

2nd Samuel 22:21-51

The Benefit of Spiritual Reflection

And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul – v. 1

This chapter introduces us to a part of David's life that you wouldn't know if all you had were the historical books of the Old Testament. The history of David focuses largely on the battles of David. From the time you first see him as a young man going up against the giant Goliath up until the time when he's more or less forced into retirement from the battlefield which we saw in the last chapter (chp. 21) of 2nd Samuel you see his battles and you see his problems, many, many problems and challenges and afflictions.

Now toward the end of his reign and near the end of his life we see the devotional life of David. You would have seen that anyway when you read the Psalms, most of which were written by David but the very fact that there's a Psalm of David recorded for us in this historical narrative reminds us that there was always a setting to David's life in which he composed his Psalms. He wasn't, in other words, some sort of ivory tower composer who shut himself off from life in order to compose Psalms, but every Psalm he wrote was based on real life experience. That's what makes David's Psalms so valuable to Christians – they're based on the ups and downs of real life.

This particular Psalm takes on an added value since you find it also recorded in the book of Psalms. If you care to read Psalm 18 you'll discover that it's nearly identical to what we have here in 2nd Samuel 22. And that should tell you something. This is not an oversight in the Bible. There is a reason why God wanted this Psalm to appear twice in the Bible. It must carry an added importance if God Himself would see fit to make this Psalm a point of emphasis.

The thing I want you to see about this Psalm is how the very fact that it appears in this historical book of 2nd Samuel tells you something about David. It tells you that in the midst of all his battles and all his struggles and all his busyness as the King of Israel, he still had a devotional life. He took time to commune with God and He took time to think about God. And he took adequate time to enable him, not just to pray and to think (or meditate) but he took the time to take his prayers and meditations and compose them into songs. Notice how the chapter begins: *And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song...*

It is this composition, along with the other songs and prayers of David that enable you to see that he was a man after God's own heart. If all you had were the historical accounts of David you might wonder how he could be called a man after God's own heart. It wasn't his high degree of holiness that warranted that title for we've seen numerous sins in him and we've seen some very serious sins and before we're done we're going to see even more sin in David's life. And it wasn't his success in being a good parent that gained him that title. I think in many respects he was a good parent but in other respects he was not so good. I suppose you could say in that respect that he was probably very typical as a parent.

The thing that made him a man after God's own heart was his understanding of and faith in and his living out the gospel. We'll see this in the course of this Psalm. Let's look, then, not merely at the Psalm but at the example of David in the setting forth of this Psalm. In so doing I think you'll be able to see:

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David, you might say, could see those unseen things that Paul mentions 2Cor. 4:18 where he writes: *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* David could see those unseen things with the eye of faith and he gives us some very vivid descriptions of those unseen things.

What, then, are the benefits of spiritual reflection? Consider with me first of all that:

I. Spiritual Reflection Reminds You That God is Great

You might say that the first 3 verses of this Psalm give us the theology of the Psalm. Look at vv. 1-3: *And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.*

There is an emphasis here on deliverance. This song pertains to the day that the LORD had delivered David from all his enemies and from Saul in particular – Saul who pursued him more vigorously and for a greater period of time than any of his enemies. This song pertains to deliverance and in v. 2 David addresses God as his Deliverer. *And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.*

Look at the other references to deliverance:

Verse 18: *He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.*

Verse 20: *He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

Verse 44: *Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me.*

Verse 49: *And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.*

Multiple deliverances – from strong enemies, from strivings, from violent men. This is salvation. You and I can say the same thing spiritually. We've had many deliverances – deliverance from the guilt of sin; deliverance from sin's dominion; deliverance from this

present evil world; deliverance from Satan's bondage; deliverance from the bondage of the fear of death. I was studying from 2nd Cor. 1 recently in preparation for the message I preached at the week of prayer. In 2Cor. 1:9,10 we read: *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*

Well might we call God or Christ our Deliverer. And the benefit to spiritual reflection is that we think on all the deliverances that have been wrought for us. There was a time in David's life that he actually lost sight of the greatness of God as his deliverer. Back in 1st Samuel 27:1 after he had been delivered for the second time out of the hand of Saul he should have focused on God as his deliverer. Instead the things he could see with the carnal eye captured his fears so we read in that verse: *And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: [there is] nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.*

David could have used a time of spiritual reflection then, but instead he walked by sight rather than faith and his fears overtook him. So will fears overtake us if we neglect the practice of spiritual reflection. But would you notice something else that is emphasized in these opening verses of the chapter. Not only does David recognize the greatness of God by his deliverances but he also recognizes that this God is his God. This point too is emphasized.

