

2 Samuel 22 • Lessons for Spiritual Success

Introduction

This is David's longest recorded Psalm. Having read the details of his life in 1 & 2 Samuel leading to this point, we know that very few things went smoothly for David. Almost every step of his life attracted some kind of controversy—whether from enemies outside Israel or within—and that he was constantly faced with the choice of doing it man's way or God's way. In David we're provided the ultimate example of spiritual success, revealed to be absolutely attainable for each and every one of us. What David did to Goliath was a metaphor for the rest of his life and a stunning example for ours.

Part I: David's thanksgiving for being saved from his enemies (v.1-32)

¹And David spoke the words of this song to the LORD in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. ²He said,

"The LORD is my rock and my fortress
and my deliverer;

³My 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.

⁴I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to
be praised,

And I am saved from my enemies.

⁵For the waves of death encompassed
me;

The torrents of destruction
overwhelmed me;

⁶The cords of Sheol surrounded me;

The snares of death confronted me.

⁷In my distress I called upon the LORD,

Yes, I cried to my God;

And from His temple He heard my
voice,

And my cry for help *came* into His ears.

Read v.1-7: God's Protection

Q: What are all the terms of things which provide protection that David assigns to God in v.2-3?

A: "Rock", "fortress", "refuge", "shield", "stronghold".

Q: What is a common characteristic of all these terms as they might be applied to us? What kind of action do they require on our part?

A: For our part, the terms are static. A rock, fortress, refuge, and stronghold all describe fixed locations on which we've laid a foundation and built something to withstand the onslaught of the enemy. They are a picture of the quality of our relationship with God. A shield is something you kept with you whether on defense or going into battle, but functioned not as a weapon but as protection.

Q: What is a common characteristic of the remaining terms as they might be applied to God?

A: They are calls to God to come to our aid: "Deliverer", "My God", "horn of my salvation", "Savior". They are a picture of our dependence on having to call upon Him.

Q: What is the contrast of the cords and snares in v.6 versus the waves and torrents of v.5?

A: Whereas the waves and torrents represent elements that are not just overwhelming, but out of our control—the pressure of external forces—the cords and snares are mechanisms that severely limit mobility and freedom. They are the pressures that come from both outside and inside forces.

Note: In ancient times a series of nets—here described as "cords" and "snares", would be connected into a giant circle around an area containing prey. The hunters would close the nets tighter and tighter, constricting the size of the area until the prey was caught in the nets and could no longer move.

Q: How do we initiate the process of God's protection coming to our aid?

A: By calling upon the Lord.

Application:

- How is a firm foundation in the fundamentals—prayer, Bible study, etc.—the beginning of God's protection?
- Do you consistently act on the belief that it is God that must fight the battle and not yourself?
- Is God's protection a test of knowledge or faith?

⁸Then the earth shook and quaked,
The foundations of heaven were
trembling
And were shaken, because He was
angry.
⁹Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
Fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.
¹⁰He bowed the heavens also, and came
down
With thick darkness under His feet.
¹¹And He rode on a cherub and flew;
And He appeared on the wings of the
wind.
¹²And He made darkness canopies
around Him,
A mass of waters, thick clouds of the
sky.
¹³From the brightness before Him
Coals of fire were kindled.
¹⁴The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice.
¹⁵And He sent out arrows, and scattered
them,
Lightning, and routed them.
¹⁶Then the channels of the sea appeared,
The foundations of the world were laid
bare
By the rebuke of the LORD,
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

¹⁷He sent from on high, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
¹⁸He delivered me from my strong
enemy,
From those who hated me, for they
were too strong for me.
¹⁹They confronted me in the day of my
calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
²⁰He also brought me forth into a broad
place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in
me.
²¹The LORD has rewarded me according
to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
²²For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not acted wickedly against
my God.
²³For all His ordinances were before
me,
And as for His statutes, I did not depart
from them.
²⁴I was also blameless toward Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
²⁵Therefore the LORD has recompensed

Read v.8-16 God's Power

Q: What is the basic message being conveyed in v.8-14 concerning the characteristics of God's power?

