

Davidsons Mains Parish Church

Life of David Series, David's Song of Praise, 2 Samuel 22:1-20

Sermon, 14th Sept 2025

(Thanks to Alistair Begg for some inspiration for this sermon).

Today's text is a record David's great outpouring of praise for God. It seems to come from the depth of his being. And, as with much of David's work, it sings. It's a great trembling Welsh choir that stirs the soul. Or, if you prefer, it's a gospel choir just delirious with praise for the Lord. Or a full-blooded Christian rock concert.

It's a lot easier to preach on than David's misdemeanours with Bathsheba, or the loss of their child, or the need for vengeance, or David's fall from grace that we have covered in the previous weeks.

Yet, we cannot unread what we have read, we cannot unknow what we now know about David. He isn't infallible. He is very far from perfect. He made some monumental mistakes.

Yet here we are, getting towards the end of the book of Samuel, heading towards the ends of the record of David's life. And we get this song of praise. I'll explain more in a moment but David seems to have sung these words both when he is young man and when he is older, so both before his fall from grace, and afterwards.

Let's read together verses 1-7. <verses>

22 David sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. ²He said:

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;

³ my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield^[a] and the horn^[b] of my salvation.

He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—
from violent people you save me.

⁴"I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and have been saved from my enemies.

⁵The waves of death swirled about me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

⁶The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.

⁷"In my distress I called to the Lord;
I called out to my God.

From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came to his ears

Hannah's song – David's song bookends

Now this is David's song, placed here, towards the end of David's life, and the book of Samuel.

And there are a few interesting things about this song.

Firstly - if should we turn back to the very beginning of the book of Samuel, to 1 Samuel 2, we were introduced to the book of Samuel by a song. A song at the beginning and at the end of the book.

The introductory song was sung by Hannah, the mother of Samuel, after whom this book of the bible is named. It's not named David, have you noticed that?

David's name appears more than any other human name in the Old Testament, it's second only to the name of Jesus in terms of how many times it's mentioned in scripture. But the book, or books as it's been split into 2, is named Samuel.

And the song of Samuel's mother Hannah gives us the opening bookend, so to speak, of the books of Samuel. And David gives us this closing bookend.

Her song was essentially her prayer that poured out from her heart.

Let's take a look at a bit of it <slide, 1 Samuel 2>.

Like David's, it is a song of praise to God, 'my heart rejoices in the lord' it opens. 'there is no one holy like the Lord, there is no one beside you; there is no Rock like our God'.

If you look there are several metaphors that Hannah uses that David also uses. Images of God that are shared in both songs. The image of God as the rock is in both.

There is much in Hannah's song that is an anticipation of all that is to follow. It ends looking forward to God "giving strength to his king and exalting the power of his anointed." 1 Samuel 2:10 (ESV).

And it leads to the question, How is God going to accomplish this? Who is this King that He will strengthen and anoint?

And here, we now find ourselves at the very end of the story, and David is singing. And now, that which was anticipated in Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, is reflected upon. David is considering the ways in which God's purpose has been fulfilled.

<let's put the 2 Samuel 22 passage up again on the screen>

And you will notice that we're told that David "spoke" these words "to the Lord." Like Hannah did. It is a personal address to God.

What is even more interesting about David's song is that it is printed twice in the bible, almost word for word, you can read it here in 2 Samuel 22, and you can find it again in Psalm 18.

The difference is that in this version they are the words of David, he is singing, praying, worshipping, speaking directly to God. And in the psalm, it's the same words, but it's written for the use of other people. The instruction at the top says 'for the director of worship' and it is a song to be sung in the temple. The same words but with these 2 different applications.

So it appears as though David wrote these words before he was King, when he was being pursued by Saul. And he also sang them and repeated them much later in his life. And he encouraged others to sing them.

Age

I don't know about you, but the things I sing now, even if they're the same words as I sung when I was young, they hit differently.

