

Intense Praise for an Invincible Kingdom

2 Samuel 22

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation (47)

Introduction: Since the time God put mankind on the earth, we have looked for places to take refuge, have built structures that offer strong protection, and tried our best to find ways to keep ourselves safe. If you've ever travelled through Europe, you will not go far before you will see massive castles built to keep loved ones in and danger out. One of the most impressive fortifications that has stood the test of time is that of **Masada**, a massive rock formation about 63 miles from Jerusalem and 3 miles East of the Dead Sea. The word itself means "*fortress*" in Hebrew, and stands as a symbol of courageous bravery against an imposing enemy.



In Herod the Great's reign, he built Masada up to include multiple palaces, an intricate water system of cisterns to capture the minimal days of rain water offered, bath houses, storerooms, and later a synagogue. During the **1st Jewish-Roman War** (66-73 A.D), a group of *sicarii*, Jewish assassins and rebels against Rome, overtook the fortress, hoping that the walls and seemingly impenetrable layout would offer protection. They were wrong. Within a few months, in the spring of 73 A.D, under the leadership of Lucius Flavius Silva built up a siege ramp, built a battering ram, and breached the walls with its 8000-9000 soldiers against the 960 Jewish holdouts. Though the fidelity of the account is open to discussion, the lore goes that instead of being captured, the inhabitants committed mass suicide. Inside the walls later excavations found store houses full of grain and water, meaning they could have held out much longer if the walls had not been torn down. But was seemingly **invincible fell to an overwhelming force**. Our faith in a fortress or deliverer is only as strong as the deliverer itself.

As we continue in these last four chapters of 2 Samuel, we come to a change in the narrative, where things are not only out of chronological order, we have a whole different genre of writing. In an overview of what had taken place over his reign, David summarizes NOT in giving a historical look, which we've already done, but a **Psalm of praise**, one that seeks to not only reach the mind but also the heart. "*He doesn't intend merely to inform you about what God has done, he wants you to see the God who did*

it, in all his **phosphorescent splendor**.”¹ Before looking at the Psalm itself, let’s consider some features contained.

- 1) **Personal Praise but NOT individualistic worship** – This is an intensely personal Psalm. Notice the first verse:

v.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.**”

The purpose of writing was to express praise to God for **delivering him** from enemies, both foreign and domestic, especially from Saul. We saw this take place in time and space throughout 1 & 2 Samuel, as David was often powerless against a greater adversary or overwhelming force. David takes stock in his life, looking back at not a single instance --- “*day*” here is not a single day but a block of time – but in the whole of how God, over and over again, rescued him. Think of this as a journal that David wrote about his thoughts and effusive praise to the LORD, where he cannot say enough but will try to say much about what God had demonstrated and what he learned. Now to some astute readers, you’ll pick up quickly that this and **Psalm 18** are almost identical, but there is a key difference. The Psalm was written “To the choirmaster”, meaning IT was supposed to be sung by all. What David had written as personal worship became a hymn that was known and sung by the people of God²

Let me suggest two thoughts to contemplate here. **First**, expressive public worship is stunted because of a lack of private contemplation, meditation, and consideration of all God has done. We allow our minds (myself included) to get cluttered with so many things, from news snippets to 30 second video clips, and we do not take the time to express praise back to God for all that He is and all that He has done. It’s no wonder why our prayers are bland and our hearts disengaged in corporate worship. **Second**, David’s private worship was NEVER an exchange for **corporate worship** and interaction. Our relationship with Christ is personal but not private. It was created to be expressed, shared, and known.

- 2) **This bookends the whole of 1 & 2 Samuel, correlating with the prayer/song of Hannah** – If you remember back a few years (yep, some of you in here weren’t even born yet) we looked at Hannah’s prayer and how it pointed **forward** to a king that was to come, which was fulfilled in David, of whom God made an eternal covenant (2 Samuel 7). Hannah wrote: “*The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.*” (21 Sam. 2:10). Here, David uses similar language: “*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*” (2 Sam. 22:2). David acknowledges that though he was *in-part* a fulfillment of the promise of God as king, he was in need of greater strength than he possessed, and there was a king to come that would be greater than he.
- 3) **The scope of the kingdom broaches into the future** – This whole Psalm, like the whole book, aches for something or SOMEONE greater than David. David was the best of what man could offer, but he fell short of the King that Israel and the nations needed. In 2 Samuel 22:50, David looks **beyond Israel alone** and to a time where God’s name will be praised and salvation

