

## 2 Samuel 22

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Preacher: Justin Hawkins

[ 0 : 00 ]     Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

All of the joy and tragedy of that swan's life was compressed into that single song, which was to be sung only once, with the final breath as it left the lungs of that swan.

And any man who heard that song was ruined for life, for all other music, which was, by comparison, dull and lifeless.

[ 2 : 02 ]     But, of course, no one ever heard such a song from a swan. The story's a myth.

And the Greeks knew that. But what is false with swans is sometimes true of men. And so it is with this myth.

Swans, at their dying breath, sing no songs. But the life of a person culminates in something.

There is for us a pinnacle, a summit that one reaches at some point in life. And when one reaches that summit and surveys all the glories, joys, and tragedies of life, past and future, the soul of a man sings.

But what he or she sings is not so clear. So what shall be the song that you sing as you survey a life gone by?

[ 3 : 18 ]     In what song will your life culminate? Our text for today is a Psalm of David. It's placed in our text this evening in the 22nd chapter of 2 Samuel.

It's repeated in Psalm 18, but we're going to look at the version tonight in 2 Samuel. You can turn there with me now if you'd like. 2 Samuel chapter 22. Though it is difficult to identify with precision when in his life David wrote this psalm, the author of 2 Samuel puts it toward the end of the text.

Toward the end of his life as a culminating moment of all of David's life. You'll see right after this in 23 we say we have the last words of David.

Which is interesting and perplexing because after the last words of David, he goes off and says some other stuff. We'll get to that next week. What we're dealing with now is chapter 22.

22 placed by the narrator as a culminating moment in David's life. And my prayer for tonight is that we look together at David's psalm.

[ 4 : 30 ]     And as we do so, we would gain a vision for the shape we desire our lives to take. And for the song we desire to sing at our lives culmination.

Our text this evening teaches us one thing. My grand point and three sub points. The life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise.

The life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise. We see this together in three ways tonight, I hope, from this text.

The life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for battles won, for righteousness vindicated, and for the glory of God himself.

For battles won, for righteousness vindicated, and for the glory of God himself. Now let's look at our text together. It's a little too long for us to read straight through, so I'll read sections of it and give you sort of a running commentary as we go.

[ 5 : 37 ] Let's look first at the fact that the life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for battles won. Look with me. 2 Samuel chapter 22, verse 1 through 6.

And David spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

He said, 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, my refuge, 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. For the waves of death encompassed me.

The torrents of destruction assailed me. The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me.

[ 6 : 51 ] This text is a song of deliverance. Before we can have deliverance, we need to get an appreciation for the despair that David is in.

At the writing of this song, the narrator wants us to see David as the conquering king whose enemies, the Philistines, Saul, Absalom, lie defeated around his feet.

David has taken the field of battle in his life over and over and over again, and every time the Lord has given him the victory. We've seen this over the last months as we've gone through David's life chapter by chapter.

And so after he has defeated these enemies, he's now cleared out a living place for the people of God in Israel. He's established a reign of peace. That would be used by his son Solomon to marshal all of the resources of Israel, not this time for warfaring, but to build the dwelling place of God.

Now it's tempting to read these stories over the last several chapters and get bored with them as though the outcome of them is not in question. We know David doesn't die in these battles.

[ 8 : 16 ] Therefore, we can't feel the drama. We've had spoilers without spoiler alerts. And it takes some work for us to go back into the actual stories and feel how tenuous the circumstance is.

If we are tempted to get bored with these battles, notice that is not how David experienced these battles. David seems here more confident than not that he is going to be destroyed by his many enemies.

If ever we are tempted to read our Bibles as though the people within his pages are characters and not real, living, sometimes fearful human beings like we are, let these words of David correct our error.

David knows the fear of death rattling his very bones. And I wonder, if we begin to see David like this, does he not begin to look an awful lot more like us?

I wonder if you've ever felt this fear of death rattling your bones, of torrents of destruction as they threaten to overwhelm you.

[ 10 : 00 ] This fear that though God has made promises to you as he did to David at his anointing as king, yet nevertheless the torrents of destruction assail you.

The promises of God are distant. The swords of your enemies are near. And you are afraid. But take heart.

