

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

VOLUME 3

NOVEMBER 19, 2017

ISSUE 21

WITHOUT GOD (PSALM 124)

By Andrew Dow

**“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 our soul;
then the raging waters would have
swept over our soul”** (Psa 124:1-5).

In Psalm 124, David offers an interesting scenario that we would do well to consider. What if God had not been on Israel’s side? What if Israel was abandoned and left on their own? Would their history have been any different?

Israel’s History WITH God: First, Israel was the result of a promise God made to Abraham—**“I will make you a great nation”** (Gen 12:2). Despite Sarah’s inability to conceive (cf. Gen 15:1; 16:1-2), God gave them a child: **“Is anything too difficult for the Lord?”** (Gen 18:14).

Fast forward to Abraham’s great-grandson, Joseph. Despite being sold into slavery, **“The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man”** (Gen 39:2). Despite being falsely accused and thrown into prison, **“The**

Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him” (Gen 39:21). Years later Joseph told his brothers, **“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive”** (Gen 50:20).

While slaves in Egypt Israel’s situation looked bleak. However, God spoke to Moses: **“I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. ... Certainly I will be with you”** (Exo 3:10-12). God demonstrated His power over Egypt’s false gods until **“all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt”** (Exo 12:41).

Finally, immediately following the exodus, Pharaoh pursued the Israelites (Exo 14:6, 9). **“Do not fear,”** Moses encouraged the people, **“Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. ... The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent”** (Exo 14:13–14). God stood between the people and their enemy (Exo 14:19–20), parted the sea (Exo 14:21–22), and closed the sea over Pharaoh’s army (Exo 14:26–27).

Israel’s History WITHOUT God: What if, as David supposes in Psalm 124, the Lord had not been on Israel’s side? If God had not been on Israel’s side Pharaoh would have quickly overtaken them at the Red Sea and they would have been forced back into slavery. If God had not been on Israel’s side they would have never been delivered from Egyptian bondage in the first place. If God had not been on Israel’s side Joseph would have died in an Egyptian prison cell. If God had not been on Israel’s side Abraham would have never had the promised child.

Is the Lord With You? Like Israel we are helpless without God (Eph 2:11–12). With God on our side we are given life (Eph 2:4–5, 13). May we learn to say with David:

**Blessed be the Lord,
Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.
Our soul has 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** (Psa 124:6–8).

GOD’S “SHEEPLE”

By Andrew Dow

In some circles, those who blindly follow a politician or political party are called “sheeple.” This slang term is a combination of the words “people” and “sheep,” and is used to imply that those labeled as such do not think critically about who or what they are following. It seems at times that this derogatory term is seen as the highest insult in the world of social media debates. It’s unfortunate that sheep have been given a bad reputation in this way. God Himself calls His people “sheep” to great effect. Far from being an insult, to be called “sheep” in Scripture describes our loving relationship with God. It is, in fact, an honor and blessing to be called God’s sheep.

God’s sheep know the Shepherds voice. Jesus said it in John’s Gospel: **“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me”** (10:14). A short time later, but in the same context, Jesus said that **“they will hear [His] voice,”** and will follow Him (10:16). If we are truly God’s “sheeple,” we will be tuned in to God’s voice. There

are many voices vying for our attention—Satan, sin, temptation, work, hobbies, and relationships—but we already have a shepherd. Follow the sound of His voice.

God, the Shepherd, cares for His sheep. Jesus calls Himself **“the good shepherd”** twice (John 10:11, 14). In the 23rd Psalm David explains that his Shepherd guides him to sustenance, brings him through struggles, comforts him in front of his enemies, and leads him a permanent home. David’s relationship with his Shepherd is summarized in this phrase: **“I shall not want”** (Psa 23:1). The ultimate gift the Shepherd gives His sheep is the willingness to lay down His life for them (John 10:11, 15, 17–18).

Are we God’s sheep? While other voices call for us are we devoted to following God alone? Do we have total trust in our Shepherd to guide us where we need to go? When used of God’s people, “sheep” is not a derogatory term. In fact, it is a great blessing to be God’s “sheeple.”

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“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)