

Redemptive Failure | Fall and Rise of the House of David

A God-Drenched Life

Second Samuel 22.1-7, 47ff; 23.1-7

10.2.22

2 Samuel 22.1-7 *And David spoke the words of this song to the LORD in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. ² He said, "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; ³ My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence. ⁴ "I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies. ⁵ "For the waves of death encompassed me; The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me; ⁶ The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me. ⁷ "In my distress I called upon the LORD, Yes, I cried to my God; And from His temple He heard my voice, And my cry for help came into His ears.*

22.47ff *"The LORD lives and blessed be my rock; And exalted be God, the rock of my salvation, ⁴⁸ The God who executes vengeance for me, And brings down peoples under me, ⁴⁹ Who also brings me out from my enemies; You even lift me above those who rise up against me; You rescue me from the violent man. ⁵⁰ "Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the nations, And I will sing praises to Your name. ⁵¹ "He is a tower of deliverance to His king, And shows lovingkindness to His anointed, To David and his descendants forever."*

23.1-7 *Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, ² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. ³ "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God, ⁴ Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, When the tender grass springs out of the earth, Through sunshine after rain.' ⁵ "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured; For all my salvation and all my desire, Will He not indeed make it grow? ⁶ "But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns, Because they cannot be taken in hand; ⁷ But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they will be completely burned with fire in their place."*

We have been looking at the life of David for a long time. I've asked a few people in the congregation to pray for this series. Thank you, and I know that God is answering those prayers.

We're coming to the end of this remarkable life as recorded in the two-part *Book of Samuel*. The book began with a song (the song of Hannah) and now ends with this two-part song of David. We're looking at three short sections (50 verses long; p 248). The first song is basically identical to Psalm 18, presented as a kind of a summary of David's life. And then there's a little appendix called "the last words of David" (probably the last written words).

These closing poems or songs are a perfect opportunity for us to reflect (that's what poems are: reflections) because these songs are a review of David's life. And they illustrate the quote attributed to the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard "*life can only be understood backwards but it has to be lived forward*" (OR "hindsight is 20/20").

This is David at the end of his long life with still a way to go but with a lot of distance between himself and the big events. He has now what we all want: "a little perspective". He's looking back on life; some episodes look very important others are now forgotten.

As YOU reflect, how well AND FROM WHAT PERSPECTIVE do you know and understand your own life? Do you recognize what events in your life were most important and which seemed urgent or enormous at the time but turned out to be fairly insignificant? AND how will you live NOW (in the present) so that in the future you'll look back with satisfaction not regret?

We've seen both regret and grief in David's life; today's text addresses the opposite of regret i.e., satisfaction. How to look forward to looking back – how to cultivate future satisfaction? Let's look at three themes:

- 1) **Trouble**
- 2) **Self**
- 3) **God**

When it comes to trouble in David's life, he makes no attempt at revising history or positive/possibility thinking or denial. Looking back on the days of his youth as a shepherd, to his early battles, to his contact with Saul and then conflict against Saul, David has a very vivid recollection of trouble.

He lived in an extremely violent age – the Iron Age – when warfare was becoming a science and David was a professional warrior. As a warrior, he remembers trouble in a picturesque way. He uses images like the symbol of crushing water (a symbol we can relate to especially after this hurricane): "the waves of death...the torrents of destruction."

He looked back on very real, very strong and overwhelming troubles, the kind of things that sweep people away like a river at flood stage. Then he uses images from the world of hunting – in chapter 22 verse six: "the chords of the grave entangled me – the snares of death confronted me!"

Again, he employs symbols and metaphors meant to convey danger... and the possibility of death...of life and death conflict. And David speaks frankly about enemies: people who were out to get him. And we've met them through the course of our study: Saul, the Philistines, Nabal, Absalom, Sheba and of course, maybe the worst of all David's enemies... David himself.

Now, what do we learn, at this point, from this retrospective on David's life? Well, he talks a lot about troubles. We've probably met people who talk a lot about troubles. Maybe YOU talk a lot about troubles.

And, there's no real virtue in doing that. In fact, we might be tempted to call people like that, complainers, whiners, the victim-mentality. But we couldn't really call David a whiner... I mean for him to summarize his

life in a poem or song and not mention trouble would be like trying to sing about the ocean and not to mention water. David did not live a carefree life!

And it raises questions: How? Why? Why so much difficulty in this one life?

One way to answer the questions is simply to say that David's was a life that was lived. You remember the Mel Gibson character in the movie *Braveheart* said, "all men die but not all men truly live." Well, David truly lived!

David had a lust for life. He wasn't a one-dimensional man (he was a warrior-poet!). He had real relationships with lots of characters in the story. He wasn't a safe or a private or timid person. He wasn't simply a spectator or a couch potato or a "hollow man" as T.S. Eliot put it.

it's a hazard of life in safety-obsessed modern America; we can choose, like no society before ours, to be private, protected, painless persons. And we CAN manage at least the illusion of safety...but not forever... Age has a way of destroying the illusion of safety. Age has a way of flushing us out of the weeds and forcing us to face life.

We run the risk of watching life on our screens but of not actually living life. We can stay home with our comforts and 10,000 movies and our little snacks. Our entertainment and diversions can keep us safe on the sidelines, living vicariously through others, avoiding real life. BUT real life has to be lived. And to truly live raises the prospect of risk and relationships and trouble.

