

Psalm 18

Pride does strange things to people, makes them believe that they're more than they are. Some sorta super human, a cut above the rest type of a person. Paul exhorts us in the book of Romans saying, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." Rom 12:3 Yet for some reason it's so easy to slip into that mode of thinking that God got a really great deal when He landed us, and we just don't know what He'd be able to do apart from us, and it's like, "Ok, who is it that's depending on who here? Who needs who, do you need God or does He need you?" But there is a tool in the hands of God that He seems to use to keep us in the proper perspective, the fact that we need Him desperately that we depend upon Him exclusively and that apart from Him we'd fail miserably and it's called "testing."

You've heard me mention before that it seems to be (generally speaking) that to the degree that God desires to lift you up, He creates balance in our lives by 1st of all taking us to that same degree down. God had a great plan for David's life, He was going to use him, drive back the enemies of Israel by him, cause the nation to bow before him, and bring the Messiah to the world through him. He was going to exalt him greatly, use him powerfully, and so you have to know that God sent David through the school of testing with a rigorous intensity. and For over 10 yrs he lived his life as a fugitive, on the run literally for his life as Saul was hunting him, seeking to kill him. He lived in caves, hid in the mountains, fled to foreign countries, slept with one eye open (kind of a thing). He told his best friend Jonathan, "...truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death." 1 Sam 20:3 and That pretty much sums up that season of his life, all those yrs out there on the run with but a step between him and death. and It was during those days that David learned like never before to trust in the Lord, to depend solely upon the Lord and see the deliverance of the Lord. God was preparing him for His plan for him.

As we come to Ps 18 these are the words that David spoke on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies and from Saul; when David was given the kingdom of Israel entirely. and It's a psalm that extends thanksgiving and praise, a psalm of adoration, and appreciation for both God's defense and deliverance of David. It highlights the goodness and the faithfulness of God. and It's not that it's downplaying the tough or tragic times (they're definitely made mention of). However in the light of God's goodness to him, and His faithfulness to be there for him, the way that those things served ultimately to bring him to a place of greater intimacy with God and dependence upon God. David is sort of echoing (or I guess sorta saying in a precursor kinda way) what James would come to say later, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4 and It's a psalm of both worship and witness. He worships the Lord for who He is and what He's done, and witnesses of those realities to the people.

The psalm (and for the record you can read it in 2nd Sam 22 as well with some minor variations) begins with a declaration of devotion, moves from there into his distress, however the Lord is faithful (Vs 7-19) to deliver. From there he speaks of the Lord's reward for righteousness, His recompense, He speaks of God's enlightening him, enabling him, equipping him and exalting him. The Psalm ends with thanksgiving to God, again for His faithfulness, His deliverance and His mercy.

Vs1

I suppose it's worth mentioning that we see here that David separates Saul from the general category of his "enemies." We read that he wrote this Ps on the day the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. and That's because even though Saul treated David like an enemy, David never considered Saul his enemy. David had multiple opportunities to kill Saul, but he never did because he considered Saul to be on the throne of Israel by God's hand and therefore the only way he was to be removed was from God's hand. So he never came against him, he always sought to support him, but Saul sorta lost his mind there toward the end of his reign, was jealous of David and wanted to kill David, but David never really had a beef with Saul. So even though he's placed here in the list of those whom David was delivered from he wasn't considered an enemy in the sense of the Philistines, or the Ammonites, or the Syrians or people like that. Yet God delivered David from his hand nonetheless.

So David says, "I will love You, O LORD, my strength." and The word that he uses here for love is a deep, passionate love. We all know that the word "love" is used often times in different context to mean different things and quite frankly it's probably used way too loosely in our society. Sometimes the word love really means more along the lines of "like" sometimes it speaks of a certain affection, but not really a deep commitment. Like when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" and Peter said, "You know I love You." Jesus was saying, "Are you deeply, passionately, uncompromisingly committed to Me?" and Peter was saying, "You know I like You a lot." They weren't saying the same thing. Here David is speaking of that deep, I'm willing to do anything or go anywhere I'm committed to you and desperately in love with You, kind of a love.

