

## 2 Samuel 22

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[ 0 : 00 ] 2 Samuel 22. So I want to start by asking you, how do you feel when you hear other people praise God? I think we can have a real variety of reactions and I think it's a little bit what we feel like kind of conservative Christians.

When we find ourselves amongst a group of other Christians praising God more exuberantly. I spoke in a church last month and it was very interesting to see my friend who I've known for years, how he sang and what he did when he was singing.

And we can feel, can't we, that when there's dancing and bouncing and raising hands, some of us can think, oh, that's a bit strange. Maybe you're from a more exuberant church and you come here and think, what's wrong with these people tonight?

You might hear other people praise and you're inspired by it. It can be like that, can't it? When you're in a large church and it causes your emotions to soar, your spine to tingle, and you find yourself moved and stirred.

I think listening to other people's praise can be a little bit alienating. Perhaps we're in a really bad place and we find it hard to be around people who are happy no matter what the reason.

[ 1 : 35 ] Perhaps we're struggling with God about something where we feel angry or bitter and we feel our hearts are at odds with others who are praising. Perhaps we feel tired, spiritually weary, just a little bit dry, and we can find ourselves nodding our heads at the contents of other people's praises, but we don't feel we can join in.

Those times hearing other people's praise can sometimes lead to us doubting ourselves, doesn't it? Why don't I feel what they feel? Am I for real, genuine as a Christian?

And my lack of faith and passion can leave us asking questions. We can feel like an outsider, like I don't really belong. And so I think hearing other people's praise can be a wonderful experience or it can be an unsettling experience.

And the same is true, I think, when you come to 2 Samuel 22. Because essentially what we're doing is we are eavesdropping on David as he worships God. We're listening in on somebody else's praises.

And depending on how you feel tonight, what kind of place you are in, it might seem strange to you, it might leave you cold, or it might stir you. But what I hope you know is that the best kind of praise always diverts our attention from the one praising to the one being praised.

[ 3 : 09 ] And so I hope listening to this chapter tonight is a wonderful experience for you, but not because you get carried away with David's faith or his powerful poetry or his inspiring passion. Rather, I hope that as you listen tonight, it is a wonderful experience because you're not caught up in David, but in David's God, who he is and what he's done.

And that's what this chapter ought to do for you as you hear what David says about God. And so the songs of David in 1 and 2 Samuel, they operate like bookends.

So do you remember 1 Samuel chapter 2, do you remember that with Hannah? And how the Lord overcame her enemies and saved his people.

And then right at the end of 2 Samuel here, at the end of the books, we're given a song with a very similar theme. In fact, the two songs, Top and Tail, Samuel, I'd argue that in many ways, that's the big theme of the books.

Some of you will know that this reminds you of Psalm 18. Maybe you want to read Psalm 18 before you go to bed tonight. But let me summarize as best as I can the chapter under three headings.

[ 4 : 22 ] First of all, it's a song about his enemies, and then it's a song about himself. And then thirdly, it's a song about God. So we know it's a song about David's enemies because of the way it's introduced.

Look at verse 1. Look at what it says in verse 1. 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. Do you remember Saul who pursued David for such a long time he'd intended to kill him? And so that's the first thing we learn. It's about David's enemies. And they were serious. They meant business.

These people weren't writing letters to David. They weren't calling him nasty names. They weren't slashing his tires. They weren't criticizing him on social media. They wanted to kill him.

Verse 5. For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction. They assailed me. The cords of Sheol, they entangled me.

[ 5 : 24 ] The snares of death confronted me. And in my distress, I called upon the Lord. And so David's foes are terrifying opponents. And he rightly fears for his life.

And so the kind of rescue that David needed was really life-saving. And the other thing we learn about David's enemies here is that God really did save him from them, not just by the skin of his teeth.

David's enemies were not just beaten. It wasn't a tight finish between David's enemies and he got through on goal difference. David's God didn't need to go into extra time.

He smashed them. They are utterly overwhelmed. So look at verse 15. He scattered them. Verse 38. They were cursed. Verse 39. For you, God, have encircled me with strength for the battle.

You forced those who rose up against me to bow down under me. Verse 40. God made them bow at David's feet. Verse 41. You've also made my enemies turn their backs to me and I destroyed those who hated me.

[ 6 : 29 ] Verse 42. They looked and there was none to save them. So if you were one of David's enemies, this chapter doesn't just tell you about your defeat, but it tells you of your embarrassment and the humiliating experience.

