

Assurance of Victory - *Psalm 124*

Introduction

- You know, we've talked a lot about how these Psalms present life as a journey. Sort of a pilgrimage.
- And like Darryl pointed out in the email that he sent out this week, this pilgrimage is full of lots of twists and turns.
- And if you've been here for this "homesick" series up to this point, we've seen a lot of that as we've been going through the Psalms of ascent. We've seen a lot of the struggles that we face in this world on full display, and we've been encouraged in our response to them.
- And last week we looked at where we find rest in this journey, in the times that we feel overwhelmed by the opposition around us. And our answer was to look for rest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but Psalm 123 left us with a sort of incomplete feeling. We ended on a cliffhanger, without really having an end to our struggles in view.
- But that cliffhanger was an intentional one. It wasn't meant to be about how we overcome or move past our struggles, it was how we find hope and rest in the midst of them.
- But if you were here last week, I promised that this week we'd be looking a bit more about how we can find some assurance of victory over these struggles, and as we come to Psalm 124 this week, we want to take some time to look at where that victory, and our assurance is found. And this Psalm actually begins in an interesting way, with introducing us to the author. The others have simply been Psalms of Ascent, but this one specifically, is a Psalm of ascent of David. So we know who's writing this, and what he's looking at is that question: In the midst of this world so full of opposition, where do we find assurance of victory over the seemingly constant struggles that are thrown our way?
- And as we dive into this Psalm, we're going to see the answer to that question, by looking at three different ways that you and I can have that assurance in this world, and how this Psalm speaks hope for our past, our present, and our future.

We can find assurance of victory by reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past (V. 1-5)

- As we get started, this Psalm, at its core, is a song of praise to God, worshiping him for what he's done. But it begins right away with a heart of reflection. Looking back into the past at what God has already done. Remembering his faithfulness. Look at V. 1 & 2:

“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,” - Psalm 124:1-2 (ESV)

- So we see that heart of reflection, and that is exactly what this Psalm is calling you and I to. The first way that you and I can have assurance of victory over the struggles that we face in this world, is by reflecting on God’s faithfulness in the past.
- These verses begin this Psalm with David reflecting on past victories, and God’s presence with him and the nation of Israel, and this is where the Psalm spends the majority of it’s time.
- With David looking back into the past, acknowledging what God has already done.
- But why is God’s faithfulness in our past so significant? This Psalm begins with an invitation to reflection, but why is that so important? These are things that have already happened, so why don’t we just stay in the present and keep moving on?
- Well the Psalm begins with a big “if”, and the next three verses serve as an explanation of what would have happened to David, and to the nation, without God’s constant faithfulness and presence with them. This is what he says:

“then 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.” - Psalm 124:3-5 (ESV)

- David really wants us to understand here that we live in a dangerous world. That we will face some pretty intense things, and the only reason any of us can say that we’re still here, is because of the faithfulness of God.
- So without the help of the Lord, “if” God had not been with them, David is really trying to hammer home this point, that he and the nation would have been up a creek without a paddle. Utterly overwhelmed and destroyed. And by showing us this, what would have happened without God’s help, it in turn serves to emphasize the greatness of God’s help and faithfulness.

