

2 SAMUEL—WEEK 15

BLESSINGS



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*The Cover Picture is Bathing Bathsheba by Artemisia Gentileschi (1593 – 1656)
On display in the Neues Palais in Potsdam, Germany*

The LORD has blessed David spectacularly and this has schooled him. The LORD did it all.

David looks to the future and sees an even greater blessing—the Messiah.

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1 2 Samuel 22:17–25

*“He sent from above, He took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me;
For they were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.*

*“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all His judgments were before me;
And as for His statutes, I did not depart from them.
I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to my cleanness in His eyes.”*

The phrase “*many waters*” (מַיִם רַבִּים, my-eem ra-beem) is a literal translation, but here “many” really means “much.” The NIV translates it as “deep waters.” In modern lingo, David was in over his head. Despite this passage’s ancient origins, it feels like it’s describing a helicopter rescue.

David was out of options when the LORD delivered him from his *strong enemy*. Defeat was sure *For they were too strong for me*.

But David wasn’t just rescued; He was brought *into a broad place*. The Hebrew word translated as broad place (מֶרְחָב, mer-khav) is a colloquialism for a place free of trouble.

David didn’t just survive; he found peace.

The second paragraph sounds like David is without sin. We know that’s not how he feels. So, what is it?

It’s the righteousness of faith. David is far from perfect, but he has faith—the faith he described at the beginning of this song.

And that faith isn’t perfect either. David simply believes and is trying to serve the LORD as Israel’s king.

That’s the lesson. Normal faith is saving faith—faith that’s credited as righteousness.

2 2 Samuel 22:26–31

*“With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;
With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
You will save the humble people;
But Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down.*

*“For You are my lamp, O LORD;
The LORD shall enlighten my darkness.
For by You I can run against a troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.
As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”*

The first paragraph illuminates the point just made about righteousness by faith. Believers aren't perfect, but there are some markers. Believers tend to be merciful, blameless, pure, humble, not devious, not haughty.

God's favor towards the faithful comes out in His response to these characteristics.

*“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”* — James 4:6b

So, in a way, the righteousness of faith is circular. Part of the righteousness of faith is knowing that your righteousness is from faith—the recognition that you lack self-righteousness.

That's humility, which is a kind of righteousness—the kind that God likes.

The second paragraph makes a beautiful connection. The LORD is David's lamp, which *shall enlighten my darkness*.

The Hebrew particle that begins the next sentence (כִּי, *key*) means, “that, for, when, by, because.” The next word (בְּךָ, *b-kha*) means, “in you” or “by you.” Thus, “For by You” is accurate.

In other words, there's a causal connection between the enlightenment and David's ability to *run against a troop* or *leap over a wall*.

But note that the connection is from the abilities to the enlightenment, not the other way round (in this passage anyway.)

That is, the blessings (abilities) David received from the LORD enlightened him (opened his eyes).

3 2 Samuel 22:32–43 (ESV)

*“For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
This God is my strong refuge
and has made my way blameless.
He made my feet like the feet of a deer
and set me secure on the heights.
He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your gentleness made me great.
You gave a wide place for my steps under me,
and my feet did not slip;
I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
and did not turn back until they were consumed.
I consumed them; I thrust them through, so that they did not rise;
they fell under my feet.
For you equipped me with strength for the battle;
you made those who rise against me sink under me.
You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.
They looked, but there was none to save;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.
I beat them fine as the dust of the earth;
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.”*

This passage starts off with a strong statement of monotheism. The LORD (יהוה, Yahweh) isn't merely the most powerful God; He's the only God. That's what the first commandment is driving at.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” — Exodus 20:3 (ESV)

The Hebrew that's translated as, “before me” (על-פני, al pe-na-ya) is literally, “upon my face.”

Then David completes his point about righteousness by faith.

It was God who *has made my way blameless*.

It was God that made him capable—even to bend a bow of bronze (which would be impossible). The LORD did it all. He made David strong and He made his enemies weak. The result was total victory.

*I beat them fine as the dust of the earth;
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.*

4 2 Samuel 22:44–51 (ESV)

*“You delivered me from strife with my people;
you kept me as the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.
Foreigners came cringing to me;
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.
Foreigners lost heart
and came trembling out of their fortresses.*

*“The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation,
the God who gave me vengeance
and brought down peoples under me,
who brought me out from my enemies;
you exalted me above those who rose against me;
you delivered me from men of violence.*

*“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
Great salvation he brings to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his offspring forever.”*

The first paragraph expresses David’s amazement at an unexpected blessing. In addition to rescuing David and giving him victory in battle, God has blessed David politically. The line, “*people whom I had not known served me,*” shows that David was surprised by this.

Even foreigners showed amazing, extreme deference. So, what can David do but praise the LORD, *my rock*, the consistent and unshakeable one.

God’s blessing has been total—salvation, vengeance, elevation, exaltation, and deliverance.

Then we get an electrifying promise, which is veiled in the English translation. David will praise God for yet something else. All the great things David has listed are terrific, “But wait; there’s more!”

*Great salvation he brings to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his offspring forever.”*

The Hebrew words translated as anointed (מִשְׁחָהוּ, mi-she-kho) and offspring (זָרְעוֹ, zar-oh) are both in the singular. They aren’t about all of David’s descendants.

They’re about one person—the Messiah.

5 2 Samuel 23:1–7

Now these are the last words of David.

*Thus says David the son of Jesse;
Thus says the man raised up on high,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:*

*“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,
And His word was on my tongue.
The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spoke to me:
‘He who rules over men must be just,
Ruling in the fear of God.
And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises,
A morning without clouds,
Like the tender grass springing out of the earth,
By clear shining after rain.’*

*“Although my house is not so with God,
Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things and secure.
For this is all my salvation and all my desire;
Will He not make it increase?
But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away,
Because they cannot be taken with hands.
But the man who touches them
Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear,
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.”*

By, “*the last words*” the text doesn’t mean these are David’s utterances on his deathbed. These are just his final, concluding writings. As such, they just ooze prophetic gravitas. David just comes out and says, straight up, “*The God of Israel said,*” and then, in quotes, says a bunch of prophetic things.

The first line doesn’t translate easily. “*He who rules over men must be just,*” means something more like, “He who rules as a righteous one.” It’s messianic.

And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises.

The final paragraph should be understood in this light. The house of David is blessed by an amazing, undeserved, everlasting covenant. *Will He not make it increase?*

And the ending depicts the final judgement. *The sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away.*

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Can weak faith be good enough?
2. What have you learned from blessings?
3. Do you detect polytheism in anyone's beliefs?
4. What's the most surprising blessing you've received?
5. What's your favorite messianic passage in the Old Testament?