

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL

### Week 35, chapters 22 and 23

As we continue in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22 we'll start at verse 29. And like last week we'll do this in small chunks since this is such a long chapter. There are a number of important implications and applications in this week's study that I think you'll enjoy.

To get our feet set for today, let's talk for a moment about what we saw occurring in this Psalm of Thanksgiving in the preceding verses. Our attention was focused on David's words that he viewed himself as essentially meriting God's deliverance as a reward for his good and faithful behavior towards God. David says that he was recompensed by Yehoveh for his ***tzedekah*** (his righteous justice) and this was proved by his having kept himself from ***'avon*** (our CJB says sin, but it more means guilt or depravity). We have to look back no further than 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12 to see that David's high opinion of himself and feeling that whatever he had done must have been relatively minor, is not justifiable. Because in chapter 12 Nathan the prophet brings God's oracle of curse upon David and all his household for the terrible evil that David had done, most recently centering on his illicit affair with a married woman (Bathsheba) and then the murder of her husband ***Uriyah*** to cover it up.

As we discussed last time, Rabbis would take me to task for such a view since they say that David's claim of purity and innocence is true because he never committed as much as a single trespass against the Lord and the Torah Law. Christian scholarship on the other hand is generally mute on the subject or at least doesn't directly challenge David's assertion of sinlessness. If Christian commentators do discuss it, often their position is that this is David speaking of the higher more ethereal kind of spiritual innocence that a Believer receives when we accept our Salvation; that is, we are forgiven of our sins and God doesn't see our sinful condition any longer.

Those typical positions can only be upheld by applying liberal amounts of allegorical interpretation to these Scripture passages and by reading modern Church doctrines backwards into the Old Testament accounts. There is no mention or implication in this song of David formerly committing sins but having those sins forgiven. Even the Rabbis admit that David is

boldly saying that his behavior has been flawless so this is not an issue of deliverance from sins but rather deliverance from earthly enemies and foreign governments.

Thus it seems to me that we need to accept (as unsavory as it is) that David is merely boasting and has a seriously distorted view of his life and his behavior before the Lord. He seems to have forgotten that YHWH saved him for a purpose greater than himself, that the several deliverances were acts of pure divine grace, and they were based on a promise God made to David and his offspring. And because the Father is always faithful to His word, David was delivered time after time. Merit was of no issue whatsoever.

Let's read a little more.

### RE-READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 22:29 – 32

This verse begins an explanation of the kind of help that David received in times past (and would continue to receive) from the Lord as he confronts Israel's enemies. And first is the deliverance from darkness. In the Bible darkness always indicates obscurity and blindness; a lamp and illumination indicate truth, deliverance, and salvation. David says that YHWH is the source of illumination (the lamp) and therefore He gives deliverance from the darkness and injects truth into obscurity. The Hebrew word used here for darkness is **choshek**, and **choshek** carries with it the sense of spiritual darkness (of evil) as opposed to the mere absence of light such as is normal at nighttime. It is this same word for darkness that we find in the Exodus account of the terrifying darkness that supernaturally fell over Egypt in order bring about the release of God's people from their bondage.

Thus we are to understand that this verse connects with verse 28 that says that God saves His afflicted people; or in Hebrew God's afflicted **'am**. David is part of the afflicted **'am** and since it pleased the Lord to save David the Lord gave David power over all of God's (and Israel's) enemies. But this also deals with David's state of mind; David was known to become depressed when things went badly for him (and we are given plenty of evidence of these episodes of depression in his many Psalms pleading for Yehoveh to rescue him). Thus the statement includes the reality that the Lord has lifted David's mental darkness, his depression.

Let me pause to remind us of a God- principle: God's delivers HIS people. He does NOT

deliver those who are not His. That doesn't mean that He doesn't communicate with people who are not His, nor does it mean that He might not help a non-Believer in their distress if it suits some larger divine purpose. I also want to say something else to you: this mental darkness, this depression that David was suffering, was a normal kind of depression. That is to say that when we have something overwhelming or tragic happen to us, it is humanly normal to be depressed over it. David was not suffering from a depression that rose to the level of emotional or mental illness but he was in a dark place as he was occasionally in fear for his life, or about to lose his Kingdom, or was in danger of losing a battle to an enemy.