You were annihilated. And this chapter reminds them, doesn't it, you don't want to be an enemy of King David because you definitely do not want to be an enemy of King David's God.

And so secondly, what does this song tell us about David himself? So three things to point out here. That in the face of his enemy, David knew that he was in great trouble.

It's just the flip side of what we saw a moment ago. That David's enemies really meant business because they wanted him dead. David knew that the dangers he faced were serious.

We've already seen that in verses 5 to 6, but just listen to verses 17 to 19. He drew me out of many waters.

[ 7 : 37 ] He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity. But the Lord was my support.

You see, when David called out to the Lord, he was desperate. His fear was great for very good reasons. So sometimes I think we can kind of catastrophize things that aren't that terrible.

But David isn't just facing root canal surgery or the clutch hasn't gone in his car. He says to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20, there is only a step between me and death.

And that was David's experience. But my second observation is that David was rescued because he belonged to God. And that's what we need to consider verses 21 to 28.

Let me remind you of some of the things that he says there. Verse 22, for I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not acted wickedly against my God.

[ 8 : 43 ] For all his rules were before me and from his statutes I did not turn aside. I was blameless before him and I kept myself from guilt.

And the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight. And he goes on like that in this section. And in some ways, I think this is some of the trickiest parts of the song.

It sounds like David has rescued him from his enemies because David is such a great guy. It's almost as if his rescue was deserved for living such a pure life before God.

And that doesn't really sound right, does it? Especially given what we know of David's sins. Some writers want to say, well, this was written in verse 1 before David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband.

And as I said last week, the last four chapters of 2 Samuel, they're not written kind of chronologically. So it's quite possible that this song was written pre-David's fall.

[ 9 : 50 ] But I don't think that answers the question. Because even before David fell with Bathsheba, David didn't think that he had a spotless record and that God somehow owed him.

I don't think he's claiming that here. I think to conclude that is to over-read the poetry. David is not claiming perfection here. He's just claiming fidelity.

He's not saying he never did anything wrong. He's saying that he never turned his back on God. He was always on God's team. And when he did sin, he turned back and he repented.

He kept trusting. He kept trying to please God. He kept loyal to God. In short, what he's saying is I was not one of God's enemies. I was God's friend.

And we've already seen, haven't we, how terrible a thing it is to be an enemy of God's people. And David's point here is God is seriously terrifying.

[ 10 : 50 ] But not for everyone. Only those who are opposed to him. And he counts himself among the blessed people who actually had God on their side.

He belonged to God. And that's why God rescued him. But further, he says this. He says that any strength, any part that he played in his own rescue was only possible because God made it so.

So that's my third observation. That any strength he had was not his own. It was given to him.

You might have noticed that throughout this song, David talks about how God came to his aid. He also talks about how he himself overcame his enemies.

And yet I think it's crystal clear that there's not two kind of opposite points, separate points. In this song, it's one and the same. God came to his aid by giving him strength against his foes.

[ 11 : 51 ] Look at verse 30. Verse 40.

Verse 40. He was strength for battle. You forced those who rose up against me to bow under me. You've also made my enemies turn their backs to me.

And so can you see that the strength that David has is always a derivative strength? It didn't originate with him. He can't take any credit for it. It was the Lord's strength generously shared with him.

And David models to you and I in this psalm a recognizing of that. And of being able to articulate it. I think that's a really good thing for us to hear, isn't it?

I think even in church life, even amongst us, we can get carried away with our own powers and our own accomplishments.

[ 13 : 11 ] And David reminds us of that. He reminds us that all ability and all accomplishment that you've been given that we've been given is derived.

It is derived from the one who is strong. It is derived from the one who shares his strength with his people. That leads me to my third heading.

David's song tells us about God. It's the most important of the three. And it's difficult to summarize all that we've been told about God. And I want to give you seven quick reflections, which is why you've got an outline in front of you.

First of all, he saves. That's what the introduction says in verse one, isn't it? And this is a song about God delivering David. Verse two uses the same word, deliverer.

Verse three says that God is the horn of salvation. That is, he's the saviour. And at the end of the song echoes this theme. Verse 47, the Lord lives and blessed be my rock and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.

[ 14 : 22 ] And David knew that God had saved him. Not just once, but hundreds of times over the course of his life. And we know that God is a saviour too.

And in Christ, he has saved us once for all. Number two, he is awesome. It's just a logical extension of the point I made earlier, that God doesn't just defeat his enemies, he smashes them.

