

The Swan Song of The King

Text: II Samuel 22

It is believed that when it comes time for a swan to die, he sings. Although the swan song is considered by many to be legendary, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle all wrote of the swan song. Aristotle said, "Swans are musical, and sing chiefly at the approach of death"

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia exclaims "Let music sound while he doth make his choice; Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end, Fading in music." Again in Shakespeare's *Othello*, the dying Emilia exclaims, "I will play the swan, And die in music." Lord Alfred Tennyson wrote of this event in his poem, *The Dying Swan*:

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear;
And floating about the under-sky...."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote: "Swans sing before they die— 'twere no bad thing; Should certain persons die before they sing." The closest documentation to the existence of the swan song was reported by Zoologist D.G. Elliot in 1898. A tundra swan he had shot and wounded in flight began a long glide down while at the same time, issuing a series of "plaintive and musical" notes that "sounded at times like the soft running of the notes of an octave."

David is nearing death and it seems only natural that we should title the sweet Psalmist of Israel's last listed Psalm be called his "swan's song," as he lifts the inspired eloquence to give God praise before he leaves the land of the living. We see the opening lines of II Samuel 23:1a, "Now these be the last words of David...." A dying man will not mince words, especially one who has a deep and abiding relationship with His God.

1. STANZA ONE: THE KING TAKES A LONG LOOK BACK

II Samuel 22:1-19

It appears that this Psalm was written earlier in David's life, but like our often sung hymns, he appears to have gone back to it from time to time to be refreshed and revived. You will find in Psalm 18 a remarkable similarity. Spurgeon wrote of this comparison, "We have another form of this Psalm with significant variations...and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all." David speaks of the Lord as his Surety, his Shield and his Savior. He was delivered from Goliath, Saul, backsliding, Israel's enemies, Absalom and his own sinful passions.

David gives details of the effect of a storm in II Samuel 22:8-16. He speaks of the tremendous and almost scary effects of a storm. In the preceding chapter (II Samuel 21) David is disturbed because three years of famine had taken quite a toll on Israel. David sought the Lord inquiring why this was occurring and the Lord gave the answer that it was because of the previous slaughter of the Gibeonites at the hand of Saul (II Samuel 21:1). David took care of the problem by the obedience of recompense through the capital punishment inflicted upon seven descendants of the former king. We can imagine the relief that came as the rain began to fall and the famine was thankfully over. The parallel

David seems to make is that the frightening effects of the storm also carry with them the blessing of prosperity and a future harvest.

In life, we see that God will bring storms into our lives to serve as a cleansing and purifying blessing that brings the much needed revival. Job 23:10: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." I Peter 1:7: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

2. STANZA TWO: THE KING DISCLOSES THAT WHICH EVOKES THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD

II Samuel 22:20-43

II Samuel 22:20: "He brought me forth delivered me, because he delighted in me." It is one thing to delight in the Lord, but what a high honor when the Lord delights in us!!

A. Walking in God's way; obeying God's Word.

II Samuel 22:21, 22 points out the King looked at sin as Romans 7:13 speaks: "...exceeding sinful."

He walks now in the ways of God. Then in II Samuel 22:23 David informs us that he walks in the Word of God.

Herein is a great avenue of delighting in the Lord, i.e., walking in God's way and obeying God's Word. In II Samuel 22:24 David refers to "mine iniquity," bringing to mind Hebrews 12:1 that speaks of, "...the sin which doth so easily beset us...." When we recognize our personal weaknesses we are better equipped we begin to step into an area where we move from that blessed place that brings God's delight.

B. Law of sowing and reaping

II Samuel 22:26: "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful...." Matthew 5:7: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." II Samuel 22:27b-28 tells us that God will show Himself upright to the upright, to the pure, He will show Himself pure. To the high-handed and proud sinners, God will bring down to the earth.

C. There is a prepared and protected path for those with a prepared heart.

See II Samuel 22:29-43. Not preparing our heart to seek God's face and do God's will is spiritually lethal and, in turn, affects every area of our life. II Chronicles 12:14: "And he [Rehoboam] did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD." II Chronicles 19:3: "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee [Jehoshaphat], in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God." When we see "good things found in thee," we are placing ourselves in the "delight" of the Lord.

3. STANZA THREE: GODLY LEADERSHIP IS GIVEN BY GOD, NOT MANIPULATED BY MAN.

II Samuel 22:44-51. David followed Saul, a man, who, by man's estimation, had everything going for him, whereas David was the one whom God had to remind those surprised by his anointing: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). Zechariah 4:6b: "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

- A. God gave David the loyalty of the people (II Samuel 22:44-46).
- B. God gave David peace, even in the presence of his enemies (II Samuel 22:47-49).

Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Psalm 23:5: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

- C. Favor is granted to the person who praises the Lord with no reservation (see II Samuel 22:50-51).

Psalm 27:5-6: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Psalm 50:23: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

Conclusion:

The person who rejects Christ and lives only for this world loses both this world and the next. The person who receives Christ and lives for the next world gains both this world and the next. When the time comes for you to sing your "Swan Song," it will be sweet if you have lived so close to Jesus that going to Heaven becomes going home. Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

-Pastor Pope-