As a child we may have sung 'All I have needed your hand has provided'. And it might have meant food, or a toy, my family, because that was my world at that age. but when you have lived, when things have happened to you, when you've experienced the highs and the lows of life... and we sing 'all I have needed your hand has provided', or we sing 'you are my rock, my fortress, deliverer' It takes on a deeper meaning.

So as a young man David was pursued by his enemies and God was his rock. As an old man, his enemies probably looked very different, closer to home, and that God was his rock in whom he could take shelter, still, well that took on a whole new depth of meaning.

David's Testimony

If the passage is open in front of you, take a look at the number of times he says "my." "My, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my."

He's not just saying, "I want to tell you things that are true of God. These facts. This information" This is *his* story about God, about what *he* has experienced and learnt. He is testifying to the power of who God is, as he has experienced in his life.

This is David's song of salvation, it's his history *and* his theology. His testimony in the form of poetry, of song.

The descriptions, ROCK

Let's look at the titles he gives to God. The nouns, the metaphors, that he claims. The Lord is his: "rock," "fortress," "deliverer", "stronghold," "shield," "salvation," and his "refuge."

I don't know if you know the book 'Guess how much I love you'. It's a children's story of a big hare and a young hare telling each other how much they love them. And they keep going and going trying to express their love more and more. I love you this much. Well I love you this much. I love you this tall, well I love you this tall, I love you to the moon, I love you to the moon and back, they say.

I was reminded of this with David's words. He almost falling over himself in trying to adequately say, "I love you." To describe his love.

He is building one metaphor on top of the other. It's as though he knows the fact that he cannot adequately convey to God the depth of his gratitude and love.

You are my rock. My fortress, my deliverer. My stronghold. My salvation. My refuge.

Note he is a rock, not a pebble or a stone.

I've got some photos of big rocks, you may recognise some of them.

<slide> A rock is something that provides shelter, shade, relief from the heat of the day.

<slide> As David discovered, a rock is a great place to hide.

<slide> Rocks were used as memorials to God.

<slide> Where did the wise man build his house? They gave firm foundations, they didn't move about like the sand.

<slide> Rocks are secure, you can have firm and secure footing on a rock.

This list of safe and secure things that God *is* comes with a knowledge, a gratitude, that is not something that is merely true in reality, but it is deep and wide, something that has become personally his. A truth that has settled in his heart and soul. It's more than head knowledge.

There is a point in people's journey with Jesus when the truth of who he is moves from the head, to the heart. At that point he becomes *your* rock, *your* fortress, *your* salvation. David has had that experience. I pray you do too.

Troubles

And we know that David hasn't lived an easy life. He is no stranger to violence. He is painfully aware of the fact that he spent a long time hiding from his enemies and Saul.

Verse 5 says: "The waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me." He's been troubled by significant difficulties. At one point he says that he is "entangled," he says. He's snared. "The waves of death" stare him down.

(1 Samuel 20:6) David said to Jonathan, "there is but a step between me and death". "There's but a step between me and death." That was the real sense in which he lived for a long time.

Who are you going to call to?

And he's pointing to the fact that when he is overwhelmed, when he's feeling as though the bottom has dropped out of his world... he is calling to the Lord. He says, "I call to the Lord. I call to the Rock, because here I find a solid place to put my feet. I call to the one who is a fortress, because here I find a safe place in which to hide."

When you read David's Psalms he often talks in these terms. "I was pushed back," he says, "and I was falling." But what did he do?

David says: "**In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I called.**"

It made me think, **who are you going to call when the bottom drops out of your world?** When you're standing on the cliff edge and it feels like there are enemies all around?

Who are you going to call when you are confronted with a hospital test result that comes back with bad news? Or when we're grieving that awful, physical, grief. I don't know what your version of this is but you understand what I'm saying I think.... Who are you going to call when it's all falling down around your ears? Who are you going to call? Who am I going to call?

Pink Floyd have a song called "Comfortably Numb." Some of you will know it. It begins like this:

Hello? Hello? Hello? Is there anybody out there?

