

Redemption Song

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 March 2019

Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0 : 0 0] the end. As for God's, his way is perfect.

The Lord's word is flawless. He shields all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the rock except our God?

Is it 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.

He trains my hands for battle. My arms can bend a bow of bronze. You can make your savings help my shield. Your help has made me great.

You provide a broad path for my feet so that my ankles do not give way. I pursued my enemies and crushed them.

[1 : 0 9] I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them completely and they could not rise. They fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle.

You humbled my adversaries before me. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight. And I destroyed my foes. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them.

To the Lord, but he did not answer. I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth. I pounded and trampled them like the mud in the streets.

You have delivered me from the attacks of the peoples. You have preserved me as the head of nations. People I did not know now serve me.

Foreigners cower before me. As soon as they hear of me, they obey me. They all lose heart. They come trembling from their strongholds.

[2 : 1 1] The Lord lives. Praise be to my rock. Exalted be my God. The rock, my saviour. He is the God who avenges me.

Who puts the 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. He is giving his king great victories. He shows unfailing kindness to his anointed.

To David and his descendants forever. Thanks a lot, Craig, for reading.

My name is Martin Ayres. I'm the senior minister here at St Silas. And it would be a great help to me if you could keep your Bibles open on page 3 to 8. This chapter, 2 Samuel chapter 22.

[3 : 1 7] A song so special. It's in the Bible twice. It's also more or less Psalm 18 as well. But we're going to look at that together. And if you'd find it helpful, there's an outline inside the notice sheet.

Just to follow where we're going with this. So let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to meet.

Where we are foolish, we ask for your wisdom. Where we are hurt, we ask for your healing. Where we are encouraged, we ask that you will make us thankful and worshipful.

Where we are confused and doubting, we ask for faith. So we pray you'll speak to us by your spirit. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Great. So tonight we're looking at this song. It's a song. David looks back on his life and he praises God. And he worships God for rescuing him.

[4 : 17] And praising God is really good for us. Because it's not just that God's got a big ego and needs praise. Although it is okay if God needs praise.

If he wants praise rather. It's not an ego if you actually really are the center of the universe. It's only an ego if you think you are and you're not. So it's right that God is praised in his universe.

He's worthy of praise. But God also calls us to praise him because it's really good for us. Just think about what happens when we praise something that we enjoy.

The effect it has on us. We enjoy it more. My football team is a team in England called Middlesbrough. The team I support. And at one evening I was on holiday abroad with my wife Kathy and her family.

And Middlesbrough, my team, were in the cup. FA Cup. Playing against Liverpool. And it was at Liverpool. It was at Anfield. And the family were planning on going out for dinner.

[5 : 19] So someone had to draw the short straw and babysit. Okay. So I said I'd take one for the team and stay home and babysit. So they went out and I got the game on.

And Middlesbrough were magnificent. But tragically, towards the end of extra time, we were 2-1 down. But we brought on a sub.

And people didn't know very much about this guy. He was a substitute called Patrick Bamford. Hadn't played very much yet. And he'd just come on. And with the last kick of extra time, he went on this run.

And he ran into the penalty box that Liverpool were defending. And one of their players was sliding in. And he just had the pace and the guile to just kick the ball out of the way of this defender sliding in to win the penalty.

Because the defender took Patrick Bamford down and missed the ball. So it's 2-1. And the only thing that's going to happen left in the match is a penalty that's going to be taken.

[6 : 20] Who is going to have the guts to take that penalty? And Patrick Bamford gets up off the turf, runs for the ball, picks it up, and just goes, Mine. Like this.

He's taking that. But no one else is getting the ball off him. Okay? And he put the ball down. Fans booing, hissing, whistling, hostility. And he buried it into the back of the net.

It was absolutely amazing. A bit later on that evening, the troops come in. They've been out for dinner. Thanks so much, Martin, for babysitting. I'm like, I have had the best night of my life.

