

24. A Song of Triumph

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"The happiest place on earth" these inviting words are arched above the entrance to Disneyland inviting thousands of people every day to take away their troubles like heavy overcoats and escape to a land of sunshine and storybook adventures.

Our hearts long for a place like Disneyland – a place where flowers bloom year-round, dreams come true and precisely on schedule. The good guys always win and children of all races sing "It's a Small World" in perfect harmony. But where we live, Main Street is littered with trash and lined with boarded-up windows. Disneyland's Main Street, on the other hand, offers parades and popcorn, huggable cartoon characters and horse-drawn carriage rides, sparkling lights, and dazzling fireworks. What a great place to live!

Unfortunately, we can only visit Disneyland. Each night, when the park closes down, the lights go out, the music ends, and the magic melts like a half-eaten ice cream cone.

A Disneyland adventure may help us forget our problems for a while, but it doesn't solve them. Thankfully, God gives us more than a very expensive make-believe magic kingdom. His kingdom offers us solid hope for the real world. He meets us in the panic and stress of our everyday life, here the tigers are real and the roller coaster rides don't always end safely.

With minor variations, this psalm is the same as Psalm 18. As we enter the final phase of David's life, the long shadows of age are stretching across his rugged face. Instead of being a season of rest and reflection, however, David's twilight years bring even more storms for him to endure.

Regardless, God delivers David each time:

- from Goliath
- from Saul
- from David's own sinful passions
- from backsliding
- from Israel's enemies
- from Absalom and all the other enemies of David.

As we study the praise of David, we find four major themes of the deliverance of God.

A. WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, THE LORD IS OUR ONLY SECURITY

2 Samuel 22:1-20 Then David spoke to the Lord the words of this song, on the day when the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. 2 And he said: "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; 3 The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence. 4 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies. 5 "When the waves of death surrounded me, The floods of ungodliness made me afraid. 6 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me. 7 In my dis-

tress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry entered His ears. 8 "Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry. 9 Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it. 10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down With darkness under His feet. 11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew; And He was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12 He made darkness canopies around Him, Dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 13 From the brightness before Him Coals of fire were kindled. 14 "The Lord thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice. 15 He sent out arrows and scattered them; Lightning bolts, and He vanquished them. 16 Then the channels of the sea were seen, The foundations of the world were uncovered, At the rebuke 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, From those who hated me; For they were too strong for me. 19 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the Lord was my support. 20 He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.

David piles title upon title in praising God. God's work for David is so big and comprehensive that it can't be contained in a single title.

Each title is meaningful to David because God has fulfilled the meaning of the title in David's experience. This isn't just a list of the names of God one might find in systematic theology. This is the knowledge of God combined with the right experience of God.

Faith does not completely depend on knowledge, but the right knowledge of God gives great strength to faith. When we get to know God for who He is, it is easy to trust Him.

The enemy of our soul wants us to believe that we can't call upon the Lord in our distress – as if we have to be right with God all the time and sitting peacefully in a prayer chapel to pray rightly. David knew that God hears our distress signals from any situation. David knew that the victory was due to God's hand, not due to his own ingenuity or ability. Without support from the Lord David would fall.

Some of us wonder if God would answer all of our prayers in the same manner as David. I firmly believe that God does not have a pet Christian. I don't believe that He would do something extra because it is king David. I believe that the difference is not in God's treatment toward us, but our acceptance of God's way. King David had a heart after God's own so that he could understand God's heart.

Too often we are so preoccupied with our own thoughts of what God should do for our situations that we don't see His way or hear His voice. That is the reason why we complain rather than accepting and rejoicing as David did. Though our enemies deal harshly with us, the Lord will support us. What keeps His mighty arms always open, always willing to hold us when we need Him? David gave the answer: "He delivered me because He delighted in me." Let's hang on to that truth in the midst of our calamities. Because He cares for us, He feels our panic. Because He delights in us, He IS our security.

