

CHAPTER 22

This chapter is a psalm, a psalm of praise; we find it afterwards inserted among David's psalms (Psalm 18) with some little variation. We have it here as it was first composed for his own closed and his own harp; but there we have it as it was afterwards delivered to the chief musician for the service of the church, a second edition with some amendments; for, though it was calculated primarily for David's case, yet it might indifferently serve the devotion of others, in giving thanks for their deliverances; or it was intended that his people should thus join with him in his thanksgivings, because, being a public person, his deliverances were to be accounted public blessings and called for public acknowledgments. The inspired historian, having largely related David's deliverances in this and the foregoing book, and one particularly in the close of the foregoing chapter, thought fit to record this sacred poem as a memorial of all that had been before related. Some think that David penned this psalm when he was old, upon a general review of the mercies of his life and the many wonderful preservations God had blessed him with, from first to last. We should in our praises, look as far back as we can, and not suffer time to wear out the sense of God's favours. Others think that he penned it when he was young, upon occasion of some of his first deliverances, and kept it by him for his use afterwards, and that, upon every new deliverance, his practice was to sing this song. But the book of Psalms shows that he varied as there was occasion, and confined not himself to one form. Here is,

I. The title of the psalm (v. 1).

II. The psalm itself, in which, with a very warm devotion and very great fluency and copiousness of expression,

- 1.** He gives glory to God.
- 2.** He takes comfort in him; and he finds matter for both,
 - (1.)** In the experiences he had of God's former favours.
 - (2.)** In the expectations he had of his further favours. These are intermixed throughout the whole psalm.

2 SAMUEL 22:1

DAVID'S SONG OF PRAISE

Observe here,

I. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart: many were those that hated him, and sought his ruin; Saul is particularly named, either,

1. As distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations. Saul hated David, but David did not hate Saul, and therefore would not reckon him among his enemies; or, rather,

2. As the chief of his enemies, who was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let not those whom God loves marvel if the world hate them.

II. Those that trust God in the way of duty shall find him a present help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so. God delivered him out of the hand of Saul. He takes special notice of this. Remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular emphasis. He delivered him also *out of the hand of all his enemies*, one after another, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another; and David, from his own experience, has assured us *that, though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers them out of them all*, ^{<PS19>}Psalm 34:19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all that are his, ^{<2TI18>}2 Timothy 4:18.

III. Those that have received many signal mercies from God ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. David spoke, not only to himself, for his own pleasure, not merely to those about him, for their instruction, but *to the Lord*, for his honour, *the words of this song*. Then we sing with grace when we sing to the Lord. In distress he *cried with his voice* (^{<PS142>}Psalm 142:1), therefore with his voice he gave thanks.

Thanksgiving to God is the sweetest vocal music.

IV. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God: *In the day that God delivered him he sang this song.* While the mercy is fresh, and our devout affections are most excited by it, let the thank-offering be brought, that it may be kindled with the fire of those affections.

2 SAMUEL 22:2-51

DAVID'S THANKSGIVING

Let us observe, in this song of praise,

I. How David adores God, and gives him the glory of his infinite perfections. There is none like him, nor any to be compared with him (v. 32): *Who is God, save the Lord?* All others that are adored as deities are counterfeits and pretenders. None is to be relied on but he. *Who is a rock, save our God?* They are dead, but *the Lord liveth*, v. 47. They disappoint their worshippers when they most need them. But *as for God his way is perfect*, v. 31. Men begin in kindness, but end not — promise, but perform not; but God will finish his work, and his word is tried, and what we may trust.