It was absolutely amazing. Now, as I'm telling you that story, what's happening, okay, is like I'm absolutely loving it. Right? And that's the point.

When we praise something, we enjoy it more. It completes our enjoyment of it. We relive the pleasure. And that's what happens when we worship God.

[7 : 16] When we sing to him, which is one of the ways we worship him, to glorify him, to give thanks to him, God graciously helps us to relive our salvation story.

We relive his kindnesses to us, his goodnesses to the world. And it nurtures in us our love for him, our sense of his magnificent glory, our satisfaction in knowing him.

And that's what our whole lives are all about. That's the point of being a human being. You might know it's in the Westminster Catechism, which is this great confession of questions and answers about the Christian faith written by some brilliant Anglicans.

What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And indeed, we glorify him by enjoying him. Now David, this great king of Israel we've been looking at through 2 Samuel, he knew that.

There's the statue of David that we've been pointing ourselves back to. But David was a great man and he wrote song after song, worshipping God. And that was partly because of David's own heart.

[8 : 32] But surely it also nurtured that love for God in his heart as well. Now at the time David's writing, it's about 1000 BC, and God's people, it's not like today when God's people are all over the world, different nations, trusting Jesus.

At that time, God's people are a nation state under this king, King David, living in what's modern day Israel, as the people of Israel. So as we look at the song, there's lots here that's unique to David and unique to that time.

But all of us have a story about God that's worth singing about. So our first point is this, a deliverance that makes our praise joyful.

A deliverance that makes our praise joyful. The background to the whole song is right there in verse 1. Have a look there. 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. Now quite a long stretch of the books 1 and 2 Samuel, which are really kind of one book split into two, quite a lot of the book is summed up in that verse.

[9 : 42] If you're going to look at David, a long stretch of his life was a story of him being the king God had chosen, anointed by the prophet Samuel, and yet mercilessly hunted down by people who oppose him.

The enemies of Israel, the Philistines and the other nations around hate David. His own son Absalom challenged him for the throne. But his biggest enemy in the books was the previous king of Israel, Saul.

And all through these troubles, the Lord has delivered David. So David sings because God has made him safe. Just as if you've come to know God through Jesus, we all have a salvation story, a story of deliverance that can move us into joyful praise.

If you look at how personal David's description is of the Lord's safety, verse 2, 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. He is my stronghold, my refuge, and my saviour.

[10 : 55] From violent people you save me. The words just keep on coming. And we can own those words ourselves if we're trusting Jesus for our own deliverance from sin and death, that God is our rock.

And because God made everything, it's not just that David's scratching around for a way to think about how he could describe God and he sees a rock and he says, I suppose God's a bit like a rock.

No, rather, God made rocks so that he could reveal to us that rocks teach us about his character, that there's something unshakable about having him as our foundation.

He's a rock. He's the ultimate rock. He's the ultimate shield, our fortress. You picture what it was like to live in that part of the world at that time. You might be living in a space where any day you might fear that an enemy army would come, would appear on the horizon and come and take what you have and take people away and take you away.

And a fortress, a stronghold, is what you need if you're going to sleep at night. And then David turns to describe the shocking distress that he went through that has taught him this about God.

[12 : 13] It's like being caught in a whirlpool. Verse 5, The waves of death swirled about me. The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me. The snares of death confronted me.

It sounds suffocating. It's like being suffocated by danger. Swamped. David has been in terrible distress. He's been hiding in caves, feigning madness so that he could be disguised from his enemies.

He was fleeing in danger. So then he describes what it looks like for the Lord to hear that one of his people, especially his anointed king, is being attacked.

And it's poetry. This isn't literally true of God. But it's poetry for a reason because God is terrifyingly big. So have a look at verse 8.

We see that the earth trembles. In fact, the heavens shake as though the whole galaxy can just get crumpled up by God in the same way we might pick up a piece of waste paper and crumple it up and throw it in the bin.

