

God's Steadfast Love

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your great salvation given to us in Jesus.

And we ask that as we hear your word, your Holy Spirit will work in us very, very powerfully. That we will know the joy of your salvation in our lives. That you will strengthen us to praise you, to worship you, to live for you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, it's great to be here with you tonight. Welcome back from a picnic that many of you guys were at.

I'm glad you were able to come back for the service. And it's wonderful to hear the great news about the Roberts little Beatrice as well. And I know that all of you are praying for them.

And that will be a great gift to them as the weeks and months go by. And as the different challenges for Beatrice come out. But this is a great gift.

[0 : 59] I think from God to you guys as well as to the Roberts that Beatrice is with us now. So, praise God for that. As we're going along here, we're going to be, we're just almost at the end of 2 Samuel.

And I hope that there's not tears of sadness coming to the end of this long, long series that we've been part of. We're going to end next week. But today is an epilogue.

We're at the very end of things. And the story is sort of over with David. But this reading on 2 Samuel 22 gives us sort of a summary of David's life.

And as you're turning back there to page 274, I want to draw your attention to the white sheet, the parish life notes. There's a great letter on the front of it. And it was great for me to read that because it's about Caleb and Jordan at Kitsilano Secondary School.

And, you know, I think it would be a hard thing to come up with a sentence that kind of encapsulates your whole academic career up to age 18.

[2 : 12] How do you say your life in one sentence? And everybody got to say one and submit one. And they thanked God. They thanked Jesus Christ and talked about their personal relationship with him in that one sentence.

And I think that's just a wonderful testimony. And it says something about Caleb and Jordan's life. That the fundamental thing that's at the center of their life has to do with Jesus Christ.

It has to do with God. That accomplishment is not about them, first of all. It is about God and what he is about. And that's what this reading is about.

It is as though the author says, we got to come up with a summary for David's life. And they choose a psalm, which is mostly Psalm 18. And the reason they choose that psalm, because in one sentence, you can summarize David's life.

And very simply, that is, God has saved me. That's the theme of his life. God has delivered me. God has redeemed me.

[3 : 19] God has set me free. God has saved me. And that's what we are going to hear in a beautiful way in this psalm that we're seeing in 2 Samuel 22.

And I want to go through this psalm with you. And as you do, I want you to think about your own salvation. Because really, that sentence is your sentence as well.

It is your life theme if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't know the Lord Jesus yet, you're searching. This is what God is all about in the world.

He is drawing people to know him as the God who saves you. The God who delivers you. The God who frees you from sin. And we know this because right at the beginning of this psalm, end of verse 2, we see lots of things about saving.

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.

[4 : 27] My stronghold and my refuge. That's a place of safety. My savior, you save me from violence. I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised.

And I am saved from my enemies. And you see the writer saying, you know, you've heard this long story I've written. Starting with Hannah. And now it's ending in David's old age.

And with all that you've heard preached over the last nine months, we're hearing here that David's life is all about God saving him. It's all about salvation. And what David knows, the essence of salvation is that you are saved from something.

And David is very aware of what he's saved from. I don't know if you've ever been saved from danger, physical danger in your life. But if you have been, especially if you've been saved from death, you're very conscious of that thing that you were saved from.

The only time in my life where I think I've been in real danger of dying was a time when I made the very bright decision with some friends.

[5 : 40] We were driving in a canyon in South Dakota. And we'd been there many times. It was a beautiful, sunny day. And the sun was setting. We thought, oh, we want to go up to the top of that canyon, hike up really quickly, see the sunrise, see the sunset.

And so we went up there and saw this beautiful sunset. And then we realized there's one thing that's a problem about a canyon. If you're at the top of the canyon, you need to get down.

It gets a lot darker down there than it does up here. Very, very fast. So we started going down and started realizing it was getting dark and dark.

And there's lots of cliffs. You have to go down a certain way. And it got so dark that we couldn't see. We didn't have flashlights. And I was in front with a little stick trying to figure out where I'm going.

And suddenly I stepped off into nothingness. So it's that feeling, that sinking, literally feeling of the earth going out from underneath you. And the thing I remember saying, the first thing I said in my mind was, God, save me.

[6 : 44] Don't let me die. Don't let me die.

And I went to the beach height and got a ride from, it's actually somebody from the camp who's looking for us. We've been there for hours. And got fixed up in the hospital and so forth. But after that, this camp I was working at, whenever we went swimming in that area, we had to drive by the canyon, through the canyon.