II. How he triumphs in the interest he has in this God, and his relation to him, which he lays down as the foundation of all the benefits he has received from him: *He is my God*; as such he cries to him (v. 7), and cleaves to him (v. 22); “and, if *my God*, then *my rock*” (v. 2), that is, “my strength and my power (v. 33), the rock under which I take shelter (he who is to me as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land), the rock on which I build my hope,” 5:3. Whatever is my strength and support, it is *the God of my rock that makes it so*; nay, he is *the God of the rock of my salvation* (v. 47): my saving strength is in him and from him. David often hid himself in a rock (1 Samuel 24:2), but God was his chief hiding-place. “He is my fortress, in which I am safe and think myself so — *my high tower*, or stronghold, in which I am out of the reach of real evils — the *tower of salvation* (v. 51), which can never be sealed nor battered, nor undermined. Salvation itself saves me. Am I in distress? he is my deliverer — struck at, shot at? he is my shield — pursued? he is my refuge — oppressed? he is my saviour, that rescues me out of the hand of those that seek my ruin. Nay, he is the *horn of my salvation*, by which I am strongly protected, and

my enemies are strongly pushed.” Christ is spoken of as the *horn of salvation* in the house of David, ~~4019~~ Luke 1:69. “Am I burdened, and ready to sink? *The Lord is my stay* (v. 19), by whom I am supported. Am I in the dark, benighted, at a loss? *Thou art my lamp, O Lord!* to show me my way, and thou wilt dispel *my darkness*,” v. 29. If we sincerely take the Lord for our God, all this, and much more, he will be to us, all we need and can desire.

III. What improvement he makes of his interest in God. If he be mine,

- 1.** *In him will I trust* (v. 3), that is, “I will resign myself to his direction, and then depend upon his power, and wisdom, and goodness, to conduct me well.”
- 2.** *On him I will call* (v. 4), *for he is worthy to be praised*. What we have found in God that is worthy to be praised should engage us to pray to him and give glory to him.
- 3.** *To him will I give thanks* (v. 50), and that publicly. When he was among the heathen he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to own his obligations to the God of Israel.

IV. The full and large account he keeps for himself, and gives to others, of the great and kind things God had done for him. This takes up most of the song. He gives God the glory both of his deliverances and of his successes, showing both the perils he was delivered from and the power he was advanced to.

1. He magnifies the great salvations God had wrought for him. God sometimes brings his people into very great difficulties and dangers, that he may have the honour of saving them and they the comfort of being saved by him. He owns, *Thou hast saved me from violence* (v. 3), *from my enemies* (v. 4), *from my strong enemy*, meaning Saul, who, if God had not succoured him, would have been too hard for him, v. 18. Thou hast given me *the shield of thy salvation*, v. 36. To magnify the salvation, he observes,

(1.) That the danger was very great and threatening out of which he was delivered. Men *rose up against him* (v. 40, 49) that *hated him* (v. 41), *a violent man* (v. 49) namely, Saul, who was malicious in his designs against him and vigorous in his pursuit. This is expressed figuratively, v. 5, 6. He was surrounded with death on every side, threatened to be overwhelmed,

and saw no way of escape. So violently did the waves of death beat upon him, so strongly did the cords and snares of death hold him, that he could not help himself, any more than a man in the grave can. The floods of Belial, the wicked one, and his wicked instruments, made him afraid; he trembled to see not only earth, but death and hell, in arms against him.

(2.) That his deliverance was an answer to prayer, v. 7. He has here left us a good example, when we are in distress, to cry unto God with importunity, as children in a fright cry to their parents; and great encouragement to do so, in that he found God ready to answer prayer out of his temple in heaven, where he is continually served and adored.

(3.) That God appeared in a singular and extraordinary manner for him and against his enemies. The expressions are borrowed from the descent of the divine Majesty upon Mount Sinai, v. 8, 9, etc. We do not find that in any of David's battles God fought for him with thunder (as in Samuel's time), or with hail (as in Joshua's time), or with the stars in their courses (as in Deborah's time); but these lofty metaphors are used,

[1.] To set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. God's wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith as such miraculous interpositions would have been to an eye of sense.

[2.] To set forth God's displeasure against his enemies, God so espoused his cause that he showed himself an enemy to all his enemies; his anger is set forth by a *smoke out of his nostrils*, and *fire out of his mouth* (v. 9), *coals kindled* (v. 13), *arrows*, v. 15. Who knows the power and terror of his wrath?

[3.] To set forth the extraordinary confusion which his enemies were put into, and the consternation that seized them; as if the earth had trembled and the *foundations of the world* had been discovered, v. 8, 16. Who can stand before God when he is angry?