When God calls out, when David calls out for God to help him, God turns up in the most spectacular way. In fact, he describes it, doesn't he? And I hope as I read it to you, you remembered a flashback from earlier on in the Bible.

Look at verses 8 onwards. What does that remind you of? Anyone? What does that remind you of? Anyone? 8 and 9?

That's right. Yeah, yeah, Sinai. Mount Sinai, with Moses back in Exodus 19. That defining moment in Israel's history. Listen to how David describes it, verse 8.

[ 15 : 31 ] Then the earth reeled and rocked. The foundations of the heavens trembled. They quaked because he was angry. And smoke went up from his nostrils.

It's an amazing section. David is writing not just so that you would be informed that God saved him, but that you would get an impression of what it's like when God comes to town.

When God comes, he splits the sky, he melts the earth, his foes tremble. He's not just a quiet achiever. And when he wants, he can display his majesty and glory of all his power.

And there is a day coming, isn't it? When all who live will see that like never before. He is awesome. Thirdly, he delights in his people.

And David wants to see that God doesn't just save his people. He doesn't save his people out of obligation. When God delivers, he's not just taking off a component of his job description.

[16:33] Salvation is not impersonal. He saves those he loves and he rejoices to save his people. He delights in those who are his. And I hope you didn't miss that.

Look at verse 19. They confronted me on the day of my disaster. But the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place.

He rescued me. Why? Because he delighted in me. That's a precious truth, isn't it? If you're here tonight and you know that you are saved by God, why is that?

It's because he delights in you. He delights in you. He's faithful. Number four, I think that's another way of saying what we've already said.

David was rescued, you remember, because he belonged to God and that is God is faithful to all his promises. That God. He doesn't abandon his people to their troubles or their enemies.

[17:31] He watches over them. He's always in their corner. He always comes to their aid. He can say in verse 26, with the merciful you show yourself merciful or to the faithful you show yourself faithful.

And this chapter reminds you and I that one of the ways that God shows himself faithful is by keeping his promises.

And this chapter is not just the testimony of an Israelite but of the Israelite king. And God made some very special promises, didn't he, about how he would protect God's king and how he would prolong his destiny.

So you remember to Samuel 7, that there would always be a king from David's line on the throne. And here in chapter 22 we see that one of the ways David sees what has happened to him is that God has been keeping his word.

Listen to how the song ends in verse 51. Great salvation he brings to his king and he shows his steadfast love to his anointed, to David, and his offspring forever.

[18:35] And we know, don't we, that that forever really does mean forever because a thousand years later, after David lived, the Lord's anointed came. And he would rise from the dead never to die again.

And so we meet at the Lord's table tonight, one of David's descendants, our king, the eternal king. Because God keeps his promises, he is faithful.

Who else do you know like that? Someone who always keeps their word, who makes astonishing promises and keeps them all. Who else do you know who does that?

Who is impeccably and perpetually faithful? No one, I suspect. Number five, he's unique. Verse 31, As for God, his way is blameless, the word of the Lord is refined, he's a shield to all who take refuge in him.

For who is God except the Lord, and who is a rock except our God. Is that not our testimony today? People love and worship many others, but who is a God besides the Lord?

[19:48] Who is the rock except our God? Number six, he shares his strength. David tells us that any strength he was given to him, it was given to him by God.

The God who is awesome, who splits the heavens and melts the earth. The all-powerful God of majestic might. He lends his power to his people. He helps them with his mighty hand.

He shares his strength. He doesn't keep it to himself. He doesn't use it to dominate people, but to serve. And those who belong to him have all his awesome resources at their disposal.

That's why the history of King David's reign is not primarily the story of a great and powerful king, but the story of David is about a great and powerful God.

And we who belong to that God today, we too have strength as part of our story. And I don't know about you, but I'm in great need of it. And I think this dimension of 2 Samuel 22 is what is most encouraging for us tonight, that we're conscious of our weakness and conscious of how great our need is for help.

[ 21 : 03 ] And so to be reminded that God is not only strong, but he is strong for us, that's a timely reminder. Because you face many challenges in your life, many difficulties and many struggles.

Many of you are facing that at the moment. And sometimes we face many foes, but the Lord is stronger than them all. And he gladly shares his strength with us, and I think that's wonderful. So number seven is no surprise at all, is it, that he is worthy of praise.