¹ Dale Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Diversity*, p. 286

² Gordon Keddie suggests that the Samuel version was written for David’s private use, while the same song was polished up in Psalm 18 for public performances.

experienced **among the nations!** This is key, since Paul picked this up in **Romans 15:8-9** in terms of how **Jesus Christ fulfills this longing:**

*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, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "**Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.**"*

Paul understood in more completeness than David could only foresee by faith a **kingdom** where not only Israel would enjoy, but would be extended in kind to the Gentile, or non-Jewish world. Not a kingdom of Law and legalism, not of guilt and shame, not lead by those who are unable to deliver on their promises, but a Kingdom whose King is Jesus, who redeems, rescues, and delivers everyone who believes, and secures them by **His own power**, NOT our ability to obey. That is why Paul could say in **Romans 15:13:**

*May the God of hope fill you with **all joy and peace in believing**, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

So we are going to look at this wonderful Psalm section by section, not just verse by verse, to understand the point that David is making and the author of Samuel wants us to see. We will leave much unsaid, and I trust you will revel in the poetic language on your own, either here or in in Psalm 18.

Praising God's Power in Thunderous Deliverance (2-20)

To understand this section and Psalm as a whole, we must remember that all of David's life is in view. Sometimes we give "foxhole" prayers: *God, please get me out of this _____, and I will _____*", but when God delivers, we move on without reflection and proper praise. Here, David grouped every instance of deliverance in one mashed up praise, which started with an **eruption of personal praise** in verses 2-4:

*He said, "The LORD is **my rock and my fortress and my deliverer**,*

*³**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.*

*⁴ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from **my enemies**.*

Now, it's not hard to see or hear the emphasis here. 11 times David uses the personal pronoun "my" to describe his deliverance. **Was this some self-focused, me-centered, man-proclaiming** type of worship? By no means. No, this was David speaking to God NOT in general or describing someone else's experience, but with an intensity of a grateful recipient of a massive gift. Each of these descriptions center around the same issue, in that David, though the most powerful man in the world and the best king Israel could hope for and receive, he NEEDED SOMEONE outside of himself to save and deliver. He knew this truth and reality NOT just in hearing, but experientially.

Sometimes this can be a hindrance to our own worship, both personal and corporate, in that we sing words in a song or read words of Scripture, and look at them like we would something on our phone, observing someone else's experience but not applying it to ourselves. The fuel for worship is always that we see **ourselves** in great need because of our sin in light of a glorious God, which drives us to Christ, which in turn humbles us, leaving us to simply lift our hands in praise (but not really lifting our hands – that'd be ridiculous!).

Next, David gives a vivid description of his plight in vv. 5-7, which gives the picture of a drowning man with water coming over the top of him while cords of hell try to drag him under. Death was at his doorstep, and his **ONLY** recourse was to **call out to the LORD**, and the Lord answered!

God did not answer David in a whisper, but in thunder and anger (vv. 8-16). Here David used Biblical allusions of God thundering at Sinai (Exodus 19:9-25) as God gathered Israel to give them the Law. Notice that the earth quaked because God was angry (v. 8), and He thundered from heaven (v. 14), and sent arrows and scattered them; **lightning, and routed them** (v. 15). This is a magnificent description in looking back, but remember, there were many times that David had to **wait** on the Lord to act, trusting that He would. David spent much time in caves, in hiding, on the run, and in hurry up and wait mode. God's deliverance is sure, but rarely in our timing or expectation.

This lead to David feeling the freedom of deliverance in vv. 17-20:

*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, but the LORD was my support.*
 20 *He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, **because he delighted in me**.*

Not only did he trust that God **COULD** deliver him, he recognized when God **DID** deliver him. God answered his prayer, delivered on His promise, and upheld His power and might by demonstrating that no one or nothing could overtake Him. But the verse that stands out is verse 20, where David gives the **why** behind God delivering him, and it demands a pause of reflection. God rescued David not out of **duty or responsibility, but out of pleasure and delight**. We are servants and slaves of God for sure, but like any good father, God loves and delights in His kids. Friday night in watching Morgan graduate reminded me how much delight we take in our kids, NOT in their accomplishments, but in who they are. There is nothing parents wouldn't give up to have our kids thrive and walk in the truth. God does not simply love us, He likes us, and likes us so much He is preparing a place for us to be with Him forever (John 14:3) and will give us new bodies fit for an eternity with Him (1 Cor. 15:53). But what did God delight in?

