**The Rock of my salvation** 27/8/23 dkm

Read: 2Samuel 22:29-51, Ephesians 6:10-24

Text 2Samuel 22:31-51

Psalms: 8, 18:29-36, 110, 72old

Despite being greatly outnumbered in the battle of Agincourt in 1415, King Henry V of England defeated the French. It is on record that he and his men prayed before going to battle, and that he ordered the singing of Psalm 115 when they won. He and his entire army sang, ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory’. They sang what may well be a psalm of David; certainly the words of this song recorded in 2Samuel 22, and in Psalm 18, are the words of King David giving all praise and glory to the Lord for deliverance from King Saul, and victory over all his enemies.

‘The Lord lives, blessed be my Rock!’ are words that we still sing today because of the victory we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, the cross of Christ and his resurrection was victory over Satan, the ruler of this world since man’s fall in the Garden of Eden. We pray as Jesus taught us, ‘Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, amen’.

**1. God gives strength**

‘An offering of praise to the person of the Lord’ is one man’s summary of verses 32-37 of 2Samuel 22. There is no other God except the Lord, the God of Israel (22:32). The Gentiles came to battle with their idols, but they might as well have gone home if the Lord had spoken to David. When David prayed and the Lord told him to fight the Philistines, they were as good as dead. As he gathered up the idols they left behind David said, ‘The Lord has broken through my enemies before me’ (2Sam 5:18-21).

God’s ways are perfect, and his word is perfect or proven; it is truth distilled and without impurity (22:31). David speaks of God’s word as being more precious and desirable than gold (Ps 19:10). Any other book has to be read with discernment; in fact, we test whatever we read against the word of God, because God’s word is true, and it is unchanging. Those who begin to question what is written in the word of God soon come to grief- they find themselves falling off the rock of their salvation. For centuries men have been studying the Bible in the hope of finding some error, but they have all failed.

Again David calls the Lord his rock; he began this song singing, ‘The Lord is my rock’ and he ends with, ‘The Lord lives, blessed be my Rock!’ (22:2, 47). Do you think of the Lord as your rock? Many people have no rock to stand on; this is obvious as you see them floundering about in life looking for some foundation, some meaning in life or some rock to stand on. Jesus saw such people as harassed and helpless (Mat 9:36). Many ‘go with the flow’, not knowing where they may end up; they always end up dissatisfied, if not disillusioned with life altogether. May we all know the Lord as our rock, the rock of our salvation?

David describes the blessings that flow from having God the Lord as his rock. He acknowledges the gifts of God’s grace, namely strength and power, strength in his feet, feet like a deer, and in his arms to bend a bow of bronze (22:33-35). Deer run fast but are sure footed, while to bend a bronze bow takes unusual strength. When it comes to singing this song, as found in Psalm 18, I find it difficult to sing the line which says, ‘In skills of war he trains my hand’. Yet our fathers fought in a war and gave thanks to God for giving them the skills and the strength to fight. As believers we are in a spiritual war of course, and we need to take up the spiritual weapons the Lord gives and fight in his strength, the weapon of prayer being paramount.

Speaking directly to the Lord in verses 36 and 37, David says that it was the Lord who gave him, ‘the shield of Your salvation’ and kept his feet from slipping; Psalm 18 has an extra line about the Lord holding him up by his right hand. These two verses point to David as king, ruling with wisdom from above. Having God’s shield guarantees David victory. The warrior God was a wise and gentle God, exacting justice. The warrior king must be wise and gentle also as he leads the people of God. ‘While it was the gentleness of God exercised that allowed David success, it was the gentleness God taught him that was his true greatness’ (Kidner).

**2.God gives victory**
David continues speaking to the Lord in verses 38-46, saying, ‘I have pursued and destroyed my enemies’, and giving all glory to God (22:38, 40). It is difficult for us to sing words like, ‘You have armed me with strength for the battle’ and, ‘I beat them as fine as dust’, but we dare not brush aside these words of Scripture as having no relevance for us today; we have just said how valuable the word of God is for us still today. Maybe we are to think of our enemy Satan, although even then it is Jesus who has overcome Satan in the cross and resurrection (1Cor 15:57).

David has just made it clear that God gave him strength (22:33) so this description of a battle must be seen in this light. David describes how he overran and destroyed the enemy, with another acknowledgment that God armed him with strength, and made his enemies fear and fall under his feet (22:38-40). ‘David virtually exhausts the lexicon of Hebrew verbs that have to do with annihilation!’ In holy war, surrender did not necessarily mean escaping death. Standing on the neck of one’s enemy was a mark of victory in those days (22:41, Ps 110:1).