The antithesis of David's depressions is demonstrated in King Saul; King Saul suffered from mental illness, from an abnormal kind and level of depression that also led to irrational paranoia. I would argue that Saul's depression was from a spiritual source; He strongly rebelled against God, God left him, and it led him into a kind of insanity. God did NOT deliver Saul from his depression that was due to Saul's sin and blasphemy because in the Lord's eyes Saul was no longer part of God's *'am*.

Of course God can, and it often pleases Him to, deliver His redeemed from mental illness and I personally know of such cases. I am by no means an expert on such a debilitating disease as mental illness but I do know that while some may be caused by spiritual influences, not all is. Further it is true that both God's people and those who are not His can suffer from mental illness and depression. I've known a number of Believers who have dealt with depression and they often worry (needlessly I think) that it is insufficient faith on their part that causes their recurring bouts of depression. Or, just as common, that in the loss of a loved one or in a terrible setback of some kind (loss of job, financial calamity) that they can't shake their depression and so think that they are in a damaged relationship with God. It's kind of the other side of the prosperity doctrine that says that if you have enough faith you'll always be rich and happy, and so if you don't you'll always be poor and sad. And that is simply a false doctrine that of itself has oppressed many folks.

King David was as mentally tough as it gets and as loved-of-God as it gets. And even he suffered terrible setbacks and so felt depressed for extended periods of time. But what he knew to do was to cry out to God and God came to his aid. We must do the same, but also be aware that sometimes depression is a legitimate medical condition that needs to be treated with medicine as well as prayer. There is no shame in it, and certainly no condemnation from the Lord is implied in such circumstances.

Then in verse 32 we get a reminder of what we discussed in a previous lesson about David's and Israel's cultural understanding of God. The rhetorical question is asked: "Who is God but

Adonai?” What it says in Hebrew is: “Who is El but YHWH?” Thus David is saying that Yehoveh is Israel’s El, and in fact YHWH is the ultimate El. And this connects back to verse 14 whereby David refers to Yehoveh as **Ha’Elyon**: The Highest El. If you weren’t here (or have forgotten) our discussion of **Ha’Elyon** and the meaning of El in those times, then review lesson #34, last week’s lesson.

But there is yet another application for us in our day. God is Yehoveh, the God of Israel. God is not Allah. God is not Buddha. God is not “the ol’ man upstairs”. God is not the generic intelligence of the Universe, nor the unnamed god, nor the Interfaith god. God is one, He is echad and He is holy, and there is one God and His name is YHWH and He is the God of the Bible and no other. Praying to Allah is not unknowingly praying to Jesus (as many Christian denominations now claim), it is unknowingly praying to nothing (at best) or Satan (at worst).

### RE-READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 22:33 -37

Yehoveh is pictured as an impenetrable place of sanctuary for David and all who are God’s people. But the next stanza says something that we read occasionally in the Bible and usually misunderstand; and it is that God makes my way go straight. “My way” does not mean, “the path that lies in front of me”, or “my direction”; rather it means my manner and my behavior. That is, the Lord teaches us His way so that we adopt them as our way, and such a way is truth. In Biblical terms “straight” usually means to be true and without deception or fault.

The Lord also makes David’s feet swift as a deer (a hind) so that he can outrun his enemies either to escape or to overtake them; and those same swift feet take David to his high places. The Hebrew term for high place is **bemah**; it is a religious site. It is a place where God dwells. So why does David refer to the place where God dwells as **my** (David’s) high place? It is because all nations had their high places of the gods. David is saying that the Lord gave him swift feet to run to Yehoveh, the high place where David’s God dwells, as opposed to running to some other high place of some other god.

That David was a great warrior is how he is best remembered. And no doubt his days on the victorious battlefield is something that David fondly remembered in his old age. Thus in verse

35 David credits the Lord for showing him how to fight Holy War; and the Lord also gives David the strength to wield weapons in a way that the enemy cannot (using the metaphor of bending a bow made not out of supple wood, but rather rigid metal). A metal bow stores so much more energy than a wood bow and thus is far deadlier when unleashed; on the other hand it is the rare warrior who has the wherewithal to operate such a formidable weapon. Holy Scriptures tell us that prayer is perhaps our strongest weapon in this world. Prayer is our connection to the source of whatever power and might we have. Thus when prayer is used by a prayer warrior of the God of Israel, and he or she is trained-up in prayer and knows how to pray, it is a most awesome weapon (like a bronze bow). However for the person who doesn't really know God, and doesn't understand the power of prayer, and doesn't know how to pray in God's will, it is a much less effective weapon (like a wood bow).

