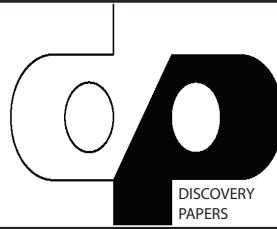


A SONG OF DELIVERANCE

**SERIES: A LIFE OF PASSION:
THE STORY OF DAVID.**



Catalog No. 20160529
2 Samuel 22:1-51
37th Message
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May 29, 2016

2 Samuel 22:1-51

As I was preparing for today's study in the life of David, I started thinking about a subject that I'm sure is unfamiliar to most of you—the subject of old age. I started thinking about that time in life when you begin looking in the mirror and wondering, “How in the world did that happen?” Or, as Ray Stedman wondered, “How in the world did such a handsome guy get stuck in such a strange-looking body?”

In my own case, I first realized that I'd gotten old a few years ago while I was picking up a pizza at a local restaurant. When I arrived at the restaurant, I walked up to the take-out counter and asked if my pizza was ready. The cashier, who was probably in her late teens, looked at me, smiled politely, rang up the bill, and then uttered these terrifying words, “And sir, I gave you the senior citizen discount!” For a moment, I thought she was talking to someone behind me, but no one was there. And so, with the sad realization that I'd gotten old, I took my discounted pizza, drove home, and wondered, “How in the world did *that* happen?”

Well, what does that have to do with our study in the life of David? And, in particular, what does it have to do with today's study in 2 Samuel 22? Quite simply, starting today, we'll be looking at David as an old man. We'll be looking at him as he nears the end of his life. Even more importantly, we'll be listening to the wisdom of an older person telling us lessons from a lifetime of walking with the Lord.

For those of you who would consider yourselves old (and for those of you who perhaps should consider yourselves old but haven't yet had an experience like the one I had at the pizza parlor!), I hope you'll be able to affirm everything that David says. For those of you who are young—or who at least wouldn't consider yourselves old—I hope you'll find David's words encouraging. I hope you'll take to heart the wisdom of an older person who has walked a few miles further down the road and is sharing the good news about what lies on the journey ahead.

If you've perhaps already looked at 2 Samuel 22, you'll know that the entire chapter is a psalm. Which is to say, you'll know that we're now switching literary genres—switching from narrative to poetry. Perhaps some of you will also know that this particular psalm is recorded twice in the Bible. It's recorded here in 2 Samuel 22 and it's also recorded as Psalm 18. In addition, at 50 verses (51 including the introductory inscription) it's the third longest of the psalms, following psalms 78 and 119.

Partly because of the psalm's length but mostly because of its rich imagery, we won't be covering all 51 verses in 35 minutes this morning. In fact, we'll only be looking at the first 25 verses or so. For a more in-depth study, I would highly recommend Steve Zeisler's series of seven sermons on Psalm 18, which can be found in the online library on PBC's website (pbc.org/series/psalm-18).

The Bottom Line

In the inscription preceding the psalm, we learn that David will be singing a song praising God for deliverance from all his enemies. This is the bottom line. This is the central lesson David has learned over his many years of walking with the Lord: God can be trusted as a deliverer. God delivered David from all adversity and opposition, and ultimately, as I hope we'll see, he can be trusted to deliver us as well. The inscription reads:

2 Samuel 22:1:

And David spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

Before we move into the psalm itself—before we hear David exalting God as his deliverer and savior—I would encourage each of us to consider any enemies in our own lives, any forces that have opposed us in the past or are currently opposing us now. Perhaps those forces involve the circumstances of your life—opposition at work, school, or home; opposition in the form of health problems, financial problems, or relational problems. Perhaps your enemies are more internal—enemies such

as fear, insecurity, painful memories, addiction, anger, guilt, and shame. Perhaps you feel opposed by spiritual enemies—enemies like those described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:12:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Of the enemies I've faced in my own life, I would say that one of the greatest, especially growing up, was the inner enemy of self-rejection. I grew up not liking who I was, and no matter what I did, I couldn't seem to feel any differently. I was like Woody Allen who said, "My only regret is that I wasn't born as someone else." This overwhelming sense of self-rejection was a tremendous enemy for me. Perhaps some of you can relate.