[13 : 21] Fire comes out of God's mouth, blazing coals, and he rides on angels. And then the language picks up on the worst, most terrifying storm that you could see.

The worst that nature has to offer. Lightning bolts, thunder, storm clouds. And he says the oceans are shaken up so much you can see the seabed, verse 16.

The valleys of the sea were exposed. I was thinking about the Mariana Trench, isn't it, in the Pacific Ocean where they say if you put Mount Everest in the Mariana Trench, it still wouldn't reach sea level.

That's how deep the oceans are. And suddenly, such is the kind of the sheer, awesome, terrifying power of God that when he's on the move, the oceans are displaced and you can see the valleys on the bed of the sea.

It's a picture of the terrifying power of God. And he's angry in the picture. He's angry at the persecution of his people.

[14 : 25] We sometimes get embarrassed by the claim that God gets angry. But in fact, it's really good news for us and for our world that we have a God who gets angry. That he is a good God who cares, who is concerned.

So he gets angry about wickedness, about injustice, about evil, about his people's suffering. And he rises up to save his king. And the salvation he brings is completely transforming.

So if you look at verse 17, David says, He reached down from on high and took hold of me. He drew me out of deep waters. In verse 20, He brought me out into a spacious place.

He rescued me because he delighted in me. Extraordinary. The Lord delights in his king and through his king and his people. And the language being used here, it's Exodus language.

It was Moses who was drawn out of the water and saved. And then it was God's people, Israel, who were drawn out of the Red Sea. And then they were brought into a spacious place, into the promised land.

[15 : 31] And that Exodus story that people like David are looking back to as part of their people's history was a foretaste of the Christian story of what Jesus does for his people.

That our great enemies of sin and death were so powerful, they were too powerful for us. It's like we're caught in a whirlpool against our enemies.

We can't stop sinning. No matter how much meditation you do, how much mind space you have, you cannot stop sinning. And we can't stop dying. No matter how much kale you eat, you will still die.

It's true. You can't stop dying. And we can't stop sinning. And those enemies engulf us. We can't escape from them. But God saw us in our distress and his mighty arm came to deliver us, the person of Jesus Christ.

So that he went out into the wilderness to resist temptation and defeat the devil. And then he went up onto Calvary to die on the cross and defeat our sin.

[16 : 39] And then he rose from the grave and left the tomb behind so that he could smash death to pieces. So that for us, we get lifted up from drowning in the floodwaters of our enemies and we get placed, planted in the safety of the kingdom of God.

Knowing God today, day by day, and looking forward to when we're truly planted on the new earth where everything is put right. So we've got a personal story like David's and one of our responses to that is to sing.

The story is told that in the late 1930s, Joseph Stalin was growing in his popularity in the Soviet Union, hysterical popularity, and there was a meeting where when Joseph Stalin's name was mentioned, the whole room erupted into a standing ovation.

The problem was then, who dares stop clapping first? And nobody dared. So eventually, there was an old man who was exhausted, couldn't stand any longer, and he sat down and he fell back into his seat and his name was written down and the next day, they went and found him and arrested him.

How did Joseph Stalin ensure people were praising him? Fear. He demanded it with threats. But our God, Yahweh, his great pleasure is to look after his people so that in our hearts, we are moved to praise him.

[18 : 12] That's what glorifies him when we enjoy him and we want to praise him. And even in a place like Glasgow today where so few people around us praise Jesus, so few even know anything about him, there are still people you find here and there who can go around singing in our hearts what David sang here, God is my rock, my refuge, my shield, my stronghold, my saviour.

Each one of us could say, you know, I had wandered away from God as far as he could get and I was so blind to it, I couldn't even see my problem and in the midst of all of that, he loved me and he sent Jesus for me and his spirit opened my eyes so that I could come back to him.

So I've been wonderfully rescued and I could sing of him forever. So that's our first point, a deliverance that makes our praise joyful. Then we get to the heart of the psalm, it's this middle section, a righteousness that makes our humility essential.

