

We may read in the OT of numerous times in which the Lord gave Israel escape from their physical enemies. Our conflict is no less real even though it is against spiritual enemies and not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4). Whether battling against Satan, the temptations of the world, or our own sinful desires, only one factor can save us from spiritual disaster, the LORD must be on our side.

I. Without the LORD: disaster!

1. *There is a vicious adversary, whom the LORD does not remove.*

This psalm may refer in general to the various attacks against David and the nation of Israel. The enemies are pictured as vicious animals who would consume them, and as dangerous flash floods like those of the wadis in the Negev. God did not always remove those enemies, but left them for good purposes (cf. Judges 2:21–3:2). Nevertheless He rescued Israel from them. Followers of Jesus Christ have Satan as an enemy (1 Peter 5:8; cf. Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4–5), battle against our sinful nature, and against temptations (cf. 1 Cor 10:13).

2. *There is certain defeat, when we face the adversary in our own strength.*

The repetition emphasizes that without the LORD defeat would have been certain. Neither his own strength and abilities, nor other outside help, would have helped. This is a necessary humbling before God, so that our enemies will flee (James 4:6–8)

3. *There is a single factor, which avoids defeat: the Lord must be on our side.*

If the LORD had not been for them, whether in miraculous intervention or by providential care, they would have been consumed or washed away. So also Paul expresses the believer's confidence, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

II. With the LORD: escape!

When the LORD is for you, the traps which your adversaries set will be broken and you will escape from the disaster which they desired for you. This leads to three logical conclusions stated or implied in the psalm.

1. *We should conclude that the LORD is to be praised.*

This is David's direct response, "Praise be to the LORD." Markedly he makes no reference to the means by which the LORD delivered. So also we must be careful not to deny praise to the LORD by focusing on the means which He uses to deliver.

2. *We should conclude that the LORD is sovereign.*

That the LORD can sovereignly rescue is explicit. A literal translation of verse 6 (e.g. in the NASB, "who has not given us to be torn by their teeth") implies that God could have chosen not to deliver Israel. Ezekiel 20 indicates that throughout 850 years of their history Israel did not deserve to be delivered, but God did so for His own name's sake. God is not obligated to rescue us. As Sovereign LORD He rescues (or not) by His choice.

3. *We should conclude that the LORD is good and great in helping His people.*

The reason the LORD rescues rests in His nature (v. 8). The name of the LORD is explained in Exodus 33:19 and 34:5–7). The LORD is compassionate, gracious, loving, and faithful. This He proclaims as His name, His essential character. He is also the Creator, having the power and right to do as He pleases. Because of His character God purposes good for His people. Because of His power God is capable of doing what He purposes.

To escape disaster the LORD must be on your side. Our natural rebellion against God separates each and every person from God, is punishable by death, and makes us enemies of God rather than having Him on our side. But He offers as a gift eternal life, an eternity in His presence and all that is good beginning now. He offers it through the Lord Jesus Christ who died in the place of the rebel. Accepting His offer fully as a gift brings not only forgiveness, but having the Lord on your side. His good purposes are then always present even in difficult times when they are hard to discern. Escape from spiritual disaster is assured in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For further reflection:

- How do you explain those who were faithful but seemed not to be rescued (e.g. Hebrews 11:35b–38; Acts 7:55–60; 8:3; 12:1–2)? What rescue may we expect and what not?
- What are the greatest dangers which you face? Why are they great when considered from an eternal, divine perspective? Can you expect rescue? How? Do you expect it?
- Peoples have gone to war against each other, both claiming to be Christian and both believing that the Lord was on their side. Could they rightly claim this? Why/why not? How should it caution us?
- How would you encourage another believer who was going through difficulties? How would you want to be encouraged?