

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Thanksgiving Song II Samuel 22:1-20

Intro: One of the best things about the Christmas season is all of the music that accompanies it. There are all those beloved traditional carols & hymns as well as a plethora of more “contemporary” (secular) songs. It seems anyone who’s ever cut an album that was even remotely popular has also cut a Christmas album: **Twisted Sister**, **Billy Idol** (*Nice Day for a White Christmas*)...I’ve even seen a Christmas album from **Colonel Sanders**! But for all the songs that are played & sung for Christmas, it’s striking that there is not even 1 song written or sung for Thanksgiving. That could be because it’s a *Johnny-come-lately* holiday but it’s more likely because Christmas music just overcrowds the season.

Sure, we did just hear a Thanksgiving *Psalm* but, thankfully, there is at least 1 song written about Thanksgiving & it was written by no less than king David himself & we have come to that song right here in **II Sam 22**. *Psalm 18* is actually a parallel to this song – it is almost exact with just some minor variations. It’s interesting that **I Sam 2** records the song Hannah sang when she brought her son Samuel to serve the Lord at the tabernacle. Now, here at the end of **II Sam**, the writer records the song of David after the Lord helped him defeat his enemies. It’s significant that these 2 books that are filled with so many burdens & so much bloodshed are bracketed by *praise!* What this teaches us is that no matter how *dark the days are* or how *painful the experiences of life become* – **we can always praise the Lord!**

1- This serves as the introduction to the song & hints to us that it’s a song of thanksgiving. This is a reflective song; it looks back over a long history of salvation when **YAHWEH** delivered David out of the clutches of his enemies & Saul. Note that David doesn’t refer to Saul as being among his enemies. No matter what Saul did to him or tried to do to him, David never treated Saul like an enemy or even considered him to be his enemy. He always referred to Saul as “*the Lord’s anointed*” & always refused to treat him as anything other than that.

Herein lies a word of caution for believers – if you are going to be numbered among the people of God, you should expect to have many enemies. Not

only that but you should also be keenly aware of the fact that you are constantly in danger of falling into their hands. David's enemies were many & varied but ours enemies can be narrowed down to just 3: the **world**, the **flesh** & the **devil**. The **devil** is a powerful foe but I wouldn't spend too much time worrying about him. He's got bigger fish to fry. Besides, he knows we have enough to contend with in the other 2. The **world** is all around us & we're called to be in it (**reach with gospel**) but the danger is when we allow the world to **be in us**. When we begin to think, act & operate like the world, we are no longer effective for the kingdom of God. How could we even consider this? Because our **flesh** desires it. Our deadliest enemy is our own **flesh**; it's what makes us susceptible to all the attacks of our other enemies. How do we defeat them? Resist the devil; reject the influence of the world & execute the flesh (die daily). Of course, none of this can be accomplished apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Vs1's not just the **intro** to the song; it's also the "**lens**" thru which we are to view the whole song. See, David's biography could have been told as the story of a **great & powerful king** but **vs1** tells us that the events of David's life are to be understood as the actions of a **great & powerful God**! Thus, in the end; **all** David can do is **give thanks**!

Ch22 is too long to do it justice in 1 sitting so we are going to deal with **vs1-20** today & catch the rest next week. This 1st section focuses on the **intensity of David's praise** but, we're not just dealing with David here but ourselves too.

2-4- David doesn't just start praising **YAHWEH** – he **explodes** in praise! He doesn't pick 1 aspect of **YAHWEH**'s character to sing about, he tries to cram as much praise of God as he can as quickly as he can. His flood of words points to his utter inability to stretch his praise to match God's matchless splendor. David can't say enough – but he will say a lot! He piles up title upon title in his vain attempt to adequately praise his indescribable God. The scholars call this an "**exuberant aggregation of terms**" = **he can find no satisfactory term wherewith to call on the God of his salvation and therefore piles term on term (Erdmann)**. The fact that he goes overboard is an admission that his praise is **too poor**.

Note, while his praise is so passionate, it's also very personal: **my rock...my fortress...my...my...my**! David wasn't celebrating the Lord in

theory but by **experience**. He had experienced the Lord's deliverance from Goliath, Saul, backsliding, Israel's enemies, Absalom, his own sinful lusts. David knew the wonderful power, provision & presence of the Lord not because he heard about it at tabernacle or read about it in Scripture but because he **lived** it, he **experienced** it. Each title is meaningful for David because **YAHWEH** had **faithfully & powerfully** fulfilled the meaning of that title in David's life.

But why so **passionate**, so **exuberant**? There must be a reason for the sheer **intensity** of David's praise - there is. For us to properly understand David's outburst of praise we must also **recognize the desperate extremes of his distress!**

5-7- Tho couched in poetic language, **vs5-6** graphically capture the peril David regularly faced. Danger constantly surrounded him on every side: physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially. In one way or another, David was always on the brink of ruin. His battles weren't with the shadow of death but with the very clutches of death. What David says here poetically he once said to Jonathan in clear terms, "**There is but a step between me and death**" (1 Sam 20:3b). That statement serves as a summary of David's life all thru the Saul years. His distress went well beyond a surgery or troubles at work – death dogged him on a daily basis! He was #1 on Saul's most wanted list – dead or alive. You might escape once or twice but what are the normal chances of coming out alive when the king has dedicated himself to making Sheol your new home? David only survived because **YAHWEH** saved him & protected him. Jesus said that one who's forgiven much will love much (Lk 7:47) so too, the one who's been delivered from much will praise much.