A: It rules over everything, both in heaven and on earth. His initial actions from heaven are conveyed equally to the realm of earth so as to be seen, heard, felt, experienced.

Q: What is being communicated in v.15-16 in the use of the terms "scattered", "routed", and "laid bare"?

A: It's the results of God's power as applied to our protection. What at one time appeared to be overwhelming is scattered, what at one time appeared to have victory over us is routed, what at one time appeared intimidating and substantive is laid bare to expose its shallowness and true emptiness.

Q: Do any of these things come about as a result of our own actions?

A: According to v.16 they come about strictly "by the rebuke of the LORD". Strictly speaking, a rebuke is something spoken. God's power comes through His Word.

Application:

- *Is your view of God's power limited to only miracles like signs and wonders?*
- *Do you realize it is most often expressed in overcoming spiritual battles?*
- *For what current spiritual battle do you need to call upon the Lord that He might overcome on your behalf?*

Read v.17-25 God's Provision

Q: Why do the terms "took", "drew me out", "delivered", etc. in v.17-20 not depict the typical activities one might associate with victory?

A: Generally speaking, the usual images of "victory" is of a person or force overwhelming and decisively defeating their enemy. Rather, these are terms of rescue. David plainly states in v.18, "they were too strong for me".

Application: *Is it possible that we might sometimes be praying to defeat the enemy in our own strength when what we should be praying for is His rescue? In whose strength would we then be trusting?*

Q: What do the qualities listed in v.21-25 have in common both for times of spiritual peace and spiritual warfare?

A: They're all aspects of faithfulness, the quality of our walk and obedience to Christ.

Point: *Nothing more is required of us in times of spiritual hardship than in times of spiritual blessing. Our number one activity to prepare during times of peace is the same as required of our conduct under fire: To remain faithful to His will and ways.*

Application:

- *Are you beginning to see that God is not asking you to engage in anything you can't do?*

me according to my righteousness,
According to my cleanness before His
eyes.

²⁶With the kind You show Yourself
kind,
With the blameless You show Yourself
blameless;

²⁷With the pure You show Yourself
pure,
And with the perverted You show
Yourself astute.

²⁸And You save an afflicted people;
But Your eyes are on the haughty *whom*
You abase.

²⁹For You are my lamp, O LORD;
And the LORD illumines my darkness.

³⁰For by You I can run upon a troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.

³¹As for God, His way is blameless;
The word of the LORD is tested;
He is a shield to all who take refuge in
Him.

³²For who is God, besides the LORD?
And who is a rock, besides our God?

³³God is my strong fortress;
And He sets the blameless in His way.

³⁴He makes my feet like hinds' feet,
And sets me on my high places.

³⁵He trains my hands for battle,
So that my arms can bend a bow of
bronze.

³⁶You have also given me the shield of
Your salvation,
And Your help makes me great.

³⁷You enlarge my steps under me,
And my feet have not slipped.

- How does adherence to His ways, ordinances, and statutes (His Word) fulfill our entire obligation to the process?
- Do you realize that you have already been provided with everything you need to overcome?

Read v.26-28 God's Perfect Justice

Q: What is the defining, behavioral difference between those who experience the positive benefits of God's justice versus those who experience the punitive?

A: It's not how they act during the time of crisis, so to speak, but determined by the quality of their faithfulness. During the battle itself one's spiritual readiness will be exposed one way or the other based on one's lifestyle choices leading up to the moment of truth.

Application:

- How well do you realize that how you act and live now is going to be how you react to times of crisis?
- To what degree do you consider yourself spiritually "kind", "blameless", or "pure"?
- How do these three qualities provide the right kind of foundation in order to deal with a crisis?

[Read v.29-32] God's Proven Dependability

Q: On whose abilities has David learned to rely?

A: Even though God may enhance David's personal abilities from time to time, David is fully cognizant that it is God that has proven Himself dependable in any and every situation.

Application:

- Share a time when God has provided you with a great victory, the ability to overcome. How does it compare to times of failure?
- In terms of the greatest issue you are facing in your life right now, list the things you believe will provide victory. How many of them are God-based versus self-based?
- In what are you actually trusting?

