



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 22:1-51

Topic

David looked back and wrote a song about his life portraying it as a musical

Title

"I' Write the Songs that Make the Whole Church Sing"

Introduction

In just a few days Captain America is going to be portrayed on the big screen.

You gotta love his shield. It first appeared in the comics in 1941. It's made from vibranium fused with an experimental iron alloy and an unknown catalyst. It is virtually indestructible.

The vibranium in the shield grants it unusual properties, allowing it to absorb virtually all of the kinetic impact from any blows that the shield receives without injuring Captain America in the process.

The vibranium is also a factor in the way Captain America throws his shield: he often uses it to ricochet around a room and strike various opponents with little loss of velocity in its forward movement after each impact.

The shield was improved by industrialist Tony Stark by incorporating electronic and magnetic components in it so that Captain America can even control it in flight.

That's all fictional... *Maybe*. What is not fictional is the shield David describes in song in Second Samuel chapter twenty-two. Three times he praises it, the third saying to God, "You have also given me the shield of your salvation" (v36).

This should excite you, if you are a believer, because you, too, are described as having a spiritual shield. It's the shield of faith you read about in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus.

Since we are fellow shield-bearers along with David, we can learn something about being behind God's shield from David's song.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are Safe Behind His Shield As God Does His Work On You, and #2 You Are Strong Behind His Shield As God Does His Work Through You.

#1 You Are Safe Behind His Shield
As God Does His Work On You
(v1-28)

This chapter is a song David wrote.

2 Samuel 22:1 Then David spoke to the Lord the words of this song, on the day when the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

You'll find it again, essentially the same, as Psalm eighteen. David lets us know it was written towards the end of his reign as he looked back over God delivering him from "the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul."

Have you ever thought of your life as a musical? ***It is!*** In the New Testament we're told to speak "to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

Since this chapter is a song it is going to be somewhat allegorical in its descriptions of things. It's going to be poetic. It's going to make fantastic comparisons. To do it justice my comments ought to be more devotional

than doctrinal - although they, like the song, are based on sound Bible doctrine. In this case we are talking about sanctification, which has been defined as “the work of the Holy Spirit bringing the whole nature more and more under the influences of the new gracious principles implanted in the soul in regeneration.” It is how God changes you from glory-to-glory throughout your life to become more like Jesus.

Through this song David is illustrating for us what it is like to be behind God’s shield of faith while He is working on you and through you. The first thing to note, in this first set of verses, is that God is working on us in such a way as to make a shield necessary but, behind it, we are kept safe - even though it doesn’t always seem that way.

2 Samuel 22:2 And he said: "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
2 Samuel 22:3 The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence.
2 Samuel 22:4 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.

The fact you need a shield in the first place puts you on notice that there is real warfare going on around you. Same thing with the references to “horn” and “stronghold.” Those are things you need when there is “violence” against you from “enemies.”

You are safe behind the shield... **But that doesn’t mean you are kept out of danger.**

2 Samuel 22:5 "When the waves of death surrounded me, The floods of ungodliness made me afraid.
2 Samuel 22:6 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.

Think about the weight of these words for a moment. These are heavy experiences that the Lord allowed in David’s life. The next time someone tries to cliché his or her way through your suffering, hit them with the fact David was feeling overwhelmed. He knew he was safe, but the danger was real nonetheless.

The Lord doesn't keep you *from* the warfare; He takes you *through* it, to work on you. His work on you may seem extreme at times **because it is extreme at times.**

2 Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry entered His ears.

God to the rescue - but not until *after* you could call the trial a "distress," and not until after the "call" became a "cry."

Beloved, you are safe behind the shield - *spiritually* safe. But you will be buffeted. You will be afflicted. You will suffer.