Musicians are clever because they're often singing what many of us are thinking. Do *you* cry out sometimes..., "Hello? Is there anybody out there?"

And it's not just that someone needs to be out there. Listening.

There's no point in crying to somebody who can't hear. But there's no point in crying to somebody who can't fix anything either.

You see, for David, he really believed God to be his rock, his fortress, his salvation, his strong tower. He believed. And he was confident that since God was this, then God would be able to *help* with this. The

conviction of *who* God is and *what* God is gives a basis for his cry. He cries to the only one who is able to hear his cry. And the one who could help him.

A fortress is useful because it protects you. It keeps you safe. A rock protects us from the elements. A saviour saves.

The Lord was David's rock and fortress throughout his life. Rescuing him from his troubles.

Just as Hannah said 'There is no one holy like the Lord, there is no one besides you; there is no rock like our God (1 Samuel 2:2).

These personal testimonies to God's love and power book-end the whole message of Samuel, which tells the story of a faithful God who can be trusted, who is as solid and dependable as a rock, a fortress, a saviour. The one that can be called to, and will listen, and will protect, in times of good and times of trouble.

Who do we run to in times of trouble? Who do we call?

God loves to be our rock. It's not a hassle. Verse 20 says 'he rescued me because he delighted in me'. God loves to be our rock, the rock that we need, to support us. He delights in you.

David's Poetry vs Science

Now, I haven't read the whole passage. I only read to verse 7. You are very welcome to read the rest. It is David's testimony in the form of poetry. Some of you like poetry. Others don't. Some people respond to music, some to words, some to visuals.

This poetry describes for us the history of David's battles, and escapes, and God's dramatic intervention, in dramatic metaphor.

At this point in the text, the people who don't think with pictures, perhaps the more science leaning folks here, may be nodding off. Bah, more words. More pictures. These images can be hard for us to wrestle with this because we can prize ourselves on being very data driven. And that is a benefit and a blessing.

And for those of us whose brains are in the world of facts and black and white: You don't need to choose. You don't need to put your brain to one side when you read these passages. You don't need to set aside scientific truth in order to, somehow safeguard God. To protect your faith. No.

Some truths simply benefit from metaphors. Some truths require pictures and poetry and analogy, because they are too great to articulate and grasp. Too much. Like the size of our galaxy, it's just too big to convey in numbers. The size and might and power of God is too big to adequately describe.

Not haphazard, God is Sovereign

And yes, he could have just written 'The Lord intervened on my behalf'. But this is how David expresses himself. 'The Lord intervened on my behalf' wouldn't be much of a poem. It would be a very short hymn. This is David's own reflection on his experiences. And he's a poetic guy.

Verses 17–20 in summary say "The events of my life haven't been haphazard. I'm not bouncing about like a cork on the ocean of life. God is sovereign, in every part of it." The Lord intervened.

His life, your life, our lives, the drama of history, is not a series of haphazard eventualities. That's the message of this poem. That God is sovereign over all. David is saying that God sweeps even *his* mistakes, his disappointments, his difficulties, his regrets into his purposes.

"God delighted in me." David says, knowing all that he was, all of his messes. This is what God does.

And what we learn here is that this whole story, this poem, this song, is not actually about David. Just like the whole book of Samuel. It's about God. and his love for us. In the midst of the mess.

There *is* someone to call to. Somone who can save.

That's what both Hannah points to and David celebrates.

It's about the one who is worthy to be praised.

I've chosen the next hymn because, like David's song, it contains the words 'I'll say of the Lord, You are my shield, my strength, My portion, Deliverer, My shelter, strong tower, My very present help'.

The very words that David encouraged us to sing...

And having considered David's song of salvation, the inevitable question is: "Am I able to sing that song?"

Are these words in your head as a fact, or are they in your heart, as a personal knowledge?

Do you *know* them to be true? Have you experienced them yourself. If you have, sing your heart out in thanks and praise. And if you'd like them to be true for you, then sing it that way, ask for it to be true for you. For He delights in you!

Amen.

Let us sing...