Be not afraid. The Lord's anointed king, you see, has also been where you are in the pain of the, in the pangs of death.

In this fearful state of enemies encroaching all around him, what is David's response? Look here in verse seven. In my distress, I called upon the Lord and to my God I called.

From his temple he heard my voice and my cry came to his ears. In my distress, in my distress, I called upon the Lord.

[ 11 : 15 ] The depths of distress drive David into the arms of his God. When the battle for his life is most intense, David flees to one final fortress, not his citadel, castle, but God himself.

What shall be the outcome for those who do such a thing? If you identify with David in the fear of death overwhelming you and the torrents of destruction coming upon you, and you were to do like David, and in your distress call out to your God, what would be the outcome for you?

What happens for David here? From his temple, he heard my voice and my cry came to his ears.

Remember that his earthly temple is not yet built. The temple he refers to here is the temple of the lofty dwelling places of God in heaven. David's God is enthroned in heaven, but he is not a God who is aloof from the concerns of his people.

He's not too busy managing the spiraling of galaxies light years away to hear the whimpering voice of a small, fragile man, one of God's servants, lying on his belly in a cave, as the soldiers of Saul surround him.

[ 12 : 58 ] He's praying for deliverance. Just last week, scientists revealed that they found a black hole, diameter of which is 22 billion suns across.

If it were to be placed at the center of our solar system, it would encompass all of the planets except Pluto, which isn't a planet, unfortunately, anymore. God keeps that there.

At every moment, he sustains it in its position in the universe. And the God who is lofty and enthroned in his temple hears the voice of his servants who cry to him in their distress.

Not only does he hear, he acts. And he acts as one who has all of the power required to sustain the universe in its place.

Read with me. Verse 8. David says, My cry came before his ears. What did he do? The earth reeled and rocked. The foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked because he was angry.

[ 14 : 22 ] Smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down.

Thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew. He was seen on the wings of the wind. He made darkness around him his canopy. Thick clouds, a gathering of water.

Out of the brightness before him, coals of fire flamed forth. The Lord thundered from heaven and the Most High uttered his voice. He sent out his arrows and scattered them, lightning and routed them.

Then the channels of the sea were seen. The foundations of the world were laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

We are tempted to read these things as hyperbole. I would suggest that they are understatement. The heavens shook.

[ 15 : 30 ] He bowed the heavens and came down. This is effortless for David's God, who is so big and yet so intimate.

Once David's God gets involved, then the outcome can be in no doubt. As it was for him, so it shall be for you.

And so as we consider together what we desire our song to be at the end of our lives that we sing, we ought to learn from David in the heat of battle not to flee, not to despair.

For the battles that we fight will one day be the fodder for praise. The temptation to run and despair that you feel now will one day at the end of your life be the occasion for great rejoicing.

Do not lose heart. Be not afraid. I would suggest that one of the reasons that we come together week by week to join as the people of God is to share our stories with each other of the victories that we have seen God win in battles fought for us.

[ 16 : 59 ] It's despairing to see only our small bit of the battlefield that lies in front of us, especially when victory seems so uncertain.

Therefore, stir each other up with tales of the mighty works of God. And therefore we will see that the life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for battles won.

Secondly, we see from this text, the life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for righteousness vindicated. Look with me at verse 21.

David, still praising the Lord, says, The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands, he rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God.

All of 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.

[ 18 : 16 ] According to my cleanness in his sight. Now I suspect that this is very likely the most difficult part of our passage for us to understand.

Since we know who David was. We know his many failings. If he's putting on an airbrushed image of himself here, we know better. Now one interpretation of this passage suggests that David wrote these words before his decline into sin with Bathsheba.

But that's not the way the narrator presents him to us here. The narrator presumes we've been reading along. And we have been. And we know the terrible things that David has done.

Adultery and murder are among them. And here we find somebody saying that he has kept the ways of the Lord, have not departed from them in any regard.

We are tempted to look at him and say, David, that's nonsense. Some cynics might interpret this simply as David trying to escape blame for his fault.

[ 19 : 23 ] But that wouldn't explain the Psalms, he writes. Wherein he confesses his sin to God. David is not one who runs from his sin. Except to run from his sin to his God.