2 Samuel 22:8 "Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry.

2 Samuel 22:9 Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it.

2 Samuel 22:10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down With darkness under His feet.

2 Samuel 22:11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew; And He was seen upon the wings of the wind.

2 Samuel 22:12 He made darkness canopies around Him, Dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

2 Samuel 22:13 From the brightness before Him Coals of fire were kindled.

2 Samuel 22:14 "The Lord thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice.

2 Samuel 22:15 He sent out arrows and scattered them; Lightning bolts, and He vanquished them.

2 Samuel 22:16 Then the channels of the sea were seen, The foundations of the world were uncovered, At the rebuke of the Lord, At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

In every circumstance, whether it was facing Goliath or Saul or Absalom or the Philistines, this is how David saw God as He delivered him from his trouble. It was 'as if' these things actually happened - that is how powerful God's deliverance was when it came. Safe behind the shield of salvation, though buffeted, God came through as He took David through it all.

2 Samuel 22:17 "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.

2 Samuel 22:18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, From those who hated me; For they were too strong for me.

2 Samuel 22:19 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the Lord was my support.

God didn't keep David *from* "many waters." He plucked him *out from* them - seemingly at the last minute. He was in a "day of... calamity," overwhelmed by "strong enem[ies]." The Lord supported him and then delivered him.

Your shield, the shield of salvation, will not shatter, but it is sure going to be battered.

The next verses, twenty through twenty-five, are perhaps the greatest challenge for us in this song. We immediately object to David singing them. Listen and you'll understand what I mean.

2 Samuel 22:20 He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.

2 Samuel 22:21 "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.

2 Samuel 22:22 For I have kept the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God.

2 Samuel 22:23 For all His judgments were before me; And as for His statutes, I did not depart from them.

2 Samuel 22:24 I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity.

2 Samuel 22:25 Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyes.

Some of the commentators insist that David wrote this song, this psalm, before his sins of adultery and murder. After all, they reason, how could he say such things after he sinned? Would it not be the height of arrogance?

No, not arrogance; not at all. It was the height of grace - the grace of God.

We should never sin thinking grace will cover it. But when we sin - and we will - grace **does** cover it!

When you sin, if you will confess it, repent from it, God will bring you "out into a broad place," restoring you "because He delight[s] in you." He sets you right back upon the path of "righteousness" and all the things you read in these verses is just as true of you as it was of David.

2 Samuel 22:26 "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

2 Samuel 22:27 With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

2 Samuel 22:28 You will save the humble people; But Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down.

These last verses contrast God's dealings with believers versus nonbelievers.

- If you are among the “humble,” the believers, you are being worked on every day to see God more clearly - His nature, His attributes, His character.
- If you are among the “haughty,” a nonbeliever, God is working on you, too, “shrewd[ly]” seeking to save you lest, in the end, He must “bring [you] down.”

God is working on you. He has promised, in the New Testament, to complete the work He has begun. He will change you daily, from moment-to-moment, to become more like Jesus. We'd like it better if He did it solely through instruction, as we read and study His Word. But His best school is life and its afflictions and sufferings. We should submit to it, not thinking our trials are anything strange. We can know that we are safe behind His shield of salvation.

#2 You Are Strong Behind His Shield As God Does His Work Through You (v29-51)

The shield is not just for defending against our enemies. It affords us the ability to move forward, to gain ground, even as the battle is raging. In these remaining verses David praises what God did through him.

2 Samuel 22:29 "For You are my lamp, O Lord; The Lord shall enlighten my darkness.
2 Samuel 22:30 For by You I can run against a troop; By my God I can leap over a wall.

This speaks of a pursuit, at night, over and through many obstacles. If you find yourself in a dark place with hindrances in your path, from behind your shield you can see clearly and overcome all obstacles in your way.

2 Samuel 22:31 As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

2 Samuel 22:32 "For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?"

2 Samuel 22:33 God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect.

"The word of the Lord is proven." Was He not a shield to all those who have come before us, whose stories we have recorded for us? Can you not say God was a "rock," "strength and power" to each of them? Did He not work on them and through them to "make [their] way perfect?"

Think of any of them - Job, Abraham, Moses, Joshua. Read Hebrews eleven, the famous "hall of faith." God is doing the same work on and through you.

2 Samuel 22:34 He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places.

You may think that your footing is treacherous, but in the Lord your balance is strong.

