**Just and merciful in salvation** 20/8/23 dkm

Read: 2Samuel 22:1-31, Galatians 6

Text: 2Samuel 22:21-31

Psalms: 139:17-24, 101, 17:1-6, 134a

In the history of Israel, Moses and David stand out as faithful servants of the Lord. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, and David was a man after God’s own heart. Both pointed to Christ, what theologians call ‘types’ of Christ. David was the Lord’s anointed, the king of Israel. One of David’s descendants would sit on the throne until the coming of the Anointed One, the Son of God sent down from heaven. Being a ‘type’ of Christ did not mean David was sinless; he was only human. David committed adultery and murder; he was also guilty of the sin of pride which made the Lord angry (2Sam 24:10). Let no one discount the seriousness of such sin. David knew that the Lord’s ‘eyes are on the haughty, that you may bring them down’ (22:28). Peter, quoting Proverbs, reminds us that, ‘God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble’ (1Peter 5:5).

David wrote this song, according to its title, when ‘the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul’. We have looked at the first twenty verses in which David describes, in military metaphors, how the Lord was his place of refuge when enemies were after him. He describes the Lord as his rock, his fortress, and his shield. As David prayed, he remembered God delivering his people through Moses. The Lord had delivered David, plucking him out of a flood of enemies. The Lord had brought him to a safe place because he delighted in him (22:17, 20).

Here in the second part of his song, which is also found in Psalm 18, David continues to reflect on his covenant relationship with the Lord, a covenant of love, but also of justice. David trusted in the Lord, but this did not mean his life would be free of trouble. Indeed, shortly after he was anointed by Samuel he had to flee for his life from the jealous King Saul. After some years on the run he was made king in Hebron and then in Jerusalem. God was with David and gave him victory over all his enemies, the enemies of Israel. But as we know, David sinned and then tried to cover it up. He confessed and the Lord forgave him, even though his sin brought trouble into his family and into the kingdom.

The Lord made a covenant with David when he became king, and related to him under the terms of this covenant. David does not refer directly to this covenant here in this song, apart from using the covenant name of God, ‘Yahweh’ or Lord’, but we will keep this covenant in mind, especially when we hear David speaking prophetically of this coming anointed one, even as he himself lives and reigns as ‘type’ of Christ. Our first subheading, for verses 21-25 is, ‘Goodness of God’, our second for verses 26-28 , ‘Grace of God’, our third, ‘God my light and my strength’

**1. Goodness of God**

Reflecting on God’s goodness in delivering him because he delighted in him (22:20), David speaks of the Lord rewarding him according to his ‘righteousness’ and ‘clean hands’ (22:21). He goes on to speak of being blameless before the Lord (22:24). How could David make such a claim after committing the sins that he did? Do we accuse him of hypocrisy? No. We need to go back and understand where David is coming from. We go back to Abraham with whom God made a covenant after choosing him and delivering him into the Promised Land. The Lord said to Abraham, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before me be blameless’ (Gen 17:1). Abraham was not sinless but ‘he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him as righteousness’ (Gen 15:6).

In speaking of ‘my righteousness’ David is not claiming to be without sin, something only his descendant, Jesus Christ, could claim; there is an element of prophecy in these verses. David was looking at the covenant the Lord had made with Moses, and later with himself. He was looking at the commands or demands of that covenant. Yes, he broke the commands, but he repented and the Lord forgave him under the terms of the covenant. ‘If David was a great sinner, he was also a great repenter’. He knew that the Lord forgave his sin, removing it from him as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12). Having been forgiven, David remained in the covenant; he was not cast out with the wicked, with those who are the enemies of God. David had not joined with the wicked, nor walked in the counsel of the ungodly, or sat in the seat of sinners (Ps 1). The righteous and the blameless were seen in contrast to the wicked; they were in the covenant, looking to the Lord and actively depending on the Lord each day and in every aspect of life. The Lord showed delight in David when he brought him back to Jerusalem after he fled from Absalom (15:25, 26). ‘David could stand in a *position* of righteousness even as he strove, by the power of God’s Spirit, to *live* in righteousness’.

David was a man who examined his life and his heart, as seen in the Psalm 17 and Psalm 139:23, 24. He confessed his sin, knowing that his covenant God forgives sin. David was not the only man who claimed to be blameless, as in a man of honesty and integrity. We have already mentioned Abraham and Moses (Numb 12:3), and Job is called ‘blameless and upright’ (Job 1:1). When the rich young ruler came to Jesus seeking eternal life, Jesus directed him to the commandments and he claimed to have kept these (Luke 18:20). We know that he went away sad, but the point is, the commandments cannot be ignored. Note that Jesus also taught this man that only God is good.

