

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 27, 2 Samuel 22-23

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This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 27. The Lord Is My Rock Poem, chapter 22; The Last Words of David poem, chapter 23:1-7.

In our next lesson, we're going to be looking at the two poems that appear in the epilogue to the books of Samuel. 2 Samuel 22, which is a long poem, 51 verses, that David sang to the Lord when the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, according to the title. So, David is going to be celebrating the Lord's protection and provision in this particular poem.

And then we're also going to look at the short poem that follows in 2 Samuel 23, verses 1 through 7, which is the final words of David. I've entitled 2 Samuel 22, The Lord is my rock. And in this poem, David is going to say the Lord protects his chosen servants.

The Lord protected David from those who opposed him, and he enabled David to accomplish the tasks that he had commissioned him to do. I call it the Lord is my rock because that metaphor, the Lord is my rock, shows up at the beginning of the poem, in the middle of the poem, and at the end of the poem. It's obvious that it is a central theme in David's mind.

And so, we have to talk a little bit about what rock means. When I think of a rock, well, the Lord is my rock, does that mean it's a rock I can reach down and pick up and throw at somebody? I might think of a larger rock as maybe an obstacle or something. This particular word, the Hebrew word *sur*, refers to a rocky cliff, a rocky terrain.

We know from the account of David's career that he would often seek refuge from Saul and other enemies by going up into this kind of terrain because it makes you relatively inaccessible when you go up into a rocky kind of area. And so, David viewed the Lord that way. The Lord is a place of refuge for me.

I can seek shelter in him, kind of like when I go up into the rocky terrain and it's very hard for my enemies to find me and get at me when I'm in that kind of situation. And so, we really could paraphrase it as the Lord is my protector rather than the Lord is my rock. But that is a key theme in this long poem.

This poem also appears in Psalm 18. There are some slight variations when you compare the two, but we have two versions of one poem that David wrote. So, let's dive in.

In the introduction to this poem, David is going to talk about the Lord as his savior and protector. In fact, in verses two and three, he's going to use nine metaphors and they're all talking about the Lord as protector and savior. So, he begins with, the Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.

My God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation. That's an odd metaphor, but he's referring here probably to the horn of an ox. And the idea is of wild oxen fighting, and the horn is their weapon, the horns are their weapon that they use.

And he's essentially saying, the Lord is like that for me. He's the horn of my salvation. He goes out and attacks my enemies like a wild ox and brings me victory and salvation.

He is my stronghold, my refuge, and my savior. So, as we read through that list, you probably saw the metaphors point to God as protector, stronghold, refuge, rock, fortress, and salvation, deliver, and save. Those concepts appear as well.

From violent people you save me. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and have been saved from my enemies. So early on here, we understand David is making it clear that he's going to praise the Lord in this psalm for the fact that the Lord has been with him throughout his life when he has faced many enemies.

His enemies were within. There were enemies like Saul within the nation of Israel, and there were also lots of foreign enemies that David had to face on the battlefield. In the first part of the psalm, verses 5 through 20, David is going to focus on the Lord delivering him.

And then he is going to generalize a bit about the reason the Lord has delivered him is because he has been faithful to the Lord. And then he's going to talk about the Lord's justice a little bit. And then in the second part of the psalm, he's going to focus on battlefield experience, and he's going to make the point that the Lord is the one who energized him for battle, trained his hands for war, as it were, gave him his weapons, almost special weapons from God, for the task.

And the Lord is the one who enabled him to fight hand-to-hand on fields of battle and not stumble and fall and win the victory. And then he concludes with more praise to the Lord for what he has done for him. In this first section of the poem, David is going to use a lot of figurative or metaphorical language.

He's going to picture himself as one who was ready to drown. He says in verse 5, the waves of death swirled about me. The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

He compares death to surging waters in which you can drown. And he said, I was trapped by these waters. I was right out there in them, as it were, and they were swirling around me.

Now he's not talking about a literal experience that he had. The waves of death and the torrents of destruction, are metaphors for the enemies that he faced that threatened his life. But he's making it clear that there were many times when his life was threatened, just like a drowning man's life would be threatened.

And then in verse 6, he says, the cords of the grave coiled around me. The snares of death confronted me. Here he's picturing death as a hunter who uses cords and snares, ropes, to trap his victims.

