**David knew danger and divine deliverance**  13/8/23 dkm

Read: 1Samuel 23:19-29, 2Samuel 22:1-20

Text: 2Samuel 22:1-20

Psalms: 144:1-8, 97:1-7, 18:1-6, 72old

David began life as a shepherd, fighting off lions and bears that threatened the sheep. One day he saw a Philistine giant threatening the army of Israel so, in the Lord’s strength, he fought and killed Goliath. David joined Saul’s army and fought many battles against the Philistines. But Saul got jealous and tried to kill David. He spent years on the run from Saul. Maybe the closest he came to being captured and killed by Saul was when he was surrounded at a mountain in Maon. When a messenger came telling Saul the Philistines were attacking, David saw his escape as an answer to prayer (1Sam 23:27). After Saul’s death, David became king. One day David committed adultery and murder. Not long after this his son conspired against him, but the Lord delivered David yet again.

The title of the ‘song’ or poem recorded in this chapter is not specific as to which ‘deliverance’ David is talking about, but it does tell us that David wrote this song when ‘the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul’. Occurring here at the end of the two books of Samuel points to a wide reference to the life of David. David trusted in the Lord from a young age, and was still trusting in the Lord when he died. He experienced all the difficulties that we face in life, and he sinned just as we have, and still do, but as he walked through the valley of the shadow of death that is this sinful world, he feared no evil because he knew the Lord was with him. He walked with the Lord, praying and praising God all the days of his life.

It is interesting that the Books of Samuel begin with the prayer of Hannah, in which she calls God a ‘rock’ who brings down the mighty, judging and destroying all his enemies, just as David does in this song. In fact, she concludes with the assurance that the Lord will give strength to his king, to David as it turns out, or is it the Lord Jesus himself? (1Sam 2:10)

This song is quite long; indeed Psalm 18 is the third longest psalm in the Psalter. We should read it right through, but to study it more closely we will look at verses 1-20 today. Our subheadings are, ‘Praise the Lord, my rock’, ‘Prayer answered with shaking of the earth’ and, ‘Plucked from danger’.

**1. Praise the Lord my rock**

David’s experiences in life led to the list of metaphors he uses for God’s protection and deliverance from his enemies (22:2-4: the first line of Psalm 18 is not included here in this chapter). David was a military man or warrior who spent much of his life fighting in what was in those days hand to hand combat with spears, swords and shields. Cities had walls and were often on tops of hills- Jerusalem was a fortress city. Besides, when on the run from Saul, David lived in caves and strongholds in desert regions of Palestine.

David pictured the Lord as his rock, his fortress, his shield, his stronghold, and place of refuge (22:2, 3). Rocks provide protection from most attacks, even from shells and mortars that are used today. The individual or army that occupied the hill and built a fortress there was difficult to drive out. David saw the Lord as his fortress and stronghold. He found strength in the Lord to stand against his enemies. He attributed his victory over Goliath to the Lord, as well as his victories or escapes from Saul (1Sam 23:28).

The shield provides protection during hand to hand combat; again David saw the Lord as protecting him. Paul refers to the shield of faith, faith being a gift from God. If you have faith in the Lord, are exercising this faith by holding up the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the evil one? (Eph 6:16). Or is your shield under your bed while you stagger from one attack after another? The Lord had protected David from his enemies on many occasions because of his ‘shield of faith’, and in this song he thanks God for this protection and deliverance.

Do you see the Lord as a place of refuge, a place where you can go when attacked by enemies? If you belong to the Lord, Satan has you in his sights. He is trying to bring you into temptation or into fear of the world. Many fellow believers are being persecuted for their faith today, and are praying to the Lord to keep them safe. The apostle Paul knew about persecution and also about temptation. He uses military metaphors when urging us to stand against the schemes of the devil in Ephesians 6: ‘The shield of faith’ and ‘sword of the Spirit’ given to us by the Lord. He, like David, went to the Lord in prayer when in physical or spiritual danger. Are you in the habit of coming ‘boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need’ (Heb 4:16)?

This is a song of praise to the Lord for his grace and power in delivering us from our enemies. David had many enemies, not because he went around upsetting people but because he was a man who feared the Lord. If you are living a godly life, and faithfully sharing the gospel, you will make enemies because people do not like being told they are sinners. Usually such people pack their bags and leave the church, but some stay to make trouble and others, by the grace of God, are brought to repentance and salvation. Our relationship with the Lord is built upon confession of sin, forgiveness, and ongoing trust in the Lord. David loved the Lord and trusted in the Lord; ‘My deliverer …in whom I will trust’ (22:2, 3).

David knew danger, but he also knew deliverance. He cried out to the Lord when he was in danger, and he remembered to thank and praise the Lord when he was delivered (22:4). The Lord is great and gracious but he is also a jealous God. So do not forget to give thanks to the Lord when he answers your prayer. Do not be like the nine lepers healed by Jesus, who went off without giving him thanks (Luke 17:17). Your going off to other places when fellow believers are gathered to praise and thank the Lord does not go unnoticed by the others, or by the Lord himself!