The enemy looked to their gods for help against the onslaught of David but they were powerless to save. They even looked to the Lord but he did not answer them (22:42). Some people put images on their shelf like the Hindus and, like the Hindu, pray to a god they do not know. It will be interesting, tragically interesting, to hear many crying out to Jesus when he comes to judge the world, but he will not hear. Many will cry, ‘Lord, Lord’ but he will say, ‘I never knew you’ (Mat 7:21-23). The Lord does not hear the cry of sinners unless and until they repent of their sin. The Lord cannot be manipulated like other gods, and he is not a good luck charm to be worn around the neck or painted on a house. That said, the Lord will hear Gentiles who, hearing the word of the God, repent and turn to him in faith: ‘I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the Gentiles’ (22:50).

David went on to subdue his enemies on every side; their gods were shown to be impotent before the God of Israel. David expanded the borders of Israel from river to river, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, and brought peace to the land (8:15, Gen 15:18). Even so, to say, ‘You made me the head of the nations’ and, ‘Foreigners submit to me’ seems to be more than a reference to David. These words are prophetic; they refer to the ‘greater Son of David’ and to the reign of Messiah. ‘David’s empire was only a picture of the kingdom of God that will one day be governed by David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus’. It will be consummated when he comes again in power and glory on the clouds of heaven.

The picture of David holding out from Saul in caves and strongholds, and later of his enemies fallen under his feet, can be linked to passages in the NT. Paul writes that Jesus must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet (1Cor 15:25), quoting from Psalm 8:6, a psalm of David. In Philippians 2:10 Paul again writes of the enemies of God bowing the knee before King Jesus, and then in Revelation 6:15 we have the picture of the rich, the famous, and all who reject Jesus, hiding themselves in caves and in the rocks from the Lamb of God in his wrath.

It is true that Jesus from the cross cried out, ‘Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do’, but the day of mercy and forgiveness will come to an end when Jesus returns in judgment. What we read here in this song of David seems to contradict the gospel but let us remember the whole gospel which includes divine justice and judgment upon the enemies of God.

**3. Give thanks among the Gentiles**
This psalm ends, like many others, on a note of praise and worship. Worship means giving glory to God, and this is what David does, even in the midst of the Gentiles. He declares, ‘The Lord lives!’ and, ‘Blessed be my Rock!’ (22:47). Seeing God as a rock, as his rock of salvation, is the underlying theme of this song of praise written by David when the Lord delivered him from Saul and all his enemies (22:1). A rock gives protection from the arrows of the enemy. A rock gives a place to stand when flood waters rise and threaten to drown us.

Not long before I became minister of this church I attended a mission conference at a place called Weston-Super-Mare in southwest England. On the weekend we visited Bath. On the way to Bath we drove past a huge rock where it is thought Augustus Toplady sheltered from a storm. After sheltering from a storm in a cleft in this rock, Toplady wrote the famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages’. This experience became a metaphor for his finding shelter in the Lord Jesus Christ from the difficulties and afflictions that a Christian encounters in this world.

David gives thanks and praise to God for all his victories, and calls upon the people to join him in praise and worship (22:50). The word translated ‘give thanks’ means to confess or acknowledge publically (Rom 15:9). We do not gather in secret to worship the Lord but gather for public worship each Lord’s Day. Persecuted Christians may find this difficult, but we are not persecuted so why do Christians not gather for public worship each week? See how the Lord brings people into his house from time to time!

The battle is the Lord’s, and in His name David proclaims victory. God avenged David; David refused to take personal revenge against Saul or anyone else. Similarly, David refused to take personal glory. All glory and praise went to the Lord. David was a king like no other, a man after God’s own heart, and a ‘type’ of Christ, the King even greater than David because he lives and reigns forever, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

David’s reference to giving thanks to the Lord among the Gentiles is taken by the apostle Paul as prophetic of Jesus and the gospel being proclaimed among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles bringing glory to God for his mercy (18:49, Rom 15:9). Paul preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. He proclaimed the kingdom of God as comprising both Jew and Gentile together as one, praising and magnifying the name of Jesus.

Words referring to Messiah, to Jesus Christ our Lord, continue in the closing verse or doxology of this song. David was the anointed king of Israel but was not the Messiah: Messiah means ‘anointed one’. God delivers his king and shows mercy to his anointed (22:51), to David in the first instance, but then we read, ‘and to his descendants forevermore’. David did not live forever. Who of his descendants is referred to as ‘God’s anointed’? The voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be, ‘My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Mark 1:11), gives us a clue, and more than a clue. Our Lord Jesus Christ was, ‘Born of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’ (Rom 1:3,4).