

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Meditations in the Psalms: Psalm 18:1-50 - The LORD is my rock

Good morning and thank you for listening to *Truth for Today*. We are continuing our series of talks on "Meditations in the Psalms". The psalm we are looking at today is Psalm 18, "The LORD is my rock". While considering this psalm, I read the life story of David as a background to appreciate the difficulties and trials he went through in his life. Some of the issues he had were from God, but others were his own doing. As we consider Psalm 18, I am sure we will identify with David because of the problems we face in life, but we can also give our praise to the Lord as David did. David relied on the LORD for strength, for deliverance, for protection and for salvation. He loved the LORD and wanted to please Him and exalt His name. I pray this morning that, as we go through this psalm, you will be encouraged, so that your path of faith may be strengthened.

Psalm 18 is a psalm of David, written to the chief musician, spoken to the LORD in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all of his enemies and the hand of Saul. The psalm has been called "The Song of a Grateful Heart"; (Spurgeon, CH: *The Treasury of David* ISBN: 9781565639454) this would certainly describe the sentiments expressed by David. In 2 Samuel 22:1-51 we have a parallel version of this psalm. There are some very minor differences between the two copies. The reason for the differences could be that he wrote the poem in his youth, and he revised it when he was older as he sent it to the Chief Musician to be used for public worship in the temple.

It is always difficult trying to speak on so many verses, so I have split the psalm up into six sections to help you understand the passage and follow the talk.

1. David's praise to the LORD (Psalm 18:1-3)
2. David's distress and cry to the LORD (Psalm 18:4-6)
3. God's answer (Psalm 18:7-16)
4. David's deliverance (Psalm 18:17-19)
5. David's appreciation of his deliverance (Psalm 18:20-45)
6. David's note of worship and praise (Psalm 18:45-50)

1. David's praise to the LORD (Psalm 18:1-3)

In Psalm 18:1-3, David begins with confessing his deep love and tender affection for his LORD. What a wonderful and appropriate way to start our prayers as we draw near to our Lord. Reading from the Amplified Version of the Bible, Psalm 18:1 begins: *"I love thee fervently and devotedly, O Lord my Strength."* The word for 'love' here has the meaning of an intense love. It is a fervent love, an affection of the deepest kind. David continues by acknowledging the LORD'S greatness and the trust he has in Him.

In Psalm 18:2 we have various words which express the way the LORD saved him many times from the continual struggles with his enemies. It is a very personal verse where he mentions the word 'my' eight times and the word 'I' once. He speaks of the LORD as *"my rock"* which means fortress or stronghold. David uses this word many times in the Psalms as he expresses the security, the comfort and the peace he found in the Lord at all times. Rocks and crags of the wilderness were his defence and fortress whilst being hunted like an animal. Psalm 61 clearly was written from similar deep experience; one such occasion may have been as he ran in bare feet up the Mount of Olives (2 Samuel 15:30) fleeing from his very own son Absalom weeping as he went (see 2 Samuel 15:13-37). He might well cry, *"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I"* (Psalm 61:2). The mighty God was always the one David turned to in time of need, his true rock and fortress. *"My fortress"* (Psalm 18:2), which means 'craggy rock' also speaks of a place of safety. "My deliverer" reminds me of the time he was brought before Saul in the valley of Elah, where he explains to Saul that the Lord delivered him from the lion and the bear (see 1 Samuel 17:34-37). Because of David's confidence in the power of his deliverer, he goes on to tell Saul, *"and He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"* (1 Samuel 17:37).

The next group of words *"my God, my strength in whom I will trust"* (Psalm 18:2) speaks of the One who bestowed the strength, thus acknowledging the source of his strength.

