

God's Steadfast Love

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[0 : 00] Well, if you would take your Bibles out and turn to 2 Samuel 22 and 23 on pages 274 and 275.

As you do that, I'm going to rise above the outrageous provocations of Dan Gifford about my geographical heritage. I'm going to ignore his ignorance. Because it would be much more fun if Aaron was here anyway. And Aaron and Amy are now the proud parents of a second daughter, Beatrice. Mother and daughter are doing well. Father is besotted. Well, now, 2 Samuel 22 and 23. I don't know if any of you caught the concert a week or two ago by the BBC.

It was a BBC concert for the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee outside Buckingham Palace. It was an amazing concert. I wasn't there. I watched it on television.

[1 : 06] It was an amazing concert. But as it went on, I became... I started to notice something. And that was that almost all the musicians are at least 10 years older than I am.

If you have a Diamond Jubilee, you can choose anyone you like to perform, of course. But the musicians, and I think this happens when you cross 65 as an ageing musician, what you do is you release a retrospective album, a Looking Back album.

So all the artists have retrospective albums. Stevie Wonder has a retrospective album. Elton John has two or three retrospective albums. And Paul McCartney has dozens of them.

Well, the last four chapters of 2 Samuel are a retrospective. They're up to 30,000 feet and they're looking back over David's reign. And at the heart of the last four chapters are two songs, two psalms from David to God.

He's not re-releasing old hits, although one of the psalms does come again in the Psalter. It's David singing in his official role as the Messiah, the chosen King of God.

[2 : 16] Just look at the end, the last verse of the first psalm. The first psalm is all of chapter 22. The last verse says, Great salvation he brings to his King and shows steadfast love to his anointed, his Messiah, to David and his offspring forever.

And then the second psalm, which is much briefer, verse chapter 23. The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of God, the Messiah of God, the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

Now, if you've been with us since the beginning of this series, congratulations. But when we started, do you remember that 1 Samuel began with a song, a hymn of praise, a psalm of praise from Hannah to God, and now it finishes with a song of praise to God from David, with two songs of praise of God to David.

So that all the narrative that we've looked at is bracketed and framed by these psalms to God. What that means is that the narratives are not just one thing after another, but they are driven by God's very deliberate hand and his doing.

And as we step back from the two books, I hope you can see that this is way bigger than David and this historic king, but that God has brought something entirely new, never before seen in the history of the universe to be in the world.

[3 : 54] And it is his kingdom and his king, his Messiah. He's raised up a particular kind of leader called Messiah, anointed by the spirit, and that the king of God is there to bring the kingdom of God.

And it's not a political evolution. The kingdom is not a human achievement, but it's a gift of sovereign grace. And from now on, all of God's purposes for creation and for his people, focus on, rest on the coming of this Messiah.

That's God's promise. But there's a problem. Did you notice as we were reading the first psalm, chapter 22, did it not seem to you like David was exaggerating?

I mean, he's making claims for himself that appear to stretch the truth, doesn't he? We've been through the narrative. There doesn't seem to be anything remotely close to what he's talking about in his experience.

I mean, look at verse 6. The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me. Yes, he was on the run from Saul for a long time, and he even avoided being speared by Saul.

[5 : 12] But he was never caught in the cords or the snares of death. I mean, he dies in his bed as an old man, doesn't he? I mean, what are we to do with this? Well, look at the action of God on his behalf in verses 8 to 16.

Let me just read a couple of these verses. Verse 8. The earth reeled and rocked. The foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked because he was angry. Or verse 10. He bowed the heavens and came down.

Thick darkness under his feet. Or verse 16. The channels of the sea were seen. The foundations of the world were laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord. I mean, David did face Goliath, and he did face Philistines.

But can you remember the earth reeling and rocking? Can you remember the foundations of the heavens trembling or the foundations of the earth being laid bare? Or is this just vivid poetic license, as some commentators say, seeing as it's okay to stretch the truth if we're talking about God? Or what about the claim in verse 44 that you kept me as the head of the nations? Yes, David had some big, significant political victories, and there were a number of non-Israelis who were in his employment.

[6 : 25] Ittai the Gittite remains my favorite. Uriah the Hittite, another. But was David ever kept as head of the nations? I don't think so. Or most troubling of all, I think, is verses 21 to 25.

Just read a couple of these verses. The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands. He rewarded me. I've kept the ways of the Lord.

I've not wickedly departed from my God. All his rules were before me. And from his statutes I did not turn aside. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt.

Really? I mean, if you've been following the story, particularly in the last couple of weeks, you can't read this with a straight face, can you? How do we explain it?

Well, I want to spend a bit of time on this. And this is a kind of a two-part sermon. All in one. And I want to spend some time flicking through the Bible.