[4.] To show how ready God was to help him: *He rode upon a cherub and did fly*, v. 11. God hastened to his succour, and came to him with seasonable relief, though he had seemed at a distance; yet he was a *God hiding himself* (²⁹⁴¹⁵ Isaiah 14:15), for he made *darkness his pavilion* (v.

12), for the amazement of his enemies and the protection of his own people.

(4.) That God manifested his particular favour and kindness to him in these deliverances (v. 20): *He delivered me, because he delighted in me.* The deliverance came not from common providence, but covenant-love; he was herein treated as a favourite: so he perceived by the communications of divine grace and comfort to his soul with these deliverances, and the communion he had with God in them. Herein he was a type of Christ, whom God upheld because he *delighted in him*, ~~2401~~ Isaiah 42:1, 2.

2. He magnifies the great successes God had crowned him with. He had not only preserved but prospered him. He was blessed,

(1.) With liberty and enlargement. He was *brought into a large place* (v. 20), where he had room to thrive, and his *steps were enlarged under him*, so that he had room to stir (v. 37), being no longer straitened and confined.

(2.) With military skill, and strength, and swiftness. Though he was bred up to the crook, he was well instructed in the arts of war and qualified for the toils and perils of it. God, having called him to fight his battles, qualified him for the service. He made him very ingenious (*He teacheth my hands to war*, v. 35. And this ingenuity was as good as strength, for it follows, “so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms,” not so much by main force as by dexterity), and very vigorous and valiant. (*Thou hast girded me with strength to battle*, v. 40. He gives God the glory of all his courage and ability for service), and very expeditious: *He maketh my feet swift like hinds feet* (v. 34), which is of great advantage both in charging and retreating.

(3.) With victory over his enemies, not only Saul and Absalom, but the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, and other neighbouring nations, whom he subdued and made tributaries to Israel. His wonderful victories are here described, v. 38-43. They were *speedy* victories (*I turned not again till I had consumed them*, v. 38) and *complete* victories. The enemies of Israel were *wounded, destroyed, consumed, fell under his feet, trampled upon, and disabled to rise, and their necks lay at his mercy.* They cried both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain. *There was none to save, none that durst appear for them.* God *answered them, not* for they were not on his side, nor did they cry unto him till they were brought to the last extremity. Being thus abandoned, they became an easy prey to David's righteous and

victorious sword, so that he *beat them as small as the dust of the earth*, which is scattered by the wind and trodden on by every foot.

(4.) With advancement to honour and power. To this he was anointed before his troubles began, and at length, *post tot discrimina rerum* — *after all his dangers and disasters*, he gained his point. God *made his way perfect* (v. 33), gave him success in all his undertakings, *set him upon his high places* (v. 34), denoting both safety and dignity. God's gentleness, his grace and tender mercy, *made him great* (v. 36), gave him great wealth, and great authority, and a name like that of the great men of the earth. He *was kept to be the head of the heathen* (v. 44); his signal preservations evinced that he was designed and reserved for something great — to rule over all Israel, notwithstanding the *strivings of the people*, and so that those whom *he had not known should serve him*, many of the nations that lay remote. Thus he was *lifted up on high*, as high as the throne, above those that *rose up against him*, v. 49.

V. The comfortable reflections he makes upon his own integrity, which God, by those wonderful deliverances, had graciously owned and witnessed to, v. 21-25. He means especially his integrity with reference to Saul and Ishbosheth, Absalom and Sheba, and those who either opposed his coming to the crown or endeavoured to dethrone him. They falsely accused him and misrepresented him, but he had the testimony of this conscience for him that he was not an ambitious aspiring man, a false and bloody man, as they called him, — that he had never taken any indirect unlawful courses to secure or raise himself, but in his whole conduct had kept in the way of his duty, — and that in the whole course of his conversation he had, for the main, made religion his business, so that he could take God's favours to him as the rewards of his righteousness, not of debt, but of grace. God had recompensed him, though not for his righteousness, as if that had merited any thing at the hand of God, yet according to his righteousness, which he was well pleased with, and had an eye to. His conscience witnessed for him,

1. That he had made the word of God his rule, and had kept to it, v. 23. Wherever he was, God's judgments were before him as his guide; whithersoever he went, he took his religion along with him, and though he was forced to depart from his country, and sent, as it were, to serve other gods, yet as for God's statutes, he did not depart from them, but kept the way of the Lord and walked in it.