And that I think is why he can say the things he says here. Instead, I think we ought to see here that David is convinced of two things about God and his sin.

The first, God really does put behind him the sins of his people. He really does. Secondly, God's grace empowers his people to live righteously.

That first point, God truly does put behind him the sins of his people. You see, all of this that David says here occurs within the covenant that God has made with David.

God has already covenanted to elect him as his anointed one. To forgive his many sins. Within the covenant with God, all of these things about the blamelessness of a murderer and adulterer, they're all true.

[ 20 : 35 ] God really does forget David's sin. Not like some passive-aggressive friend who makes a show about not bringing up your error by bringing up your error.

Not like one who continually holds it over you and then holds their forgiveness over you as well. That's not the way God works.

He drowns our sins in the depths of the sea. He takes them into the pit of hell and burns them there. They're gone. You remember them better than he does.

Of this, David is very convinced, though he doesn't give an argument for how it works. We'll get to that in a bit. So, God truly does put behind him the sins of his people.

Secondly, I think David is convinced that God's grace empowers his people to live righteously. God's grace empowers his people to live righteously. Look at the way he says the things that he's done.

[ 21 : 42 ] Look at verse 30, talking about his military endeavors. He says, For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall.

By you, by my God, I can do these things. David is aware of the fact that the motivating force behind all of his military success is the power of God.

He is not acting at any moment in this psalm independent of the grace of God. Look again at verse 33. Not only are David's military exploits motivated by the grace of God, but also his moral exploits are empowered by the grace of God.

Verse 33. The Lord is my strong refuge. He has made my way blameless. He has done this. I don't merely sit here blameless before him by my own doing.

He had some agency in this. But if you think that these things are less than obvious in our text, I don't blame you. What is unclear for David about how all this stuff works is clear for us.

[ 22 : 58 ] We know how God can forget, really forget the sins of his people so that we can really say that we stand blameless before him. And we know how God's grace empowers us to do good action.

We know something about God that David didn't know. We have better insight into this mystery than David did. How does it work?

The one who is absent from this text thus far, but not until the end of the chapter, is Jesus. For the Christian, Jesus is the reason that we are able to stand blameless before God.

Jesus and the purchasing of our souls that he did on a cross and the Holy Spirit that he sent to indwell the lives of those who love him make it possible for us to be motivated by God to good works.

Jesus does this. Jesus makes David not a liar. Jesus has been doing that for all of us ever since.

[ 24 : 19 ] We'll come back to Jesus in a bit. But we see then that those who take their refuge in the fortress of God have good confidence that they will never be ashamed.

The life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for righteousness vindicated. Thirdly and finally, the life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for the glory of God himself.

The glory of God himself. Look with me at verse 47 and following. The Lord lives.

And blessed be my rock and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation. The God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me who brought me out from my enemies.

You exalted me above those who rose against me. You delivered me from men of violence. For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations and sing praises to your name.

[ 25 : 36 ] Great salvation he brings to his king. And he shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.

The life of God's beloved culminates in joyful praise for God himself. Look at that first phrase in 47. The Lord lives.

Had nothing in this chapter been written other than that, we would have sufficient motivation for praise. The Lord lives. He is who he is.

He cannot be any other than he is. He is good. He is love. Therefore, who cares what the Philistines do?

Yes, it's wonderful that they are now smitten, destroyed by David. But the Lord lives.

[ 26 : 42 ] And though you may not see now victory in the battles you fight the way David himself did not in the middle of the battles see victory coming for him, the Lord lives.

And tomorrow morning you will wake up and the Lord will live. And therefore, you will have reason for rejoicing tonight as you lay down and tomorrow as you rise up.

And so long as that sun shines on you and for trillions of years afterwards, you will have a reason to rejoice because the Lord lives.

But that's not all. Verse 51. Great salvation he brings to his king and he shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.

Great salvation he brings. How very little David knows the truth of this statement.

[ 27 : 54 ] You see, this text, this chapter, frames the entire text of Samuel, first and second Samuel. And if you look on the other side of the frame for a parallel, what you find is this.

Hannah's song. Hannah, the one who prayed, begged the Lord for a child and the Lord gave her Samuel. And she sings just like David does here.