He says, "The Lord is my strength." "God it's not about me and my ability, it's about You and Your ability through me, You having Your way in me, I'm just an instrument in Your hands." and What a beautiful place to be, to just be in that place whereby you've submitted yourself to the Lord, you're not out there trying to make something happen, or bring it all together, in a frantic panic to get things done but just, "Lord, You're my strength, here I am, have Your way." and I'm not saying that we shouldn't be diligent about our work, but there's notable difference in trying to do in the efforts of the flesh what can only truly be done through the work of the Spirit. We get out there and get to spinning our wheels and exhaust our energy only to get nowhere fast. When we finally give up and give God the reigns, things get done. In the book of Zechariah God said it like this, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the Lord of hosts." Zech 4:6

“O LORD, my strength.”

Vs2

You wanna talk about a guy who was articulate, who knew how to express his heart in a manner which was eloquent, David was that guy. He just lavishes the Lord with title after title expressing his heart in all that God is to him and all that He’s done for him. It’s like, “One word, one phrase, one title simply isn’t enough, there’s no words that adequately express my heart in a single statement. God, You’re my rock, my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, my shield, the horn of my salvation...my stronghold.” You’re my recourse, my every resource, my all in all. and He says in Vs 3

Vs3

So amongst other things here in these 1st few Vs one of the things that seem to jump out at us immediately is the fact that salvation is of the Lord. David says, “I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised and so shall I be saved from my enemies.” and We do well to recognize the fact that our day of deliverance, our source of salvation is the Lord.

David isn’t the only one who was able to call upon the Lord in a day of distress and find deliverance. The bible says, “...the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” Rom 10:12-13 and Of course we realize that the application I’m making here is one that is spiritual as to where the interpretation that David is speaking of is situational but the point is that David recognized the fact that God was there for him in his hour of need, whatever that need may be, and it was God who would rescue him, who would deliver him in his day of difficulty or discouragement. and The same is true for you; the same is true for me.

He is our rock, (our anchor of security and stability in an ever shifting culture and society, when we’re being tossed about emotionally) He’s our fortress, (speaking of a high place of refuge and defense, a place of protection to which we can run). He’s our deliverer, our strength, our shield, and our stronghold. Of course the words “shield” and “stronghold” are military terms that suggest a place of protection and security in regards to the attack of the enemy. Now, the weapons of our warfare aren’t carnal, but make no mistake we’re in a war. We may not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against powers, principalities, rulers of darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. and We need the Lord as our shield, our stronghold, and our deliverer.

Here in these 1st 3 Vs David declares his faith, hope, and love. Vs 1, “I will love You, O LORD.” Vs 2 expresses faith, “In whom I will trust” and Vs 3 speaks of hope, “So shall I be saved from my enemies.” and You might note the 3 “I will’s” of these 1st 3 Vs, “I will love You, I will trust You, and I will call upon You.” David here becomes a great example for us to follow, to love on the Lord, trust in the Lord, and call upon the Lord in our day of distress.

One more thing and then we'll move on. I want you to see how many times David uses the personal possessive pronoun "my" here in these 1st 2 Vs. He refers to the Lord as my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my shield, my salvation, and my stronghold. I mean it's one thing to acknowledge the Lord as a strength, a rock so on and so forth, but it's another thing altogether to say He's my rock.

For instance there are all kinds of wonderful children running around in this church and I thank God for all of them. But there are a few that are a little different, that are set apart in my eyes, perhaps (if you'll allow me) a little more special to me than the others, you know why? Because they're mine, and trust you have the same affection for those children, or grandchildren who are yours. It's not that you don't care for all of them, it's that there's something that sets 1 or 2 or a few of them apart, they're yours. and That little possessive personal pronoun makes all the difference when it comes to relationship doesn't it. How important that you and I be able to say, "The Lord is my rock, He's my fortress, my shield, and my salvation."

How crucial it is we utilize the resource of all that He's provided for us and all that He is to us, that we realize that we can call upon Him and be delivered by Him.

Vs4-5

As articulate as David is regarding the goodness of God toward him he's equally able to express the difficulties and dilemmas of the world around him isn't he? He speaks of the "pangs of death" the "floods of ungodliness" the "sorrows of Sheol" and the "snares of death" that confronted him, surrounded him and made him afraid. and The idea that's being communicated here is that he was with out human resources to save him, his back was up against the wall and unless the Lord intervened he wasn't going to make it. and It may be a little bit sick but I'm kinda glad that David when he was backed up against the wall didn't simply say, "But that was ok because I knew that my God would come through for me."

