

Praising God for His Deliverances, Part III

Call to Worship: Psalm 32

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 22:1-20

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 22:21-28

Hymn #286- *We Gather Together*

Hymn Insert- *Better is One Day*

Hymn #550- *Jesus, Priceless Treasure*

Introduction:

As we continue to work through David's lengthy Psalm of praise, where he is praising God for His perpetual faithfulness in delivering David, out of the hands of his enemies, we come now to an interesting portion of the song.

Here, David turns the arrow of focus, away from God, for a few moments, and toward himself. And what he says here, can easily lead one to think that David is putting forth his own self-righteousness, as some means of David actually meriting God's continual favor upon him. And if we were unaware of the life of David, which we have been going over, all throughout 1 and 2 Samuel; and if we were somehow ignorant of all that the Scriptures teach in general, it would be very easy to see such a conclusion as viable. "The Lord has rewarded me *according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands* He has recompensed me. For *I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.* For all His judgments were before me; and as for His statutes, *I did not depart from them. I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity.* Therefore the Lord has recompensed (rewarded) me *according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyes.*"

Now, wait a minute. Is David actually inferring here, that he has merited God's favor in any respect? Is he justifying himself in the sight of God, creating a direct correlation between God's faithfulness to David, and David's obedience to God, leading God to deliver David, because of the righteous acts of David? Is David putting forth a "justification, based upon obedience," contrary to the whole biblical notion of "justification, by faith alone, in Christ alone?" Is God's goodness toward David, contingent upon David's faithfulness to God, in any respect. Well, the answer to most of these questions is actually "yes" and "no."

Now, for the bulk of the body of this sermon, I want to explain what I mean by this answer, because it is very important, and if we are not careful, we can either underestimate or

overestimate this type of language, which is found throughout the Scriptures, and most often, in the Old Testament.

I. David's Righteousness: What he is *not* saying

How is it that David can speak of his own righteousness, in any form of a meritorious way? How can he say, "The Lord rewarded me *according to my righteousness...*" in any sense?

Well, let us begin by eliminating, what David cannot possibly mean, right from the outset, which will help us narrow down our focus in the direction of what he does mean.

1) We certainly know that David is *not* saying that he is without sin. Very clearly, it has been shown in previous chapters, not only that David has sinned (and that greatly-- most evidently in his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah), but furthermore, that David, having been confronted by Nathan the prophet, very clearly, had owned and confessed his sin, in this regard. In fact, Psalm 51, which was written by David, as a confession of that sin, uses some of the strongest language, confirming that David was owning the whole of his sin, without any excuse, whatsoever. He put himself in the crosshairs of God's judgment, recognizing full well, that what he had done was wicked, ungodly, and worthy of God's severe judgment. And so, we can most certainly presume, that David has not suddenly become shortsighted in the text, which we are examining this morning.

2) We certainly know that David is *not* saying, that he is, in any sense, resting in his own righteousness, as a means of granting him access to heaven. In other words, David is not saying, "Lord, my relationship with you, and my ticket to glory, is based upon my own personal righteousness." David knew well enough, that a man must keep the whole of God's law, perfectly, if he is to personally merit eternal salvation. And David knew, that he had not done that. In fact, he states in Psalm 51, "In sin, did my mother conceive me." David knew that he was born with a contaminated, unrighteous nature, which could never, ever, bring him into glory, or cause him to stand before God, in any sense, at all. In fact, we read in our first Scripture reading, David's words from Psalm 32, which declare very clearly, that the one, who is blessed in this regard, is only the one, to whom, God does not impute iniquity. In other words, David is saying, "The blessed ones, are those, whom God Himself chooses, to not hold their sins to their

account." Those who are forgiven, are blessed; not the righteous, because there are none righteous in the sight of God, no, not one.

And this, therefore, would eliminate the false teaching, which some would hold, which states that the Old Covenant Jews were justified by their keeping of the Law. The Scriptures are very clear, teaching us that everyone, who was ever justified before God, from the beginning of time, was justified, solely by faith in God's promised Messiah, be it, pre-Christ, looking forward, or post-Christ, looking backward. In fact, the entire New Covenant faith is based upon emulating the faith of Abraham, who was justified by his faith, back in Old Testament history (Romans 4 makes this very clear). And furthermore, Hebrews chapter 11, the great faith chapter, which presents us with "so great a cloud of witnesses," as our examples of the faith, presents us with all Old Testament and Old Covenant figures. No one was ever justified by the keeping of God's Law.

And so, David is not here presuming, in the slightest, that he has merited anything before God, concerning his eternal salvation. There is no way, that such an heretical notion had ever even entered the mind or heart of David, and to think otherwise, would be to claim that David was somehow, spiritually schizophrenic.

Well, having ruled out what David was certainly not saying, what then do we make of his words here? Surely, they must mean something? Well, indeed they do.

II. David's Righteousness: What he *is* saying

The key to unlocking David's thoughts here, naturally, lies within the context itself. We must begin by asking ourselves again, "What is the purpose of this Psalm?" Well, as we have seen already, David is praising God for his deliverances. What deliverances? God has delivered David out of the hands of all of his enemies and Saul. And so, it is important, therefore, to recognize, first of all, that David is not addressing matters of eternal salvation, but rather, matters of physical salvation. David is praising God for prospering him, and delivering him, out of the hands of his physical enemies. Now, as we have already seen throughout this Psalm, this definitely has spiritual implications, which we will get to shortly, when we consider how what David is saying here, reflects spiritual realities. In other words, I don't want to take most of the

physical realities given in this Psalm, and draw spiritual realities out of them, while discarding those, which perhaps, seem to make us uncomfortable. I believe that there are a few spiritual realities pictured here, as well. That said, in context, David himself is speaking primarily about physical deliverances, and not spiritual deliverances.

