

Psalm 18 • The LORD is my rock and my fortress!

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Psalm chapter 18. This is frankly one of the longer Psalms in the collection. There are only 3 in fact, that are longer and it has an introduction to it that goes like this.

“A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” (ESV)

And we know about that event because we can read about it in in the Bible. Now, by the way, I want to just say something before we get into this Psalm, okay?

There are many people, and when I say people, I mean, serious students of the Bible and even scholars, I don't know that I've ever met one of those ever, who believe that this Psalm has a dual meaning.

And what they mean is, they believe that it also. While it refers to David's life in some particular way, which we've already read, he wrote it when the Lord delivered him from his enemies, that it also applies to the ministry of Christ and His death, burial, and victorious resurrection, and even His exaltation.

And I'm going to show you at the end of this Psalm where those things are implied, okay? But, it's difficult to be dogmatic about that. There are some people who are dogmatic. They read through Psalm chapter 18 and they just say, this is a prophecy of Christ. This is a prophecy of Messiah.

Let me tell you the reason why they say that. It's because there's one verse in this Psalm that Paul quotes in his letter to the Romans when he writes to them about the ministry of Christ to reach Jew and Gentile. And if you'll skip all the way down here to verse 49, we can look at that one verse. Skip all the way to the end of the Psalm.

In verse 49 it says, *“For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, (and that word, nations is often translated in the New Testament, Gentiles) and sing*

to your name.” Now, again, this is quoted by Paul in Romans 15. Let me show this to you on the screen. Here's where it comes. He says,

Romans 15:8-9 (ESV)

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised (that means the Jews) to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, (that's Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so forth) and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (and then he quotes Psalm 18) As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

And because Paul cites this Psalm in Romans, speaking of the Ministry of Christ, it is believed by many people that the whole Psalm is Messianic. Now again, that doesn't necessarily mean that it didn't apply to David or have a connection to David. We know that it did. It says it in the introduction, a song or a Psalm written when God delivered David from his enemies.

Let's go ahead and go through this, we're going to go through it rather quickly. This Psalm begins in somewhat typical Davidic fashion, with the first 3 verses forming an opening declaration of faith that, again, I think it'd probably be a good idea for us to adopt in our own prayers.

He says, *“I love you, O LORD, my strength.”* When's the last time you told the Lord you loved him? He goes on to say, *“² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn (the word, horn means strength, he calls Him the strength) of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.”* Stop there.

Like I said, this is a great introduction to a prayer but why is it that we don't start our prayers this way? Why don't we start off just declaring how faithful He is, and how strong He is, and how much of a refuge He is in our lives.

He says, *“I love you, O LORD, my strength.”* You are my strength. He's not declaring strength in himself. He's declaring strength in the Lord. He says, you're my rock, you're my fortress, you're my deliverer. Those are great words to describe God, are they not? He says, I take refuge in you. You're my shield.

You're my strength. My stronghold. A stronghold was a place that, boy, militarily speaking, if you had a stronghold that was impenetrable, you could fight off any enemy. And that's the way David saw the Lord.

And then he says here at the end of verse 3, *"I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies."*

Alright, now having made that opening declaration, David goes on in the next few verses to tell his story. He says, *"⁴The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; ⁵the cords of Sheol (that means, the grave) entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.*

⁶In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears."

I want you to notice here in these verses, David freely confesses that he was in complete distress over his circumstances and the mounting attacks of those who wanted to kill him, there-fore, he called upon the Lord. He says, I not only called upon the Lord, I cried for help. I think that's very significant.

We get in distress and sometimes we forget to pray. Crazy as that may seem. These verses, as I said, are also reckoned to Messiah regarding his death, and we'll talk more about that here toward the end, and we'll look at some of those.

Now verses 7 through 15, David uses some very dramatic language to describe God's powerful deliverance. And you'll notice as we read verses 7 through 15, that he sets phrase upon phrase in poetic description of God's, deliverance and intervention.

He says, *"Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. ⁸Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. ⁹He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet.*

¹⁰He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. ¹²Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds." Now, I want you to stop there.

I know we didn't get through the whole section there of this descriptive work of God's intervention, but did you notice, and I find this very interesting, how descriptive these words are? For figurative language, they're very descriptive.

If I'm going to use figurative language, I may not be so in depth, talking about these things. And it makes us wonder, did David get a glimpse of the glory of heaven? Did God show him something in the heavenlies that you and I aren't subject to being able to see.

We don't know because David doesn't tell us. He doesn't say in this Psalm, and the Lord rend the veil between heaven and earth and I beheld, and then he begins to say these. He didn't say that. It'd be nice if he did. Like Paul gave us some insight into the fact that he was taken up to the third heaven or whatever and heard and saw these incredible, inexpressible things.

But David just starts talking, we're left wondering. David, are you just really using figurative, descriptive language to describe how God took care of you and defeated your enemies? And, are these things just symbolic when you talk about the blast of smoke from His nostrils? Are you just talking about His wrath? Is that just basically your way of saying, He got angry? And He showed His wrath?

It's one thing to figuratively say, and the Lord came and delivered me. But notice how descriptive he is. The Lord came on a cherub, and He's surrounded with dark clouds, and hailstones and fire precede Him out of this glorious sort of a deal. And you're left going that's incredibly detailed for just general sort of descriptive language. It really leaves us wondering, doesn't it? What was David seeing? What did he see? What did the Lord show him?