Whatever your own personal enemies, I hope you'll keep them in mind as we read David's song of praise recounting how God delivered him from his own enemies. Hopefully, too, as we go through the psalm, God will give you confidence that he can give you the same deliverance that he gave to David.

The Happy Ending

Interestingly, David begins the psalm with the end of the story. He begins with the happy ending. He begins by praising God after the deliverance he's just told us about in the introductory inscription. Later, he'll go back to recount how that deliverance took place. In this respect, the psalm is like a movie that opens with the final scene then flashes back to an earlier point to recount the entire story. David declares:

2 Samuel 22:2-4:

**The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold and my refuge,
my savior; you save me from violence.
I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be
praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.**

It's impossible to read these verses without sensing that David is unable to contain himself. He's unable to stop from praising God with every wonderful word in his vocabulary—words like rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation, stronghold, refuge, and savior. Indeed, the clear impression is that no list of words, no matter how long, could even come close to exhausting all of the glorious things that could be said about the Lord.

The most repeated word in these verses, however, is actually the word 'my'. David declares that God is 'my rock, my fortress, my deliverer'. God is not merely a rock, a fortress, a deliverer. David has had a personal encounter with God, and it is out of this deep personal encounter that all of his praises flow.

Hopefully, many of us have had a similar personal encounter. And yet, I sometimes wonder how many of our encounters with God are merely theoretical or theological. I wonder how many of our encounters are only head-level without actually being heart-level and gut-level. Head-level is of course a wonderful beginning, but if more of our encounters with God were also heart-level and gut-level, I suspect that more people would be like David, bursting forth in unrestrained songs of praise.

The question is, how did David come to encounter God in such a deep and personal way, and how can we come to encounter him in that same way? Thankfully, the rest of the psalm tells us the answer, as the aging king returns to an earlier point in his life to tell us the story.

The Predicament

Surprising as it might sound, the secret to encountering God at more than just a head level—at more than just a theoretical level—is actually remarkably simple. Unfortunately, it's also remarkably painful. The secret, as David tells us, is this: you can't have a deep encounter with God as your savior until you've first had a deep recognition of your need to be saved. And you can't recognize your need to be saved until you've first recognized that you're overwhelmed and unable to save yourself. David tells us:

2 Samuel 22:5-7a:

**"For the waves of death encompassed me,
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
6 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.**

**7 In my distress I called upon the Lord;
To my God I called.”**

In other words, David’s story, like so many great stories of salvation, begins with a predicament. It begins with a situation with no apparent way out—a situation where the forces opposing him were greater than his resources to handle them. In short: David’s story begins with the painful realization of his own personal inadequacy and powerlessness.

For David, as well as for us, the agonizing truth is this: until we feel overwhelmed—until we feel inadequate, powerless, and helpless—we will never encounter the salvation of God at more than a theoretical level. We will never have more than a theoretical savior. As long as we feel capable of saving ourselves, we won’t have any need for a savior greater than ourselves. As long as we feel capable of delivering ourselves, we won’t have any need to be delivered by anyone else.

Of the many people in the Bible who have reached this point—the point of feeling completely overwhelmed—there is also of course Jonah. In fact, Jonah may well have been familiar with David’s psalm. In the belly of the great fish and at the edge of death, he cried out to God with words very similar to David’s.

Jonah 2:2-3:

**“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
3 For you cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.”**

In my own case, as I mentioned earlier, I grew up feeling that I was never good enough. I didn’t like who I was and I couldn’t seem to feel any differently. In my college years, things got even worse as I became heavily involved in drugs and alcohol, trying to find some relief. As I’m sure you can imagine, drugs and alcohol only made the problem worse, and by the time I was in my late 20s, David’s words described me perfectly: “the waves of death encompassed me, and the torrents of destruction assailed me.”

I’m sure many of you know what it’s like to feel overwhelmed, if not by drugs and alcohol then by something else. Perhaps some of you are feeling overwhelmed this morning—feeling that words like ‘waves, torrents, cords, and snares’ describe your life. Perhaps you know what it’s like to be ‘encompassed, assailed, entangled, and confronted’.