The CJB translates verse 36 wonderfully; whereas most Bibles will say that you (meaning God) give to me the shield of salvation, the CJB says that you give me **your** shield, which **is** salvation. Just as prayer is our powerful bow of bronze but is only fully useful in the hands of a trained prayer warrior, so is our salvation in Yeshua our shield from the arrows shot at us by our enemy, Satan, and whomever he might be using to attack us. But that shield cannot be conjured up by us; we cannot merit it, we cannot design it, we cannot work up enough faith from inside of us to manufacture it. This shield is given to us from afar; it is a gift from God that has been transported through time and space to benefit us, and it is available only from Him.

### RE-READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 22:38 – 49

All of these verses are referring to Holy War. Let me recall for you that the Holy War that began with Joshua was never successfully completed. The goal was to rid God's Kingdom (the Promised Land) of those who didn't belong there; and who didn't belong there was all who didn't wholeheartedly worship Him. It was NOT a requirement that the Canaanites all be killed; if they were driven out of the land that was acceptable to God. The Lord's preference was for the Canaanites to give up their wicked false gods and instead to worship the God of Israel (which essentially changed their identity from Canaanite to Israelite). But forced conversion was never contemplated. Any conversion was to be modeled on Rahab, the harlot innkeeper of Jericho, who witnessed the power of the God of Israel and gave her trust to Him by her own free will.

The only Canaanites to be killed were those who did not choose to worship Yehoveh, and instead of leaving chose to stand and fight. As a parenthesis (because it is so often

overlooked) the ONLY place on the whole earth that was under those Holy War instructions was Canaan, the Promised Land. The other nations of the earth were in no physical danger from Israel. God didn't tell Israel to conquer the Middle East; this was a limited Holy War (limited to the Promised Land). But it is also an uncompleted Holy War.

Thus elements of the Holy War continued on in David's day and since David was committed to this Holy War God equipped him for it. David speaks NOT of partial victories but of overwhelming victories. When he repeatedly uses the term "I", he indeed sees himself as the victor. On the other hand verse 40 begins, ""For you braced me with strength for the battle and bent down my adversaries beneath me." In other words, David fought the battle with zeal and skill but in some supernatural way the Lord handed the enemy over to David so that the victory was a foregone conclusion before it began.

I think Christians have more trouble with this particular concept than perhaps any other. We don't know how to view or characterize our participation in the things we do for the Lord. Therefore some are nearly 100% passive and think that we are to sit in our pews, on our hands, and simply wait for the Lord to supernaturally cause something to happen in our presence so that we do nothing and can give all credit to Him. Others are nearly 100% active and think we are to run around frenetically shaking the handle on every door until one finally opens (or even knocking the door down if the handle doesn't work) and then flying through it as a bull on his way towards a red flag (the red flag being that task or goal that we feel the Lord has put before us).

Some Believers are so reluctant to speak of their participation in a ministry or a mission that all they can speak of is the Lord doing this and the Lord doing that as though their involvement is incidental or even meaningless. Others are so caught up in "doing" that all they can speak of is that **I** did this and **I** did that for God (as though God is but a junior partner).

In some ways David may have given us a pretty fair model of how to think in a practical way about our participation in a Godly endeavor; and it is certainly NOT as equal partners but it is as a co-operative venture; we have our part and God has His but we are as a tool in the hands of the master. A tool that remains at rest safely tucked away in a tool box is useless. But a tool that tries to operate without its master guiding it is directionless, may be used for the wrong purpose, and can even be destructive. David is not afraid to express his activities and successes and to feel good and fulfilled about them; but it is invariably spoken of in the context of the Lord providing not only the purpose and the means, but also the victory itself in a very real way.

Verse 42 is quite interesting because it expresses the reality that the enemy who looks to their gods for help, looks to an empty suit. The lights might be on, but there's nobody home, therefore to seek their gods for victory is pointless. On the other hand the enemy of Israel cannot hope to approach Israel's God Yehoveh (because they know of His power) and expect help. They can thrust their hands into the air and yell, "Lord, Lord"! But He will respond, "I don't know you". I think we need to understand how real and tangible this is to David even though when we read this ancient verse it sounds more like a great parable or a wonderfully pious saying to us 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians.

