

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm One Hundred And Twenty-Four - Praising God For Delivering Us From Overwhelming Adversaries (Psalm 124:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Psalm 34:19 says that "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Truly, God helps His people out of numerous tight and seemingly futile defeats.
- B. God's people **owe** God **praise** and **thanksgiving especially** for His deliverances where the believer was otherwise facing overwhelming and fiercely destructive opponents.
- C. Psalm 124:1-8 is a pilgrim psalm's call for such a healthy **response** to God's deliverance as follows:

II. Praising God For Delivering Us From Overwhelming Adversaries, Psalm 124:1-8.

- A. A decidedly **unusual** series of grammatical constructions occur in this pilgrim psalm of ascents as a literary device by the author aimed to draw our attention to his main lesson:
 1. Twice -- once in verse 1 and then again in verse two -- the author uses the unusual expression **lulay** translated "unless" to form the decided **protasis**, or "unless" part of a **conditional** clause.
 2. Following this **protasis** come **three** repeated and unusual expressions of '**adzay** in the Hebrew (verses 3, 4 and 5) meaning "in that case". These form the **compound apodosis** of the conditional expression.
 3. Accordingly, the psalmist is focusing on a strong **cause and effect** theme as the **CORE** of his message.
- B. That **CORE** idea is Israel's need to appreciate God's deliverance from overwhelming adversaries, 124:1-8:
 1. The psalmist called the nation Israel to voice its praise for Jahweh's deliverance, Ps. 124:1.
 2. He claimed the nation was blessed to have Jahweh on her side, for **had** this **not** been the case, Israel would have been disastrously overwhelmed by viciously merciless enemies, Ps. 124:2b-5:
 - a. If Jahweh had not been on Israel's side, then when men had attacked her, Israel would have been "swallowed alive" when "their anger flared against us." In other words, the enemies who had attacked them were **so furious** at Israel that without God's help, the fury of the enemy attack would have resulted in swift, vicious, merciless defeat for Israel, Ps. 124:2b-3.
 - b. If Jahweh had not been on Israel's side, then the raging flood of wrathful opponents would have led to the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical destruction of the people of Israel, Ps. 124:5:
 - (a) As we have noted before, the **nephesh** translated as "soul" (KJV) refers to the whole life principle of man, including his mental, physical, emotional and spiritual life that God created in Adam when He breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, cf. Genesis 2:7. (b) Thus this Hebrew word, **nephesh** as used in Psalm 124:5 teaches Israel's **whole** mental, emotional, spiritual and physical welfare was at stake when God delivered her from this attack by an infuriated enemy.
 3. Accordingly, the psalmist expressed his own exemplary praise to God for His invaluable deliverance:
 - a. The psalmist praised Jahweh for His not allowing Israel to be torn by the fury of her enemies, 124:6.
 - b. He praised Jahweh for allowing Israel's **nephesh** (KJV "soul") of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical welfare to escape like a helpless, defenseless, fragile bird who is delivered out of the overpowering, terrifying clutches of a fowler's trap on the ground, Ps. 124:7a.
 - c. He praised Jahweh for breaking the overpowering clutches of the snare so that Israel, like a frightened, vulnerable, doomed, fragile bird could get away and fly from danger, Ps. 124:7b.
 4. In summary, the psalmist explained the **power** of this deliverance was **omnipotence**, for Israel's Jahweh was the Maker of heaven and earth, the sovereign over the fowler's snare, the fowler who made the snare no matter how fiercely cruel and motivated to destroy was Israel's enemy, Ps. 124:8.

Lesson: *It is fitting to praise and thank God for His deliverance from one's overwhelming opponents.*

Application: *(1) God is all-powerful, and loyally loving toward His people. Hence, He uses His power to deliver us from emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually destructive opponents. We should then FITTINGLY praise Him for such deliverances! (2) Also, since gratitude is healthy according to Claudia Stahl, Ass. Ed., Advance for Occupational Therapists ("The Healing Power of the Gratitude Attitude," 11/24/97, p. 18-20), we ALSO have a HEALTH reason to praise God for such deliverances!*