All of these histories are framed by songs. When Hannah begged the Lord for a son to rid her of the disgrace of her barrenness, the Lord responded by giving her Samuel, which set in motion this series of events that would culminate in the anointing of David.

But it wouldn't really culminate there. No. Samuel, you see, is prologue to David. But David is prologue to another one who would come. Hannah could little imagine the grand story of which she was becoming a part when she mumbled her prayers through tears.

David could little imagine the grandeur of what God would do in answering his prayers. David knows the goodness of God. But there is so much goodness of God that David does not know.

[ 29 : 27 ] And who knows what story you are in the middle of when you pray your prayers through tears. Like Hannah, alone, barren, disgraced.

Or like David, alone, fleeing from Saul, hiding in dank, damp caves, praying to the Lord who sustains the universe.

And the Lord does greater than they asked for. Has he stopped responding to the prayers of his people in that way?

No. God, you see, is always doing greater than we realize. And when David here thanks the Lord for the salvation, he brings from the Philistines, he knows little of the salvation that is to come through one that will come out of his own lineage.

When God makes to David the promise to put one of his seed on the throne forever, little does David know that the one who is foretold is God himself.

[ 30 : 52 ] When we give praise to God, you see, for his gracious works, be they for righteousness vindicated or for battles won, we can be confident that our words express a slim fraction of his greatness and glory.

No matter how magnificent your praise is to God, it is always understatement. For God is enthroned in glory.

Far surpassing the minds of angels, far surpassing the minds of angels, trillions and trillions of years of study will yield but a fraction, an infinitely small fraction of the glory of God.

There will always be more to rejoice in, to discover about the glory of God. That's what makes heaven so worth looking forward to. No harps and naked winged babies on clouds, no infinite ravishment with the glory of God.

Great salvation he brings to his king, he shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring, to the one who will come from the line of David and all who will associate themselves with the one who comes from the line of David.

[ 32 : 18 ] Salvation he will bring to them. And this is how David can say he walks in righteousness. This is how he says he can do great things.

This is how he can say the Lord has won for him great battles. In retrospect, all of this makes so much more sense than it did for David. We can see God being gracious to David in a way that David could not see.

God was in David's life preparing the grounds not only for the building of a temple but for the birth of a son, Jesus himself. Yes, very shortly God would make his dwelling place with man in the temple but most supremely in the incarnation of Jesus.

These things are so great that the beauty of even the swan song is not adequate to tell the full glory of God. We will never exhaust the praises of God even with those last songs surveying the entirety of our life and the graciousness of God to us.

We will never exhaust his praise. The heart of God's people then yearn for more tongues to sing.

[ 33 : 44 ] Yes, indeed, for a thousand tongues to sing as we ourselves will sing very shortly. For a thousand tongues to sing our great Redeemer's love. That is the desire for the people of God.

The greatest poetry that we can muster, the greatest rationale that we can discover is insufficient to plumb the depths of God's love and mercy. And so we're going to need infinity, eternity to do it.

And we're going to need each other that we can bask in the glory of God directly and reflected in each other. And if you desire to have a life that goes about itself day by day preparing to sing such a grand song of God's praise, day by day commit yourself to practicing this, to beholding the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed in the scripture, in the words of Christ spoken in scripture, and in the image of God displayed in the ones who sit next to you and behind you and before you.

Commit yourself to the love of God and neighbor experience your soul to be ravished by Christ and prepare yourself to sing a song of praise for eternity to come.

God let's pray together. We shall sing very soon Lord Christ that we desire a thousand tongues to sing your great praise but we know that a thousand tongues would be insufficient to sing your praise and therefore we humbly come to you and we say thank you for the grand things you've done for us in Christ.

[ 35 : 49 ] We pray that even as we go from this place tonight you would give us greater and clearer glimpses of what you've done for us and that new morning by new morning your mercies would be likewise new to us.

That from this day until the day when our lungs expel their last breath we would have clearer and clearer pictures of you. And that after one day you breathe back life into our mortal bodies once again we would have infinite resources for singing to you a song of joyful praise.

In the name of Jesus I ask these things. Amen.