

Introduction

[Note: This Psalm is also found in another Walk with the Word study on 2 Samuel 22. This is not a precise parallel to that study.]

It is generally acknowledged that the books of 1 & 2 Samuel were authored either directly by or under the supervision of Ezra as part of Israel's rededication to God's Word upon their return from the Babylonian Captivity, so this is actually the first recorded appearance of this Psalm. Of all the Psalms attributed to David it is the longest. Readers are encouraged to study the historical context of this Psalm as well as the continual battles and issues occurring between Saul and David. But if the old hermeneutic is true that everything is important but when God repeats something it is especially important is true, then we need to pay particular attention to this Psalm as it appears twice in the Old Testament.

Essentially this Psalm addresses the issue of how to successfully navigate all conflict in the course of this life, not just from outright enemies, but even those within our sphere of influence who at times may come against us. Contrary to the wisdom of the world in their notion of "conflict management", David provides a personal example of the wisdom of God in this regard.

Part I, verses 1-32: David's Thanksgiving for Being Saved from His Enemies

Read verses 1-3

For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said,

¹"I love You, O LORD, my strength."

²The 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.

³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies.

Q: What is noteworthy as to how David is described in this Psalm's opening notes?

A: He is identified as "the servant of the LORD".

Point: From the outset the tone of this Psalm is set to emphasize God's superior and David's subservient roles. Victory is never attributed to the servant but the Master.

Q: How is this reinforced by the opening line of v.1?

A: It begins by downplaying David's personal strength and instead emphasizes God's.

Q: What do all the terms in v.2 have in common?

A: "My rock", "my fortress", "my shield", and "my stronghold" are all static locations from which a defense can be mounted; none are offensive positions which go out to face the enemy.

Application: Our best position and strength is within God's stronghold from which we only go out at His direction. We allow the enemy, who thinks they are engaging us, to actually engage the Lord.

Q: What are the listed benefits of taking refuge in God as our stronghold?

A: “My strength”, “my deliverer”, and “my salvation” are progressively realized. Our only hope of truly being delivered is to rely on His strength so as to be saved.

Point: Just as we cannot effect our spiritual salvation in Christ for the life to come, we cannot effect our own rescue in this life. Are there any examples of a self-rescue in Scripture on any level?

Q: How does the opening verse reveal a much deeper relationship than just that of a servant and master?

A: A strict servant subordination would probably be saying, “I need You”, whereas David leads with “I love You”.

Q: How does this carry over into the closing verse?

A: “...worthy to be praised” is not just recognizing God’s authority, but His glory.

Observation: The Hebrew grammatical construction here rendered “praise” is a continuing action and not just limited to the present, but from now forever going forward.

Application: It begins by acknowledging that God is our **protection** in Whom we stand to face **anything** or **anyone** coming against us.

Note: This defensive stance which should always be our standard response is mirrored in the purpose of the armor of God expressed by the Apostle Paul:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, **so that you will be able to stand firm** against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Read verses 4-6

Q: Why is this speaking of something far deeper than just the prospect of physical death?

A: It was not just the threat of physical death, but “the torrents of ungodliness”. It is a way of stating a great spiritual threat is at work motivating what is taking place.

Q: How does the specification of “cords” and “death” reveal that these threats were really coming through the agency of man?

A: 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.

⁴The cords of death
encompassed me,
And the torrents of ungodliness
terrified me.
⁵The cords of Sheol surrounded
me;
The snares of death confronted
me.
⁶In my distress I called upon the
LORD,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His
temple,
And my cry for help before Him
came into His ears.

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Q: How is the sequence in v.4-5 describing a progressively worsening situation?

A: First he was “encompassed”, then “torrents” began to overwhelm him to the point he was “surrounded” until ultimately “confronted”. The noose, so to speak, was drawn tighter and tighter.

Q: What was David’s reaction? What was the only thing which could rescue him not just from the “cords” and “snares” but the underlying “ungodliness”?

A: He “called upon” and “cried to” the Lord.

Q: What might be notable that the Lord’s response heard David from “His temple”?

A: Since the temple to come in Jerusalem does not yet exist, this indicates that God did not merely hear David and respond from heaven in general, but from that part of heaven associated with believers’ access to God. In other words, it was not just a general response from God to an earthly response but identifies the special quality of how a spiritual request from a believer is particularly handled.