- In my reading, it's not really clear what specific event or situation is being referred to here, or really prompted the writing of this Psalm, but if you're familiar with the life and the rule of king David, these words would have fit so perfectly with pretty much everything that happened during his time as king, and even the time before he became king.
- The books of 1 & 2 Samuel are just full of stories of God's faithfulness to David.
- Think about David being anointed as king. Think about his confrontation with Goliath. Think about his life on the run as king Saul tried to have him hunted down and killed, and the countless battles that he had to fight in his life.
- Throughout everything that happened in David's life, he knew that it was by the strength and the provision of God alone that he survived. That if God had not been with him in any one of those moments, by rights he should have been dead a hundred times over. All of the opposition that faced him, as well as the nation of Israel would have completely crushed them.
- And the main image that he uses to get this idea across is using the idea of water. A flood, torrent, and raging waters, and this is some pretty intense imagery.
- Water is not something to be messed around with. And this is not referring to just some gentle stream, or mildly wavy lake kind of water.
- When I read this, it brought to mind the idea of something like a flash flood. I've seen videos of these things, and they're crazy. I've seen videos of these floods toppling buildings, collapsing bridges, and washing away cars and trucks like they were nothing.
- Rushing and raging water is brutally powerful, and if you're caught in it, there's pretty much nothing that you can do about it. That is the intensity that David is going for here. Without God, he would have been completely swept away and destroyed by the world around him.
- So David is looking back over his life, seeing all of the times that he would have been completely overwhelmed by the world around him, and the circumstances that he was facing, but as he looks back, he sees God's faithfulness so clearly. Understanding that it is only because of God that he has gotten to where he is.
- And the same is true for us. The only reason any one of us is here now, is because of the faithfulness of God in our lives, and I would encourage you to make this kind of reflection a regular part of your devotions, and your time with God. We don't want to live in the past, but we certainly don't want to forget it. So whether that's through journalling, prayer lists, going through old pictures, etc. Take some time to really look back at your life, and think about how God's faithfulness has gotten you to where you are today.
- I know that as I reflect even just over this past year, I am blown away by the faithfulness that God has shown to Elaine and I. Darryl reminded me last week that it had been exactly a year since we made the decision to come and be a part of Liberty Grace, and the way that God has been at work in our life over this past year is just staggering.

- But maybe as you reflect on your life, and look back at the things that you've been through you struggle to see that faithfulness, and you're having a hard time seeing where God was at some point in your life. Well this Psalm is not just meant as a personal reflection, looking back at our own lives. It is also an invitation to corporate worship, for us to reflect on God's faithfulness to all of his people. "Let Israel now say"
- You see, we can be encouraged not just by God's faithfulness to us personally, but by God's faithfulness to all of his people, because in that, we get a picture into his constant, never changing character. And that is a character of love for his people, and constant protection and provision.
- So many times in life we feel like we're living in V. 3-5. Like we're going to be completely overwhelmed by the world around us, and we can hardly figure out what end is up, and we certainly don't see how God's faithfulness is playing out in our lives.
- Well God has given us such a gift in the Bible, this book that is so full of stories of God's faithfulness, and his care for his people. Stories that reveal his character to us, a character that will never change. The God that we serve today, is the same God that was so faithful to David and the people of Israel. And the same God who promises to continue to be just as faithful to those that serve him.
- And as we reflect on God's faithfulness in our own lives and in Scripture, let us also reflect as a church on all that he has done. The fact that Liberty Grace Church is here today, and has existed in this community for almost 8 years, even the fact that God put it in Darryl and Charlene's hearts to plant a church here, is a pure testament to God's faithfulness.
- God has been so faithful to us as a church, so we reflect on what God has done for us, and for all of his people, knowing that without him we would have been completely overwhelmed and washed away.

We can find assurance of victory by responding to God's faithfulness in the present (V. 6-7)

- After V. 5, we sort of step back into the present with this Psalm. The first five verses were all about reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past to find assurance of victory, and now V. 6-7 are about showing us that we can have assurance of victory by responding to God's faithfulness in the Present.
- Essentially, once we've taken the time to look back at what God has done, how does that impact our life right now?
- You can see how David responds to his reflections right at the beginning of V. 6:

*“Blessed be the LORD,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!” - Psalm 124:6 (ESV)*

- So the primary response that we see in this passage, as David reflects on God’s past faithfulness, is a response of worship, crying out *“Blessed be the LORD!”*
- He is simply overwhelmed by the faithfulness that God has shown to his people, and he is driven to cry out in praise.
- And after this declaration of worship from David, he follows up his praise with speaking more about the greatness of what God has done.
- Again it makes mention of the danger that God has rescued his people from, but here our imagery is changed up a bit. Instead of this image of a person at the mercy of rushing water, it changes to an animal escaping from a predator, and this image continues in V. 7.

