

TEXT SERMONS - SERIES: PSALM SERMONS

A DOXOLOGY AFTER DELIVERANCE PSALM 18

The inscription at the top of Psalm 18 in your Bible was not added by the publishers or editors of the volume. It is part of the original song that David sang. This Psalm appears two times in scripture, the first time in II Samuel 22 and then here in Psalm 18. In the original version the inscription at the top of the Psalm in your Bible forms the first verse of the original song:

“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.” (II Samuel 22:1)

This Psalm focuses upon the omnipotence of God and the impotence of David and, using these two points of the scriptural compass, let us chart our course as we explore this Psalm.

Maya Angelou wrote a book titled: “The Caged Bird Sings.” Here in Psalm 18 we see David, the caged bird, singing! Or rather, he is “The Cave Man Singing.” In I Samuel 22:1 we read, “David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.”

The setting is as follows: David had been anointed to be king by the prophet Samuel at God’s instructions, however, Saul was still king and it would be some years before David would be crowned king. During this intervening time, Saul, in his jealous rages tormented David. While on the run from Saul and his minions, David, even though in constant danger, wrote songs and sang. Although a fugitive he was not a fatalist. He kept his eyes upon the Lord and kept his heart in tune with God, as this and other Psalms indicate.

Psalm 18:1 proves David’s faith and walk with God during this difficult time: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength.” Do you comprehend what David said in those opening words? He said, “I *will* love you.” In spite of his circumstances, the threats that faced him, and the difficulty of living in caves (I Samuel 22:1) and fleeing for his life, he *willed* to love God! He said, “I *will*...” He did not attach any conditions to his love for God; he did not try to bargain with God; he did not say, “If you get me out of the mess I am in I will love you.” He simply determined to love God no matter what the situations and circumstances that surrounded him.

David’s attitude toward God during this most difficult time in his life reveals his genuine heart for God and is a model for us. I have met persons who, because of some reversal, tragedy, misfortune or rejection were angry at God. They blamed their situation upon God. More than one person has said to me, “God doesn’t love me because He allowed such and such to happen to me.” David could have voiced disappointment with God, but his attitude was, “I am going to love God no matter what happens to me!” What a victorious spirit and one that should serve as a model for all of us.

It was in this same overcoming spirit that David penned the next verse, verse 2, of his song. In this verse he writes about the safety that the Lord Himself afforded him during this dangerous time in his life.

THE LORD IS HIS REFUGE

Verse 2

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (v.2)

David uses seven metaphors to describe who God is to him at this particular time of need. These terms are used to describe the refuge, the safety and protection that David found in the Lord.

1. **“Rock.”** – *“The Lord is my rock.”*

On another occasion David wrote, “When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy.” (Psalm 61:2)

Israel is a rocky country, especially the deserted area where David was hiding out from Saul’s searchers. Crags and over-hanging rocks provided shelter and safety. His best shelter was God Himself. David did not have a “piece of the Rock” – he had the Rock, Himself! So does everyone who puts their trust in Him. Can you say, “the Lord is my rock”?

2. **“Fortress.”** – *“and my fortress.”*

While the rock was above him, the fortress was around him. He found security and comfort in the truth that God surrounded him. Later he wrote, “You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.” (Psalm 139:5)

3. **“Deliverer.”** – *“my deliverer.”*

The Lord was not only his Defense, He was his Deliverer. The idea is that the Lord not only protected him in the place of danger but that the Lord delivered him out of that dangerous place. He says, “My Deliverer is my God.”

Every one of us has been delivered by the protecting hand of the Almighty, even though we may never have had a close encounter with some physical catastrophe. Many times has God delivered us from dangers of which we were not aware. We are on a pilgrimage through this world where there are “many dangers, toils and snares” and we need deliverances that only the Lord can accomplish. Thank God for His deliverances, known and unknown!

4. **“Strength.”** – *“my strength.”*

One in such an extremely dangerous and taxing predicament as David was in during this period in his life, needed inward fortitude and support to continue day after day. He found the Lord to be his strength.

My life’s verse is Philippians 4:13 which reads: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I have continued to this day in ministry, in this my 77th year, only because I can say with David that the Lord is “my strength”!

5. **“Shield.”** – *“my shield.”*

The word “buckler” occurs in some translations. It means “shield.” God was a Rock above him, a Fortress around him, Strength within him and now he says, a Shield before him. To Abraham God said, *“I am your shield.”* (Genesis 15:1)

There are two shields mentioned in scripture for God’s soldiers: there is the Shield Who is our Father, and, there is the shield of our faith which is part of the Christian soldiers armor mentioned in Ephesians 6:16. David is talking about the shield Who is our heavenly Father here in this Psalm.

Which of us really knows how many of the enemies arrows, aimed at us as God’s soldiers, have been warded off by God our invisible shield? What He was to Abraham and David, He is for all His own.

6. **“Horn.”** – *“the horn of my salvation.”*

This is a strange term for us in our modern culture. Yet, not so strange if we understand the analogy. The reference here is to the animals that have horns and use them as an offensive weapon as well as a defensive mechanism. There a picture of this term applied to God in Deut. 33 as follows: “His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns like the horns of the wild ox; together with them He shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth.” (v.17) The term usually refers to power and strength.

7. **“Stronghold.”** – *“my stronghold.”*

The word translated “stronghold” in most translations, is translated “high tower.” The Hebrew word means “a lofty place; a refuge; a place of defense; a high fort or tower.”