The next expressions would speak of God as his faithful protector and how He intervened in awesome power to protect and shield him on many occasions. *"My buckler"* (Psalm 18:2), which means shield, protector, scaly hide of the crocodile, all of these things would speak of real protection. *"The horn of my salvation"* (Psalm 18:2) speaks of power and *"my high tower"* (Psalm 18:2) speaks of lofty refuge, a place of rest and peace. Psalm 18:3 completes this section with a note of praise. Do we express our deepest love and appreciation to the Lord for the way He intercedes in our lives? Do you ever have such a joy in your heart that just wants to overflow with thanksgiving and praise? Nehemiah 8:10 says, *"The joy of the LORD is [our] strength."*

2. David's distress and cry to the LORD (Psalm 18:4-6)

Psalm 18:4-6 speak of David's distress and cry to the LORD. David thought that he was about to die at the hands of men whose ungodliness was evident. They hated him without a cause; they hunted him like a partridge in the mountains. He was considering the sorrows and the reality of death and the grave, and he was afraid. They were as cords which wrapped themselves around him. They were like floods that would completely engulf him. Mr Spurgeon comments, "He was like a mariner broken by the storm and driven upon the rocks by dreadful breakers, white as the teeth of death." (Spurgeon, CH: *The Treasury of David* ISBN: 9781565639454) In his distress he called upon the LORD and he cries to his God. This was something that David did habitually; it wasn't the first time and it wouldn't be the last in such difficult times. God heard David's voice in His heavenly dwelling place and He heard the cry of His beloved servant. There may be someone this morning listening who feels very similar to the way David felt. Dear fellow believer, don't be embarrassed to cry unto the Lord! He is always listening out for the cry of help from His own. In His tender love, He will sustain, comfort and deliver you from the depths of your distress.

3. God's answer (Psalm 18:7-16)

Psalm 18:7-16 gives us God's answer to David's cry. God acts with a prompt and powerful response. David uses very poetical language to describe to us the greatness, the awesomeness and the power of his God, the God of the impossible who is more than willing to move mountains, willing to move Heaven and earth to deliver His own. David at the end of this section speaks of the way that the LORD drew him from the depths of death (Psalm 18:16). He pulled him out of the many waters, waters that he had been wallowing in, horrible dirty waters. David at many times faced death due to enemies and so called friends hunting him down. Many times the battles were numerically set against him but, with God's protection and power, he was able to overcome the enemy or escape capture and almost certain death. In the Old Testament when God was angry and decided that men had overstepped the mark, He used all the mighty power of His marvellous creation to thwart them, and protect His own. He used earthquakes, thunder, lightning, darkness, thick clouds, hailstones and fire (Psalm 18:7-16). When we think of the greatness of God and how small and insignificant are His enemies, why should we be concerned or afraid? Oh, how safe we are in Him, *"The Rock of our salvation and hope."*

Psalm 18:15 speaks about the power of His word seen in creation; David had seen God work in an amazing powerful way at many times. It is the same power that opened the prison doors at Philippi (see Acts 16:25-40). It is the same power that still today breaks the chains of sin and bondage and sets the captive free. In Psalm 18:16, David sees the hand of God reaching down from His heavenly dwelling place and lifting him up above the storms of life. There is a chorus that this scripture reminds me of:

*"He took me out of a pit,
And from the miry clay,
He set my feet on a rock,
Establishing my way,
He put a song in my mouth,
My Lord to magnify
And He will take me some day
To His home on high."*

James Fitch

What an amazing answer to David's cry! Remember that David's God is our God, and that He is on our side! Oh, that we would have the faith to rest on this. God can change the scenes around us with the power of His might. "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform" are the words of a well known hymn (William Cowper (1731-1800)). Another way of looking at Psalm 18:7 in particular would be prophetically, in relation to the death of Christ and God's answer to death. Matthew 27:45-51 speak of the darkness and the shaking of the earth when Christ hung on the cross of Calvary, facing death for every man. He took upon Himself the burden of sin and died in our place. After Christ died, God raised Him from amongst the dead and set Him at His right hand in Heaven, Hallelujah!

