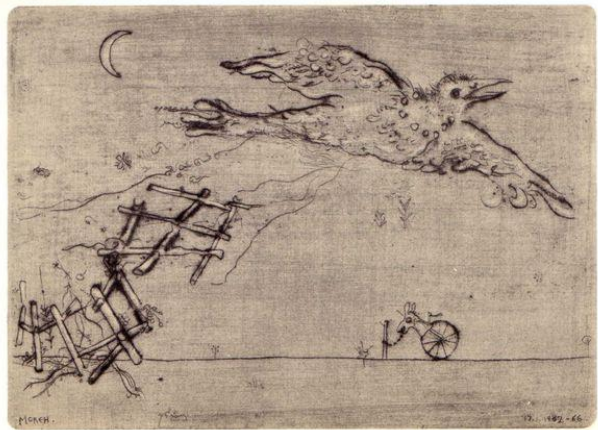


Psalm 123 was a plea for God's deliverance from those who heap scorn and contempt on his people. Psalm 124 is a hymn of thanksgiving and praise to God who *has* delivered them.

What seems to be in view, though, are dangers more serious than scorn and contempt, as demoralising as they are. Rather, God's people have been subjected to the chaotic forces of unrestrained anger-violence - which, apart from God's intervention, would have completely overwhelmed them.



What God's pilgrim people have been rescued from is likened first to a battle with sea monsters (v.3), a battle no human could possibly win. Then, having been delivered from their mouths, they seem doomed to be swept away and drowned in the raging waters. It is a case of the proverbial 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'.

Precisely how the Lord delivered them is not made clear. There is no mention of a miraculous event such as the parting of the Red Sea, for example. What matters is not *how*, but *that* "the snare is broken and we have escaped!" (v.7) The implication is that one or more crises were resolved in such improbably good ways as to leave no reason to doubt that it was by the Lord's hand that deliverance had come. This is the way God often works. Many, many Christians can attest to amazing turns of event following from their crying out to the Lord for help. Writings by missionaries are invariably replete with such faith-inspiring stories of what can only be divine intervention, often in desperate situations.

Yet some will be slow to acknowledge God's hand at work. They will dismiss answers to prayer as simple coincidences, or unremarkable (in spite of the evidence), or the result of inexplicable causes. The psalmist may well have such a hesitancy to acknowledge God's saving work in mind when he calls on all those with him to speak out about God's mighty works, testifying publicly to what he has done for them (v.1b). This rises in v.6 to an exclamation of blessing on the LORD, giving him the praise and glory due his name. Finally, there is an affirmation of trust in the name of the LORD. Only the one "who made heaven and earth" is able to tame sea monsters or calm the raging waters. These are words of comfort, and encouragement to faith, for all God's people, no matter how dire their situation (see Matt 8.23-27).

To ponder

Are you as quick to testify publicly to the Lord's work as you are to cry out for his help?

To pray

Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, I cry out to you for all your children who this day are in danger from people who hate them and seek to destroy them. Deliver them from the forces of darkness and chaos, that they may bless your name, in which I pray. Amen.