

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

## A Thanksgiving Song II II Samuel 22:21-51

**Intro:** We are currently in the middle of David's song of Thanksgiving. This is a song of retrospect; David looks back over the course of his life & is able to plot the hand of **YAHWEH** as He was present in his life – moving & working on David's behalf, for His anointed king & for His chosen people. Quite naturally, when one reflects back on their own personal experience with the Lord, one can't help but be thankful. Despite the difficulties we may have faced along the way, if we look with an open heart & mind, we'll see that everything the Lord has done is for our ultimate good.

Tho it's not the only way to express thanksgiving, 1 of the best ways to express it is thru praise & that's what David does right here at the beginning of his song. David doesn't just offer up empty platitudes of praise; he literally piles on the praise! The 1<sup>st</sup> section of the song emphasizes the **intensity** of David's praise. David explodes in exuberant, passionate praise & he does so for 3 reasons: **1) because his distress was real & extremely desperate;** **2) because YAHWEH intervened in a mighty way on his behalf;** **3) because his eventual deliverance was a welcome relief.** In vs20, David says the Lord, "**brought me out into a broad place...**" For most of his young adult life, David had lived in tight places. By his own admission, he was always but a step away from death (I Sam 20:3b). But now, thru **YAHWEH** divine deliverance, David's been removed from the bondage of desperate circumstances brought into a place of openness & freedom. It is right for David to offer **YAHWEH** exuberant, passionate praise. In fact, it would be wrong for him not to!

While the 1<sup>st</sup> section instructs us in the fact **that YAHWEH** delivered David, this next section explains **why YAHWEH** did it. David gives us 2 reasons why YAHWEH delivered him: **1) because of who David was** & **2) because of who YAHWEH is!**

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**21-31-** Wow! I'll be the 1<sup>st</sup> to admit that, knowing what we know about David, it's hard to read vs21-25 & not be at least a little bit incredulous. What gives here? Is David promoting a Santa Clause theology of **works-righteousness**? Is he giving himself a little too much credit or maybe he's just blind to his

own sinfulness? Is David revealing a self righteous attitude here or is his understanding of the severity of sin been weakened? These verses can confuse even the most thoughtful Bible student. How can a man who had Uriah's wife in his bed & Uriah's blood on his hands ever conceive of saying anything like this (21-25)? In fact, some theologians try to say that this is evidence that David wrote this song early in life, well before his sin with Bathsheba but I'm not so sure.

**21-25- who David was** - As with most difficult passages of scripture, the problem doesn't lie in what David says but in what we **think** David is saying. If we look at this passage & assume David's claiming sinless perfection, we're wrong. So what's the deal? The best way to decipher a difficult passage of scripture is to allow the scripture speak for itself. 1<sup>st</sup> notice that **vs21 & 25** are similar – they serve as a frame around the core passage of **vs22-24**. In both, David claims **YAHWEH** deals with him (lit.) “**in line with my righteousness.**” If that's the case, what **kind** of righteousness or righteous activity is David referring to? The answer to that is neatly tucked away in **vs22-24**.

In **22**, David makes 2 different claims: **#1**) he “**kept the ways of the Lord**” & **#2**) did “**not wickedly depart from my God.**” This is hardly a claim to sinless perfection. What he **is** claiming (especially **#2**) is a **general, overall faithfulness** to **YAHWEH**; the covenant God of Israel. David had never **committed apostasy**; he had never **turned his back** on **YAHWEH**! **Vs23** is also a general statement of **fidelity**: **YAHWEH**'s **ordinances** are before him & he doesn't turn away from **YAHWEH**'s decrees. **Vs24** interprets it all “**I was also blameless before Him...**”The Hebrew word **tamiym** does **not** mean **sinlessness** but means to be **complete** or **whole**. David literally says “**So I proved wholehearted toward Him.**” This is **not** a claim to **perfection** in life's **particulars** but a claim of **wholeheartedness** in life's **commitment**. **Mt Henry** puts it this way: “**Tho he had sometimes weakly departed from his duty, he had never wickedly departed from his God.**” David isn't saying he was spotless & always did the right thing – we know better! He had his days of despair when he ran to the enemy for help but these were incidents of failure in a life that was otherwise wholly devoted to the Lord. In the midst of his difficulties & distress, David honored the Lord only – he never turned to idolatry.

In **24b** is also enlightening: **My iniquity** relates to **that to which I am**

naturally prone or subject. This entire song is a response to David's deliverance from his enemies & Saul. Here, David relates that he was aware of his natural tendencies toward his enemies & Saul: **take care of them himself**. This was the pull of his fleshly desires; that's what his flesh wanted to do. But, David knew this & guarded himself (& his men) from giving way & giving in to **his iniquity**.

So, when David speaks of his **righteousness & purity (21,25)**, he's **not** talking about **sinless perfection** but his **life's direction**. He's not expressing some pharisaical pride over **errorless obedience** but a **faithful loyalty** to **YAHWEH** as evidenced by a **consistent obedience**. Of course, all of this is important for us because it is just **this** kind of **faithful, whole-hearted** (the **imperfect**) **servants** that God **delights** to rescue. **YAHWEH** delivered David because he was a man after His own heart & faithfully so. Tho David stumbled at times & failed at others (**as we all do**) he never turned his back on worshipping & serving **YAHWEH**. But that's not the only reason for **YAHWEH's** deliverance

**26-31- who YAHWEH is** – God not only delivered David because of who David was, He delivered David because of who He was! We know that God is loving & gracious but these verse point to another aspect of God's character in that **God is to man what man is to God**. This is a preview of the Lord's statements in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5), "**Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy**" (7) & "**Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God**" (8). David didn't just sing about this truth – he practiced it & benefitted from it. **YAHWEH** showed David great mercy because he had shown great mercy to others (**Saul & Shimei**). David was faithful to the Lord & the Lord was faithful to him. The principle in **vs28** is also taught in **Prv 3:34; Jam 4:6 & I Ptr 5:5**, "**God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble**." David was humbled & broken before the Lord on many occasions & because of this, the Lord lifted him up in honor.