Since everyone in that era believed that there were many gods, it was common to acknowledge even your enemy's gods. Some made it their business to know another nation's gods very well; to know their names, their functions, what pleased and didn't please them, and so on. And this is because the general belief was that if you called on a god or a goddess by their proper name, and asked them for something within their proper function, and you did so respectfully and perhaps brought the proper gift or appeasement, then you could win that god's favor. So when David says that Yehoveh pays no attention to Israel's enemies, and that He will never aid the enemy no matter what they may promise Him, it is a great comfort and assurance for David.

But David also says in verse 44 that the Lord *palat* David from the *rib* of the *'am*. That is, God delivered David from his disputes with the congregation of Israel. This is speaking of Yehoveh delivering David not just from foreign powers but from internal Israeli rivals and from domestic problems; from other Hebrews such as Saul, Achitofel, Avishalom, Ishbosheth, Abner, and others. Interestingly it seems as though David sees his dominion over his own people Israel as a prelude (as a first step) to his dominion over the nations, the *goyim*, the gentiles. Does that not sound familiar?

<sup>DRA</sup> **Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and then to the Greek.***

Verse 45 relates to this concept, but it is a difficult translation and so nearly every Bible version says it a little differently. The CJB speaks of the foreigners who cringe before David but then obey him in fear. The KJV says that the moment that foreigners hear of David, they submit to him. The NAS says that foreigners pretend to be obedient, but the minute David appears they



properly obey. And on and on it goes. The Rabbis long ago dealt with this passage and I think they have it right. They say it is explaining that non-Israelites (non-worshippers of Yehoveh) fear David and so they conceal the truth of what they really believe and really harbor in their hearts or do so because they fear it will displease David if he finds out. They will even lie and deny that they actually took up arms in war or were merely against David. In other words, many gentiles will say that they believe in the God of Israel, and that they are for Israel (and David), but only because they don't want to be harmed. But David and Israel's power is so great and fearsome that they only come trembling from out of their fortresses to pay homage to this powerful king over God's Kingdom in order not to be killed.

So after David recognizes that all of these wonderful things have happened (and is really amazed by it), he once again understands that his is a co-operative venture led by the steady and irresistible hand of the Master. So in verse 47 David offers a praise of thanksgiving to the God of Israel who has given David the power to accomplish such unlikely things; and to deliver David from the hand of the enemy when at times it seemed that his survival was impossible. And that God even raised David up over those (probably Hebrews) who rebelled against him.

### **RE-READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 22:50 to end**

I love verse 50. Essentially the Psalmist says that the grace that God showered upon David was so complete and awesome that the praises for the Lord for it couldn't be restricted or contained only to Israel but it had to be raised up by the gentile nations as well.

This is a classic case of a prophecy happening in one sense at a certain time, and then happening again later in a higher and greater sense. David conquered gentile nations and with that the knowledge of the God of Israel spread and so therefore did the praises lifted up to God spread. Yet, in a later time, a royal descendant from David, the Messiah Yeshua will bring about the same only greater. The anointed King of Israel whose deliverance the Lord had used so mightily in ancient times was (in the larger sense) not about David as an individual but rather it was really all about David's forever seed that culminated with Christ.

Let's get started in chapter 23.



### READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 23:1-7

This song of David that forms the first 7 verses of this chapter is usually referred to as David's last words. However that is by no means the case. We have recorded in 1Kings chapter 2 a deathbed speech to Solomon whereby David gives his son some admonitions and instructions (some of it concerning unfinished vengeance). That speech was private and personal, whereas what we read here is, like all of David's Psalms, meant to be recorded and handed down to posterity. So we need to view this as more of David's final oracle than last words (at least as we commonly think of the term).

The character and nature of this song that follows the Psalm of Thanksgiving in chapter 22 has a distinctly more prophetic nature. Even though there are some obvious prophetic parallels in chapter 22's song, it was much more intended as a hymn of praise to the Lord for all the deliverances and the many blessings that David had experienced throughout his life. Thus we might call the song that begins chapter 23 as a prophetic will and testament of David that more or less unfolds the significance of David's kingship in relationship to the sacred history of the future.

For me one of the most fascinating aspects of this song happens right at its beginning because whether David intended it or not (and I suspect that he was fully aware of it), this entire song is essentially an expansion of the prophetic oracle given hundreds of years earlier, as pronounced by the pagan gentile seer Balaam in Numbers 24 (and we'll start off next week by reading those passages). And as I think will be demonstrated, what we'll see is a wonderful and poignant example of the concept of Progressive Revelation as we compare Numbers 24 with this song of David.