Notice in v. 2 how *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.* And in v. 3 *he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.* I'm reminded of the refrain in a hymn from our hymnbook. The title of the hymn captures the theme: *I AM His and He Is Mine.* The last stanza in that hymn goes like this:

His forever, only His; Who the Lord and me shall part?

Ah, with what a rest of bliss Christ can fill the loving heart!

Heaven and earth may fade and flee, Firstborn light in gloom decline;

But while God and I shall be, I am His, and He is mine;

We sang earlier in the service the 23rd Psalm. Everything in that Psalm is based on the opening line: *The Lord is my Shepherd.* It's because the Lord is my Shepherd that I'll not want. It's because He's my shepherd that He'll lead me into green pastures, beside still waters. Because He's my shepherd he'll restore me and he'll be with me and he'll anoint me with oil and prepare a table before me even in the midst of my enemies.

This is certainly a great thing to reflect upon – how the Lord is your God – He's your rock and fortress; He's your deliverer; He's your shield and the your high tower and refuge and Savior. These are things worth reflecting on. These are things that we glory in and such spiritual reflection can go a long way in consoling you and strengthening you for the

challenges you face in this present evil world. So spiritual reflection reminds you that God is great and that God is near and that God is yours through Christ. Would you think with me next how:

II. Spiritual Reflection Reminds You that God Answers Prayer

Notice the words of v. 4 *I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.* David is saying here in effect – *I will call because I have called.* And beginning in v. 5 he reflects on how he's called and on how the Lord has answered and it's especially in this section of the Psalm that he speaks spiritually and he speaks vividly.

His reflection leads him to remember in v. 5: *When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; 6 The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me; 7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.*

It's hard to know what David is referring to historically. Could it be the time when he was nearly trapped in the city of Keilah, a city he and his men had rescued from the Philistines who were going to turn him over to Saul once Saul and his army converged upon the city? Or would it have been that time when David and his men were on one side of the mountain and Saul and his men were on the other side and just as Saul and his army encompassed David Saul received word that the Philistines had invaded another part of the land so that he was distracted from pursuing David? Or perhaps he was reflecting on more recent events – when his rebellious son, Absalom, converged upon the city of Jerusalem with an army that was prepared while David was unprepared and barely had time to escape from the city.

David could be referring to any of these events or he could be referring to all of them, the point is he's speaking spiritually and he's seeing the unseen things that providentially surrounded him during such dire circumstances. In a sense you might say he's viewing things with his eyes opened the way Elisha's servant had his eyes opened in 2Ki. 6 when he was able to see that there was an army of angels surrounding them that was larger than the Syrian army which was there to apprehend them.

Look at the spiritual things David saw beginning in v. 8. This is where the Psalm becomes most vivid, you might even say it's apocalyptic: *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. 9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.*

Here is God – he's heard David's cry of distress and he moves heaven and earth in order to respond to the cry of his servant, David. Verse 11: *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. 13 Through the brightness*

before him were coals of fire kindled. 14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.

He is acting now on behalf of David. He moves against David's enemies: *And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. 16 And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. 17 He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; 18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.*

Now here's the thing – we don't really have anything in the historical narrative that aligns with this language do we? You might refer, I suppose, to chp.5. It's especially interesting to note the words of v. 20 which reference the Philistines when you read: *And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim.*

And in the following verses you read of the Philistines invading the land yet again and this time the Lord directs David into a different kind of maneuver and tells him to wait until he hears the sound in the mulberry trees: *And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines (2Sam. 5:24).* The language of this Psalm, however, is even more vivid and more apocalyptic than that. For in this Psalm you see the Lord sending out arrows and lightning bolts, as it were. And you see the very earth itself rent to its foundations.