This bit of the psalm is a bit weird when you've read 2 Samuel. If you've been with us and you've tracked what David has been up to, look at what 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. Really, David?

[19 : 43] This is David who, do you remember that David was meant to be off leading his army into battle and instead he stayed at home and then he saw Bathsheba bathing on a roof and he took her and he committed adultery with her and when he found out she was pregnant, he sent her husband onto the front line to get him killed.

Clean hands? What does he mean? I don't know whether you saw in the news this week about British Airways, they had a flight that was meant to go to Dusseldorf and it came to Edinburgh by accident.

Did you see that? It's probably quite a good result actually if you're heading for Dusseldorf and you end up in Edinburgh. But anyway, BA had to reroute this flight. It's a bit embarrassing. So then Ryanair took the chance to sort of try and get some PR bonus points and they put on this tweet on social media.

Hey British Airways, we have a present for you. Geography for dummies. Very good. Except it completely backfired on Ryanair of course because Ryanair never gives you anything as a present. So people start tweeting, well how much do you have to pay?

And do you pay by the page? Be good to know what hidden charges there are for BA on this. And then someone pointed out that back in January Ryanair had a flight heading for Greece and it got diverted and landed 500 miles away 24 hours late.

[21 : 02] And they left the passengers at the airport with an old bus that the pilot was asked to drive to where they were meant to go. So Ryanair seemed to sort of have this amnesia about its recent history and became all self-righteous about British Airways.

Well you read this little bit of the psalm and you think has David done the same thing? Has he sort of started to forget what he's been like? Well of course he can't have done that.

He wrote other songs in which he confessed his own sin. The horrors of his sin. But he goes on in verse 22 for I have kept the ways of the Lord.

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 him.

So what does he mean? I'm not sure but I think there might be two things going on here. First of all just recognizing that although David knows that ultimately he is a sinner before God if you look at the whole pattern of his life through the books of Samuel he did keep going as a man of faith.

[22 : 16] He came back to God and confessed his sin. He's never gone off to worship other gods which was the key mistake that Israel's kings go on to make in the future. The overall trajectory of his life has been that he's a man of faith.

But I think also because of that we remember as well that he trusts God's promise that if you are someone trusting God he does see you as righteous.

God counts as righteous anyone who has faith in him. As David says in one of his other songs blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven whose sins are covered.

And the heart of that grace comes in verse 28. If you have a look there David says you save the humble but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low.

That is the key idea really through the whole of 1 and 2 Samuel. The book started with another song from Hannah that the Lord Hannah said the Lord brings down the proud and lifts up the humble.

[23 : 22] And here David has a song at the end of the book and it's as though he's saying that's what I've learnt in my life as well that Hannah's song was true.

So what does it mean to be proud and what does it mean to be humble? In Bible language it's not just about whether you're a confident person or whether you're an insecure person it's about whether you're proud or humble with reference to God.

That's the fundamental difference between the two kings in 1 and 2 Samuel Saul and David. They're both sinful but Saul was proud. He didn't depend on the Lord.

David at his best moments knew that he needed God to act for him. So he focused on obeying the word of God and trusting the promises of God.

And God looks for that kind of humility from us today. It's the humility to say on my own I'm not good enough for God. My riches are not going to help me and we are many of us globally speaking very rich that won't help us.

[24 : 27] My achievements are not going to help me and some of you are high achievers that's not going to help us before God and my religion is not going to help me. Our religious works are not going to save us.

So we come to God with our heads bowed grieving in humility over the ways that we have shown ourselves to be unworthy of the blessings of God and when we come to God like that trusting his promises he lifts us up.

he lifts up the humble forgiving us for everything we've ever done wrong so that we can say like David says in verse 29 you Lord are my lamp the Lord turns my darkness into light with your help I can advance against a troop with my God I can scale a wall.

So that's the heart of the psalm and it's the heart attitude that we're called to have towards God that we would be humble and depend on God to forgive us our sins and lift us up.