[7 : 27] We don't often do this on a Sunday. But it's a great way to keep yourself awake and keep your hands active. And I want to do this not just because it's helpful for Monday, but because we're dealing with what is most important to God himself, and that is his own Messiah.

And I think there are two things that help us understand this psalm. And the first is, David is a prophet. You look down in the second psalm, chapter 23, verse 2, at the bottom of that page, David says, In other words, David is prophesying, through the Holy Spirit, about the Messiah to come. It's true that the shape of David's experience is the same as Jesus' experience, but he's speaking way beyond his pay grade. He's speaking bigger than he knows.

And he has a real sense, as this is happening, that what he's speaking about is far bigger than anything he's experienced or anything that ever happens in the physical kingdom of Israel. I want to show you how this works, if you will.

So let's turn to the right, let's go to the New Testament, to the book of Acts. Acts, chapter 2. And I'm on page 910, 910.

[8 : 55] Now the second half of Acts 2 is a sermon by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. Jesus has risen from the dead. He spent 40 days doing an intensive seminar with his apostles, teaching them how to read the Old Testament.

And Peter is preaching about the resurrection. In verse 27, he quotes from a Psalm of David. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption.

Question, how could David possibly say that? He died a thousand years before. How could David say that God was not going to let his body see corruption? Verse 29.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. So how can it be true?

Is it just wishful thinking? Verse 30. Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he, the Christ, was not abandoned to Hades nor did his

flesh see corruption.

[10:12] Now, why does Peter on the day of Pentecost bother quoting from the Psalm? Why doesn't he just say, well, Jesus rose from the dead? It's not just to show that God can keep a promise over a thousand years.

It's because of this, that without grasping one and two Samuel, without grasping who David is, our constant temptation is to create a Messiah in our own image.

If your Messiah is not anchored into one and two Samuel, you'll have a Jesus of your own making, a political Jesus or a prosperity Jesus or a middle class, therapeutic, nice West Coast plastic Jesus. So, when David speaks these two Psalms at the end of 2 Samuel, he is speaking as a prophet of God, prophesying about Jesus. That's the first thing to remember.

The second is David is a unique shadow. In the Old Testament, a number of places, God provides shadows of which Jesus is the reality.

[11:25] So, if Moses was a shadow prophet, Jesus is the real prophet. If Melchizedek was a shadow priest, Jesus is the reality. But there is no more important Old Testament figure for understanding who Jesus is than David, because David is both a prophet and the Messiah.

Jesus' very identity as the Son of God, the Messiah of God, comes from the character David. That's why David is so important for understanding the New Testament.

The first phrase of the New Testament in the first chapter of the New Testament opens by saying, the book of the geniality of Jesus Christ, Jesus Messiah, the Son of David. And the last chapter of the New Testament, Revelation 22, the risen Jesus says, I, Jesus, am the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star.

It's not that they just happen to be two apples on the same family tree. There's a deeper connection in the purpose of God. Jesus is both the source of David and the goal of David.

And you may be saying, well, that's all very interesting. That's for people who are interested in theology and flicking through the Bible. I want to say to you, this is the gospel.

[12:46] Just turn right to the book of Romans, Romans chapter 1 for a moment. Page 939. Didn't we look at Romans recently?

For about a year? Good. Glad you remember. Do you remember the book of Romans is basically an exposition of the Old Testament?

That's when Paul preaches the gospel. That's what he's doing. So look at verse 1. Paul, the servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Where does the gospel come from?

Verse 2. Which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scripture. What's it about? concerning his son and then he says two things about his son Jesus who was descended from David according to the flesh.

Number one. And number two. Declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus, Messiah, our Lord. That is how the apostles preached the gospel.

[13:52] That Jesus is the fulfillment. The Messiah of God. The fulfillment of David. Turn right again to 2 Timothy chapter 2. On page 995.

2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ two things. Risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel.

Now of course you can have a gospel without David. it's a minimal gospel. Why do you want the minimum gospel? The apostolic gospel preaches Jesus as descended from David.

And this is what enables us to understand what Jesus is, who he is and what he's doing. And every time in the New Testament we hear the word Christ. Christ. To fill out what that means we need to understand he's the Messiah of the Old Testament.

so that David like the Exodus was a rehearsal for the great redemption David is a rehearsal for the Messiah. And over the last few weeks that huge gap between the reality of David and the great promise of God hasn't it made us long for the coming of the true Messiah of God?

[15:17] This is the point. David is both prophet and Messiah. And sometimes when he is speaking by the Holy Spirit his words are the very words of Jesus.

He speaks for Jesus. He stands in Jesus' shoes and speaks with Jesus' voice. This is amazing. One more text before we go back to the Old Testament.

Romans 15. Let's go back left. Romans 15 page 949.