**2. Prayer answered with shaking of the earth**

Do you trust the Lord like David? Do you believe God is able to deliver you from all your enemies, all your troubles, and all your fears? Or do you get worried and fearful when threatened by powerful people, or the powers of this world? David speaks of fear in the face of ungodliness, and of death, but in his distress he called upon the Lord (22:7). We live in the presence of terrible ungodliness as the list LGBTQ gets longer and longer. Many are distressed about climate change, and some are distressed about war, which continues to be a reality long after the time of David! What about you? Are you distressed by these things? Then listen to David when he says, ‘In my distress I called upon the Lord’ (22:7).

It is natural for us to fear things greater or more powerful than we are, but no one and no thing is more powerful than God, who created all that exists in heaven and on earth. So call to God, ‘our Father in heaven’, as David did, when something causes you to fear. He called upon the Lord with confidence that the Lord would hear. David was not a doubter; he prayed in faith to the all-powerful and all-loving God, the God who does not slumber or sleep.

David’s prayer was answered without delay: ‘Then the earth shook and trembled’ (22:8). David witnessed the Lord coming down to deliver him and scatter his enemies. How dare anyone touch the Lord’s anointed, the apple of his eye! We are not told of the Lord shaking the earth when David prayed, but he certainly did when the greater Son of David cried out from the cross; the earth quaked, rocks split in two, and there was darkness over the land (Mat 27:51). David had no doubts about the power of God to save him from his enemies because God has power to shake the earth itself (Heb 12:25f).

David would have been aware of Samuel calling upon the Lord to send thunder and rain (1Sam 12:17), but what he describes here in verses 8-16 is probably a picture of Moses crossing the Red Sea, and going up Mt Sinai. The Lord was angry with Pharaoh and drowned him and his army in the sea, which He had divided to save Moses and his people. David writes of the channels of the sea being seen and the foundations of the world being uncovered (22:16). When the Lord gets angry it is as if he blasts out from his nostrils a powerful wind, along with fire, lightning, and thunder.

Mt Sinai shook when the Lord came down to meet with Moses. Earthquakes are terribly frightening and dangerous. Man with all his power and technology still cannot stop them. Nor can he stop volcanoes, which are similarly powerful and dangerous. The people stood in fear of the Lord when they saw lightning and thunder, and smoke and fire on Mt Sinai. David understood, as those people did, that all this was a demonstration of the power of God as he came down in power to shake the earth, and speak through thunder and lightning (22:14). We still see earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and terrible storms, but do we see the hand of the Lord in such events? We hear about ‘extreme weather events’ and, ‘more extreme weather events’, but who is listening to the voice of God?

‘He rode upon a cherub and flew’ (22:11). This is a strange image to us- but see Ezekiel 1:4f. Cherubs are attendants or protectors of the divine. They are pictured as carrying the throne of the Almighty. ‘Dark clouds’ are associated with God protecting and guiding his people in the Exodus and through the desert, a cloud by day and fire by night (22:12,13). The picture is of the Lord coming down from heaven to save and to judge. God came down in the Lord Jesus Christ to save, and to judge. Now is the day of salvation; full and final judgment will come when Jesus comes again on the clouds of heaven!

As David reflected on these natural events he was reminded of just how awesome is the power of God. He knew God could shake the earth, and divide the sea; David was never so bold as to think he as a man could stop the sea level rising! Do not forget however, that Jesus spoke and stopped the waves. When God heard his cry for help, David had no doubt that he was in the most powerful hands in all the world. He knew the Lord could move heaven and earth to save him from his enemies. ‘Underlying these poetic words is the understanding that the Almighty will turn the universe inside out, if necessary, to deliver His servant’. Do you believe God loves you so much that he will turn the universe inside out to save you? He has done this of course, in sending his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and save you from sin and death.

**3. Plucked from danger**

What a difference aircraft have made to war these days. Underground bunkers become more important than rocks and fortresses. Moreover, helicopters are now a vital part of rescues, especially in floods or at sea. David did not see such rescues, but he did know that the Lord reached down and wonderfully saved him from his enemies (22:17). The way the Lord rescued him was as if he plucked him up and transported him to a safe place. The Lord ‘brought him out into a broad place’, a place of freedom from his enemies (22:18). The Lord could shake the earth, or divide the sea to deliver his chosen ones, and he could, in an equally awesome and amazing way, simply reach down to pluck up an individual in whom he delighted.

When Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan, as voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’. Jesus is God’s Son whom he sent from heaven to rescue persons in whom he delights. In Jesus Christ we are lifted up to sit with him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:5). They say the Jordan is not a river you want to swim in these days. One summer in India was so hot I took a dip in the Ganges. I came out with a layer of mud (sewage) over me that took a long time to remove.

God sent Jesus to cleanse us of sin, to give us true life or life in abundance. Jesus said he came to set us free, to set us on the path of life. Do not be like the Jews who blindly and proudly said to Jesus, ‘We are not in bondage’, we are already free (John 8:33). This is like a drowning man saying to his rescuer lowered down from the chopper to save him, ‘I am fine; leave me alone’. Blindness to sin is the most serious and widespread malady of the human race. Yet the cure is close at hand. God is holding out the cure in his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.