B. WHEN DAYS ARE DARK, THE LORD IS OUR ONLY LIGHT

2 Samuel 22:21-32 "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has 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 blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. 25 Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyes. 26 "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; 27 With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. 28 You will save the humble people; But Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down. 29 "For You are my lamp, O Lord; The Lord shall enlighten my darkness. 30 For by You I can run against a troop; By my God I can leap over a wall. 31 As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. 32 "For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?"

David isn't claiming sinless perfection. He speaks of his righteousness through God's forgiveness, mercy, and righteousness. We can come to God in prayer with the same claim, but not on the basis of our own righteousness, but the righteousness when we received Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Carrying a lamp into a forest night doesn't guarantee we'll see all the trees. It only means that we can see a few steps ahead of us, far enough to keep our footing sure. Likewise, as the Lord lights our path, He may not shine all the answers to the shadowy questions in our minds, but He will give us all the light we need to scale life's obstacles with confidence and agility.

There is something in true humility that prompts the grace and mercy of God and there is something in pride and haughtiness that prompts His resistance and displeasure. Humility isn't necessarily a low opinion of self, rather it is a combination of the accurate opinion of self and simple self-forgetfulness. Humility is others-centered, not self-centered.

True greatness does not lie with those who strive for worldly fame, rather it lies with those who choose to serve in Jesus' name.

C. WHEN OUR WALK IS WEAK, THE LORD IS OUR ONLY STRENGTH

2 Samuel 22:33-47 God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect. 34 He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places. 35 He teaches my hands to make war, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 36 "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great. 37 You enlarged my path under me; So my feet did not slip. 38 "I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them; Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. 39 And I have destroyed them and wounded them, So that they could not rise; They have fallen under my feet. 40 For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose against me. 41 You have also given me the necks of my enemies, So that I destroyed those who hated me.

42 They looked, but there was none to save; Even to the Lord, but He did not answer them. 43 Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I trod them like dirt in the streets, And I spread them out. 44 "You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people; You have kept me as the head of the nations. A people I have not known shall serve me. 45 The foreigners submit to me; As soon as they hear, they obey me. 46 The foreigners fade away, And come frightened from their hideouts. 47 "The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, The Rock of my salvation!

David was by no means strong in himself. In fact, when he was ruled by his own carnal passions, his seemingly solid-marble character proved to be cracked and chipped and flawed. The key to David's strength was that he acknowledged God as the source. David knew the principle of Ephesians 6:10 long before Paul penned the words.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

God has a resource of power that is His might and He makes available to us by faith. We don't have to be strong in our might, but we can be strong in His might. The Lord turned David's battlegrounds into proving grounds for his faith. For when David was at his weakest, God was at His strongest. When David was crumbling sand, God was the Solid Rock.

D. WHEN OUR FUTURE IS FOGGY, THE LORD IS OUR ONLY HOPE

2 Samuel 22:48-51 It is God who avenges me, And subdues the peoples under me; 49 He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. 50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name. 51 "He is the tower of salvation to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore."

Are we unsure of tomorrow? Parts of our future will always be a mystery to us. But there are a few things we can count on as God's children – the eternal promise that cut through the clouds like shafts of sunlight: God's loving-kindness, the guidance of His Word, His strength when our faith is weak, and His fountain of hope when all our streams have run dry. We can count on His faithfulness.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) God has the strength to deliver us from any problem.

Sometimes He does and some times He doesn't. He didn't promise to take away every problem – not in this life, anyway. However, He promised to take us through them. He offers security, light, power, and hope. Real help for the real world.

2) Faith does not completely depend on knowledge, but the right knowledge of God gives great strength to faith.

When we get to know God for who He is, it is easy to trust Him.

3) Humility is other-centered, not self-centered.

Humility isn't necessarily a low opinion of self. It is a combination of an accurate opinion of self and simple self-forgetfulness.