As both David and Jonah tell us, once we’ve recognized our predicament, the turning point comes when we call out to God. Personal powerlessness needs to be followed by crying out for help from a power greater than ourselves—a power that can deliver us from our predicament. For those of you who are familiar with the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, you’ll recognize that these are the first two steps of AA. Step 1 says: “Admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” Step 2 says: “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” Or, in their shortened form, the first two steps declare: “I can’t; God can.” This is the wisdom David, Jonah, and so many others have learned over the course of their lives. Hopefully, it’s also the wisdom we’re increasingly gaining ourselves: I can’t; God can.

The Resolution

In the following verses, we’ll see the beginning of the resolution to David’s story. We’ll see the beginning of the process that will lead to David’s deliverance from his enemies and his escape from his predicament.

2 Samuel 22:7b-16:

**From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry came to his ears.
8 “Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations of the heavens trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.
9 Smoke went up from his nostrils,[a]
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
10 He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
11 He rode on a cherub and flew;
he was seen on the wings of the wind.
12 He made darkness around him his
canopy,**

thick clouds, a gathering of water.
13 Out of the brightness before him
coals of fire flamed forth.
14 The Lord thundered from heaven,
and the Most High uttered his voice.
15 And he sent out arrows and scattered
them;
lightning, and routed them.
16 Then the channels of the sea were seen;
the foundations of the world were laid bare,
at the rebuke of the Lord,
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

In reality, David is giving us a glimpse into heaven. He's giving us a glimpse into the heart of God, revealing how God's heart responds to those who call out to him. Indeed, he's giving us a picture of complete omnipotence—a picture of a power that is infinitely greater than any power that might be coming against us. In addition, these verses are perhaps also be intended to remind us of scenes from the Old Testament, like when Moses and the people of Israel encountered God at Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 19:17-19:

Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. 19 And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

Inevitably, the question arises, if God is able and willing to save those who call on him, why do we still face so many enemies? Why do we continue to battle health problems and financial problems? Why do we continue to struggle with painful memories, ungodly desires, and addictions? Why do people call out to God and fail to be delivered from terminal illness, persecution, and other horrifying and heartbreaking forms of death? If God is so powerful, why does he frequently, at least from our perspective, seem to do so little to rescue us from our predicaments?

The key phrase of course is the phrase 'from our perspective'. From our current vantage point, from our current perspective, it can seem as if God is uncaring or unresponsive. It can seem as if God is failing to deliver us from our enemies, failing to save us. And yet, our current perspective is precisely the problem—a perspective that is bounded not only by our own limited understanding but also by space and time. If we had an eternal perspective—if we truly had God's perspective—we would see things differently.

Paul shares something of this eternal perspective with us when he writes in 2 Corinthians, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV). From an eternal perspective, whatever pain and suffering that we are going through now is 'light and momentary', regardless of how all-consuming it may feel to us at the moment. Moreover, our current suffering is 'far outweighed' by the glory that it is achieving for us, even though it may now seem utterly pointless.

I'm certainly not trying to trivialize the suffering any of you may be going through today. My prayer is simply that all of us would come to have a perspective that is more like Paul's—an eternal perspective that is able to go through the sufferings of this life without seeing God as unresponsive or uncaring. The truth is, one way or the other, God will deliver us from all our enemies. He will deliver us in this world or he will deliver from this world, but in the end, his deliverance is certain.

In the following verses, we see the end of the process. We see the final resolution of David's story as God intervenes and delivers him from his predicament, delivers him from the forces that have been overwhelming him.

2 Samuel 22:17-19:

"He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.
18 He rescued me from my strong enemy,
from those who hated me,
for they were too mighty for me.
19 They confronted me in the day of my
calamity,

Perhaps some of you have experienced your own form of divine deliverance, divine rescue. Perhaps God has intervened in your life to save you from circumstances that were about to overcome you or possibly even kill you. In my own case, I have a very real sense of having been rescued. I have a very real sense that I should have been dead from drugs and alcohol back in the 1970s. I felt like the Titanic was about to go under. The band was still playing and deck chairs were still being moved around, but my ship was taking on water quickly and without the Lord's intervention, I'm convinced I would have died.