Every time I looked at those cliffs, I thought, that was the place of danger. That is the place of death. And every time I looked at that, I say, how did I ever make it through that?

Well, David is no different there. His danger is very vivid to him. Look at verse 5. He says, And I want to stop right there and say that this is a real gift.

To be clear, completely clear about the danger that God has saved you from. To know with all your heart that there was danger that God has taken you away from.

[8 : 29] It's not a physical danger. It's extreme spiritual danger. It's the danger of sin that entangles you. It's the danger of spiritual death.

Of darkness without knowing God. Without knowing eternal life. Without knowing that you will see the face of God. And be welcomed by him. That is what Jesus saves us from by his death on the cross.

He actually grabs us from darkness, the Bible says, into the glorious light of God himself. This is salvation.

It's salvation from something. And you can look at those things and say, That is the awfulness that God has rescued me from. David's very aware of this in my life.

In his life. And he says in the next verse, In my distress, verse 7, And I called upon the Lord. To my God I called from his temple. He heard my voice. And my cry came to his ears.

[9 : 31] And there is this sense of wonder and thankfulness at this. That is salvation. It is calling on the name of God for help.

And often it's a very inarticulate call. It's not something that has to be a perfect prayer. In fact, it's usually the opposite. And yet God hears you.

He saves you. That's the promise in Jesus Christ. And David is absolutely amazed that the living God would reach into his life, place his hand on his life, and save him.

Would focus the attention of the almighty God upon him for his salvation. And he can't, with words, adequately describe how astounding and wonderful that is.

And so he takes the next 12 verses or so. 18, or verse 8 through 19. To talk about it in these incredible images. And we don't have time to read all of them.

[10 : 34] But look at verse 14. He says, Now, if you were living with David and saw some of the salvation that took place in his life, you would see things like David sneaking away from Saul and getting away from him.

You would see him at the last minute hear a decision from the Philistines so he didn't have to go with them when he was living with them to fight against Israel, which would have been political suicide for him.

If you had looked at David, you would have seen him, you would have seen Absalom defeated by David's men. That's one of the salvations. They'd be very tangible things.

A big victory over the Philistines. And it would be something that's very earthy that you could see. But David sees a deeper significance to this.

David sees God coming from heaven to rescue him. He is looking with sort of spiritual eyes to see the mighty God himself behind all of that coming to rescue him.

[12 : 17] And they're exuberant, powerful words of God's saving in those kind of mundane things in his life. And our salvation in Christ is no different.

His saving work in you, and I'd love to hear all of your testimonies, may have been very different for all of you. But it may have been very, very insignificant looking.

A prayer, a thought, a realization that yes, Jesus is true. It does make sense. He is one who saves.

And there is that quiet prayer that may have been a turning of one's life over to Jesus Christ. It may be the work of salvation is gradual growth in your life, which is part of our salvation.

It is prayer of praise that's very, very silent in you. There is a freedom from sin that you may be experiencing little by little. All of those don't look big, but they have eternal significance.

[13 : 21] It is God himself coming from heaven to rescue you. You could actually use these incredible images of David to say this is the significance of what God's doing in your life.

It has eternal significance. It's not just about that time or that little freedom from sin that happened. This is what salvation is about. And I love verse 20.

If you look at verse 20, it finishes that section and it says, God brought me out into a broad place. He rescued me because he delighted in me.

Now that's a verse of the place of salvation. And it's actually a picture of shalom, this peace that the Old Testament talks about, which is a deep word that goes into all of our relationships, including our relationship with God.

And literally that word wide place means roominess. He brings us into roominess. And that means a place of freedom from trouble, anxiety, and stress.

[14 : 28] You might know what this is like in your own life. When you feel trapped or your options have run out, physically you can feel very, your chest tightens up.

There is a sense of your options being closed in. All of these things are the idea of trouble that the Psalms talk about. Salvation is the very opposite.

It gives us roominess. It is a place of openness and freedom and airiness because of being at peace with God. It doesn't mean you stop being afflicted by these things.

But the place of salvation is a place where God drives out fear and gives instead his love and his peace, his rightness in relationships.

It is that place where God's steadfast love drives out fear. And that's the gift of Jesus in the forgiveness of sins. He gives us that wide place where we are not constricted by the things of fear and sin and resentment.

[15 : 38] And that's why Jesus said these words. He said, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. You are constricted. You are imprisoned. The slave does not remain in the house forever.