But rather he confesses, "I was afraid, I was freaked out, wasn't sure what to do or where to turn." Because I've felt that way. We have this tendency to see our bible heroes as men and women of impervious faith, but they were human like you are and like I am. and David was afraid, so what did he do?

Vs6

When he was in a tight place, hemmed in on every side, felt discouraged and defeated, he called upon the Lord. How often the enemy wants to rebuke us in our distress, say things to us like, "You can't call upon the Lord right now, you're not trusting in Him, what makes you think He's going to respond to you?" As if to say, "If you can't bolster up the confidence in Him, then you better not even think about calling upon Him." But David says here, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God." and What happened? "He heard my voice, and my cry came before Him." The bible says, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry." Ps 34:15

It's amazing to me the way the enemy is able to twist our perspective. It's like we have this tendency to stay away from the body, or not draw near to the Lord when perhaps we've stumbled or are struggling with sin when that's when we need Him the most. and In that same frame of mind we think we can't call upon the Lord when we're in distress because it shows a lack of trust in Him therefore it can't be pleasing to Him and so there's no way He'll help us out. The fact is that God has His eyes upon us and His ears are open to us and He just wants to hear from us. But the enemy doesn't want you calling out to the Lord in your day of distress, you know why? Because it stirs your heavenly Father to action. Have you ever heard a cry of distress, received a distress signal, a cry for help, perhaps from your child, or someone who's been in an accident, or their trapped in a dangerous situation? It's compelling isn't it? It has this way of stirring you to action. I've never been hanging out somewhere just nonchalantly and heard one of my children cry out in serious distress and went, "You know, they'll just have to work that one out on their own, this episode of Sponge Bob has me riveted." Man, I'm stirred immediately to action, I'm off and running to the reference point from which that cry came, I want to help, I want to intervene on their behalf. Now how much more do you suppose that your heavenly Father is stirred to action when He hears the cry of distress from one of His children? and He's stirred immediately, begins dealing with the situation instantly, and the enemy doesn't like it when God is stirred into action on your behalf, because that insures your victory, and his defeat. But that's exactly what happens; God hears the cry of His own and immediately comes to aid them, to be a shield and a stronghold, a deliverer for them. God moved on David's behalf, notice.

Vs7-19

The primary thing we want to notice here is the fact that the Lord is the defender and the deliverer of those in whom He delights. and Again on a spiritual level it may mean deliverance from the struggles of this world into the eternal peace of His presence. But on a circumstantial level David is saying that when God purposes in His heart to deliver you, the heavens and the earth will be subjected to Him or employed by Him in whatever means necessary to get the job of delivering and/or defending done.

David describes a scene in which he felt as though he was drowning in a sea of strong enemies and yet the Lord heard his cry, came swiftly to him and drew him out. Notice there in Vs 18 it says in speaking of his enemies that, "They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support." and My point in drawing your attention to that Vs is to simply say this.

God will not only deliver His people out of all their troubles, all their struggles, all their discouragement and despair in due time, but He will sustain them, support them, and bear them up under their trials in the mean time. God will never leave you nor forsake you, and remember Vs 1? He will be strength to you, not only is He your salvation and deliverance in due time, but He's your support, and your strength in the mean time.

I think it's important here to notice how careful David is to give God the glory and the credit for sustaining him and saving him in his day of distress. "He sent from above, He drew me out, He delivered me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me." He knew that left to himself he would've fallen, he would've been overwhelmed and overtaken, but because of the support and the strong hand of the Lord he was able to overcome. and That's where the Lord would have us to be, in that place of recognizing (in truth) that apart from the Lord we'd have fallen, but we were not forsaken and through Him we've overcome. Now when you're in that situation practically, it can be a bit scary, unnerving really, but spiritually it's a great place to be because it primes us to be in that place of giving God all the glory as He takes me, or takes you and draws you/delivers you out of that place, that situation or circumstance that's too strong for you, or too strong for me.

Something else I want you to see about Vs 19 is that his cry for deliverance wasn't one that was general. When he says, "He delivered me because He delighted in me." Understand that his cry wasn't a random plea for deliverance toward anyone who might have the time to help. "If Baal wants to deliver me, wonderful, if the Philistines will look upon me, great, if God wants to give me His time, I'd receive that to." No, this wasn't just a general desire to survive, it was rooted in relationship, He was crying out to the Lord...his rock, his fortress, his deliverer.