This is the wisdom David is sharing with us in this psalm of praise. This is the wisdom of an older person who has been repeatedly rescued from all the predicaments and enemies of life. God has delivered him—God has saved him—and the clear message is that he can do the same for us as well. As it says in Isaiah, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper,” (Isaiah 54:17), and as it says in Philippians, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13).

One might expect the psalm to end here. David was in a predicament, God rescued him, story over. And yet, the story is far from over. In fact, the psalm isn't even half finished. What comes next, at least as far as the verses we'll be looking at this morning are concerned, might be called the epilogue. What comes next serves to explain what has just happened. It serves to answer the question: why would God respond to David's call for help? Indeed, why would God respond to any of our cries?

The Epilogue

Verses 20-25 give us the answer. Referring to God, they say:

**He brought me out into a broad place;
he rescued me, because he delighted in me.
21 “The Lord dealt with me according to my
righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he
rewarded me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the Lord
and have not wickedly departed from my
God.
23 For all his rules were before me,
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
24 I was blameless before him,**

and I kept myself from guilt.

**25 And the Lord has rewarded me according
to my righteousness,
according to my cleanness in his sight.**

There are two main ideas here, both of which are absolutely mind-shattering. First, David tells us that God rescued him because God delighted in him. To anyone like myself, who grew up battling issues of self-rejection and self-contempt, this is virtually impossible to comprehend. I didn't even like myself, much less delight in myself, so how could a holy God find me delightful?

And second, David tells us the amazing truth that God delighted in him because God saw him as righteous, blameless, and free from sin. This concept may seem even harder to believe, if not altogether false. How can David possibly say that he is free from sin, especially after committing adultery with Bathsheba and ordering the murder of her husband Uriah? Moreover, since David declared in Psalm 51 that his ‘sin was ever before him’ (Psalm 51:3b), isn't he simply contradicting himself?

Well, the real question is: how can any of us claim to be righteous and blameless in the sight of God? How can any of us claim to be free from sin? The answer of course is: we are blameless in the sight of God not because we've never sinned but because we've been forgiven. As David declares in Psalm 103, “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12). The greatest deliverance in David's life—and the greatest deliverance in any of our lives—is deliverance from sin. It's deliverance from everything that has separated us from God; a deliverance that can only come through faith in Jesus Christ.

Obviously, David lived a thousand years before Jesus. And yet, like the other Old Testament saints, David placed his faith in God's promised Messiah, even though that Messiah had not yet been born. As many have observed, Old Testament believers looked forward in history to the Messiah, while we look backward. Either way, looking forward or looking backward, salvation, along with the forgiveness that is inherent in salvation, only comes through faith.

Ultimately, this is the deepest wisdom that David, the aging king, has to share with us. This is the main thing he has learned from a lifetime of walking with God. God delivered him from all his enemies, and the greatest of those enemies was his own sin. This was the enemy David was referring to in Psalm 51 when he cried

out to the Lord, saying, “Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:9-10). This was the deliverance—the salvation—David most deeply needed—and it’s the deliverance and salvation you and I most deeply need as well.

Again, in my own life, it was not only deliverance from drugs and alcohol that led me to praise God—deliverance from physical death. It was deliverance from myself—or, at least, deliverance from the way I’d been seeing myself. When I realized that I was a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)—that God delighted in me and saw me as righteous and blameless in his sight—it was absolutely transformational. I came to see who I was in Christ, and that new way of seeing myself set me free. It delivered me from the terrible enemies of self-rejection, self-loathing, and self-hatred that had long held me prisoner.

If each of us could truly lay hold of this—if we could truly grasp the profound truth of our deliverance from sin, guilt, and separation from our Creator—I’m certain that we would burst forth in songs of praise, just as David does here in 2 Samuel 22. We would burst forth in songs of our own—songs arising not from a theoretical encounter with God but from a heart-level and a gut-level encounter. We would be more like John Newton when he penned the most famous of all modern hymns, *Amazing Grace*:

*Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav’d a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.¹*

As we conclude our time together this morning, my prayer is that God would help each of us to harken to David’s words—to harken to the words of an older saint—who has experienced the deliverance of God. May God help each of us to know that same deliverance, and may that knowledge genuinely and deeply move us—move us to songs of praise in the midst of a lost, broken, and hurting world.

Endnotes

¹ John Newton. *Amazing Grace*. England, 1779.