

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

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24TH MARCH 2021

Every time I read these words, they surprise me:

***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;  
I am not guilty of turning from my God.***

They are words spoken in Psalm 18:20-21 by King David and they tell us why God has rescued him from his enemies in a spectacular way. This Psalm is also found in 2 Samuel 22 right near the end of David's life as he looks back on how God has saved him from many enemies from his days as a shepherd and all the way through his kingship. It is a Psalm that celebrates God's power to save, but in the middle of it we find these unusual verses.

It makes us feel like David is boasting about himself, and that because he's racked up enough points with God, God has come to his aid to rescue him in his time of need. We can easily treat moral actions like nectar card points that we gradually save up over time and then cash them in for something cool when we've saved up enough. If we look at King David's life this way then he'd certainly racked up a lot of points. There are many highlights. Famously he stood up for God's people to slay Goliath who challenged Israel's armies. He was anointed king, but remained faithfully in King Saul's service and did not try to violently supplant him. Twice he came within literal, arms reach of Saul who was trying to kill him, but refused to do so because it was not God's plan or timing.

However, as we read on, we see that the core of David's righteousness is faith in God, not just successfully doing good stuff. Verses 18:25-27 say this

- 25** To the faithful you show yourself faithful,  
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,  
**26** to the pure you show yourself pure,  
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.  
**27** You save the humble  
but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

He moves on from how God has responded to him personally, towards how God acts towards people in general. God saves those who humbly trust in him. What is humility? Here it is contrasted against 'devious' schemers who cook up their own plans to get out of sticky situations rather than faithfully, or blamelessly, relating to God.

Let's look at it from David's perspective. As we said, he could have assassinated Saul twice when he came into very close contact with him, and Saul failed to notice him. God did not ask him to do it, but he could have done it and forced his way into kingship through violence. Additionally, when David was hiding from Saul in exile, he had numerous opportunities to team up with pagan nations to attack Israel or attack Saul. He did not do this. The pressure must have been immense. Even his own men wanted him to force about his kingdom. He had already been anointed and Saul had been rejected, but David chose to trust God and wait. That is tough. He was faithful and he was blameless in the way he acted, but above all, he trusted God. God made him more and more successful and thwarted the schemes of others, including Saul, to defeat him.

In general, humility is maintaining an honest view of ourselves in light of who God is and what he says about us. It's not demeaning to us, and saying we're rubbish and get nothing right. It's not being boastful and thinking we're greater than we really are. God saves the humble because they trust what he says and follow him rather than proudly pursuing their own ways. If David's words near the beginning were boastful, he would have contradicted himself a few verses later. Rather, he honestly sees the fruit of following God, at last, after walking in his ways for a long time.

But is this just for David? Is it only for the super spiritual who endure unbelievable trials? What about us today? Verse 30 has the answer:

As for God, his way is perfect:

The Lord's word is flawless;  
he shields all who take refuge in him.

God shields all who take refuge in him. King David is not a one off. Throughout the Bible we see an incredible diversity of people who trust in God, and God delivers them and saves them. Hebrews 11 is a whole chapter dedicated to outlining some of these people who have 'taken refuge in' God, from prostitutes like Rahab to cowards like Gideon.

God supremely reveals his desire to save and protect all people through Jesus, who died for all people's sins and was raised so that people from all walks of life can access God through him. The key to taking refuge in God is not astounding works of righteousness, but humility that allows us to trust in God's astounding power to deliver us from each and every trial.

This Psalm leads us through a whole process of salvation. At the beginning, David recounts how the 'cords of death' entangled him in verse 4. Verses 6-19 show us God's tremendous power and control over chaotic forces of sea and lightning, and how he reaches down to the depths to save David. Then looks at the verses we've covered in this Beacon, including the reasons for God's salvation and how it works. But, this Psalm is beautiful because it goes on to say more and shows a complete reversal of events where the forces that once oppressed David are now humbled and defeated.

David was humble, and in verse 39 he praises God 'because you humbled my adverseries before me'. He calls God his stronghold in verse 2, but in verse 45, his enemies have "[lost heart]; they come trembling from their strongholds". God enacts a complete reversal of fortune where David was once oppressed under his enemies, but has now been exalted above them because of the thoroughness of God's rescue.

We do not generally face physical enemies in the same way that King David did. However, we are told to put on the whole armour of God to stand firm against the devil, and the myriad temptations and trials that face us as Christians. If we have turned to Jesus, God has reversed our fortunes in the same way, we not only have the strength to defend ourselves, but the strength to become the people God truly wants us to be, with the promise of an eternity spent with him.

Having seen how God is willing to deliver anyone who takes refuge in him, let's humbly trust in him and allow him to deliver us from every trial, and bring us out victorious.



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