And he's saying, there were many times that I felt as if death had trapped me with its snares and its ropes. I was in trouble many, many times. This first part of the psalm is what we call a Thanksgiving song, where the psalmist will look back on his time of need, recall his cry for help, and then talk about how the Lord delivered him.

And that's what David is going to do here. 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. And David is talking here about the heavenly temple, because we're going to see the Lord coming to deliver him through the clouds, through the sky.

So, the Lord is coming from up there. So, David was entrapped by death many, many times. He cried out to the Lord for intervention and help.

And the Lord heard David's cry. And then what we get in the next verses is what we could call a poetic theophany. It's in poetic form.

It's figurative. As far as we know, there was never an experience like this where the Lord came through the clouds in the storm to deliver David. David, it's very poetic.

It's a theophany in that the Lord is making a visible appearance in this passage. He's coming to deliver David. And so, get the picture.

David is trapped by death. He cries out to the Lord. The Lord hears, and here comes the Lord.

Verse 8, the earth trembled and quaked. The foundations of the heavens, which would be the mountains, shook. They trembled because he was angry.

Smoke rose from his nostrils. Consuming fire came from his mouth. Burning coals blazed out of it.

So, the Lord comes breathing fire and smoke in this theophany. He parted the heavens and came down. Dark clouds were under his feet.

He mounted a cherub and flew. So, one of these winged, half-human, half-animal type creatures, the Lord is pictured riding on one of those swiftly. He soared on the wings of the wind.

He made darkness his canopy around him. The dark rain clouds of the sky, out of the brightness of his presence, bolts of lightning blazed forth. The Lord thundered from heaven.

The voice of the Most High resounded. So, the Lord is coming in the storm. I think there is an element of polemic in this passage, just as there was in Hannah's song back in 1 Samuel 2. The Canaanites believed in the god Baal.

He was a storm god who would come in the storm. David is saying basically, no, my God, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the one who controls all of that, and he comes in the storm. And he shot his arrows and scattered the enemy.

With great bolts of lightning, he routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed, and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of breath from his nostrils. So, David is trapped in the waters of death.

The Lord comes in this powerful theophany, thundering, hurling lightning bolts as a mighty warrior against the enemy. And he is going to reach down. Verse 17, he reached down from on high and took hold of me.

He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes who were too strong for me. No bravado with David, I'm the mighty warrior, and nobody can stand up to me.

No, he's very much aware of his vulnerability when he steps on the battlefield against a Goliath and others like that. And he realizes that the Lord has always intervened on his behalf. And this poem helps us understand just how David felt when he was in battle.

He felt as if death were all around him, but he was very much aware of the fact when he won his victories that it was the Lord who was empowering him. It was as if the Lord were coming down through the sky to deliver him. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support.

He brought me out into a spacious place. He rescued me because he delighted in me. So the picture is David is drowning.

Death has a hold on him. The waters of death are swirling around him. He's ready to go under.

And the Lord comes down and blasts apart the water and pulls David out and puts him in a safe, wide-open place. And David is describing poetically the experience he had against all of his enemies as the heading to the psalm makes clear. David's now going to stop and he's going to talk about his relationship with God.

And he says in verse 21, the Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands, he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord and I am not guilty of turning from my God.

All his laws are before me. I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.

The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight. This is probably raising red flags for you because you realize David is talking as if he were perfect as if he had kept the Lord's law right down to every detail, and that's clearly not the case. Obviously, in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, he broke four of the Ten Commandments, including adultery and murder.

So how could a man with that kind of history talk this way? Some have said, well, he must have written this before all that happened. Even then, he wasn't perfect. And it looks as if, based on the heading to this psalm, this came toward the end of David's career, after the Lord had delivered him from all of his enemies.

He seems to be claiming moral perfection and unwavering allegiance to the Lord's covenant demands. But given his moral failures and shortcomings, he can't be claiming to be innocent in some absolute sense here. You look at other psalms that David wrote, and he's very much aware of his sinfulness, and he confesses his sins.

And so, I think we have to look at this as a more general kind of passage that reflects the worldview that we see in the Psalms. In the Psalms, it's either black or white sometimes. There's not a whole lot of gray.

There are the righteous who are on God's side, and there are the wicked who are enemies of God. David, on occasion, broke the Lord's law. He sinned and sort of put himself in the position of an enemy.