Praising God's Power in Righteous Direction (21-31)

With this, David makes a claim that at first blush causes us to turn our head a bit, since it seems a bit hyperbolic at best or hypocritical at worst. If this is read **out of context**, it could easily feel like David is beating his own chest, pointing to his own righteousness, and neglecting the tragic reality of his own sin that has been written down for all of us to learn from. Here is how David frames God's pleasure in his righteousness:

*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*

Could David really make this claim? After all, we've seen his sexual sin, deception, coercion, and mass murder. Maybe a better question is: *can any of us make this claim?* The answer is: YES, but with a most important caveat. In verse 24, the word for "blameless" does not mean sinlessness but wholeness,

completeness, and integrity. What David was claiming was NOT perfection, but whole-hearted commitment, an overall fidelity, and relentless direction of seeking to please the LORD.

“When David speaks of his righteousness and purity (21, 25) he does not point to sinless perfection but life direction; he is not sporting a pharisaical pride over errorless obedience but expressing a faithful loyalty via consistent obedience.”³

David’s life DID reflect the faith that pleases the LORD: *“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6)* David believed God, was justified and made righteous by faith, and desired to please the Lord with the direction of His life. In pleasing God by faith, he believed that God saw his obedience and righteous response and rewarded Him with not simply deliverance, but access to God Himself, which is the reward of all who seek Him.

The context matters here, because in vv. 26-31, David points out that it is **God’s mercy, His light, His blamelessness, and His perfection** that proves true. Our response is that of **humility** (v. 28), which Hannah recognized in 1 Samuel 2, since only those who are truly broken over their pride can truly enjoy the stronghold that God is for us.

This is such an important truth to reflect on. If we believe that the **gospel** is the *“power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”* (Rom. 1:18), and that God saves us NOT *“by works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5), and that we are being perfected by the Spirit, not the flesh (Gal. 3:4), all by faith, then we can, with David, declare that we walk in righteousness given to us by Christ as we seek to please Him in all things. Far too often we can brand ourselves by the sin of our past, relegating ourselves to thinking we could never attain to a right walk with God that He rewards because we are too sinful. That is NOT the gospel. That signals we have been striving to please God on our own, in our own works, and that always ends in disappointment and sorrow. No, David could point to God’s mercy and his own humility as the source of the direction of life. We can point to the perfect work of Christ and our trust in Him for our righteousness alone, knowing that even in hating our sin, we will fall. And when we fail, we have an Advocate in Jesus Christ who made propitiation on our behalf (1 John 2:1-2).

Praising God’s Power in Supreme Dominion (32-51)

In one sense, David covers much of the same ground in these concluding verses that he did in vv. 2-20, focusing on the power God provided David to establish his kingdom from his enemies (32:43). But instead of promoting the **delivering power of God**, He delves into the **dominion** that God exhibits to establish His kingdom. This lead to David leading not only a kingdom for the people of Israel, but an international one:

*You delivered me from strife with my people; you kept me as the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.*

⁴⁵ *Foreigners came cringing to me; as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.*

⁴⁶ *Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses*

The scope of the kingdom is NOT just about delivering David, but bringing salvation among the nations! The same power that worked in and through David to deliver him from his enemies, and the same

³ Dale Davis, p. 290.

power that allowed him to establish his earthly kingdom, is the same power that will bring **great salvation** to the nations. This will be brought about by the King by whom all others kings fall and whom nations serve (Psalm 72:11). And we are reminded that is it God's great **hesed** love that motivates Him to bring in His anointed, both in David's day, our day, and forever.

Hope comes when we know that what we are banking our life on cannot fail. We have a personal, knowable God who presents Himself as the most powerful, dominant force in the world, who not only fights for us, but delights in us. We are not crossing our fingers hoping that our lives have meaning or that our mission will be successful. We KNOW that all that God has promised WILL happen, in His timing, for His glory, and He calls us to be a part of it. So we rest and trust, humbly returning praise to

"my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, my shield, my horn of salvation, my stronghold, my refuge, my savior, my support, and the rock of my salvation."