Well, what then does David mean by these words, as taken from this literal context? I believe what David is implying here, brethren, is that David has been wrongly persecuted and oppressed by some of these enemies, and he has been justified in fighting against the others, in accordance with God's commands. In other words, David's enemies have come after him, without a righteous cause. And in that sense, David has been righteous in the matter. He has had a clear conscience, being unwilling to turn away from God's statutes and laws, when dealing with those who came against him. His enemies had no legal or legitimate reason for seeking to destroy him. In fact, as we have seen last time, they often took advantage of David, when he was inhibited in some way, attempting to destroy him without just cause. David was God's called warrior, ordained by God, and taught by God (as we will see later in the text), to deal with and destroy God's enemies, who were David's enemies, because they were God's enemies.

And so, brethren, when David speaks of God rewarding him because of his righteousness, and because of his unwillingness to turn away from God's statutes and laws... etc, he is speaking within the context of the contention that has existed between David and his enemies. We saw this very clearly in David's dealings with Saul, did we not? David had done nothing wrong. In fact, all he did was attempt to faithfully serve the king, and that, because of his fear of God. And yet, Saul went after David continually, because he was jealous of David. In that sense, David was righteous and just in all that he did, and God rewarded him, according to his righteousness, by delivering him. Let me give you one further, contemporary illustration, before we move on here.

Consider those who are presently persecuted, oppressed and imprisoned in other countries, because of their manifest faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider those who are grossly persecuted by Muslims. They are persecuted wrongly, are they not? They are totally righteous in the matter, are they not? And as God delivers them, there is a real sense, in which they can say, that God has delivered them because of their own righteousness. In other words,

because they had done no wrong. They were falsely accused, and they remained faithful to God, keeping His statutes, even to the threat of their very lives. And because of this, God delivered them. They remained steadfast and immovable. They kept the faith! Again, none of this has anything to do with their eternal salvation, which is based entirely on the righteousness of Christ alone!

Now, let me carry this one step further, into the spiritual realm as well. Is there any sense, in which, such things can be transferred into the spiritual realm, or do David's words begin and end, in dealing with physical circumstances alone? I believe that there are two ways, in which, we can recognize spiritual implications from David's words here.

1) In a Fruit Bearing Sense: Now, what do I mean by this? I mean that the Scriptures do teach that there is a real sense, in which, God's redeemed children will be rewarded according to their works. There are "heavenly rewards" dispensed by God, upon His faithful children. The parable of the talents, given in Matthew 25, clearly confirms this, along with other texts that speak of each person being rewarded according to their works.

Now, again, none of this involves meriting salvation, in any sense, at all. And in fact, even the works that are done, in Christ, are works that can only, truly be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit, in and by us. And yet, by the sheer grace of God, God would still have us rewarded for the works exercised by us, even though, we are mere vehicles, used by His Holy Spirit. And so, what is done, already within the context of God's free grace in Christ, and in fact, would otherwise be unacceptable outside of God's free grace in Christ, is indeed rewarded by God.

We can also put it this way. While the righteousness of Christ alone, is that, which justifies us in the sight of God, and brings us to glory, that same righteousness is producing a righteousness in us, such that we are being made more and more into the image of Christ. And that righteousness in us, though a work of God Himself, God yet, graciously attributes to us, as it is exercised by us, not as a means of meriting salvation, but as a means of glorifying Him because of our salvation. And as it is exercised, God, freely and graciously rewards, even what He Himself is responsible for producing and working in us. And so, to that end, what David is saying here, could be transferred into a spiritual, practical application for us. The righteousness

of Christ, which saves us, also produces fruit in us, and God rewards us for that fruit, even though, He is the One, who has rerooted, watered, pruned and provided constant light for the tree's growth. God rewards the work of His hands, and in the end, says to His children, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord." He graciously commends us, even for the work that He Himself has done in, by and through us. Let me bolster this point, by quoting two Scriptural texts, which speak to this end:

a- Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

b- Philippians 2:12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

And that is why, David can say, what he says in verses 26-28, here in our main text (read now). In essence, God will bless and reward the work of His hands, as the work of His hands will bear the necessary fruits (always in Christ), which warrant the blessing. To be sure, David well knows that that is the only reason that he can speak in these ways about himself. What God saves, He changes, and what He changes, He blesses, as they bring out, what He has put in. And that is why, a mere profession of faith alone, without any fruit bearing to follow, is a lie, hypocrisy and a sham. God's work must and will produce fruit, unto being rewarded. [Apply here, and reference Romans 8 as well] [short beatitudes]

2) In a Messianic Sense: Finally, we can see David's words in the most literal, perfect spiritual (and physical sense), when we see them as reflected in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt, these verses belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the truest and most proper sense. He alone can state them, with reference to His own merit, in every sense of the term. For He alone was wholly righteous, perfectly keeping the Law in every sense, and worthy of all good and proper recompense and reward for His obedience.

And yet, the wonder of it all, brethren, is that He who knew no sin, became sin for us, so that we would become the righteousness of God in Him. In other words, He transfers this great

honor to us, so that, in Him, we can, in fact, make the same claim, which David here makes. Since, we have been freely given the righteousness of Christ, and since, Christ has taken away our sins, having crucified them in His own body, we can and do stand, forever pure and righteous in the sight of God, receiving eternal life, and every blessed reward of glory, which He has merited on our behalf!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25