He has referred to God already as his “fortress” however, here it is more the location of the fortress or stronghold that he has in mind. This term is used by David to convey the idea that in God, he has the ultimate position of safety and security. God, the high and lofty One (Isa. 57:15) is his impregnable stronghold.

Praise God for the assurance that we also have, that He is our Stronghold. As such He is:

- Above us - Psalm 91:1 – *“....shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”;*
- Beneath us - Deut. 33:27 - *“underneath are the everlasting arms.”*
- Behind us - Isa. 58:8 - *“the LORD shall be your rear guard.”*
- Before us - Isa.52:12 - *“the LORD will go before you.”*
- Beside us - Psalm 23:4 - *“I will fear no evil for You are with me.”*

These are picture words that David uses to describe, in very down-to-earth terms, who and what he perceives God to be to him in his extremity. Who and what God was to David, He is to all of His children today.

After describing his Refuge in God in such vivid terms, we must not miss the very next words in his song which are recorded in verse 3. In view of Who and What God is to him he says, “I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.”

Knowing that God is Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Strength, Shield, Horn and High Tower is wonderful knowledge, however, He waits for us to call upon Him to intervene in our fight of faith. As long as we think we are sufficient in and of ourselves we will not draw upon the All Sufficient One! Do not delay but “call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I (we) be saved from my (our) enemies” – for, remember, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

I love to sing, in the company of redeemed ones, that great hymn written by Martin Luther. Here are but two of the verses:

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.”

David, in this Psalm, begins by singing about the Refuge he has in the Lord Whom he loves. He continues to sing about his difficulties and as we move through his song we come to see how the Lord rescued him, as David explains it.

THE LORD IS HIS RESCUER
verses 16-20

In the days before David was crowned king and King Saul still sat upon the throne, David’s life was constantly in jeopardy. Saul hunted and hounded him relentlessly. David was in dire straights and needed God to rescue him. His dangerous situation is stated as follows:

“The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.” (vs.5-6)

Then in verses 16 through 20 we have, what we may call, “Salvation In Seven Stanzas.” This is a picture of the process of biblical salvation whether it is the salvation of our souls or salvation from life’s struggles. Here again, as in verse 2, are seven actions that are attributed to God as David reports his rescue by God:

1. **“He sent.”** – “He sent from above.” v.16

God, in love, took the initiative to deliver David and through his experience, recounted

here, we can see the pattern of our salvation. “Salvation is of the Lord” as Jonah, after his submersion excursion, declared. It is not partly of man and partly of God; it is *Soli Deo* – of God alone! Mankind cannot work his way up to God; God must come down to man and that He did in the Person of Immanuel – “God with us.”

2. **“He took me.”** v.16

He took me – He personally came to my aid, said David. And all who have experienced God’s saving grace can say with Paul, He “loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal.2:20) Christ Jesus was not sent by the Father to set for us a good example so that we could lift ourselves by our own boot-straps, as it were, from sin’s depths to heaven’s heights! No, He took us by the hand individually. *He took me!* This is the sovereignty of God in action.

3. **“He drew me.”** – *“He drew me out of many waters.”* v.16

The picture is of one drowning and the rescuer came to save the drowning one. He did not come to teach us how to swim or how to keep our heads above the waters of the cesspool of sin. He came to lift us out! David said, “He drew me *out!*”

4. **“He delivered me.”** – *“He delivered me from my strong enemy.”* v.17

Seven times in the New King James translation of this Psalm, David speaks of being “delivered”:

- Psalm 18:2 *“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer...”*
- Psalm 18:17 *“He delivered me from my strong enemy....”*
- Psalm 18:19 *“He delivered me because He delighted in me.”*
- Psalm 18:43 *“You have delivered me from the strivings of the people.”*
- Psalm 18:48a *“He delivers me from my enemies.”*
- Psalm 18:48b *“You have delivered me from the violent man.”*
- Psalm 18:50 *“Great deliverance He gives to His king.”*

David’s testimony is the testimony of all who have come to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The chronology of salvation is: “I was in sin” and now I am “in Christ” having been delivered by the One who “*took me*” and “*drew me out.*”

5. **“He brought me forth.”** – *“He brought me forth also into a large place.”* v.19

David had been hiding in the caves and the mountains from his enemies. He had been “cooped up, hedged about. His movements had been restricted as he hid from Saul’s troops. When the Lord rescued him He brought him forth “into a large place” – that is, he set him free.

Thank God, that He does not leave us in the state in which He found us as captives in sin, but delivered us and set us free! “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

6. **“He delighted in me.”** – *“because he delighted in me.”* v.19

Why did God do for David all that He did? He did all this “because he delighted in me,” said David. Saul despised him, God delighted in him!

David delighted in the Lord: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength” (v.1) and now he says the Lord delighted in him. David testifies in Psalm 37 with these words: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (v.4)

Do you find the thought that God delights in you as His child satisfying and uplifting? Some perceive God only as a frowning Judge. However, what a joy to know that God smiles with delight upon His obedient children!

7. **“The LORD rewarded me.”** – *“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands....”* (v.20)

Isn't God wonderful? He sends His Son from heaven, He takes us, draws us, delivers us, brings us out of our sinful state, all because He delights in us! And, in addition, He rewards us for living for Him!

There is much more in Psalm 18 that could occupy our attention with great blessing. For now we shall end with verse 46 as David exclaims:

**“The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock!
Let the God of my salvation be exalted.”**

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