

## Week 27: David, the Psalm Writer

### Hook



**Main Point: Godly people look to God as their refuge and strength.**

The first audio movie commentary track was featured on a laser disc printing of the 1933 film, *King Kong*. The year was 1984 and Ronald Haver (American film historian) provided backstory and insights as the film unfolded on the screen.<sup>1</sup> Since then, countless movies have been released with an available commentary track, often featuring directors and actors who share thoughts and stories that no one else could provide.

**Q: Have you listened to a movie commentary track? Did it provide any additional insight to the movie?**

**Q: If you could listen to a commentary track for anything (movies, music, a product, a building, etc.) and learn more about what the creator was thinking, what would it be?**

**Transition:** Today we will go beyond the narrative and hear from David himself through two of the psalms he wrote.

**RECAP:** In the last few weeks, we have seen how David's great sin multiplied into the next generation in the sins of his sons and how one son, Absalom, rebelled against him and challenged him for the throne. Last week we saw David return to the throne and forgive those who had turned against him during Absalom's rebellion, showing the heart of God for his enemies.

## **Week 27: David, the Psalm Writer**

**Book** (Note: 1 Chronicles 29:10–13 records a similar prayer of dedication for the temple spoken by David, but it does not include these psalms exactly.)

**Main Point:** Godly people look to the Lord as their refuge and strength.

### **2 Samuel 22:1–20 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** The Lord can rescue us from any enemy, no matter how strong.

**Q: How did God prove Himself to be David's refuge throughout his life?**

**Q: How does this psalm (song) show God to be mighty? What else does it say about Him?**

The end of chapter 21 describes David's victories over the Philistines near the end of his life, after he had returned to the throne, forgiven his enemies, and avenged the Gibeonites (21:15–22). The Philistines had been David's consistent enemies since his very first individual battle with Goliath (1 Samuel 17). This summary reminds us of Goliath, who was a giant from Gath. This story has four giants, one of which was a giant from Gath with heavy armor and weapons who taunted Israel like Goliath and was killed by Jonathan, David's nephew.<sup>2</sup>

It's at this point that this psalm (song), repeated as Psalm 18, is included in 2 Samuel. The introduction says it is the song David wrote when the Lord delivered him from "all" his enemies and Saul. Saul's death is recorded at the end of 1 Samuel but is included here because it is the end of David's life, after the Lord had given him rest from *all* his enemies.

Most study Bibles have maps of the territory of David versus the territory of Saul, showing just how much land David conquered while he was king.<sup>3</sup> Chronicles tells us that by the end of David's reign, the Philistines were subdued, and the reign of Solomon, whose name means "peace," would be one of peace from all the surrounding nations (1 Chronicles 20:4; 22:9). First Kings tells us that Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and to the border of Egypt, including the Philistines, and they all paid him tribute as vassals (1 Kings 4:21). Though later kings would again fight wars, Scripture describes David as having complete victory over all his enemies so that in his son's days, the kingdom could be at peace, a foreshadowing of Christ accomplishing victory over evil so that the eternal kingdom of God would have eternal peace.

This psalm was David's final victory song, but he gave all the credit to the Lord, just as he had from the very beginning in his first victory with Goliath. He didn't claim his own might or power or wisdom but only the power of the Lord. All David did was cry out to

the Lord, and he was delivered (22:4–7). Bruggeman called “crying out to God” “Israel’s most elemental act of faith.” In the same way, we can’t save ourselves from our Enemy of evil but can only cry out to Christ to deliver us (Ephesians 2:1–9).<sup>4</sup>

Many of the psalms describe God as rock, fortress, refuge, shield and stronghold – all words that this psalm uses as images of the places soldiers could go for protection when they were being attacked. David lived that truth as a tangible reality when he was on the run from Saul and Absalom. God-made caves were his physical fortress, as effective as any man-made fortress could be. And the Lord was his spiritual fortress (22:3).

But beyond that, God was also his deliverer and savior. David didn’t just run to God and hide. The Lord came down and fought David’s enemies for him. David described the Lord’s anger (22:8) and His great strength (22:12–16). The Lord is “Most High” – no enemy is too much for Him, no matter how powerful (22:18). Paul said the same is true for us today. The Lord fights our battles for us; we need only to stand firm on Him (Ephesians 6:10–18). No matter what enemies we face, the Lord is stronger (1 John 4:4).

