

Thought for Today: July 14, 2008

Psalm 124 (NASB)

**“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,”
Let Israel now say,
“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us,
Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their anger was kindled against us;
Then the waters would have engulfed us,
The stream would have swept over [us]*;
Then the raging waters would have swept over [us]*.”**

**Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.
[We]* have escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper;
The snare is broken and we have escaped.
Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

* The New American Standard Bible inadequately translates a Hebrew word here as “our soul.” The Hebrew word, however, typically refers to the whole self. Even when the word is being used to refer more specifically to the inner self, the Hebrews did not envision the same distinction between soul and body as the Greeks did.

A beautiful thing about the Psalms is that they seem, at one point or another, to reflect almost every human emotion. I hope you’ve seen that for yourself in your own reading. It’s so very comforting to know that our ancestors have wrestled with struggles not dissimilar to our own. To read of their doubts and fears as well as their faith and their courage helps me to feel more at home with my Bible and more in awe of my God.

As I think about the words of this psalm, I think of relief, humility, and gratitude. The knowledge that God has delivered us from certain death is overwhelming. It may not be at first glance, but when we stop to really think about the implications of such a thought, it sort of grabs us by the throat—at least it did me.

“If not for God, I would be dead.” Try saying that out loud. This is the kind of sentence that can change a life. Indeed, it ought to change our lives. If we believe that God has rescued us from the death blow of our enemies, then we have a hero to whom we owe our entire existence. Hear it again: Without God, you and I would be dead; we’d have no hope. But with God, we are rescued, released from the trap, free to breathe in the life with which God has graced us. We are free to take a moment, as this psalmist did, to thank God again for saving us from certain destruction.

May our humility and gratitude be as thoughtful as this psalmist’s.

In Him,
Patrick Barber