And the point that needs to be stressed and I think this is the intention behind David's language – the vividness of all these descriptions serves to show clearly and fully the loyalty of God to David. Now you may read this vivid description of that loyalty and say to yourself – *that's wonderful. God was certainly loyal to David. But is God really that loyal to me?* And at once the words of Paul in Romans 8 come to my mind: *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31).*

And to convince us that the loyalty factor is exactly the same Paul then directs our minds and our thoughts to something even more convincing than the apocalyptic scene of David. He points us to Christ: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32).* Here at the cross where God spared not His Son – here is where we see God coming to your rescue. Here is where we see the heavens rent and the wrath of God unleashed and the foundations of the world exposed, so to speak. God unleashing His wrath on all that comes between the sinner and God.

Can it not be said of you with regard to your salvation what David says in his Psalm beginning in v. 17: *He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; 18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. 19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my*

stay. 20 He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The Lord has come to your rescue. The Lord has moved heaven and earth to save your soul. The Lord has heard your cry and has shown you the greatness of His salvation and He remains loyal to you. He continues to hear you out of His holy temple. And the impact of such a spiritual reflection should be to instill in your soul such a renewed vitality that you can say what David says in v. 30 *For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.* And v. 34: *He maketh my feet like hinds' feet: and setteth me upon my high places.* And in that renewed vitality you will ask what David asks in v. 32 *For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?*

The benefits to spiritual reflection, then, become plain. Spiritual reflection reminds us of the greatness of our God and spiritual reflection reminds us that God answers prayer. Could we think finally for a moment on how:

III. Reflecting on Our Spiritual Benefits Reminds Us of the Gospel

There's a rather strange section to this Psalm that begins in v. 21. You perhaps found it somewhat puzzling when we read it earlier. On the surface of it, it seems to run contrary to everything we know about the gospel and everything we know about ourselves. Listen to these words beginning in v. 21:

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23 For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. 24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. 25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.

When I read words like these I find it very striking that this Psalm is found in the same book that gives us so much of the life of David. This is the same book that tells us how David took another man's wife and got her pregnant and tried to cover up his sin which led to the murder of the woman's husband. This is the book that gives us the account of one of David's sons taking advantage of his half-sister and when David does little or nothing about it one of his other sons then avenges his sister and then flees.

How can such words as what we find in v. 21 be found in this same book that gives us such accounts of David's sin. One might be tempted to say – *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness?* Are you kidding me David? Is this really you speaking David? The words seem like the epitome of hypocrisy and self righteousness – until you learn to view them covenantally.

It's David, you see, that Paul draws from in Romans 4 when he writes in v. 6 *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* Paul gives us an

interpretation of David's words from Psalm 32 that magnifies the blessing of God. Not only, you see, does the Lord not impute sin, according to that verse, but indeed, the Lord imputes righteousness. So just as David can say of the Lord in the earlier verses of this Psalm that he is *my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my shield, my high tower*, so can we interpret him through the gospel as indicating now in v. 21 that the Lord is my righteousness. This is the very title assigned to the Lord in Jer 23:6 *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

And this righteousness by God's grace did become David's righteousness just as the righteousness of Christ becomes your righteousness and my righteousness. And since we're on the subject this morning of spiritual reflections – could I suggest to you that a great way to read and apply these seemingly strange verses that begin in v. 21 is to read them with a view to the greater David that was to come, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ultimately it is Christ alone who can say *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.* That's true of Christ. He was sinless. He could say *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23 For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them...v. 25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.*

This becomes the basis for the loyalty that we considered in my previous point. This is why the Lord will hear you out of His holy temple. This is why the Lord will move heaven and earth to come to your aid. This is why the Lord's loyalty to you will be sure and steadfast. It's because Christ has earned the reward and Christ has paid your debt and by virtue of your union to Christ, God sees you in Him and is as loyal to you as He's loyal to Him.

I'm so glad this Psalm appears in 2nd Samuel. I think it's meant to be considered in the broader context of David's life. There's so much in David I can relate to in terms of his sins and failures but I can also relate to him in this respect – that like him (to use the words of the hymn):

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus name.

What a great Psalm to reflect on then – and what a great exercise to engage in – spiritual reflection. In that reflection we're reminded of the greatness of our God, the truth that He answers prayer and the gospel provides us with the basis of our confidence in Him.