David was a warrior and a king, but he was also a songwriter, an artist. This tells us something about his personality, his heart, and his relationship with God. Songs/poetry are a wonderful way to express prayer and worship, because deep meaning can be conveyed through figurative language that can be harder to express in plain language. Poetic language adds emotion. You experience poetry differently than narrative. Singing adds another layer of art and emotion to poetry and helps us remember the words, which was important in the ancient world when things were passed down orally.

David wrote a lot of psalms in his lifetime, but this was the one chosen in 2 Samuel as a conclusion to his life. This was what his life was all about – the Lord’s provision, protection and deliverance. David gave all glory and honor to the Lord for His work in David’s life. David knew he was nothing without the Lord’s strength and power. As God had told him, the Lord took him from being a lowly shepherd tending his father’s flock and made him king over all Israel. It was God who fought his battles and gave him victory (2 Samuel 7:8–11). David made a lot of mistakes and sinned gravely, but he knew who God was and who he was in relationship to God. David wasn’t perfect, but he had great faith in a perfect God.

**Q: What enemies and struggles are you facing right now? What would it look like for you to trust the Lord to fight your battles for you?**

**Q: How might being still and trusting in Him change your heart? How might it change your perspective? Your relationships? Your actions?**

**2 Samuel 22:21–51 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** God blesses the humble and righteous and humbles the proud.

**Q: How could David say he was blameless before God when he had sinned so greatly?**

**Q: Why does God treat the humble differently than the haughty?**

The first section of this second half of the psalm (vv. 21–25) is difficult to read after the last several chapters of David’s story, which included his own great sin and then his son, Amnon’s, great sin and David’s lack of punishing him for it. Because we know the context of David’s story, we must deduce that being “righteous” and “blameless” in God’s sight doesn’t mean doing everything perfectly. It means that when we do sin, as we will all do sometimes, we thoroughly repent. David’s hands were “clean,” not because he had never committed any sins, but because God “washed” them through David’s confession and repentance (Psalm 51).<sup>5</sup>

The poetic structure of the next section offers several parallel lines about how God relates to people. He is merciful to the merciful and blameless to the blameless. He blesses the pure and righteous but “seems tortuous” to the crooked. He saves the humble but humbles the proud (22:26–28). David was telling us that if God seems tortuous to you, it’s because you aren’t walking with Him. If He is humbling you, it’s because you need to be humbled. God is good and everything He does is right (22:31).

This isn’t a works-righteousness theology, it’s being honest about what it looks like to walk with the Lord. David said that walking on the path of the Lord instead of the ways of the world made his feet like the deer (22:33–34), able to keep his footing over the rough terrain of life. The Lord lights our path to show us the right way to go (22:29; Psalm 119:105) and give us supernatural strength to handle what life throws our way (22:30–46). The imagery David used are physical battles he had with his enemies, as a warrior and king, but we can apply the same truths to our spiritual battles. If we put on the armor of God and let Him fight our battles for us, we can stand firm against all the dark forces of evil in the world (Ephesians 6:10–18).<sup>6</sup>

David praised God both for what God had done for him (22:47–50) and simply for who He is, because there is none like Him. He is worthy of all our praise (22:32). This psalm is a personal psalm about what God had done for David, but all the psalms were also used in corporate worship and to teach the people about God, so we can all apply these general principles to our lives.<sup>7</sup> The Lord will fight our battles for us when we put our trust in Him, and He blesses those who put their trust in Him. This doesn’t mean “if you’re good, God gives you presents” but that He gives those who trust in Him spiritual blessings such as peace, joy, wisdom and all the other Fruit of the Spirit so we can walk in His ways and live the abundant life He meant for us to live.

**Q: How have you seen the spiritual blessings of God in your life?**

**Q: In what ways has God guided your paths and given you sure footing even on rocky places and helped you to stand firm even when you are being attacked?**

**Q: How have you experienced God’s humbling the proud in your life?**

## **2 Samuel 23:1–7; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** Godly leaders lead by the wisdom of the Lord.

**Q: Why is fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? Why is fear of the Lord the best way to lead a group of people?**

**Q: How will God fulfill His everlasting covenant with David through Jesus?**

Second Samuel records these as David's last words even though there are a few more chapters in the book. They are a good follow-up to the psalm in chapter 22 and a conclusion of how God had worked in David's life and would use His everlasting covenant with David to bless the whole world. David recognized again that he came from a humble place in the world, but the Lord had exalted him to the highest place in Israel (23:1).