God is always faithful to His character & His covenant. Knowing the character of God is essential to knowing & doing the will of God & pleasing His heart. David knew God's covenant so he understood what God expected of him. Not only could he rejoice in **YAHWEH's** deliverance, he could also revel in the **power & safety YAHWEH** had provided (**29-31**).

So, this is not some strange new concept David is espousing for himself.

This is mainstream doctrine – it’s been here all along. Those who faithfully follow God & esteem His Word by obeying it can expect His blessing; those who don’t – can’t! Doesn’t **Judges 10:6-14** give us the flip side of David’s situation? How can those who reject God’s lordship & despise His law (thus, despising Him) expect His rescue? They have no ongoing commitment to God just a temporary need for Him. They desire no covenant relation with God; they just want Him to sell out his own character to meet their immediate crisis. They’re not looking for a Savior & Master; just a bomb shelter. What we can deduce from all this is simply: if God is not honored by your life, you can expect no response to your desperate cries.

What David has related to us here is **the importance of our righteousness** in God’s response to our distress. The application for us is that it **does** matter how we live in the midst of our difficulties. We must never use our many afflictions & pressures of this life as an **excuse** for **turning away** from your God or for **walking away** from His Word. David refused to do this even when it appeared to be the quickest way. We can do no less.

While the previous 2 sections have emphasized David’s deliverance; this last section emphasizes David’s dominion. This passage describes how **YAHWEH** gave His king victory & how the surrounding nations submit to his kingship.

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**32-43-** In his song of praise, David rejoices over **the power that establishes the kingdom**. Note: David highlights **YAHWEH**’s activity in **vs32-37** in either the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (**He**) or the 2<sup>nd</sup> person (**You**). Then in **vs38-43**, David speaks in the 1<sup>st</sup> person of what **I** have been able to accomplish. Obviously, David’s success is directly related to **YAHWEH**’s activity. Lest we be too thick to catch that, David carefully inserts some “**You**” activity in his success portion (**40-41**). His intention should be clear: **everything he’s been able to accomplish has been done by YAHWEH’s power.** “**You have armed me with strength for the battle**” (**40a**); David knew his kingdom rested on solely on **YAHWEH**’s muscle.

Next, David takes a look around & sees all **the different peoples that serve the kingdom**.

**44-50-** His kingdom is **international!** This also prompts praise because it’s

**YAHWEH** who *subdues the peoples under* him. Thus, since David's kingdom is international, his praise must also be international (50a)! This section gives us a brief glimpse of the **scope** of David's kingdom. He was no mere Philistine vassal, reigning over a postage stamp sized section of Judean landscape. David was **YAHWEH's** covenant king over Israel & eventually, all the surrounding nations came to recognize & acknowledge his authority – not just over Israel but over them as well! In this we have a preview & a pledge of the day when all kings will bow down & all nations will serve David's royal Descendant (**Ps 72:11**). Israel was called to be a witness to the nations & David's responsibility was to build a kingdom that would publicly honor the name of the Lord. David only accomplished this in part but when Jesus is enthroned, it will be complete!

**51-** Finally, David concludes his song of thanksgiving by alluding to **the promise that guarantees the kingdom**. Here he praises **YAHWEH** as his *tower of salvation* (deliverance) & the One who continually *shows mercy* (devoted love) to him. The mention of *mercy*, David's *seed* & *forevermore* point back to God's **covenant promise** to David in **7:12-16**. This last verse reminds us that David's kingdom & its ultimate fulfillment do not depend on the *lucky breaks of history* but on a divine decree that actually determines & shapes history. Because God's kingdom rests on God's promise, it's a sure thing! This fact gives us strength as we trudge thru the many dangers, toils & snares of this Christian life. We can keep moving forward, despite the tragedy, because we know God's kingdom is invincible & assured!

This brings us back to the original point that **God's power establishes the kingdom**, the dominant emphasis of this last section. God's promise is sure, yes; but it is sure because God's power will bring it to pass. We must always remember church building is the express work of Christ Himself. Isn't that what He told Peter, "*upon this rock I will build My church...*" There's no place for *Christian cockiness* (an *oxymoron*). It's never going to be our programs, technology, seminars or abilities that will establish the kingdom. These are only useful in response to His call & His work. If we ever forget this, then we'll become disillusioned & burn out. It is God's power alone that guarantees the kingdom & the glory.

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David declared in **24b** that, *I kept myself from my iniquity*. His natural tendency was to place himself on the throne by any means. He knew this & he fought the urge to do it every time the opportunity presented itself. It

would have been disastrous if David had done this but to his credit, he didn't. Sadly, while David was vigilant in this area, he was lax in others. In the end, it wasn't this sin that caused him to fall – it was a sin he'd ignored & toyed with all his life. We must be on guard against sin over every area of our lives. If we only focus on the 1 or 2 sins that constantly dog us, we may fail to see the one that's about ready to strike & bring us down. We must be vigilant in every area of life, personal, at home, church, work, community. It's great to have victory over a besetting sin but if I'm still offending my brother, discouraging a non-believer or damaging my testimony elsewhere, it's only a hollow victory. We can't do it on our own – we must constantly search the word & seek the power of the Holy Spirit to experience lasting victory over sin. 😊