

“David Had It Good, We Have It Better,” or,
 “How Easter Enhances Redemption”
 Pastor Sam Richards
 Sermon for 12 March 2023
 Texts: Psalm 27:1-6

Psalm 27: **4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not [a]comprehend, or overcome it.**

Have you ever considered the “life of the redeemed” of Israel before the coming of Christ? We have it on solid authority that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Jesus said, **I am the God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; *before they ever were*, because **I am the God of the living!** Did David in fact “have it good?” How shall we say that he was even redeemed? There are many who consider David a chief among sinners—that would be the elephant in the living room. Consider David’s notorious sin with Bathsheba—the adultery that led to lying, deception, treachery and murder of an innocent, or at least brave and noble husband. Why is it that we remember so well David’s sin and downplay his repentance? And what about the weighty consequences: the death of his “love child,” loss of an ally in Uriah, strife and rebellion in his own household (**the sword shall not depart from your household**—2 Samuel 2:10). Certainly that is a grim picture of the consequences of sin *even where it is genuinely repented of—as it assuredly was!* Such incidences remind us of how the church struggles with reconciliation and restoration. Restoration is not optional; it is commanded. In fact it is the whole purpose, the whole loving intent of church discipline. The love of Christ for the fallen sinner, and not mere hatred of sin, should drive the process beginning to end. Hatred of sin is a proper personal attitude but it must be treated with care 1. that it not lead to self-hatred and 2. that it not contaminate our love for others.

How about this brief digression into David’s repentance? Some may ask, “Why bother to get into that?” Well, here is what I am modeling. When we stake out our position on, say, David’s redeemed status with God—it is critical to deal with the chief difficulties of an opposing view. Unless we show awareness that David’s sin was real, and his repentance genuine, we have allowed David’s sin to become a stumbling block. The gritty truth, and happy, too, is that it is sinners who sin and repent who are saved. Repentance is vital. John the Baptist preached repentance and so did Jesus. **Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand** validates repentance—as Luther taught, our lives are to be lives of continual repentance. Good for the soul and a manifest sign of humility¹ Hollywood opines that ‘Love is never having to say, “I’m sorry”.’ Christian living is living so that you never have to—a good goal and a high standard for our behavior. *We are spiritual beings, living spiritual lives!*

Think with me further for a moment, have you considered how it is that King David is saved?—for so we assume him to be, as we say, *prior to the coming of Christ?* It doesn’t

¹ The 1970 movie *Love Story*, based on the novel of the same name by Erich Segal, tells the story of star-crossed lovers Jennifer and Oliver, who marry against their parents’ wishes. This movie is the source of one of the most famous aphorisms ever to come out of **Hollywood**: “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.”

It was made famous in Arthur Hiller’s *Love Story* (1970), in which Jenny (Ali McGraw) says it to Oliver (Ryan O’Neal) and Oliver later quotes it to his father (Ray Milland).

appear, it is not recorded(!), that David never asked Jesus to come into his heart which is our common understanding and our clear advantage over David. *What David asked was to be near to God, in His presence continually.*

What, then, are we to make of this phrase in Psalm 107:2, **Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.** Is the “redeemed of the Lord” an empty category?!

Can that mean people were “saved” in the Old Testament! Of course.

Were they saved by faith? By having a **heart after God**—as is said about King David? Is a sinful man capable of having a heart after God *and so pleasing God* that he is numbered among the redeemed? Yes, apparently, by the grace of God—for unless God acts, we are irreparably lost! In mercy, God bypasses depravity rendering hopeless, hopeful. Jesus saves, we do not save ourselves. We cannot.

Well, it would appear to be so and that is what we are to look into this morning. After we have considered that matter. We are then to assess how Easter takes the game to a whole new level! We are so much more blessed than David ever was for we have all the promises of God fulfilled in the crucified and risen Lord!

A major stumbling block for believing Jewish seekers, when it comes to their consideration of Jesus as their promised messiah, is their *Davidic expectations*: they looked for a leader and a commander. It was hard for them to see how a wonder-worker who was crucified by the Romans could qualify. This objection must be answered²! *Was Jesus a leader?* We could ask the thousands that followed him in the days of his ministry on earth. That “follow-ship” seems to represent leadership. And, what about the triumphant crowd that Jesus led into Jerusalem—seated on a donkey, his followers streaming behind him shouting “**Hallelujah! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**” That procession, led by Jesus, would qualify as leadership, wouldn’t it? And as for commander, we have Jesus’ words: **Do you not think that I could ask my heavenly Father and he would send me twelve legions of angels?** (Matt. 26:53) What is that if not command authority?! Just because Jesus could have settled things by the sword, by force doesn’t nullify who he was and what he had at his command! Of course, had Jesus summoned those twelve angels, he would have established himself as commander—and in fact, when he returns **and all His angels with Him—in triumphant glory**, all questions about leadership and command will be settled!