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.

Revelation 8:4

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 5:8

Application: The **physical** is always accompanied by a greater underlying **spiritual** issue which requires a greater **spiritual** response in order to be properly addressed by God on our behalf. This is why we can never effect our own **rescue**.

Read verses 7-15

Q: Against whom is this response from God directed?

A: Those who were coming against David, who represents the godly follower of Christ.

Q: How do these verses explain the nature of the working of God’s power?

A: All the examples provide a picture of ruling over everything both in heaven and on earth. Some specify physical manifestations taking place (e.g., quakes and shaking), while others a parallel working of those of a spiritual nature. (e.g., smoke, darkness, etc.)

Q: How does God’s response in v. 14 directly contrast with what was being attempted as described by David in the previous section?

A: Whereas they were attempting to close in on and restrict David by drawing tighter and tighter their cords and snares, God instead “scattered them” and “routed them”.

⁷Then the earth shook and quaked;
And the foundations of the mountains were trembling
And were shaken, because He was angry.
⁸Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
And fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.
⁹He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With thick darkness under His feet.
¹⁰He rode upon a cherub and flew;
And He sped upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

¹²From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice,

Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹⁴He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.

¹⁵Then the channels of water appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare At Your rebuke, O LORD, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

¹⁶He sent from on high, He took me;

He drew me out of many waters.

¹⁷He delivered me from my strong enemy, And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the LORD was my stay.

¹⁹He brought me forth also into a broad place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me.

Q: How does v.15 contrast with the “torrents of ungodliness” in v.4?

A: His response is with “channels of water” which expose everything to its very core.

Point: *In the course of allowing God to work on our behalf, the true spiritual nature of what is taking place is exposed and we come to understand what is really taking place.*

Q: Why does v.15 ultimately characterize God’s response as a “rebuke”?

A: The underlying Hebrew term carries with it the meaning of to check something before it continues further, while simultaneously exposing and laying it bare for all to see.

Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

Psalm 106:9

Application: *The working of God’s power does not merely **respond** to the situation but **exposes** its greater underlying spiritual issues. In the process, we come to understand the true **nature** of what is taking **place**.*

Read verses 16-19

Q: How has the object of God’s actions changed from the previous section?

A: This is devoted to describing the nature of His rescue on behalf of His own.

Q: What are the terms employed to explain the nature of His rescue?

- “He took me”
- “He drew me out”
- “He delivered me”
- “He brought me forth”
- “He rescued me”

Q: How does this teach us the true working of victory?

A: It does not come about by our own strength or will but exclusively in the course of God’s rescue.

Q: Why do these things always overwhelm us?

A: Our antagonists not only are “strong” and hate us to the point they are “mighty” in their efforts, (v.17), but are crafty in their timing by

confronting us “in the day of my calamity”. They select the most opportune time to press their combined actions against us.

Observation: In Job 1, all the back-to-back earthly actions experienced by Job in a single day were actually instigated by Satan.

Q: How is God’s response characterized on a personal level?

A: “He delighted in me”. It was not just the actions of God the Judge, but God the Father.

Application: Biblical accounts of **divine** rescues are effected by the **grace** and **mercy** of God alone, even on behalf of the **individual**.

- Do we even pause to inquire of the Lord before taking something on personally?
- In whose strength do we really trust?

Read verses 20-24

Q: What is the reason twice specified where we are personally concerned?

A: “According to my righteousness”, (v. 20 & 24)

Q: What is the evidence of the existence of biblical righteousness listed here?

- (v.20 & 24) “the cleanness of my hands”—Speaks to the quality of one’s actions or deeds, conforming in all things to God’s Word and ways.
- (v.21) “kept the ways of the LORD”—Speaks to rejecting the world’s notions of working to consistently abide by those of God.
- (v.23) “blameless with Him”—Speaks to the absence of sin.
- (v.23) “kept myself from iniquity”—Speaks to strictly adhering to the true meaning of God’s Word rather than attempting to twist it to suit one’s self.

Q: How do we know these qualities are all connected to our obedience to His Word?