*“We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped!” - Psalm 124:7 (ESV)*

- Honestly, this isn’t the most flattering illustration that David could have used, of a poor helpless bird caught in a trap. But what this is doing, is adding on to the images that we were given in V. 3-5. While those verses really nailed home the intensity of the danger that we face in this world, and it focuses more on our inability to save ourselves.
- Just like a bird who’s been caught in the trap of a hunter, we are completely helpless and vulnerable, in need of God’s help and provision.
- This Psalm is not presenting the kind of mind set that says “we could have done it but God made it easier”.
- Instead, it is again that recognition that we could never do these things on our own that prompts us to cry out in worship to our God when we are reminded of what he has done, and how faithful he is, and to share about that faithfulness.
- As David cries out “blessed be the Lord”, he follows it up with these explanations of the great things that God has done.

- And this really flows so naturally out of that first point. they're meant to build on one another. As we see God's faithfulness when we reflect on what he's done in the past, it really leads so naturally to this response of worship.
- So as we reflect on God's faithfulness in the past, we are prompted to give him praise in the present, sharing about all that he's done for us.

We can find assurance of victory by resting in God's faithfulness in the future (V. 8)

- And finally, the eyes of the Psalm begin to look forward in V. 8, as we read these final words:

"Our help is in the name of the LORD,

who made heaven and earth." - Psalm 124:8 (ESV)

- This is the culmination of David's reflection on God's unending faithfulness. Everything that he has been saying up to this point has led to this final declaration of assurance, that our help is in the name of the Lord.
- And again, as we've seen already, God is named as the maker of heaven and earth, reminding us of the power of the God that we serve.
- And this shows us our final takeaway from this passage. We've seen how God's faithfulness impacts both our past and our present, but now we want to look at why the faithfulness of God is so significant for our future.
- Whatever trials we're facing right now, whatever difficulty we've faced in the past, will probably not be the last of it. There are still plenty of difficult times coming down the line, as we continue to live in a broken world, but we can find assurance of victory in this world by resting in God's faithfulness for our future. Because our God doesn't change. He has been faithful in the past, and he will be faithful in the future.
- This Psalm reminds me of the truth of Paul's words in Romans 8:31

If God is for us, who can be against us? - Rom. 8:31 (ESV)

- If God had not been on our side we would have been washed away, and destroyed, but on the flip side, If God is for us, who can possibly stand against us?
- No matter what we will face in the future, who can stand against us when God is on our side? So as we reflect on God's faithfulness in our past, and as we respond to his faithfulness in our present, let these things give us the confidence to rest in his faithfulness in our future.

- Because like we said last week, even if our struggles never end in our future on earth, we have an eternal future secured for us in the Gospel, and that is something that no one can ever take away from us.
- And that's something that I love so much about this Psalm. It is just so saturated with the truth of the Gospel.
- Think about reflecting on God's faithfulness in our past. If God had not loved us enough to send his son to die on the cross in our place, we would have been utterly destroyed, like a bird caught in a trap, or a person swept up in a flood, facing the deserved consequences for our sin, unable to save ourselves by our own merit or effort.
- But because of God's faithfulness and love for us, we have been rescued from that state, and have been given the privilege of being able to cry out to God and praise him for all that he's done, crying out "blessed be the Lord"
- And as we reflect on what God has done for us through Christ, we are able to have the confidence that no matter what has happened, is happening now, or will happen in the future, we can rest in God's faithfulness, and our right standing before God in Jesus Christ, and the future he has prepared for us.

Conclusion

- So where are you in this journey right now? This Psalm has really given us a comprehensive view of how we look at God's faithfulness in our past our present, and our future, so it's important to take a moment to slow down, and think about where we are actually at right now.
- Maybe you're someone who's faced a lot of struggles in the past, or maybe you're someone who's facing the struggles of this world right now in the future, or maybe you're someone who will face those struggles some time in the present.
- Well wherever you are, and whatever you're facing, we can be encouraged by the example set for us by David in this Psalm.
- Take some time to reflect on God's faithfulness in the past, being reminded of who he is.
- Take some time to respond in the present by praising God for who he is and what he's done
- And finally, rest in the assurance of victory that we are given through Christ for our future.
- As the Psalm says "*Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*".