The son remains forever. So if the son shall set you free, you will be free indeed. He will bring you into that place of wideness, of roominess.

Jesus' name is God saves. And the God whose nature it is to save David saves us as well. And he brings us to that place of openness with the living God.

He brings us to that place of freedom that the forgiveness of sins gives us. It's the freedom of following him. And I wonder if you know that freedom and that peace that Jesus gives as he forgives you.

That is the salvation that God has given to you. That is what Jesus wants you to know every day. It's why that's part of our liturgy. The confession of sin and the declaration of the freedom of Christ in the forgiveness of our sins.

[16 : 45] It's salvation. And I love how the description of shalom continues. He says, he rescues me.

See verse 20. He rescues me because he delighted in me. Well, why did God do this for David? Why does he go to extraordinary lengths to rescue him and deliver him into the place of shalom?

David says, he rescued me because he delighted in me. And I think this is one of the most beautiful parts of this chapter, of this very long psalm.

Because here, God rescues his people because he delights in them. And he's saying that he chooses you because he loves you. When Jesus saves, he brings you to be God's children.

And God delights in his children even more than your parents do. Even more, if you are parents yourselves, he delights in us more than you delight in your children.

[17 : 48] It's an incredible thing. While I was typing up this sermon, my six-year-old son, Nicholas, decided that he wanted to do what I was doing. So he brought a laptop computer over to sit next to me as I was writing and typing.

And he said, I want to start doing it too. So I told him how to get into Word. And he started typing. It took a very long time for him. And he wrote out a little note.

And he made it really big. I think it was 48 font. And he went and he printed it for me. And I'll tell you what it said. Because I kept it for a reason.

This is it right here. So you can even read it from the back, I think. That's how big it is. It says, my dad is the best dad ever. I didn't prompt him. And I will love him forever.

I am Nicholas. And I'll probably save that forever too, right?

[18 : 49] And when I read that, the first thing I can think of, well, first of all, you can imagine that it warmed my heart to read that.

But you can imagine that I delight in him. And I delight in his brother Alexander as well. But that delight, which is pretty powerful, is a pale comparison to the delight that God has in you.

And this is what David is singing about here. The delight God the Father has in Jesus, he delights in Jesus. He has that same delight in you.

This is the gift of salvation. One of the very few times in the Bible where God speaks audibly and we hear the words are the words to Jesus where he says, This is my beloved son.

With you I am well pleased. Because we are in Christ, in salvation, he says to you tonight, You are my beloved daughter.

[19 : 56] You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. And he says to you tonight, I rescued you because I delighted in you.

And that is the truth of salvation. Is that something that you believe? Do you accept his delight in you? It's the truth of Jesus. His saving and God's delighting in you actually go together.

They cannot be taken apart. It is why we are able to call God Father in Jesus. His delight, our salvation, our together. Now I want you to know that if you've been through this sermon series with us, there is not much delightful about David in the past 11 chapters.

I don't know if you've noticed that. We have seen him as an adulterer, as a murderer, as a weak man, and a very flawed man. And yet here he dares to say that Jesus rescues him because, or that God rescued him because God delights in him.

Not only that, look at verses 21 through 25. It's a little bit hard to accept this. It says, The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands.

[21 : 16] He rewarded me, for I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For 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. And the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.

Really, David? Can that actually be? And certainly, when we see this, we see a contradiction.

And this is not an accident. It's not like the writer is suddenly realizing that he made a mistake, as you pick it up here in the, you know, 3,000 years later. This is something that was deliberately put there.

The writer has put it there. Why? Well, it is a bit of a puzzle. We've seen David's guilt, his unrighteousness, his failures, his weakness, his evil deeds.

[22 : 18] But what we're seeing here is that God is not dealing with him on the basis of that unrighteousness. Instead, he is dealing with David on the basis of David's righteousness.

And the question is, well, what righteousness? I haven't seen much of that in the past 10 chapters. Well, the clue is in the next verse, where David turns from writing about what David is like to writing about what God is like.

So look at verse 26. It says here that, God lightens his darkness.

Somehow, God deals with David according to his righteousness, not according to his massive unrighteousness. And that points to a much deeper salvation.

It's not just about that David has been saved from an evil king, Saul, or from the Philistine army, or from Goliath, or from Absalom. He is saved from unrighteousness somehow, from spiritual death, from God's judgment, which he really believes in.

[23 : 42] It is by God's mercy. And the only one who can make sense of this is Jesus. It's not until Jesus comes that we can possibly understand how this could be.