But the bottom line, David was one of the righteous by God's own standards. He had a heart after God, and the Lord saw that, and he chose David. So, this language

doesn't imply that David thought he was innocent and that he's just forgetting about his sins, his great sins.

But I think he is saying, I was one of the Lord's faithful followers. I was on the Lord's side. It may be overstated a bit, but it's interesting that when you proceed through the former prophets and you work your way into the books of kings, the Lord holds David up as the example of a righteous, faithful follower of the Lord.

David becomes the paradigm for kings, against which the later kings are measured. And you'll frequently read, this king did not follow the Lord wholeheartedly as David did. And the Lord himself says this.

And you wonder at times, has the Lord read the books of Samuel? Obviously he knows about David's career, but at this point in time, the Lord chooses to put all of that behind us, and he wants to focus on David as a loyal servant and hold him up as an example. And David was a faithful follower of the Lord. One thing you can say about David, he was not an idolater.

And in these king's passages, that seems to be the focus. These people were worshipping other gods, unlike David. David, say what you want about him.

He didn't always obey. He sometimes let power get the best of him. But he's not an idolater.

Show me one place in the story where David is portrayed as an idolater. And that signifies a lot with the Lord. And so, the Lord eventually chooses to focus on David's positives, and I think that's what David is doing here.

So, if the Lord is going to look at David like that, eventually, why can't David himself talk in these terms? He's saying, the Lord delivered me in these situations because I was fighting his battles. I was on his side. I was faithful to him.

And so that's probably not a completely satisfying explanation for what's going on here. But I think it is the focus that David has. I compare it to, let's say, a man that I admire greatly, a former president at Dallas Seminary, who's well known as a preacher, Chuck Swindoll.

Or we could think of Billy Graham. And if I said, Chuck Swindoll is a righteous man, a follower of the Lord. Billy Graham was on the Lord's side.

He was a righteous follower of the Lord. In contrast to, you fill in the name, I won't do that, some horrible individual out there, you know, an Adolf Hitler or somebody like that, or lots of people. You don't have to go far to find examples of wicked people who are opposed to God.

If I say in that context, Chuck Swindoll or Billy Graham is a righteous person in contrast to this person, you know what I'm talking about. But there is another side sometimes that we see in the Bible. The Bible would come along, Paul would say, everyone is a sinner.

Everyone is alienated from God apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And Chuck Swindoll and Billy Graham would be the first to admit that they were sinners, redeemed by God's grace nevertheless. So, it depends on how you look at it.

If you want to focus on sin, yeah, we're all sinners. But then again, some sinners have repented of sin and they've come over to God's side. The Lord has brought them over and they are now followers of the Lord.

The Psalms tend to look at it that way. Billy Graham's righteous as opposed to this wicked person over here. Billy Graham is on the Lord's side.

He's promoting the Lord's interests as opposed to these enemies of the Lord. And that's what David is saying here. In the context of all his wars and his battles, he was on the Lord's side and he was faithful to the Lord and he never worshipped other gods.

And so maybe he overstates it a little bit for emphasis. Maybe there's a little hyperbole here. But nevertheless, David is a righteous man.

And the Lord, when David repented of his sin, the Lord chose to move on. If you're familiar with the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe, you'll remember that Edmund did some very bad things. He got in with the white witch and caused all kinds of problems.

And the white witch was ready to kill him. But then Aslan stepped in and took the punishment for Edmund. And later, when Aslan brings Edmund to his brother and sisters, who are pretty upset at their brother, Aslan just hands Edmund over and he says, here is your brother.

There is no need to talk to him about what has happened in the past. It's as if Aslan is saying, we're going to move on from here. Edmund has been taught his lesson and he is ready to serve me.

And that's what we're going to focus on. And that's what the Lord does with David in the books of Kings. And David is looking at his own career from the vantage point that the Lord looks at it, I think, in the books of Kings.

Well, we've said enough about that. Let's move on. David is going to generalize about the Lord's justice in verses 26 and 27.

He says, to the faithful, you show yourself faithful. To the blameless, you show yourself blameless. He's speaking to the Lord here.

To the pure, you show yourself pure. What David is saying is, that the Lord will always prove to be faithful and blameless and pure to those who are that way themselves. You will see, that God will react and respond to you in a way that mirrors your character.

