

Escaped!

“Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers: The snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:7-8)

“Escaped” is a word made wonderful and blessed only by those who have known the miseries and wretchedness of captivity, prison, or have narrowly missed a dreadful and horrible eventuality. It looms large in testimonies of those who have escaped countries of terrible oppression, famine, devastation, of those who have escaped torture-house prisons and death camps, and those who have been rescued miraculously from a fatal accident, a deadly or utterly debilitating disease.

The singers have realized what they escaped, and vividly testify in words prefaced by what surely “*would have*” happened if the Lord had not been on our side. We *would have* been swallowed alive. The waters *would have* overwhelmed us. The stream *would have* gone over our soul. The swollen waters *would have* gone over our soul. Now this escape is pictured in the imminently appropriate imagery of a bird from the fowler’s snare.

Consider the unsnared bird. Out of captivity his freedom is virtually unlimited. He is not bound by the natural barriers of walls, waters, depths and heights of the earth bound. We often use the phrase “free as a bird” to express the ultimate in liberty. A frail and weak creature, yet he is protected by his ability to fly. Who can catch one? He may have many enemies yet, as long as he can fly, no earth creature can touch him. Such is the freedom that man was designed to live in before he fell.

Consider the snare. Fowlers are earth-bound. They cannot invade the bird’s heavenly sphere. They may succeed in catching one only by luring them down to their sphere, the earth, and setting a trap there with a lure suitable and attractive to the natural desires of the bird. So it was that the enemy of our souls set the first snare in the garden, appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Adam and his wife took the lure, and every single member of the whole human race, including God’s beloved elect, were trapped in a prison house of sin.

Consider the bird in captivity. He who once had unlimited freedom now has none. He is still a weak creature. He has no power or means to free himself from the snare or to break its bonds. His state is utter hopelessness. Alone, without outside help, he will surely perish. Will as he may to be free, he is still in prison. Likewise the sinner, though he may know he sins, know the penalty, know he is only building up the fires of hell for his soul by his continued rebellion, yet is powerless to free himself from its bondage. Though he may will himself to cease sinning and repent, yet he cannot.

Consider the deliverance. We are not told someone came along and loosed the loop from his foot, or opened the door of the cage that held him captive. Indeed there is a personal deliverance for every poor captive of Satan that trusts in Christ. But that deliverance was not accomplished by cracking open the door momentarily and leaving the snare intact to catch again. No, Christ’s deliverance of sinners was much, much more mighty than that. In one mighty stroke, in His sinless life and sacrificial death at the Cross, our Lord smashed Satan’s claim against man by abolishing his sin debt forever! When one poor sinner escaped the whole flock of God’s beloved elect got out. We who most *surely would have utterly perished* have escaped, now are, and forever will be, free as a bird! Having “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Peter 1:4), who can stop us from singing about that at the top of our lungs, and adoring Christ forever and ever?

C. M.

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