Secondly, David looks back and sees himself. He did not live the unexamined life; he had come to know himself. He was the man who lived and had joy and sorrow and pleasure and pain and, in it all, he was changed. He was called and he was empowered to answer that call. He's been the youngest son and a lowly, manual labor, a shepherd (street sweeper) and, (last section) he was raised up: *"the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel."*

David sees himself as a work... a composition. He looks back and sees what he's become. It's a specific self-image. All the hammering, chiseling and pounding, the breaking and molding and shaping, it's made David into who he is today as he looks back. He's the writer of the 51st Psalm – he's a reflective person/poet.

He's become a unique king; not perfect as we'll see even in the final episodes of his life, but it does remind us of the New Testament truth that Paul sets out so clearly: *"we are God's workmanship created for good works in Christ."* (Eph 2.10)

And that brings us to our final point: if David is a work of art, who is the artist? The one vision that dominates David's review of life, and ALL of David's poems is God Himself. David's life flowed from a relationship to God. David is poet and David is poem, composed by God.

His self-image rises out of THIS. His view of trouble comes from THIS. The reason he had a lust for life, the reason he launched out and really lived, the Source of his calling and the Source of his growth is God Himself. David's life is simply drenched in God.

These final poems are a retrospective of a life soaked in God: God the Foundation, God the Rescuer, God the Empowerer, God the Protector, God the Desire, and God the Satisfaction of the Desire.

Look at the whole song, how it's filled with metaphors for God: "my Rock, my Fortress, my Deliverer, my Bedrock, my Shield, the Horn of my Salvation, my Refuge, my Savior, my Support.... He delivered me from my strong enemy... For they were too strong for me. He rescued me because He delighted in me."

And even the act of composing this song is an activity drenched in God. Notice how easily and seamlessly David moves from speaking ABOUT God to speaking TO God. Earlier in this long Psalm, verse 29, *"for You are my Lamp, Lord and the Lord illumines my darkness for by You I can run upon a troop; by my God I can leap over a wall."*

V. 49: *"the God who also brings me out from my enemies – you even lift me above those who rise against me."* – And on it goes – writing about the One who's right there with him while he writes. David moves back and forth: about God and to God looking back... looking forward... looking to his side... Everywhere David looks God is there. It's as if God is right there with David in this overview of his life.

Eugene Peterson raised the metaphor of the rock that's so prominent in this whole long song and asks the question, "what could be more different from God than a rock? ... But when David sees a rock, it reminds him of the solid stability that he's found in God.

Now as you read this long poem in chapter 22 and then David's last words in chapter 23, you may get the idea that David has forgotten about his own failures. And as we remember there have been more than a few. But now, looking back David forgets them.

In fact, he seems convinced (21-27!) that he's "all that" you know the ideal king. It's like David's looking to be rewarded for his own obedience and righteous governing. But what's really happening is that David now sees himself the way that God sees him. Despite all David's ugly flaws and sins, God sees him as perfect because of what God himself has done on David's behalf. God established a covenant with David and God did indeed send the Ideal King to keep the covenant FOR David.

David is explicit about this in the last paragraph verse five, "He has made an everlasting covenant with me – ordered in all things and secured for all my salvation and all my desire; will he not bring it to bloom?"

And where David sees his own obedience – he's seeing what God – through Jesus Christ sees. God sees, in the end, looking back only David's obedience; everything else is thrown into the sea of forgetfulness.

David's song of reflection and celebration is really, more than anything, a celebration of God's faithfulness. David looks back and sees, not perfectly, but he sees the moving of God in his life, often mysterious often baffling, often painful and yet, now for a time in this reflective poem, the regrets and scars and sorrows and sins of David's life are gone and the trustworthiness of God the covenant keeper, the constancy, the "hesed" (covenant loyalty) of God overshadows everything else. It's very obvious to the observant reader that David is not the Main Character in the David Story – God is.

Now, what should we do in response to this poem? What should we do to live the God-Drenched Life?

Well, among other things, look back on your own life at whatever stage you are and see the trustworthiness of God toward you and trust Him who gave His Son and has called you to believe in Him, Jesus Christ.

Invoke God i.e., call Him into the reflection with you. Perhaps write about it: David was a journaler maybe you should look into that practice of writing in God's Presence... but at least be a reflective believer.

Ask God: "Lord help me interpret the trouble in my life; help me see myself as You see me; help me see You and Your work through Jesus Christ and how You've been applying that work to me by Your Holy Spirit. Help me see Your faithfulness in purchasing me, calling me, and working in me. Help me to see You as the Artist and myself as Your artwork.

Interpret your life through the lens of God and His saving grace. Ask God to be with you in this reflection as you write and pray about Him and to Him.

Jesus Christ, the One Ideal King, David's Rock, David's Savior and mine, Jesus defined eternal life, NOT simply as "the sweet by and by" but as a present reality in those who depend on Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection. His definition of eternal life comes in a prayer to the Father (John CH 17): *"Father, You gave the Son authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* (2-3)

I wonder how many of us are waiting for eternal life when it's ours right now. We can, like David, right now, we can press in to know God (that's what eternal life IS!). It's a group activity, a team sport. It may involve singing. It may involve study with others, prayer with and for others. Eternal life is KNOWING GOD... David knew God and that's why his life ended in satisfaction.

And it's yours, eternal life is yours, for the taking (believing!) – God is offering Himself to YOU and to ME. So, let's not wait: LET'S GET TO KNOW GOD and the One He sent – THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, and this is the God-Drenched Life.