So, if you are striving to be faithful and blameless and pure, you have nothing to worry about with God. He is going to encourage you in that and help you. The NIV translates the second half of verse 27, but to the devious, you show yourself shrewd.

I don't think that's the best translation. I would prefer to translate it this way, you prove to be deceptive to one who is perverse. And what David is saying here is, that the enemies of God who are perverse, just may find that God will use deception to bring them down.

And we see examples of that in the Bible. People forfeit their right to the truth. 1 Kings 22, evil King Ahab insists upon listening to false prophets all the time.

And so, the prophet Micaiah, who is the true prophet of the Lord on that occasion, he says to Ahab exactly what the false prophets are saying. Yeah, go out and fight, you'll win the battle. This is what Ahab wants to hear.

Ahab says to himself, wait a minute, you're saying positive things about me. You never do this. You're always opposing me.

So, I put you under oath. You need to tell me the truth. At this point, Micaiah, who was engaged in deception, then says, well, here's what went on in the heavenly council.

The Lord has decided to judge you. And in the council, he said, who will go out and deceive Ahab? The Lord sets the agenda as one of deception. And there are different proposals that are made.

And then the spirit, and I think it's talking about the spirit who energizes the prophets, the Holy Spirit, says, I'll go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth mouths of his prophets. And the Lord says, do it. So, the whole agenda is deception.

And Micaiah was deceiving Ahab because he understood that. He understood we're deceiving him. In fact, the Lord himself is speaking on this occasion through those prophets.

But the irony of it is Ahab forces the truth out of Micaiah and still believes the false prophets. He goes out and he is killed in battle. But that's a classic example of deception.

And it's not confined to the Old Testament. When you get into the New Testament and you read about the end times, you read that the Lord is going to send a deluding influence upon those who have decided to believe the false message of Satan. And so, there's a time of deception coming in the future where the Lord is just sort of going to give people over to their own philosophy and design.

And so, this all comes under the umbrella of deception. And you might think that's not fair for God to do that. But as a commentator, J. A. Alexander, said about this passage, the same course of proceeding which would be perverse in itself or towards a righteous person, when pursued towards a sinner, becomes a mere act of vindicatory justice.

So divine deception, when implemented against sinners, is part of God's just punishment of them. And he has the right to use deception in situations like that. David goes on, With my God, I can scale a wall.

I think that that translation is toned down a bit. The Hebrew verb that's used here really means to leap or spring. So, David is saying, with my God I can leap over a wall.

So, David is beginning to make his move into the second part of the psalm where he's going to talk about how God energizes him for battle and has enabled him to win victories out there on the battlefield. He says, in verse 31, As for God, his way is perfect. The Lord's word is flawless.

He shields all who take refuge in him. When he talks about the Lord's word being flawless here, I don't think he's talking about the Bible. We could take those words and apply them to the Bible.

But in the original context in which David is speaking, a context of war, I think David is talking about oracles of salvation that the Lord provided to him prior to a battle. And we've read about some of these in Samuel where David would say, if I stay here, will Saul come? Will they hand me over to him? The Lord says, yeah, he will come and they will hand you over. And so David leaves.

On other occasions where David is facing an enemy and he inquires of the Lord, 2 Samuel 5, we see some good examples of this. And I think what David is saying here

is, that every time I go to the Lord and inquire of him prior to a battle, his word is always flawless. If he says, yes, go and fight and I will give you the victory, you can bank on it.

You can trust in the Lord's word of promise in these situations. And verse 32, for who is God besides the Lord? And who is the rock except our God? The Lord is the only true God. He's the only God who really can provide genuine protection for his people.

The incomparability of the Lord that we talked about in an earlier lesson. And then he begins to describe the battle situation. It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.

He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He causes me to stand on the heights. David, if you've ever seen one of these deer running in high terrain, it's amazing.

You say, how can that animal do that? It should trip. It should fall and break its neck. But it's able to leap around over all of the rocks.

And David says, that's the way I felt on the battlefield. Because think about it, in hand-to-hand combat, if you trip, if you get injured, if you sprain your ankle or break a leg or something like that, you're dead. You're going to fall down, you're going to be vulnerable and you're going to be dead.

And David is basically saying, no, when I was on the battlefield, I was able to jump around, leap around, and have the agility of one of these deer. He trains my hands for battle. My arms can bend a bow of bronze.