In my distress- notice **when** David called on the Lord- **in the midst** of his distress. He didn't wait until he could get to the tabernacle or until he could clean himself up a bit. No, David called on **YAHWEH** in the midst of his danger & failure. The enemy of our souls wants us to believe we can't call on the Lord in our distress. He wants us to think we must be right with God & sitting peacefully in church to pray rightly. If that were the case – we'd never pray! It's the flesh that thinks it can or must improve before God will hear. Impossible! The flesh can't achieve it, we can only receive it.

He heard- For David, it was as simple as that. He cried out to **YAHWEH** & **YAHWEH** heard. But David also knew something else. He knew **YAHWEH** couldn't hear about the distress of His people without taking action on their

behalf. This brings us to the 2nd reason for the exuberance of David's praise – **the lively intervention of his God!** David cried to **YAHWEH** in his distress & **YAHWEH** heard. Then what happened? Heaven came down & the world came unglued

8-16- Not exactly what you'd expect from the sweet hour of prayer! We get the impression that **YAHWEH**'s a little more than irate here. Note the progression: **YAHWEH** hears & then He responds. When He arrives it's as if Sinai's happening all over again! God's angry that His servant must endure such affliction & so He comes in **blazing anger, shuddering majesty & world-convulsing power to rescue him (Davis)**. See it from David's perspective: God was so concerned about his problem that it seemed to David as if He left heaven & shook earth to meet his need. That's our great God!

Of course, David could have just said, "**YAHWEH** intervened on my behalf." Why didn't he? Obviously, it would've ruined the poetry. What's not so obvious is that, while that phrase is factually true, it isn't **impressively** true. David doesn't just want to tell us a fact about God; he wants us to see God in all His saving fury! He doesn't just merely inform us about what God has done; he wants us to see the God who did it & in all His glorious majesty & splendor! Such a sky-splitting, world-shaking, enemy-bashing God excites & energizes exuberant praise!

17-20- Here is the final reason for the ecstasy of David's praise – the **blessed relief of divine deliverance**. David characterizes his relief in 3 different ways: **1)** as a **rescue** (17) – he maybe insinuating a Moses-like event since the verb **masah** (to draw out) is **only** used here, in **Ps 18** & in **Ex 2:10**, where infant Moses was drawn out of the Nile; **2)** as **support** (18-19) – on that dreadful day when his enemies were prepared to take him out **YAHWEH** supported him. He knew the victory was due to God's hand, not his own ability or ingenuity. Without the Lord's support, David would fall; **3)** as **freedom** (20a) – a broad place is the exact opposite of the cramped & constricting confinement of danger & distress. His enemies had him hemmed in on every side with no room to move or even breathe. He was stuck between a rock & a hard place but **YAHWEH**'s deliverance gave him elbow room, breathing room. David's relief oozes out. It was all God's doing & he knows it (18b), that's why he can't help but **insufficiently praise** an **all-sufficient** God!

delighted- David has spent a lot of time explaining why his praise is so extravagant but here he drops a brief but vital explanation as to why God even bothered to manifest His divine favor & kindness towards David in these miraculous deliverances - it's because He **delights** in him! God didn't rescue David from some obligation to common providence: God's not obligated to rescue just anyone who happens to need it. No, God rescued David out of an obligation to **covenant-love** (**hesed**). God doesn't just treat David as His child but as His **favorite** child. David's plea for deliverance is thus rooted in that covenant **relationship**, not just a **desire to survive**. David appealed to **YAHWEH** for help because he knew He would respond. He is a God who hears, who comes & who rescues! What an amazing God!

We've spent some time trying to explain why David's praise is so intense, so exuberant. The reason is simple: if you really listen to **vs4-20**, you'll understand David's passion in **vs2-3**. But, words & phrases might help you understand David's praise but they can't make you **feel** it. That's our problem – we can hear the intensity of David's praise, we can even understand it to some degree & yet, we can still not be caught up in it. Which is really a shame because, truth be told; everything David experienced, we've experienced; maybe not physically but spiritually to be sure: all the danger & the distress, all the crying out to God & all the divine deliverances. The Lord rescues us from the bondage of sin thru the blood of Jesus Christ; He continually supports us in the face of our greatest enemies & He grants us freedom in Christ. Our deliverances have been no less miraculous than David's & our praise should be no less passionate or intense. Why do some believers find it so difficult to praise the Lord? Because they tend to look at themselves & their problems more than at God & His deliverances. It's just a matter of bad perspective.

If you find it difficult to match David's gusto in praise you can at least try to duplicate the genuineness of his praise. David's not playing for the cameras in **vs2-4**. His praise flows from a genuine excitement over what God has done in his life. As worship leader, you'll rarely (if ever) hear me encourage the congregation to sing or clap. That's because I don't think praise should be coerced. Man can **coerce** praise (**N. Korea**) but God **inspires** praise! He doesn't want His people to praise Him because they **have** to but because they can't help but praise Him.

Does your experience with God drive you to praise Him? 😊