In Romans 15 the Apostle Paul he quotes from 2 Samuel 22 the whole chapter is about the great triumph of Jesus in his death and resurrection.

Verse 8 I tell you that Christ became Messiah became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm his promises given to the patriarchs in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy as it is written therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles.

[16:36] He's quoting David from 2 Samuel 22. I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name. This is quite stunning. Question who does Paul think is speaking in verse 9?

Is it us? No it's not. It is the words of the Messiah himself who is saying because of my death and resurrection therefore I will praise you or confess you or proclaim you among the Gentiles.

I think this ought to give us tingles actually as we start to see the connections in the scriptures.

In other words David is not just speaking as a prophet it's not that Jesus just comes as the fulfilment of prophecy as we go back and look at these psalms we are able to enter into the mind of Jesus Christ and understand how Jesus thinks about his own death and resurrection.

I just find that amazing. So let's go back shall we to 2 Samuel 22 and 2 Samuel 23 to these two psalms and I remind you what we're reading is what Jesus the Messiah is thinking spoken prophetically by David a thousand years before Christ.

[17:56] And I've got two points and we're entering into the second half of the sermon to those of you who are drifting. There are two points. The first point is about the first psalm which is 51 verses long which was written at the beginning of his rule.

Second psalm is 7 verses long written at the end of his rule because as you get older you're supposed to get briefer. That is my wish for all of you. I've reverently called this psalm the Messiah is very happy.

The Messiah is very happy. It's a long psalm of praise to God. But look at what David is facing verses 5 and 6. It's not simply his own death it's nothing short of the entire power of death.

The waves of death encompass me the torrents of destruction assailed me the cords of Sheol entangled me. Since the creation the waters remain a symbol of threat and chaos.

That's how God destroyed the world in the flood. They remain a symbol of darkness and chaos.

And that little idea of the cords of death is quoted by the apostle Peter of Jesus' death and resurrection in Acts chapter 2.

[19:11] So here we are seeing through the eyes of Jesus what Jesus is facing. And verses 8 to 16 I think this highly colourful and cosmic language describe what's going on on the cross.

We're allowed inside Jesus' experience. experience. And Jesus doesn't just face death for himself he faces death capital D capital E and he kills it. That's what the psalm says.

Jesus' death means the death of death. And I think these verses capture that ancient Christian idea of the harrowing of hell. That on the cross and in his death Jesus defeated death and entered into the place of the dead and liberated those who were held captive plundered the spoils of death.

Look at its cosmic reach verse 8. The earth reeled and rocked the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked because God was angry. In verse 10 he bowed the heavens and came down thick darkness were under his feet.

God comes down on Sinai glory with Sinai glory. The creator of the ends of the earth comes to confront all the enemies of creation and he comes in hot wrath to deal with the enemies of his people all that threatens to drown out his purpose and there's smoke and there's fire just as there was on Sinai.

[20:30] Or verse 14 the Lord thundered from heaven the most high out of his voice. Verse 16 the channels of the sea were seen the foundation of the world were laid bare. Today we've said the Apostles Creed and when we say he descended into hell what we mean is that Jesus truly died and when he died he proclaimed these words this is what happened as Christ pulled the sting from death for all who follow him.

And then from verse 17 I believe he now speaks about the resurrection. Verse 17 he sent from on high he took me out he drew me out of many waters verse 20 he brought me out into a broad place he rescued me because he delighted in me.

Or verse 49 you exalted me about those who rose against me you delivered me. Jesus' experience of the resurrection was the experience of vindication of all he said and did.

While David had the unique privilege of being exalted to be the Messiah over the nation of Israel Jesus has been highly exalted above all things and given a name which is above every name so

that at the name of Jesus all should bow and confess that he is Messiah Lord to the glory of the Father.

I think it also explains the crushing the smashing and the crushing in verse 43 where he crushes to dust his enemies David never did that I mean at the end of David's life the Philistines and the Amorites are still circling around it's describing all the enemies of humanity and all the enemies of God's good purposes which are embodied in death and I think it explains the surprise in verse 44 that David becomes the head of the nations because God's victory over death and God's victory over chaos in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were not just for Jesus sake but were for the nations so that the kingdom of God is pluriethnic multinational and eternal verse 50 for this I will praise you a Lord among the nations and sing praises to your name that's why the Messiah is so happy you see he's overjoyed that through him God has destroyed the destroyer and he's begun to create a people he's become the firstborn of many brothers and sisters of an expanding people who enter salvation through him that's happy

