

Psalm 94:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

Analysis

Unless the LORD had been my help (לֹאָלוּ יְהוָה אָזְרָתָה לִי)—The counterfactual condition expresses retrospective gratitude. Lulei (unless/if not) introduces what would have happened without divine intervention. **My soul had almost dwelt in silence** (כִּתְعַט שְׁכָנָה דָּוָמָה נִפְשֵׁי)—dumah (silence) is the silence of death, Sheol, the grave. The soul's dwelling place nearly became the realm of speechless darkness.

This testifies to rescue from death's brink—physical, emotional, or spiritual. Psalm 115:17 declares 'the dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.' Only the living can testify to God's faithfulness, making each breath an opportunity for witness.

Historical Context

In Hebrew anthropology, death meant silencing praise—Sheol's inhabitants were cut off from worship. This explains the psalmist's urgency to testify while alive. The resurrection hope later transformed this theology, but the psalm reflects earlier Israelite understanding of death's finality.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. When have you looked back and recognized God's help prevented spiritual or physical 'silence'?
2. How does gratitude for past deliverance fuel present trust when facing new trials?
3. What testimony of rescue do you owe to others before you enter 'silence'?

Interlinear Text

דֹּוּמַת	הַשְׁכַּת	הַ	כְּמַעַט	טָל	לִ	עָזָב	תָּהָא	!	הַיְהָ	!	לֹא	לֹא
Unless	the LORD	had been my help		H0	had almost		dwell		in silence			
H3884	H3068	H5833			H4592		H7931		H1745			
נַפְשִׁי:												

my soul
H5315

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 31:17 (References Lord): Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

Psalms 118:13 (References Lord): Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

Psalms 13:3 (References Lord): Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Psalms 115:17 (References Lord): The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.