And there follows Psalm 107: 2, in verses 8-15, a recitation of the mighty acts of God and the reasons for this praise is also presented succinctly: **for He is good: His mercy endureth to all generations . . . He hath redeemed them from the hand of their enemies . . . He hath gathered them out of the nations, from the east and from the west, from the north and the south.** The Exodus history of being redeemed out of Egyptian slavery, being led throughout the wanderings in the wilderness, rescued from hunger, thirst and peril of the

² Ask the genuine seeking Jew a clarifying question: “Do you not have difficulty seeing how Jesus was a ‘leader and commander’ as Scripture teaches that the Messiah would be?” And go from there. Talk about His following, His triumphal entry—His promised return. When Jesus was asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He replied, “It is as you say.” (In all four gospels!)

sword, and venomous vipers . . . **out of their distresses** as Scripture records. *One might suppose these memories would sustain the people, but with each generation, they are more and more forgotten. Not that a long time is a necessary ingredient!*

In Jesus' day those who came seeking signs and miracles, as proofs of Jesus' messiahship, managed to forget yesterday, or to foolishly question and, discount, things that Jesus did just days, weeks or a few short months ago? *And we, I fear, are in no position to throw stones about forgetfulness!* We forget more than we remember. We tend to forget the rock from which we were hewn, or, the desperation, or destitution from which we were rescued, spiritually speaking, when, as the spiritual dregs we seemed to be, the Lord lifted us up, cleaned us up and put his robes of righteousness upon us! *In His mercy*, He sanctified us, unworthy though we were.

Yes, we forget what we were before He reached out and loved us *redemptively*. All this, in varying degrees of forgetfulness, mixed with proud ingratitude. How sweet the moments of total recall are when we ponder **the mercy which endureth** and remember His kind goodness. David's psalms are loaded with instances of just such recall. So whether from the pages of sacred history, biblical theology, and our volumes of personal experience, we find records . . . and are prompted to rejoice in the God of our salvation. Here are the verses I alluded to:

**8 Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,
And for His [a]wonders to the sons of men!
9 For He has satisfied the [b]thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.
10 There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in [c]misery and [d]chains,
11 Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.
12 Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was none to help.
13 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.
15 Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness,
And for His [e]wonders to the sons of men!³**

³Footnotes

- a. Psalm 107:8 I.e. wonderful acts
- b. Psalm 107:9 Or *parched*
- c. Psalm 107:10 Lit *affliction*
- d. Psalm 107:10 Lit *irons*
- e. Psalm 107:15 I.e. wonderful acts

The God of our salvation is the same God as David's God of salvation—the God be praised here!

David had it good, but we have it better. Easter is the cream cheese icing on the carrot cake of salvation-or, if you prefer, the hard sauce on the Christmas pudding . . . putting the comparisons in a culinary framework! Hence I declare: David Had It Good, but We Have It Better. That is what we are looking into this morning.

Shifting now to Psalm 27:1-6, with its exuberant expression of personal faith, we encounter an open expression of David's **heart towards God**.

Listen in, **the Lord is my light and my salvation. My light . . . my salvation.** Note how personal, and declarative his language is. And, as a direct consequence of this Godward focus, David confesses courage, a fearlessness” **Whom shall I fear?** *There's an answer to the fearfulness that so often besets us mere human beings!* Make, affirm and declare God to be **your light, your salvation.** Allegiance to God allies yourself with God, the omnipotent One as well as the source of life, light and salvation. Indeed, when God is **the strength of your life** as it was of David's life, something of invincibility is converted to your heart. **Of whom shall I be afraid,** indeed. God and not my human condition, God and not the sociology of my being, education, past or genetic make-up—none of the circumstances that make up who I am, or who is around me—as long as my heart is aligned with God *then He is mine as surely as I am His!*