**2. Grace of God**

The Lord is first and foremost the God of truth and justice. We focus on his grace, as David did, but grace is necessary to fulfil justice for sinners like David and you! In his justice God condemns sinners; we have no hope of salvation, or of being justified, without grace. Just as David saw the Lord dealing with him according to his righteousness and clean hands, so he saw the Lord dealing with the merciful or faithful according to their faithfulness (22:26). It is the same with the blameless and with the pure; the just God will repay them according to their deeds. And it is the same with devious or crooked individuals; they will reap the rewards of their actions.

It is amazing, or we might say concerning, how the Lord brings people down in the same way they try to bring others down; remember Haman in the Book of Esther. David says of the Lord, ‘With the devious/crooked you show yourself shrewd’ (22:27). When David himself got onto the crooked path, lusting after Bathsheba and committing adultery, and then tried to cover up his sin by committing another sin, God was not fooled. God was shrewd or astute in pursuing David until he repented. ‘God will not be mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will reap’ (Gal 6:7). Eli was told by a man of God that the Lord honours those who honour him, while ‘those who despise me will be lightly esteemed’ (1Sam 2:30).

From Genesis to Revelation the Lord is seen as saving the poor and humble while bringing down the haughty or proud (1Sam 2:8, Ps 101:5, Prov 3:34, 6:17, James 4:6, 1Peter 5:6). The song of Hannah at the beginning of the Book of Samuel, like this song of David at the end, declares God’s concern for the poor and the afflicted, and his power to lift them up (22:28, 1Sam 2:8). In broad terms we could say that ‘the theology of the books of Samuel is summarised in the songs of Hannah and David that begin and end it’.

In the Beatitudes Jesus says, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ and ‘blessed are meek’. He also declared a blessing upon the merciful and upon the pure in heart, which is what David declares here in this song: ‘With the pure you show yourself pure’ (22:27, Mat 5:7). Jesus had a blessing for the humble but not for the proud, which is what David says here in verse 28: ‘You [God] save the humble but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down’.

Most people understand and support justice, except when it comes to themselves. Few admit to being proud because they compare themselves to other people. But when we stand before Jesus our pride is revealed; it keeps us from coming under the shelter of his wings, as Jesus said. Humility is essential to salvation; ‘Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up’ (James 4:10). No one else can save you, and the Lord will not save you while you remain proud and haughty before him and before men.

**3. God my light and my strength**

David stops looking at his own righteousness to look at the grace of the Lord. It was only in God’s strength that he had victory in any battle. It was only by God’s protection that he escaped Saul and other enemies. The Lord was his shield, as well as his strength when it came to bending a bow of bronze, and running against a troop or leaping over a wall (22:30,31, 35). What a vivid description of war, as it was in David’s day. Remember Jonathan climbing the rock face to attack the Philistine outpost (1Sam 14:4). David might have recalled the night he captured Saul’s spear and water bottle (1Sam 26:7); did the Lord guide him by some unseen light. Darkness often has a spiritual meaning, but it is also an important tactic in warfare, still today.

In looking to the Lord, David comes up with many ‘For you’ references to God, many attributes of the Lord. We have already seen that God saves the humble, lights his lamp, and helps him run and jump. ‘David as the lamp of Israel (21:17) merely reflects the blinding light of the glory of God, who is the lamp of David himself’ (22:29). In the second of the seven ‘I am’ declarations in the gospel of John, Jesus declares himself to be the light of the world: ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life’ (John 8:12). David knew what Jesus was talking about even a thousand years before Jesus spoke these words. Do you know and understand what Jesus is talking about? And what about David reflecting the light of the Lord in his life? Are you reflecting Jesus to those around you?

In verse 30 David says that God’s way is perfect; Jesus reminds us that God is perfect at the end of his sermon on the mount (Mat 5:48). God is omniscient and omnipotent. David consulted the Lord before going into battle because God knows everything. Remember Saul’s dilemma when God would not answer his prayer. When the Lord tells us to do something we know we will succeed, so do not doubt God’s loving purpose for your life, or his power to fulfil his purposes in you. When the Lord speaks, he, in effect, acts.