David described himself not only as the anointed of God (king) but also as a psalmist; both identities he took to heart as critical to who he was as leader of God's people (23:1). As king, he was Israel's civic and military leader, but he also led them in worship, which is a necessary part of being a leader after God's own heart. Not all leaders must be musicians to lead God's people, because not all worship is expressed through music (Romans 12:1–2). But all spiritual leaders should lead their people in worship of God alone. That is an essential part of being a spiritual leader.

David's last words are given by the Spirit of the Lord, who came upon him the moment he was anointed and worked through him all his life afterward (1 Samuel 16:13). In these last words, the Spirit told David that when leaders rule justly "in the fear of God," the Lord shines on them. We know from Psalms and Proverbs that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is where we get godly wisdom, which is why people whose leaders fear the Lord are blessed, because those leaders will guide them in the ways of the Lord, which leads to abundant life and spiritual blessing. Throughout their history, Israel had peace and blessing when they walked in the ways of the Lord, but when they followed their own ways, things fell apart. In the same way, when our churches and our families follow the voice of His Spirit and walk in His ways instead of the ways of the world, we will experience peace and blessing.

David closed with the promise of God's everlasting covenant with him, to establish his eternal kingdom through a son of David – Jesus (2 Samuel 7:12–16). This promise was not only for David; it is for all of us (Isaiah 9:6). David was a leader after God's own heart, but he was not perfect; he sinned greatly. But one day, a son of David would come who would live a sinless life and die as the sacrifice for our sins, and the Lord would establish his throne forever (Philippians 2:1–11). The promise of David's covenant is a perfect king who will rule over a perfect kingdom. All things will be under His dominion, and everything will be ruled in the fear of the Lord, so all things will be good. No evil, no crying, no pain. David's reign of peace and rest from all his enemies was a mere shadow of the perfect kingdom of eternal peace that would come in his

descendent, Jesus. This is the hope and the promise David pointed to with his final words. This was his legacy and his desire for himself and for his people. Not his own power and majesty as king but pointing ahead to the One who would rule with God's power and majesty. This was a man after God's own heart who pointed to the Lord instead of himself.

**Q: In what ways are you not walking in the fear of the Lord right now?**

**Q: In what areas of your life are you not submitting to the lordship of Christ but trying to rule your own life?**

**Q: In what areas is God leading you to follow His Spirit instead of your own wisdom?**

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### **Took**

**Main Point: Godly people look to the Lord as their refuge and strength.**

More than one million people end up in the emergency room each year due to slip-and-fall accidents. According to the CDC, the average cost of those visits is more than \$30,000.<sup>8</sup> Every one of us has experienced the anxiety that accompanies a lack of sure footing – it demands all our attention, slows us down, and often has us thinking the worst. Walking with the Lord doesn't mean there won't be challenging terrain – struggles, hardships, and suffering. But we can navigate them with the Lord's strength, power, and wisdom.

**Q: What kind of peace accompanies walking with the Lord?**

**Q: Describe the actions, thoughts, and attitudes of someone who walks with the Lord daily.**

Silently, identify areas in your life in which you are not submitting to the Lord's authority. What do you need to do today to begin to turn those parts of your heart over to Him?

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** In what areas is God leading you to follow Him more closely? To listen for His voice more intently? In what areas do you need to change your thinking or your actions to more align with God's ways, His wisdom, and His will for your life? Really dig deep into your own heart and be honest with yourself. In what areas and ways are you still trying to rule your own life instead of submitting to His lordship?

**PRAY** for God to show you how you can walk with Him more closely. Pray for His wisdom to know how to walk in His ways and handle the difficult things that may come your way. Ask His Spirit to guide you, reveal His will to you, and speak to you. Thank Him for the gift of Jesus as our perfect king of the perfect eternal kingdom.

**ACT:** Worship. This week, choose one way to worship the Lord. It could be writing your own psalm or listening to worship music. It could be prayer or meditation or going for a nature walk. It could be writing a gratitude list or a list of reasons to praise God. It could even be a more active way to worship Him through serving someone or sharing the Gospel with someone or another way of tangibly glorifying God through your actions.

**NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*:** Since these chapters are David's final words, it seems as though we should be coasting to the end of the story, but next week, we'll see David mess up again. But this time, his sin is a lack of humility, the opposite of what he had just talked about godly leaders needing to have in these chapters. Again, David's imperfections and sins just point us to the fact that he is not our salvation; the promised Messiah would be.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/the-first-audio-commentary-by-ronald-haver--the-criterion-collection>

<sup>2</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.askadamskutner.com/slip-and-fall/10-facts-statistics-slip-fall-accidents/>