Part II: David's thanksgiving for being set over his enemies (v.33-51)

[Read v.33-37] The Warrior for God: The Skill to Defeat His Foes

Q: What is the contrast between the list of terms in these verses such as feet, hands, arms, etc. and things like fortress, high places, bow, shield, etc.?

A: It's the contrast of not just being equipped with tools but provided with the knowledge and training to properly use them.

Q: What is the common thread for the verbs "sets", "makes", "trains", "given", "help" and "enlarge" used in these verses?

A: They all attribute to God as being the source of skills developed in this life.

³⁸I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
 And I did not turn back until they were consumed.
³⁹And I have devoured them and shattered them, so that they did not rise;
 And they fell under my feet.
⁴⁰For You have girded me with strength for battle;
 You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.
⁴¹You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me,
 And I destroyed those who hated me.
⁴²They looked, but there was none to save;
 Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.
⁴³Then I pulverized them as the dust of the earth;
 I crushed *and* stamped them as the mire of the streets.
⁴⁴You have also delivered me from the contentions of my people;
 You have kept me as head of the nations;
 A people whom I have not known serve me.
⁴⁵Foreigners pretend obedience to me;
 As soon as they hear, they obey me.
⁴⁶Foreigners lose heart,
 And come trembling out of their fortresses.

⁴⁷The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;
 And exalted be God, the rock of my salvation,
⁴⁸The God who executes vengeance for me,
 And brings down peoples under me,
⁴⁹Who also brings me out from my enemies;
 You even lift me above those who rise up against me;
 You rescue me from the violent man.
⁵⁰Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the nations,

Application:

- Do we believe our talents acquired in the course of this life are already God-given and can be used regardless?
- How well do we recognize the need to submit them to God and refine them according to His Word and ways?
- Do we sometimes select leaders based on their earthly skills rather than their gifts and calling?

[Read v.38-46] The Warrior for God: The Strength to Defeat His Foes

Q: Why isn't being skillful or talented enough to succeed?

A: David repeatedly describes the enemy in terms that they are numerically superior, intimidating, overwhelming. Even the most skillful warrior can be overwhelmed. To overcome requires not just spiritual preparation beforehand, but endurance to see it completely through.

Q: David describes several categories of enemy: "those who rose up against me", "those who hated me", "foreigners" and even "my people". Of what might they all be representative?

A: The extent of attacks one can expect is not just from outside aggressors, but from within the ranks of alleged supporters. It's only with God's provision of strength that all can be withstood and overcome.

Application:

- Do we sometimes pray for a "thing" needed to deal with an issue or obstacle, but fail to ask and rely on God for the strength to wield it?
- How does asking for and relying on His strength complete the work of faith in our life that began with the abilities and gifts He's provided?

[Read v.47-51] The Worshiper of God

Q: What is the biblical definition of "worship"?

A: To rightly acknowledge God for who He is, what He's done, for His complete sovereignty over **everything** on heaven and earth.

Q: What are some of the things that David acknowledges, some of the things he's come to know as a result of God's interaction in his life?

- "The LORD lives" (v.47)
- "God...executes vengeance for me" (v.48)
- "God...brings down peoples under me" (v.48)
- "God...brings me out from my enemies" (v.49)
- "You...lift me" (v.49)
- "You rescue me" (v.49)

And I will sing praises to Your name.
⁵¹He is a tower of deliverance to His
king,
And shows lovingkindness to His
anointed,
To David and his descendants forever."

- "He is a tower of deliverance" (v.51)
- "He...shows lovingkindness" (v.51)

They combine to show David's acknowledgment that everything has been accomplished by God; there's not even a hint of reference to suggest something was accomplished because of David's personal skill or strength.

Application:

- *How often do you rely on or even seek God's strength rather than your own?*
- *How often do you seek God's rescue rather than effecting a solution on your own?*

Overall Application

There are some who might say that David is too lofty an example to attain to, that he was specially gifted to excel where we can't. Based on this discussion, do you still think that's true? Perhaps David's greatest example is to show how realistically attainable a victorious, Christian walk can be obtained by those who simply choose to rely on God by obedience and endurance through His Word rather than self.