- (v.22) “...all His ordinances were before me...” “Ordinances” are the proper application of God’s Word even to those things not overtly specified in Scripture. It is the proper application of God’s Word to any and every situation or issue.
- (v.22) “...I did not out away His statutes...” “Statutes” are the biblically ascribed boundaries for such things as practicing the Old Testament rituals or whom to marry or associate with. It is resisting the infiltration of the world’s ways and standards into our service and worship of God.

Q: How does v.24 specify the standard by which these things are measured?

A: “...in His eyes”.

²⁰The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.
²¹For I have kept the ways of the LORD, And have not wickedly departed from my God.
²²For all His ordinances were before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me.
²³I was also blameless with Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity.
²⁴Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.

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

Read verses 25-29

²⁵With the kind You show
Yourself kind;
With the blameless You show
Yourself blameless;
²⁶With the pure You show
Yourself pure,
And with the crooked You show
Yourself astute.
²⁷For You save an afflicted
people,
But haughty eyes You abase.
²⁸For You light my lamp;
The LORD my God illumines my
darkness.
²⁹For by You I can run upon a
troop;
And by my God I can leap over a
wall.

Q: What attribute of God is this describing?

A: God's perfect justice.

Q: What do the first three conditions in v.25-26 have in common?

A: "Kind", "blameless", and "pure" are all positive spiritual qualities found in a righteous person.

Q: How are they contrasted by the fourth?

A: It is a quality associated with the condition of wickedness, the exact opposite of righteousness.

Point: With the righteous God responds by returning that exact quality; with the crooked He does not respond in parallel, but in just proportion to their acts. God is incapable of any kind of response with sin but instead judges it.

Q: What is the greater meaning of v.20?

A: Relying on God empowers us to accomplish things we would otherwise not find ourselves capable.

Application: When God responds, it is only according to His **just nature**, but particularly **empowering** for His own.

Part II, verses 30-51 David's Thanksgiving for Being Set Over His Enemies

Observation: David first devotes significant space to acknowledge his divine rescue from his antagonists. This places into proper perspective how to handle such victories and even the appropriate parameters for our participation within the boundaries of God's Word and will.

³⁰As for God, His way is blameless;
 The word of the LORD is tried;
 He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
³¹For who is God, but the LORD?
 And who is a rock, except our God,
³²The God who girds me with strength
 And makes my way blameless?
³³He makes my feet like hinds' feet,
 And sets me upon my high places.
³⁴He trains my hands for battle,
 So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
³⁵You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,
 And Your right hand upholds me;
 And Your gentleness makes me great.
³⁶You enlarge my steps under me,
 And my feet have not slipped.

Read verses 30-36

Q: There are lists of terms related to each other. Which are those related to David?

A: "Hands for battle", "my feet", "my arms", "a bow of bronze", and "a shield" are things related to tools needing to be trained and ready in order to engage in conflict.

Q: What is related to the Lord?

A: "A shield", "refuge", "a rock", and "high places" all refer to the positions selected by God from which to conduct such engagements.

Q: How do we know for sure that it is the Lord who trains and equips us?

- (v.32) "...God...girds me with strength..."
- (v.32) "...God...makes my way..."
- (v.33) "He makes my feet..."
- (v.33) "He...sets me..."
- (v.34) "...trains my hands..."
- (v.35) "...hand upholds me..."
- (v.35) "...makes me great".
- (v.36) "...enlarge my steps..."

Q: What are the qualities assigned to God which joins these lists to make them successful?

- (v.30) "...His way is blameless..."
- (v.30) "...the Word of the LORD is tried".
- (v.30) "...He is a shield..."
- (v.31) "...is God..."
- (v.32) "...makes my way blameless..."
- (v.35) "...Your right hand..."

Q: And what has submitting to God's sovereignty, will, and obedience to His Word resulted in?

A: "...my feet have not slipped". (v.36) either in the course of conflict nor in the overall proper use provided by His training and counsel. Because it is void of any sin, it results in God's eyes that we are completely "blameless".

Point: Ever notice how rare it is to find one party in a dispute completely innocent of any wrongdoing? That can only consistently come from doing it God's way.

Application: Even though we may have the **tools**, we still require the Lord's **training** and **instruction** in their proper, biblical **use**.

- Have you ever thought of yourself or someone else as a "warrior for God"? How does such a thing come about?
- How often do you seek the Lord's counsel on how to use a skill or when and where to employ it?

