeared for them; and therefore it is but just that he should have all the glory of it, and be blessed and praised on account thereof;

who hath not given us [as] a prey to their teeth; the teeth of wicked men are like spears and arrows, like swords and knives, to devour good men; their passions are strong, and their desires very vehement after their ruin; and, if suffered, the saints would fall an easy prey to them: but God will not give them up to them, either to Satan the devouring lion, or to any of his emissaries; nay, when they have seized them, and got them in their mouths, they shall be snatched from them, as the lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear by David; see (^{<5704>}Psalm 57:4 ^{<1004>}Proverbs 30:14) (^{<1008>}1 Peter 5:8 ^{<0173>}1 Samuel 17:34,35).

Ver. 7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,* etc.] The people of God are like little birds, being harmless and innocent, singing forth the praises of God for his goodness to them; as also because weak and unable to resist their foes; and worthless in themselves, like sparrows, as the word^{f1757} here used signifies; and are fearful and timorous, and flee at the least apprehension of danger, (^{<9407>}Psalm 102:7 11:1 ^{<2811>}Hosea 11:11). Satan, and wicked men under his influence, are like fowlers who lay snares for them, to draw them into sin, into immorality and error, in order to bring them to ruin and destruction; hence we read of the snare of the devil and of wicked men, (^{<5407>}1 Timothy 3:7) (^{<5126>}2 Timothy 2:26 ^{<33910>}Psalm 119:110); and who form plans and lay schemes to oppress and destroy them; but through the wisdom given them to discern these devices and stratagems, and through the power of divine grace, accompanying them, they escape what was intended for their hurt, and particularly in the following manner:

the snare is broken, and we are escaped; measures concerted by wicked men are broken, their schemes are confounded, their devices are disappointed, so that they cannot perform their enterprise; and by this means the saints escape the evils designed against them, the afflictions of the world, and the temptations of Satan.

Ver. 8. *Our help [is] in the name of the Lord*, etc.] This is the conclusion the church draws from the scene of Providence in her favour; this is the instruction she learns from hence, that her help is in the Lord only, and not in any creature; and that it is right to put her trust and confidence in the Lord for it, and only to expect it from him whose name is in himself; and is a strong tower to flee unto for safety, (~~1080~~ Proverbs 18:10). The Targum is,

“in the name of the Word of the Lord;”

in the Messiah; in whom the name of the Lord is, his nature and perfections; and in whom help is found, being laid upon him, (~~1221~~ Exodus 23:21) (~~2839~~ Hosea 13:9 ~~3999~~ Psalm 89:19);

who made heaven and earth; and therefore must be able to help his people, and to do more for them than they are able to ask or think: for what is it he cannot do that made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them? (see ~~800~~ Psalm 121:1,2).