Only Jesus can give David, or you, or me, a righteousness that is not our own. And this is critical for us, because you and I have our own failures, our sins, our addictions, our unrighteousness.

We have some of David's great failings. And therefore, we wonder, how can God delight in me? And certainly, Satan wants you to question that.

But the nature of God is to save. And Jesus' forgiveness is declared on the cross in great power, very clearly. It is that God now delights in you, because of what Jesus has done for us.

And if we don't accept God's delight in us, it's because we don't trust God's word. We don't trust what Jesus has done on the cross.

[24 : 52] And so we need verses 31 through 37. And it says, This God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord proves true. He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

For who is God but the Lord? Who is a rock except our God? This God is my strong refuge, and has made my way blameless. He has made my feet like the feet of a deer, and set me secure on the heights.

He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your gentleness made me great.

You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. You see, his gentleness makes you great.

And that word gentleness means stooping down for us. Jesus gives us what we do not deserve, and it is salvation. It is God's victory over the enemies of God, which are sin and death and rebellion.

[25 : 57] And I notice that we're getting close to the time that I need to close, but I want you to know that in verses 38 through 46, we have a description here of victory over David's enemies.

And it's important for us to read that because that is the essence of salvation. It is a victory over the enemies of God. David's enemies, the enemies that actually want to destroy the anointed, are God's enemies as well.

And God's saving work is his victory over those enemies. For us, it is victory over sin and death and separation from God. It is the incredible event of Jesus' victory on the cross that God, that is why God delights in you and saves you.

It's why God's steadfast love cannot be shaken or taken from you. And I want to close by saying two things very briefly.

There is a response that David says that you and I, that he has when he looks at his salvation, how God has saved him, what God has saved him from, what God has saved him to.

[27 : 10] That's the delight of God, the wide place of salvation. When he thinks of those things, there are two things he does. The first thing he does is to praise God.

So verse 47, the only thing that he can do in response is to say this, the Lord lives, blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.

Blessed be the God and rock of my salvation. And what we should understand about praise is that praise means making God known.

Praise means making his truth known. And that's why David recounts all the ways God has saved him. He recounts who God is very clearly. He is a rock. He is a refuge.

He is a deliverer. He's a stronghold. And he says, God has done great things. God is a great God in these ways. And that is the basis of his praise.

[28 : 07] It's not general or vague. He says, what God has done for him and the steadfast love that he has made for David. And we should remember that our salvation is far greater than David's.

And what that's meant to do is to bring praise out of us, his people. And I hope that God is drawing you through this psalm to praise, to bring you out of yourself.

That is something that is contagious. Praise deepens our relationships with God. It deepens our relationship with one another as well. It changes all those relationships.

Living a life of praise is rich. It is the wide place of salvation. And I love the way that the prayer book talks about this when we give God thanks.

He says, it says in the prayer book that we are meant to praise God not only with our lips but in our lives. And that brings us to the second thing that David does.

[29 : 09] Not only does he say that we praise, live a life of praise, but we live for God. And so if you look at chapter 23, verses 1 through 7, in verses 1 through 3, he says, David says, God's speaking through me here.

Listen to this. This is a prophecy. And he says this at the end of verse 3. Just flip the page. He says, when one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, and it's talking about Jesus, one who is to come, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

For does not my house, in other words, my descendants, stand with God? For he has made an everlasting covenant. There's going to be an eternal king, and that is Jesus, ordered in all things and secure.

For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? And verse 6 and 7 says that not only will that happen, but that will mean that one day Jesus will drive away all evil.

Worthless men, those that are evil, are like thorns that are thrown away and consumed by fire. And what that's telling us is that when Jesus rules, there is a place where the light of God shines on them and where people live in a way that they are growing as God intended them, like grass.

[30 : 38] And we are in this fortunate place here tonight, if you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, where you know the good rule of God over you.

The righteous rule of God has come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. And those who will live the Christian life love Jesus. They love his rule over them.

They love the obedience that comes because we are free. the freedom and joy of that obedience. And it is his real and wonderful light that you walk in.

So don't keep living in the darkness. Walk in his light. Walk under the rule of the Lord Jesus who has saved you. And you will grow because of that rule as his light shines on you and as his truth and his goodness rains down on you.

His rule is your salvation. So may our Lord Jesus Christ restore unto you tonight through this psalm the joy of that salvation every day.

[31 : 44] Amen.