2 Samuel 22:35 He teaches my hands to make war, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

In the original *Karate Kid* Daniel Larusso tells his mom that he needs to learn "real karate," not the kind you get at the YMCA after school. Just so, as a Christian you need to be learning "real" Christianity and that involves actual warfare. Through it you are strengthened. It's like bending a "bow of bronze" as you are supplied by the Spirit of God to overcome by faith.

2 Samuel 22:36 "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great.

David was looking back over his life. He could see his mistreatment by his family... his sheep being attacked by lions and bears... the defiance of Goliath while Israel trembled... his more than a decade of persecution from Saul... his living in caves as a fugitive... his fall into sin... the rebellion of his own son, Absalom. He called all this "gentleness" on the part of God; or we might say that he saw God as being "gentle" with him in each circumstance.

2 Samuel 22:37 You enlarged my path under me; So my feet did not slip.

This verse reminds me of those cartoons where the hero gets cornered then draws an escape route!

Verses thirty-eight through forty-six extol the extent of David's victories.

2 Samuel 22:38 "I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them; Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.

2 Samuel 22:39 And I have destroyed them and wounded them, So that they could not rise; They have fallen under my feet.

2 Samuel 22:40 For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose against me.

2 Samuel 22:41 You have also given me the necks of my enemies, So that I destroyed those who hated me.

2 Samuel 22:42 They looked, but there was none to save; Even to the Lord, but He did not answer them.

2 Samuel 22:43 Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I trod them like dirt in the streets, And I spread them out.

2 Samuel 22:44 "You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people; You have kept me as the head of the nations. A people I have not known shall serve me.

2 Samuel 22:45 The foreigners submit to me; As soon as they hear, they obey me.

2 Samuel 22:46 The foreigners fade away, And come frightened from their hideouts.

You may not feel this way now, in the midst of your life and its troubles and the trouble to come. Still, your most vicious enemies are already vanquished and your foot is on their necks.

- Sin was vanquished on the Cross of Jesus Christ as the Lord paid its penalty and bore its punishment for you. One day you will be free from its very presence but, for now, you can walk in victory.
- Death was vanquished on the Cross of Jesus Christ as the Lord died for the sins of the world but then rose from the dead to offer life to whosoever will believe in Him.

With sin and death out of the way, the rest is a cake walk!

2 Samuel 22:47 "The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, The Rock of my salvation!

2 Samuel 22:48 It is God who avenges me, And subdues the peoples under me;

2 Samuel 22:49 He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man.

David enjoyed moments of victory and, looking back, those moments were all he could see. He didn't minimize the warfare or the danger, but through it all he understood God was not just working on him but through him, strengthening him for the journey.

2 Samuel 22:50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.

2 Samuel 22:51 "He is the tower of salvation to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore."

God "shows mercy" to you. Always. Sometimes, however, it is what C.S. Lewis called "severe mercy." God's work of salvation is the expression of a love so severe that it would allow me to lose everything, yet so merciful that I am able to gain Christ in return.

Severe mercies dot the landscape of all God's saints. I earlier mentioned Job and Abraham and Moses and Joshua; and all those in Hebrews eleven who have preceded us. At one point or another, in some way or another, they each experienced the love of God so severely as to lose everything yet His mercy in gaining Christ in return.

God's love for you is not an indulgent, pampering love that leaves you to yourself. It is a jealous love that removes everything else that would compete for His affection in your heart. It is a love that refines you and changes you rather than leaving you as you are.

Each episode, every circumstance in your life has been designed to strip away what is temporal to replace it with something eternal.

When it seems you are being buffeted; when trials are all around you; when the suffering seems too much to bear. It is then you should picture yourself behind the shield of God's salvation, remembering that His work is really gentle and bringing you to a desired end. He's already given you the greatest victories - you are saved for eternity, can overcome sin, and have nothing to fear from death.

The rest - what we call living - is just filling your heart with the wonder of His love.

Your life **IS** God's musical. Listen to your heart for a moment. What songs are you singing?