He goes on in verse 13, *“The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. ¹⁴ And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.”*

Look at this, verse 15 is really interesting. It says, *“Then the channels (and by channels, he means valleys, okay? The valleys) of the sea were seen, ...”* And what that means is, when God descended from heaven, He pushed back the waters of the sea into valleys. Like the parting of the waters at the Red Sea to the point where the ground underneath could be clearly seen which is why he goes on to say, *“...and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.”*

Again, you can see how this terminology used to emphasize, obviously God's judgment, which for David was deliverance, is so incredibly specific, where he's giving details that go beyond just simply saying, and God was mad, and He visited that wrath upon my enemies. There's more going on here than I think just David's imagination or descriptive language.

He goes on in verse 16 to say, *“He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. ¹⁷ He rescued me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. ¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support.”*

Notice again David admits that his enemies were stronger than he but that's of course, why this whole Psalm gives glory to the Lord, because in David's admission, this is a victorious Psalm, meaning God gave the victory. It wasn't David who did it.

Verse 19, *“He brought me out into a broad place; (meaning an open area) he rescued me, because he delighted in me. ²⁰ The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. ²¹ For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.*

²² For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. ²³ I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt. ²⁴ So the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.”

Now, as these words pertain to David, it's important for you and I to know, David is not making a case for sinless perfection here. He's simply stating that because he devoted himself to the Lord, and to obedience to God's Word, it resulted in a godly life. One for which, in his side of the equation, there was no guilt.

Verse 25. *“With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ²⁶ with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.”* Interesting word, isn't it? Your Bible may have, *“astute”* or *“shrewd.”* Which tells you that this word in the Hebrew is a challenging one to translate.

Tortuous, it means to twist actually, in the Hebrew, to twist. So, it's being used probably figuratively in this passage, with the crooked man, you make yourself seem twisted. Which, again, in our vernacular doesn't work very well to describe God. But David is using a word that, and I think it's probably better translated, to the shrewd, or to those who try to be shrewd, you are more shrewd, if you will. Anyway, it's a challenging one to turn into English.

But, in verse 27, he says, *“For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. ²⁸ For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens*

my darkness. ²⁹ For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall.” In other words, the Lord enables me.

Verse 30, *“This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.”* That is a statement repeated over and over and over in the Psalms.

“³¹ For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?—” In other words, who is a strong foundation, except the Lord our God, there is none.

“³² the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. ³³ He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.

³⁴ He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

³⁵ You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. ³⁶ You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.

³⁷ I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed. ³⁸ I thrust them through, so that they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet.

³⁹ For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. ⁴⁰ You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated me I destroyed.

⁴¹ They cried for help, but there was none to save; they cried to the Lord, but he did not answer them. ⁴² I beat them fine as dust before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets.

⁴³ You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. ⁴⁴ As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me. ⁴⁵ Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses.”

You'll remember that after Saul fell, David immediately became king in Hebron and for about 7 years. And then eventually, the northern tribes of Israel came and made him king. And they took Jerusalem as the capital and then he was king over all Israel.

And David is recounting that this is a work of God's grace. He said, he saw himself in such a humble light, he didn't really think he was anything all that

special. And so, he was a little bit incredulous that, as king, people came to him trembling and fell at his feet and said, we'll do whatever you say, O king.

And David's like, really? But he ascribed that to the Lord. God, you did this. You did this. You made people actually fear me, but rather than getting a big head about it, like he was something special, David recognized he wasn't anything special. It was God who did it. Just an incredible attitude.

David begins to praise the Lord. Verse 46, he says, *“The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—”* I've got an old worship chorus going through my head.

“⁴⁷ the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, ⁴⁸ who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence. (perhaps, and most likely referring to Saul)

⁴⁹ For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name. ⁵⁰ Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.”

You can see this is a wonderful victory Psalm. David is just reveling in the victory of the Lord. God, you gave it. You gave it. David did that sort of thing. He ascribed things to the Lord. Even if something bad happened in his life, David knew that God was taking care of him, and he ascribed even that to the hand of the Lord.

As we look back over Psalm 18, maybe as we read through these verses, perhaps you found it not terribly difficult to find the various messianic references. Because you'll remember that because one of the verses in this Psalm is quoted by the apostle Paul related to Christ, many people believe it is a messianic Psalm. Let me just show you a couple of places here.

Verses 4 and 5 suggest his death, the death of Messiah, especially in the words, *“the cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me, the cords of the grave, or shield, entangled me, the snares of death confronted me,”* and so forth.

And then verses 7 through 18, which we're not going to read the whole thing speaks of His resurrection. Specifically verse 7. *“Then the earth reeled and rocked, the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked.”* We know

that there was an earthquake that preceded the time of the resurrection of Jesus where many others came out of the tombs who had died before.

And then verse 16, *“He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.”* Again, that could be considered a figurative statement related to the resurrection. Then verses 19 through 27 possibly speak of the exaltation of Messiah.

Verse 23. *“I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt.”* Verse 24, *“So the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.”* That certainly is a statement that Jesus would have been able to say.

And then verses 28 through 42 could very well speak of the victory of Messiah. Verse 35, for example. *“You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.”*

Verse 36. *“You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.”* Speaking of just the victory of the Lord.

And then finally, verses 43 through 50 could be referring or speaking of the coming kingdom of Messiah. Verse 43, particularly into that verse, *“you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me.”*

Verse 44, *“As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me.”* We know that this will be the case in the Millennial Kingdom.

You can see why there are allusions to the Messiah in this Psalm and for my part I don't have any problem believing that because I think there's a whole lot more in the Bible that refers to Messiah than we're even aware.

And I believe that it is written about Him in the volume of the book.

So, we're going to stop there.