That's what verse four says to us very explicitly, and it's how the song finishes in verse 50.

Therefore, I will give thanks to you, Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praises to your name. Notice he's worthy of praise all over the world, not just in Israel. He deserves international worship. He is internationally great. And in between that song, Start and Finish, David is really falling over himself to express this truth.

And David uses these vastly inadequate words to try and express just how praiseworthy God is.

And he is praiseworthy because he saves. Because he's awesome.

[ 22 : 22 ] Because he delights in his people, because he's faithful, and because he's unique.

Because he shares his strength, and he is praiseworthy for many other reasons beside.

The story, I'm told, of the Soviet Union in the 1930s during the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. Stalin. And it's in full swing, and apparently there are a provincial meeting one night where there is mention made of Stalin's name, and a standing ovation begins.

And given the position that he held, and the people's fear of him, nobody wanted to be responsible for ending the standing ovation. So it just went on for ages.

The standing ovation. And eventually the story goes, an old man who could stand it no longer resumed his seat. And apparently his name was noted, and the next day he was arrested.

That's what dictatorships are like. People praised their leader, but the praise was coerced. It's something people must render for fear of the consequences, but it's not so with God.

[ 23 : 33 ] The God of David inspires praise, and it's true that all should bring it, but God forces no man. He is no dictator.

Instead, God lives and loves in such a way to cause human hearts to well up in instinctive worship. And as David trains our eyes here to see what God is like, praise is not being insisted upon, rather it is stirred up in us.

And is that not possible that a song 3,000 years old might stir us up 3,000 years later? Not by inspiring us with the words of passionate songwriter, but they point us towards God.

The God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Indeed, that's possible. And in fact, I would say that's what's intended. And so it's fascinating when you get to the New Testament and you read Romans 15, Paul mounts an argument in that chapter that God's great purpose in all of history is to unite Jew and Gentile.

To unite all the people that so with one heart and mouth they will glorify God that they might praise God, in fact. That Christ came to confirm the promises that were made to Jews and like David so that Gentiles like you and I will have a reason to praise God.

[ 25 : 04 ] So let me read to you a couple of verses from Romans 15. I'll pick it up in verse 4. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hoped.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God for I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy and then what?

Do you know what he does next? He quotes from the Old Testament and where does he quote from? To Samuel 22. Therefore as it is written I will praise you among the Gentiles I will sing hymns to your name.

And so do you see that God expected chapters like 2 Samuel 22 to serve a purpose 3,000 years later. It was written under God's sovereign hand so that Gentiles like you and I might join our voices with David's in praise to God.

[ 26 : 18 ] His God and our God. And we can do that because we have been joined together with him by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. So three brief thoughts as we come to the Lord's table.

In the first place it causes us to remember that God is a terrifying enemy. And if there are any here who are not confident that they belong to God then I urge you to sort that out with serious urgency. And if there are those of us who know God but we love people who don't know him we need to pray don't we with that serious urgency. And look for opportunities to show them what our God is like. Because when God comes against his enemies he comes awesomely he comes with majestic power he splits the sky he melts the earth. His foes tremble. And all who do not love Christ tonight are facing a moment like that in their futures.

And feeling terrified of that is a sensible reaction. Because God makes a terrifying enemy. And yet we all at one time were in that boat weren't we?

[ 27 : 36 ] And none of us have got anything to boast about. And so my second concluding thought is that this song causes us to recall how much we've all needed God's rescue his salvation.

I'm pretty convinced that one of the reasons David praises God so earnestly in this chapter is because he's not forgotten how great a danger he was in before God saved him.

And I think often as Christians we are forgetful of that. It's why the Lord's Supper is such a wonderful thing isn't it? It keeps us on message. And I suspect remembering the danger we were in will stir us to praise God more earnestly as he deserves.

Because without the Lord Jesus what this psalm says of David would be true of us. Without him the waves of death swirled around us.

Without him the cords of the grave coiled around us. Without him the torrents of destruction would have overwhelmed us. It's no joke. And we should remember that.

[ 28 : 47 ] Because it would remind us how wonderful God is who has come to our aid. And that's where we finish tonight. Seeing God clearly.

Because above all else that's what 2 Samuel 22 should cause us to do. His God is our God. God and we know him as David knew him.

Our saviour awesome in power delighting in his people faithful to his promises. One of a kind.

Sharing his strength with us every day and so absolutely and unquestionably worthy of our praise.

for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. That through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus that together together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 00 ] Amen.