

Psalm 18

May 29, 2022



SCRIPTURE

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

¹ I love you, LORD, my strength.

² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield^[b] and the horn^[c] of my salvation, my stronghold.

³ I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies.

⁴ The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

⁵ The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.

⁶ In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help.

From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

⁷ The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.

⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it.

⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.

¹⁰ He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky.

¹² Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.

¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.^[d]

¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.

¹⁵ The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.

¹⁶ He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.

¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.

¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support.

¹⁹ He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.

²⁰ The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.

²¹ For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I am not guilty of turning from my God.

²² All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees.

²³ I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.



24 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless,
26 to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.
27 You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
28 You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.
29 With your help I can advance against a troop^[a]; with my God I can scale a wall.
30 As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.
31 For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God?
32 It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.
33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.
34 He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great.
36 You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.
37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed.
38 I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet.
39 You armed me with strength for battle; you humbled my adversaries before me.
40 You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes.
41 They cried for help, but there was no one to save them— to the LORD, but he did not answer.
42 I beat them as fine as windblown dust; I trampled them^[b] like mud in the streets.
43 You have delivered me from the attacks of the people; you have made me the head of nations. People I did not know now serve me,
44 foreigners cower before me; as soon as they hear of me, they obey me.
45 They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds.
46 The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!
47 He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me,
48 who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from a violent man you rescued me.
49 Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name.
50 He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing love to his anointed, to David and to his descendants forever.

COMMENTARY

This title contains more information about its setting than any other psalm. It is linked with the Lord's deliverance of David... from... all his enemies and from... Saul. This rescue is not specified or described any further in the title. Neither does its parallel, 2 Samuel 22, give any detailed information about its precise setting in David's life. However, it is clearly set against the backdrop of a military victory where Yahweh fought for David and delivered him from his enemies. Such was the promise for those who



obeyed Yahweh. He would fight for them and bring them victory (Dt 32:41-42). Elsewhere in the OT, only Moses and Joshua are called the servant of the Lord (cp. Ps 36 title).

18:1-2 In no other psalm is there such a large number of metaphors used to convey God's attributes. All of these relate to a military setting where God is seen as the real strength behind the person who fights. He also protects the psalmist as a hiding place from the enemy (his rock...fortress... mountain, and stronghold). God also protects him by guarding him against the onslaught of weapons (He is his shield) and rescues him from his enemies (He is his deliverer and his salvation). In keeping with the military imagery in this psalm, the horn of salvation may refer to one of the horns of the altar, which represented a place of refuge (1Ki 1:50-51). However, it more likely refers to the horn of a wild animal that gored its enemies (Dt 33:17; Ps92:10), signifying military strength.

18:3 Worthy of praise in some contexts is based on the attributes of God (48:1; 96:4; 145:3), but here it is clearly connected with specific events in the life of the psalmist.

18:4-5 The perception of the inevitability of death is pictured in a number of ways in the psalms (such as being near Sheol; 88:3). In this case it is pictured as being entangled in ropes and unable to escape (116:3; 119:61). Torrents is an image of being overwhelmed with water and in danger of drowning (Jnh 2:3,5). When pieced together such imagery describes being tangled in ropes while overtaken with a flood of water. There was absolutely no chance to swim away since the psalmist's limbs were bound and unable to move. Death itself confronted him in the same way enemies did (17:13) and would not allow him to escape.

18:6 Temple most likely refers to heaven in this context.

18:7-15 These verses describe a theophany where God reveals His power through natural phenomena such as an earthquake (v. 7) and a thunderstorm (vv. 13-14). Mountains represent stability within the natural order, so their shaking and trembling describes God's power to bring upheaval to what seemed secure (Jdg 5:5; 1Sam 14:15). Smoke and consuming fire combined with God's voice that thundered from heaven is reminiscent of the Sinai experience (Ex 24:17; Dt 4:12,24; 9:3). The image of God acting as a warrior who fights for His people and uses the natural elements as His weapons is also connected with Israel's past experiences (Jos 10:11; Jdg 5:4,20). God's riding on a cherub—imagery found in creation hymns (19:1; 104:3)—blends the supernatural with the natural. Such a mixture is a common feature in many ancient Near Eastern myths, particularly those related to Baal, the Canaanite storm god. Some interpreters see this section of the psalm as a polemic against Baal, showing that Yahweh is the sovereign Lord of creation. Psalm 18:15 seems to be connected with the exodus event when the depths of the sea became visible because of God's breath (see Ex 14:21).

18:16-19 Reaching down, taking hold, and pulling out are anthropomorphic descriptions of God's condescension to rescue the psalmist in his time of need. These terms also



allude to the image of a well as the place where one feels trapped during times of distress, connecting the concepts of “drawn up” and rescued (30:3; 40:2; Jer 38:10). The deep waters are related to the “torrents of destruction” in verse 4 and are identified more specifically as enemies. The spacious place is another illustration of being delivered from one’s enemies. There is assurance that God delights in His people when He rescues them from harm and protects them from their enemies (41:11).

18:20-24 This declaration of innocence is set off by the same statements in verses 20 and 24. Unlike its use in prayers, these statements of innocence are part of thanksgiving for answered prayer, indicating why God delivered the psalmist from his calamity. Righteousness is further clarified as cleanness of...hands, meaning integrity in his obedience to God’s commands (24:4). The psalmist was not absolutely perfect and free from sin, but he was blameless in terms of his faithfulness to God (15:2; Dt 18:13).