[23 : 00] Jesus the second psalm which is much briefer verses 1 to 7 of chapter 23 I don't I it's I've called it the Messiah is big or big news it's a much smaller psalm but it's reach is huge and I just want to point out two little things that make it very big the first is that the Messiah will come to be the universal ruler if you turn the page and look at verse 3 halfway through that verse when one rules justly over it's not the word is not men there I'll come back to that ruling in the fear of God he dawns on them like the morning light like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning like rain that makes the grass to sprout from the earth it's a beautiful picture of the rule of the Messiah isn't it it's not just an exercise of power it's righteousness and justice and his rule drives back chaos and alienation and corruption and he replaces corruption with shalom and his rule brings freshness and vitality and renewing and life the translation of men is not quite right it's not that the Messiah is supposed to rule over some men and not others in the Hebrew it's humanity it's humanity regarded as a race in other words

David is prophesying the rule of Jesus Christ over all human I know I know how deeply offensive that is but here's the point the exaltation of the Messiah over humanity is not for his sake but it spells salvation and shalom that's the connection here it's very big and it's big secondly because of the covenant verse 5 does not my house stand so with God he has made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and secure this is a very big Bible word it's one of the key ways the Bible speaks about God's relating to us when God created the world he made covenant with Adam determined to bless Adam and humanity with Noah God remade the covenant he re-established the covenant determined to bless humanity with Abraham God remade the covenant determined to bless humanity with Moses God remade the covenant and now we come to the last remaking of the covenant before we come to Jesus Christ and it reveals to us that

God's eternal covenant now is focused entirely on the coming of the Messiah and all the blessings of God will now be caught up in him that's why we lingered on 2 Samuel 7 the covenant of God our lives go up and our lives go down and our circumstances go round and round and history goes up and down sometimes it looks like chaos but not so for the purposes of God God is working all things for the blessing of humanity and at the heart of that is the person of Jesus Christ it's the heart of what God was doing raising up David and through his reign it's the heart of what God is doing today in 2012 in Vancouver he is exalting his Messiah and I think this has huge implications but because we've been going for a while I just want to point two implications for you to take away and meditate on the first is this the vital connection between suffering and glory the shape of the Psalms that we've looked at today are suffering to glory the shape of David's life was suffering to glory remember he was hounded and he was hunted but he never took the throne by force because he trusted God

I want to go a little bit deeper on this suffering and glory are not disconnected they're not just two stages in a sequence it's not you know we suffer now but it's through suffering that God brings glory this is absolutely key to understanding David it's key to understanding Jesus and it's key to understanding your life and my life again and again and again Jesus says that the Messiah must suffer to enter his glory it's not that he puts up with the bad and waits for the good but it is through the suffering through him becoming one of us and binding himself to us and then grinding our enemies to dust that he enters the glory and he opens the door for us to enter the glory as well you see our deliverance our renewal our hope our future all come through his suffering so it is for all of us who follow

Jesus isn't this the central tension of the Christian life the tension between suffering and glory the overlap of suffering and glory and the shape of our lives brothers and sisters is irrevocably marked by the shape of Jesus life suffering and glory not that we just hold our noses now and wait for the future because what Christ has done you see our suffering is transformed now it becomes part of our fellowship with Jesus in suffering we have fellowship with Jesus there's a vital connection between suffering and glory we have a suffering Messiah which doesn't mean you know it's not just an empty hero statement how brave and noble he is you remember that David suffered so that he could become God's king in God's way over God's kingdom and Jesus suffered for us as well to change our hope and in his suffering he dealt with everything that stands between us and God and in his suffering

[29 : 01] Jesus becomes our deliverer our saviour our refuge our rock and if you follow Jesus Christ our lives are shaped by the same dynamic we too will enter glory through suffering secondly and finally vital joy I know often when we speak on suffering and glory and often in the New Testament the weight is on the suffering part because we live in a culture that doesn't know what to do with suffering but in these psalms the weight is very decidedly and profoundly on the joyful side of the equation I don't know if you noticed that it's the joy of God entering the suffering and transforming it into glory that's where Paul takes this psalm in Romans 15 remember he said it all comes down to this the Messiah singing after his death and resurrection I want to confess you among the nations and sing your name to the world that is what Jesus is doing now that's what he's doing right now that's what he does when we meet together that's what this world is for it's for the Messiah to sing the praise of his father around the world but I just want you to see the intensity of this in the first two verses in verses 2 and 3

I go back and I finish with this 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 my stronghold and my refuge my savior you save me from violence it's such a spontaneous overflowing joyful wonder just want to be spontaneous for a moment and it's also very intimate do you notice do you notice the my there's nothing cold and casual and careless my rock my fortress my deliverer my God my rock my shield my salvation my stronghold my refuge my savior and since Jesus has suffered for us we can say to God we can take these words on our lips and say God you are my deliverer my hope my rock my refuge so may the God of hope fill us all with joy this joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may abound in hope Amen I believe I believe I moon at 16 or next year? I hope you have and have loved I and have loved so that