Then, as is often the case, given the adversarial, and hostile nature of the fallen world, when **the wicked come against me to eat up my flesh . . . eat up my flesh?** *Does that seem too strong a word? Too harsh, or hard a saying?* **David pin points the cannibalistic nature of this life a radically realistic perspective.** It is not enough to see oneself as a consumer when the wicked see you as a commodity—something to be exploited, used, yes, consumed to sate an appetite, serve another's errant pleasure. In malice the wicked seek to feast upon us—that is why we have child sex trafficking, rape, both ancestral and cultural. We are objectified, commodified and consumed. Our predatory nature endangers us; it makes this world a scary place. It is our cruelty that thickens the brew. But for God. But for God? Yes, **when they came against me,** God, *My savior/rescuer,* caused them **to stumble and fall!** The net spread for me failed and for every time I was attacked, or captured—there was **an army of them,** as in many of them, yet *I refused to give in to fear.* I see plainly how it is—the “war,” up close and personal, swirls about me unabated and yet I prevail because of my faith in my God. Whatever might befall me, God remains God and I desire and declare Him to be my God.

Because time and again, God blew my assailants off their feet, I smile at the remembrance of their frustration, at their failed hunt . . . their empty handedness! They searched and could not discover me. The Lord provided me a way of escape. If not from the hunt, then from the ensuing captivity. I escaped the cage they penned me in.

With verse 4, we are shown **the life-preserving power** of David's singular, and foremost desire: **To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.** Our love of God must be that familiar, that close, that present (**all the days of my life!**) As well as forever! Divided aims is often that which does us in: distraction leads to weakness, weakness leads to

disappointment and, sometimes, despair. A dear, young friend, who lived with us but briefly, one day cried out, “O Lord, help me. I have too many thoughts in the head!” Indeed. Or too many desires in the heart. David’s plan? Have only one compelling desire if you hope to have life, salvation: ***to be ever present with God***. If you were asked to draw a picture of the house of God, what would it be a structure? A household? What colors would you use to add atmosphere, tone, flavor?

Is this singularity of desire important? Yes. Essential even God judges us by the ***desire of our hearts***—thank goodness, and not by our abilities, aptitudes or accomplishments. For if we think about it, no amount of works would be sufficient to get us into heaven! And none of those works would be of sufficient quality (that is, good, or fine enough) to get us in. Neither enough, nor good enough—we see how inadequate our insufficiency, our limitations tend to be. If the horse we ride is lame, there is much delay in getting anywhere. It is gracious of God to take the will as counting for the deed . . . he perfects, he completes our incompleteness. Let your desire be of the Lord! Aim at that and you shall assuredly attain heaven.

Aim to **behold the beauty of the Lord** . . . aim to make inquiry **in His temple**.

I spoke earlier of our many escapes, of the many failed “hunts⁴” . . . of wounds instead of a kill shot? Do you remember that? Well, it turns out that this refuge, this safety, this safe sanctuary proves to be the **pavilion of God, the secret place of His tabernacle . . . where He shall hide me**. (v. 5) And after danger is past, at times, the Lord will **set me high upon a rock . . . and now, my head above my enemies all around me!** I see and celebrate my deliverance.

This divine gesture, reminds me of Psalm 23 where David writes, **Thou setteth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies . . . Thou anointed my head with oil, my cup overruneth**. *That God should make such a public display of their defeat is typical*. It takes us straight to the cross, to that great, spiritual spectacle for there, in the presence of all who sought to eliminate and destroy His beloved Son, Christ was crucified and triumphed! In a high place (**If I be lifted up!**), a conscious place—in their very midst, publicly, and openly contrary to all their expectations. It would not be surprising if our triumphal entry into heaven should unfold in just such a manner, too—openly, publicly, transparently.

Because of Easter(!), **Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle**—His house, tent, or temple—**I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord**. (v. 6)

Do you see how Easter is threaded throughout all this? All this enmity and warfare? And if death could not defeat our Lord, what is there left for Him to conquer—except your wandering, distracted and poorly focused heart?

David did not have Easter to aim at, but you do. Make Easter joy your aim, and make Christ your life, **your light and your salvation**. Don’t settle for anything less than Jesus, or

⁴ As survivors of abuse relate, there may be many instances of that abuse *however* without denying, dismissing, or minimizing those events, we must allow that there could have been more. There may have been many failed attempts and probably were. It often turns out that the abuser had many, other victims!

live for anything less than the eternal joy that comes from owning only Him. Then you will live fearlessly and free—just like David.

Amen.