18:25-26 These verses make the connection between the statements of innocence in the previous section and Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness. This is an outworking of the covenant stipulations in Deuteronomy 28 whereby God is faithful to those who are faithful to Him.

18:28-29 Light is sometimes connected with salvation (deliverance) and provides security and assurance that God protects His own (27:1). The security becomes confidence in 18:29 with the sense that the psalmist could leap over a wall. In other words, he could accomplish the impossible with God on his side (Mt 19:26; Mk 9:23; Lk 18:27).

18:31 The uniqueness of Yahweh is significant in Israel’s theology, and it forms the basis for the distinctiveness of Israel among the other nations (35:10; 89:8; Ex 15:11; Dt 4:32-40).

18:32-36 The descriptions in these verses are of traits that are important for warfare. Strength is the clothing (1Sam 2:4). Feet of a deer represent swiftness (2Sam 1:23; 2:18). God made the psalmist more skillful by training his hands. The bow of bronze is unusual since bows were not covered with metal. The point seems to be that it was strengthened and made more effective as a weapon (Job 20:24). The shield is perhaps related to its earlier mention where it was identified with God Himself (vv. 2,30).

MAIN POINT

Even in the most difficult situations, God gives sure footing to those who trust in Him.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is something you like to do to unwind when you've had a bad day?

What about when you've had a bad year? Are you more likely to draw closer to people or withdraw from them? Explain.

Think about the most difficult experience or season you've ever faced. During that time, did you draw closer to God or withdraw from Him?

There are times when it seems like everything that can go wrong does. Our lives become filled with chaos and despair, and there appears to be no way out. In these times, our natural inclination is to question God or even doubt Him. But the Bible tells us to turn to God. In fact, in Psalm 18, we see that is exactly what David did.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:1-6.

List all the ways David described God in the first three verses.

How did David describe his own situation in verses 4-6?

Is it strange to you that David praised God as he did when his own life was such a mess? Explain.

David wrote this psalm after the Lord delivered him from the hands of his enemies, which included the house of Saul and the Philistines (find the context in 2 Samuel 22:1-2). As he reflected on the years he spent running from Saul, and then on his early years as king when he was in constant war with the Philistines, he recognized the impossibility of his odds. At times, David was literally being assailed on every side, and figuratively, he felt that this had defined much of his existence in the preceding years. However, when all hope seemed lost, David continued to call upon the Lord and place his trust in Him.

From verse 6, what can we know for sure about God when we turn to Him in the hard times we face?

Has there been a time in your life when you could relate to what David wrote in this verse?



- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:16-24.

How did David know God heard him?

How can we know God hears us?

Some might read verses 19-24 and believe that the circumstances of our lives depend on our behavior. How would you respond to such a belief system?

As New Testament believers, how should we understand the meaning of verse 24 (see Romans 3:22)?

Though it was David who defeated his enemies (see 1 Samuel 30:16-20; 2 Samuel 5:17-25, 8:1-14, 10:1-19, 12:26-31, 21:15-22), he knew it was the Lord who delivered him from each situation—a characteristic that is seen as early as his fight with Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17:34-47). In addition to his years fleeing from Saul and the ongoing wars he faced, David also dealt with family discord and betrayal, and an eight-year period where most of the tribes of Israel refused to recognize him as king. Despite all these circumstances, David continued to trust in the Lord as his source of strength and deliverance. No matter the situation—whether enemies are opposing you, betrayal is despairing you, or life is just overwhelming you—God is more than able to rescue you. Ultimately, God has rescued us all through the work of Jesus on the cross. We stand before God as fully competent bearers of righteousness because Jesus’s death completely fulfilled the requirements of God’s Law (see Romans 8:1-4).

- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:25-36.

What stands out as especially encouraging in these verses? Explain.

What is a situation in your life where you need God to light your lamp and illuminate the darkness (v.28)?

Practically speaking, how can a person find God’s light in dark times?

In verse 31, David asked a couple of rhetorical questions. What are some other ways that we tend to answer those two questions (e.g., we might trust in our own abilities, another person’s ability or insight, or even money and worldly success as the answer to every problem)?

When have you experienced the truth of verse 36 in your own life, where God gave you the way to go and the strength to get there?

The cloven hooves of the deer David mentioned are adept for climbing in precarious situations. The two digits that compose the hoof have a hard exterior shell with a soft pad underneath, like the fingernail and finger on human hands. The two digits can spread apart and flex to land on uneven surfaces or grasp small projections in the rock



face. The soft pads provide an anti-slip ability on small or slippery ledges. These factors allow the deer to ascend and descend on steep rock faces that have minimal projections, where predators are unable to follow. David expressed that God provided him with secure footing on ground that seemed otherwise impossible to traverse. (Other references to God giving sure footing include Psalm 40:2 and Habakkuk 3:19.) As David turned to God, God set David's feet on the secure path.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What testimony do you have of trusting God and finding Him faithful in the difficult times?

What steps can you take in your relationship with the Lord now that will give you secure footing when difficult times come along (vv.33, 36)?

Think about a tough situation you're now facing. What insight and/or practical help does Psalm 18 give you in that situation?

PRAAYER

As you close your small group meeting, thank God that you can always turn to Him and He will give you the help you need. Ask Him to give you an unshakeable hope to trust in Him and praise Him, regardless of the circumstances that surround you.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group members to look ahead to next week's scripture passage:

June 5, 2022 --- Psalm 34