2. That he had carefully avoided the bye-paths of sin. He had not wickedly departed from his God. He could not say but that he had taken some false steps, but he had not deserted God, nor forsaken his way. Sins of infirmity he could not acquit himself from, but the grace of God had kept him from presumptuous sins. Though he had sometimes *weakly* departed from his God. By this it appeared that he was *upright before God*, or *to God* (in his sight, and with an eye to him), that he *kept himself from his own iniquity*, not only from that particular sin of killing Saul when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but, in general, he was afraid of sin and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he said and did. The matter of Uriah is an exception (^{<1156>}1 Kings 15:5), like that in Hezekiah's character, ^{<4423>}2 Chronicles 32:31. Note, A careful abstaining from our own iniquity is one of the best evidences of our own integrity; and the testimony of our conscience for us that we have done so will be such a rejoicing as will not only lessen the griefs of an afflicted state, but increase the comforts of a prosperous state. David reflected with more comfort upon his victories over his own iniquity than upon his conquest of Goliath and all the hosts of the uncircumcised Philistines; and the witness of his own heart to his uprightness was sweeter though more silent music than theirs that sang, *David has slain his ten thousands*. If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness. Let favour be shown to the upright and his uprightness will sweeten it, will double it.

VI. The comfortable prospects he has of God's further favour. As he looks back, so he looks forward, with pleasure, and assures himself of the kindness God has in store for all the saints, for himself, and also for his seed.

1. For all good people, v. 26-28. As God had dealt with him according to his uprightness, so he will with all others. He takes occasion here to lay down the established rules of God's procedure with the children of men: —

(1.) That he will do good to those that are upright in their hearts. As we are found towards God, he will be found towards us.

[1.] God's mercy and grace will be the joy of those that are merciful and gracious. Even the merciful need mercy; and they shall obtain it.

[2.] God's uprightness, his justice and faithfulness, will be the joy of those that are upright, just, and faithful, both towards God and man.

[3.] God's purity and holiness will be the joy of those that are pure and holy, who therefore give thanks at the remembrance thereof. And, if any of these good people be *afflicted people*, *he will save* them, either out of their afflictions or by and after them. On the other hand,

(2.) That those who turn aside to crooked ways he will *lead forth with the workers of iniquity*, as he says in another psalm. *With the froward he will wrestle*; and those with whom God wrestles are sure to be foiled. *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!* God will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him and be displeased with those that are displeased with him. As for the haughty, his eyes are upon them, marking them out, as it were, to be brought down; for *he resists the proud*.

2. For himself. He foresaw that his conquests and kingdom would be yet further enlarged, v. 45, 46. Even the *sons of the stranger*, that would hear the report of his victories and the tokens of God's presence with him, would be possessed with a fear of him, would be forced to submit to him, though feignedly, and would be obedient to him. The successes which he had had he looked upon as earnest of more and means of more. Who durst oppose him by whom so many had been overcome? Thus the Son of David *goes on conquering and to conquer*, ~~<4015>~~ Revelation 6:2. His gospel, which has been victorious, shall be so more and more.

3. For his seed: He *showeth mercy to his Messiah* (v. 51), not only to David himself, but to that seed of his for evermore. David was himself anointed of God, not a usurper, but duly called to the government and qualified for it; therefore he doubted not but God would show mercy to him, that mercy which he had promised not to take from him nor from his posterity (~~<4075>~~ 2 Samuel 7:15, 16); on that promise he depends, with an eye to Christ, who alone is his *seed for evermore*, whose throne and kingdom still continue, and will to the end, whereas the seed and lineage of David are long since extinct. See ~~<5825>~~ Psalm 89:28, 29. Thus all his joys and all his hopes terminate, as ours should, in the great Redeemer.