Read verses 37-42

Q: Who is designated as coming against David?

- (v.37 & 40) "my enemies"
- (v.39) "those who rose up against me"
- (v.40) "those who hated me"
- (v.43) "contentions of the people"

Application: These last three categories are not necessarily outright, known enemies, but are all experienced from time to time by members of our own family, church, or sphere of influence.

Q: How does David's perspective rub against the normal way the world would interpret these results?

A: The world would attribute to David himself as having the skill and expertise to so effectively turn the tables on his antagonists, but David attributes every aspect of his successes to the Lord.

- (v.39) "You have girded"
- (v.39) "You have subdued"
- (v.40) "You...made my enemies turn..."
- (v.41) "He did not answer them"

Q: How is a God-moderated victory described?

A: As complete and overwhelming even when the numerical odds are not in our favor.

Application: A warrior victorious according to God's **training** and **guidance** experiences complete and indisputable **victory** regardless of the **size** or **strength** of the adversary. But it never comes by his own **strength** or **will**.

37I pursued my enemies and
overtook them,
And I did not turn back until
they were consumed.
38I shattered them, so that they
were not able to rise;
They fell under my feet.
39For You have girded me with
strength for battle;
You have subdued under me
those who rose up against me.
40You have also made my
enemies turn their backs to
me,
And I destroyed those who
hated me.
41They cried for help, but there
was none to save,
Even to the LORD, but He did not
answer them.
42Then I beat them fine as the
dust before the wind;
I emptied them out as the mire
of the streets.

⁴³You have delivered me from
the contentions of the people;
You have placed me as head of
the nations;
A people whom I have not
known serve me.
⁴⁴As soon as they hear, they
obey me;
Foreigners submit to me.
⁴⁵Foreigners fade away,
And come trembling out of their
fortresses.

Read verses 43-45

Q: Particularly as it relates to David, what is the incredible result of having performed all things according to God's Word and ways?

A: "You have placed me as head of the nations". (v.43)

Point: During David's time this most likely meant all the nations in the immediate area of the Middle East closest to the greatly expanded Davidic kingdom. But since David is a forerunner or pre-reflection of Christ "the son of David", there is a deeper Messianic meaning when Jesus overcomes and judges all enemies of the cross and literally rules over all the nations of the earth.

Q: Why is the reference to the response of "foreigners" particularly important to the historical figure of David?

A: It took approximately 20 years before he could "conquer" all the uprisings and dissensions aligned against him by his own people before he was properly recognized and accepted as king over the whole of Israel. Then he would engage in campaigns involving the submission of the nations around him.

Point: A relationship is being expressed connecting victory among those closest to us and its extension to those completely on the outside.

Application: Dealing with **internal** conflict is often the necessary predecessor to achieving victory over **external** conflict.

Read verses 46-50

Q: What has the warrior trained and empowered by God ultimately resulted in?

A: A true and avid worshiper of God.

Q: What is the biblical definition of proper worship?

A: To rightly acknowledge God for who He is, what He's done, and 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 this regard?

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

⁴⁶The LORD lives, and blessed be
my rock;
And exalted be the God of my
salvation,
⁴⁷The God who executes
vengeance for me,
And subdues peoples under me.
⁴⁸He delivers me from my
enemies;
Surely You lift me above those
who rise up against me;
You rescue me from the violent
man.
⁴⁹Therefore I will give thanks to
You among the nations, O
LORD,
And I will sing praises to Your
name.

⁵⁰He gives great deliverance to
His king,
And shows lovingkindness to
His anointed,
To David and his descendants
forever.

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

Q: What is significant about the last line in this Psalm?

A: It definitely opens the door to deeper Messianic themes which can be derived from this Psalm.

Application: *A proper God-directed victory will always turn the authentic **warrior** for God into an unremitting **worshiper** of God.*

Overall Application

- Do you think that the things in which you are naturally gifted do not need to be submitted to God or scrutinized according to His Word? How should you address this?
- How often do you truly operate from God's position of refuge as opposed to picking your own time and place? How can you determine the difference?
- Have you ever celebrated your own strength and will at the expense of Christ's? How well do you submit to the complete sovereignty of the Godhead?
- Do you recognize that properly resolving conflicts within the Church has a follow-on effect on antagonists from without?

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