It's as if the Lord comes and actually trains David how to use his weapons. We actually have this pictured in some ancient Near Eastern art, especially from Egypt, where one of the Pharaoh's gods is pictured showing him how to use the bow and how to use his weapons. He gives the Pharaoh special weapons and then shows him how to use them.

You make your saving help my shield. Your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet so that my ankles do not give away.

I pursued my enemies and crushed them. I did not turn back until they were destroyed. And then he describes how his enemies fall at his feet.

He has the strength of the Lord. They cry for help, but there's no one to save them. Sometimes they even cry to the Lord.

Certainly, Israelites, who were enemies of David, would have done this. But from the ancient Near East, we know that sometimes a defeated enemy would cry out to the God of the victor for mercy. But in this case, the Lord is on David's side and they received no support from the Lord.

And David talks in very violent terms. I beat them as fine as the dust. I pounded and trampled them.

And then he says that the Lord has delivered him from all the attacks of the peoples and has preserved him as the head of the nations. And he says, people who didn't even know me before, who didn't recognize me as having authority over them, they may have known about me, but they didn't recognize me as having authority, now they hear about me and they come. And want to be my subjects.

And they come trembling before me. And it's all because of the Lord and the strength he provides. And then he finishes up this poem with, the Lord lives.

He affirms that the Lord is a living God. And he's not talking in philosophical terms there. He's talking in very practical terms.

The Lord is alive and well. Praise be to my rock. Exalted be my God, the rock, my Savior.

He is the God who avenges me, who puts nations under me, who sets me free from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes. From a violent man, you rescued me.

Therefore, I will praise you, Lord, among the nations. I will sing the praises of your name. When the nations come and bring their tribute, David will praise his God in their presence.

He gives his king great victories. He shows unfailing kindness to his anointed one, to David and his descendants forever. So, David was very much aware of the Lord's enablement and empowerment on the field of battle.

And he praises the Lord here for that. We then move right into the last words of David in 2 Samuel 23. This is a very short poem, and David is going to make reference to the fact that he is the Lord's chosen servant, chosen to rule in righteousness over the nation.

And he alludes to the covenant, referring to the covenant that the Lord has made with him. So, here's what David said. The inspired utterance of David's son of Jesse, the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the hero of Israel's songs.

David is aware of the fact that the Lord's Spirit is speaking through him. There's a sense in which David is a prophet, and of course, he has given us a great deal of Scripture, many, many Psalms. And he says the Spirit of the Lord spoke through me.

His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke. The Rock of Israel said to me, when one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, which is an important principle, the fear of God is the essence of, it's the starting point of genuine wisdom, according to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth. And so, he's using a metaphor again, this is poetic language, to describe the ideal king who fears God. And he compares him to the bright light of dawn and the sunshine that follows a rain.

And this light and this brightness signify here divine deliverance, a renewed blessing. And so, he's picturing a righteous king, and he, I think, is claiming to be that, as one through whom the Lord provides blessing and salvation and security for his people. And he says, if my house were not right with God, verse 5, surely, he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part.

Surely, he would not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire. David understands that the Lord has chosen him. And remember, the Lord chose David at the very beginning because of what he saw in David's heart.

And David is referring to that here. I was one who was in line with the Lord's program. I was a man after his own heart, and he made an everlasting covenant with me and has provided salvation for me.

And then he's going to contrast this ideal king with enemies, evil people. Evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns which are not gathered with the hand. Whoever touches thorns uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear.

They are burned up where they lie. So, he contrasts himself with those kinds of people. And so, I think David is celebrating here, in his final words, the fact that he has a special relationship with the Lord.

Of course, when we read these poems, we realize that, yes, they're true in David's experience, but we understand that David did have his flaws. And there's a sense in which the language that's spoken in these psalms that David writes here will ultimately be fulfilled through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, capital S for Son, who will come and he will be that righteous ruler, absolutely righteous ruler, who follows the Lord and brings about the complete fulfillment of the covenant that the Lord made with David, which entails ruling over the nations, as we understand from Psalm 2. And so, these psalms of David realized in part in his experience,

ultimately point us to the ideal messianic king, the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our next lesson, we will conclude our study of the books of Samuel by looking at 2 Samuel chapter 24.

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