Vs20-24

Again context is key in these particular portions of scripture when David is declaring his righteousness. He's not claiming sinlessness; he's saying that he's robed in the righteousness of faith as compared (or perhaps contrasted) with his enemies. He keeps the word, they don't, he hasn't departed from the Lord, they have no fear of God, he looks honor God, they don't care about God. and Because he's sought to honor God, God has honored him, rewarded him. However we do note the tone of human responsibility with regard to keeping ourselves from iniquity, Vs 23 (read). and It's not to say that it's about what we do at the expense of what He's already done, however God will not extract from us our freewill. Like we spoke Sunday morning, the opportunity to return to the former way of life is always there. Heb 11:15, "...had they called to mind that country from which they came out, that would've had opportunity to return." If you want to sin, you can sin, or you can get on your face and cry out to God for deliverance from temptation and He'll be there for you, and be a deliverer to you. You can submit to His work in your life...or not, and as you submit to Him, believe me you're keeping yourself from your iniquity.

Vs25-27

WITH the merciful You will show yourself merciful. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy." Matt 5:7 He said, "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." Matt 7:2 That's what David is recognizing here, that God will honor the position of a person's heart. Do you want mercy from God? Then show yourself merciful.

Now there in Vs 26 where we read, “WITH the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.” The idea there is that you can’t outsmart God, you can’t pull the wool over His eyes, or somehow scam Him. It’s the proverbial principle, “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.” Prov 26:27

It’s God’s poetic justice system, He just has this way of making things backfire against those who take their stand against Him.

There in Vs 27 you see the familiar principle stated over and over again throughout the scriptures how that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Vs28-29

Or to understand these Vs another way, “WITH God nothing will be impossible.” Or as Paul told the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” David is simply acknowledging the fact that God not only enlightens us, He empowers us.

Vs30

Again fairly self explanatory, God’s way is perfect, His word is pure, it’s proven, it’s been tried, tested, placed in the fiery furnace of life’s trials and has always come back completely true. David is saying, “I’ve placed my trust in the Word of God and It’s never let me down, it’s been proven true with out fail, with out exception.”

Vs31-36

In Vs 6 David was talking about being hemmed in, in a tight place (distressed), but God has placed him on an enlarged path, so that his feet didn’t slip, like hinds feet on high places. and Again with out getting to deep into it we’re seeing here that not only does God enlighten us through His word, not only does He empower us by His Spirit, He also equips us for His call upon our lives, God’s calling is God’s equipping, His enlisting is His enabling. and He teaches you and me to make war as well, we war in the realm of the spirit.

We note again David’s giving the glory to God for any and every good thing about his life. He says in Vs 35, “Your gentleness has made me great.” and That word gentleness has a condescension about it, “God, You stooped down in order to do a great work in my little life, it’s because of Your gentleness, Your willingness to condescend to relate to me and work patiently with me that I am what I am.” (Picture of Christ) Paul would say, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

Vs37-49

You see it’s clear in David’s heart who’s doing the work, and who deserves the glory. Now Paul picks up Vs 49 here and quotes it in Rom 15:9 in light of the fact that the gospel would go out to the Gentiles and Christ would be magnified and God’s mercy would be glorified in that transition and that Jews and Gentiles would praise God together. So again not only do we have history here, but prophecy as well.

Vs50

See David's not confused. His relationship with God isn't one that's based upon his works, or his righteousness, it's one of mercy and grace. "He shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore." He knows where he's been, what he's done and the fact that God's mercy has been abundant toward him. and We know where we've been, what we've done, the abundance of mercy that God has poured out upon us. and May that overwhelming goodness cause a surge of praise to well up in us; that God might be glorified for all that He has done and is yet to do for our eternal good, and His eternal glory.

Prayer Points:

God You're so good, and we thank You for Your goodness toward us, your gentleness at work in us, that we might become what it is that You desire of us. God help us to decrease that You might increase in our lives. and Lord me we love you passionately, trust in you whole heartedly, and help us to call upon You in the day of distress, the day of discouragement. Lord, You are our deliverer, and we give You praise.