Any of us can do that if you've never done that before you can do that today coming to God asking him to forgive you trusting his promises and David is showing us here that that all of this is tied in with his promises that he makes to his king David was the king so we've seen first a deliverance that makes our praise joyful secondly a righteousness that makes our humility essential and thirdly we see a promise that makes God's kingdom unstoppable.

[26 : 00] The promise gets mentioned right at the end of the psalm in verse 51 he that is God gives his king great victories he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed that's his Messiah to David and his descendants forever.

That's really the theme of the last third of the psalm David's speaking about how God has helped him establish his kingdom and as he does that he points us forward to his greater son Jesus Christ so we see that he strengthens his king in verse 41 you made my enemies turn their backs in flight and I destroyed my foes and he exalts his king if you look at verse 45 foreigners cower before me as soon as they hear of me they obey me now that was never as true of David as it sounds here but David knew that God had made these great promises to him God has promised ever since Genesis chapter 12 to Abraham that he's going to establish a kingdom and through that kingdom the whole world is going to be blessed and then in chapter 7 of 2 Samuel God firmly ties those kingdom promises to a king in David's line whose throne will last forever so we read about that king in Psalm 72 verse 11 all kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him and we see it today already in ways that

David could never even have imagined when we look at the church we've just started at St. Silas we're hearing more about it in the coming months but started supporting a new mission partner who's heading to Zambia soon to train pastors in Zambia to teach the Bible and the reason why we're sending people like that to Zambia is because the church is really big there but 150 years ago there were no Christians in Zambia and now maybe a third of the population are evangelical Christians an evangelical church there that's much bigger than the one in Scotland then just last week on Tuesday a guy came to see me to tell me about the Good Shepherd Church in India he said 50 years ago a group from Britain from Operation Mobilization went to India to share the gospel then a few decades later in the 80s they realized that the Dalit people in the lowest caste in India were a people to focus on and they started setting up schools there

Christian schools medical care he said today there are over 4,000 Good Shepherd churches among the Dalit people of India it's an extraordinary growth in the church in a part of the world David would never have dreamed of that's the church today and in Revelation 19 the Apostle John sees a rider on a white horse called Faithful and true he's Jesus Christ the warrior Messiah King and as he rides his robe says on it King of Kings and Lord of Lords and John sees the Messiah King when a great victory against everyone who stands against him and he gathers his people from every nation for the great supper of God in the great city of God where he's going to reign forever in righteousness and we'll sing his praise forever that's what God has promised for his king David's greatest son the Lord Jesus and because of that we might feel a terrible minority in Glasgow we might feel no one's interested in what we believe everyone thinks something different to me we're the ones with a certain hope for the future and it's glorious so David ends the psalm as he started it verse 47 he says the Lord lives exalted be my God the rock my saviour there's a story told of when the English army defeated the French at Agincourt in the 15th century

Henry V of England who was king of England at the time he ordered at the end of the battle that the army sing Psalm 115 and when it has this line not to us oh Lord not to us but to your name be the glory Henry threw himself on the ground and he got the whole army to lie on the floor we've won a great victory but it wasn't us to the Lord's name be the glory it's that same idea behind this psalm here as David writes it he's been a great king on the whole through the books of Samuel but he's saying this wasn't me anything good that I did was God strengthening me so folks that's David's song it's expressive poetry and it gives us three glorious truths about God and three responses for us God is a great deliverer and because he delivers us we praise him joyfully God is righteous and so we come before him with humble trust asking him for the gift of mercy and God is a promise maker establishing a kingdom so we come before him with excited hope knowing that his kingdom will know no end and his glory shall know no bounds so we end like David ends in a mood that's summed up really well by a hymn by Isaac Watts where Isaac Watts wrote this join all the glorious names of wisdom, love and power that ever mortal knew that angels ever bore all are too poor to speak his worth too poor to set my saviour forth

[31 : 46] Amen Amen Thank you.