4. David's deliverance (Psalm 18:17-19)

Psalm 18:17-19 speak of David's deliverance. David speaks about his own great weakness and the strength of the enemy which was something he had felt very deeply before going into the battle with Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17:20-58). We must take a big lesson here in that we should never go out alone in our own strength to face the enemy. We will have people who will hate us, despise and reject us, as they did to our Lord. But our strength is in the God of Heaven and earth, "[the One] in whom we live and move and have our being" (see Acts 17:28). He is a faithful protector and will deliver us just like He did to David many times over. The LORD was David's support and stay during the days of his oppression. In Psalm 18:19 David remarks that the Lord was inclined to deliver him because He delighted in Him. In 2 Samuel 15:26, David spoke of the possibility of the LORD not delighting in him because of what he was doing. He spoke many times, however of finding favour with the LORD. The LORD took David from the sorrows of hell and lifted him up and set his feet in a large place or room. The Lord takes great pleasure in His own. When we are in the depths of despair, He not only lifts us up (1 Samuel 2:7-8), He sets us amongst princes (1 Samuel 2:8, Psalm 118:3) and puts a song in our mouths! (Psalm 40:3). Joseph was an example of this as he came from the pit to the prison, then on to the palace of Pharaoh. David, too, was taken from the cave of Adullam to the throne of Israel.

5. David's appreciation of his deliverance (Psalm 18:20-45)

Psalm 18:20-45 speak of David's appreciation of his deliverance. As I read Psalm 18:20-29, David is reflecting over his life. David probably wrote this psalm before his sin with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11:1-12:23). He considers the things that God would appreciate in his life. He was righteous and had clean hands (see Psalm 24:4). He kept God's ways while not intentionally departing from them. He was a man of God's word and he kept it. In Psalm 119:11 we read, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." He was upright in his ways toward God and in dealing with others. He kept himself from sin and guarded himself from iniquity. He was indeed a man after God's own heart. In Psalm 18:20 and Psalm 18:24, he speaks of the LORD rewarding him because of his clean hands. He felt it was right that God should deliver His upright servant from wicked men. In 1 Peter 5:5 we read that, "God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." David goes on to speak about mercy, purity and uprightness in connection with having received these things from the Lord; he went on to show these things to others in his life. In Psalm 18:30-42, he expresses his appreciation of his deliverance to God. He takes comfort from past experiences. He starts by stating that God's ways are perfect, His word is tested and tried, and He is a shield and refuge to all who trust in Him. Psalm 18:31 asks the question, "Who is God except the LORD? Or who is the Rock save our God?" Our God is perfect, He is unchangeable, He is unmovable and He is the Incomparable One.

David goes on to speak of his girdle, feet, hands and arms all guided and strengthened by God (Psalm 18:32-34). He acknowledges that his strength and skill in battle came from the LORD Himself. He goes on to speak of the shield of salvation that protected him and the powerful right hand that held him up. He appreciated the way God had given him the surefootedness of a deer, swift to outrun his enemies on dangerous mountain paths (Psalm 18:33, 36). He was also guided on safe paths so there was no chance of slipping or falling. In our pathway we should walk close to the Lord on paths that are well away from the dangerous cliffs, paths in life where there are no dangers.

The story is told of two chauffeurs being interviewed for a job. The question was asked: if they were asked to drive up a mountain road how close to the cliff edge would you drive? One answered 'as close as possible' and the other said 'as far away as possible.' The man who answered 'as far away as possible' got the job! The lesson is: why go anywhere near anything that could take us down that slippery slope and away from God. There is nothing better for a Christian when he has a righteous, holy, blameless and upright life. In Psalm 18:37-42, David speaks of the many battles where God was faithful to him and gave him strength and wisdom to defeat his enemies. David gives the glory to God and gives the praise to Him. In Psalm 18:42-45, David speaks of the way God made him King and people served him, submitted to him and obeyed Him. His enemies were defeated from within and without.

6. David's note of worship and praise (Psalm 18:45-50)

In Psalm 18:45-50, we have David's note of worship and praise. Psalm 18:45-40 brings the psalm to an end with David's heart uplifted and rejoicing in the LORD. He summarises the whole psalm in Psalm 18:45-50. I think we should read Psalm 18:45-50 together: "The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his King; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore."

Surely this is the cry of the happy Christian! "The LORD liveth" is the catalyst that gives confidence to every believer. The personal pronoun is again used when David repeats with assurance and joy, "My Rock and my Salvation." This is the third time he speaks of the LORD as his rock, (Psalm 18:2, 31, 46). David had been lifted up and he was very thankful. He wanted everyone, not just in the assembly but among the nations, to hear the sounds of adoration,

thanksgiving and praise to God. In Psalm 59:16-17 we see a similar outburst of praise in thanksgiving for God's delivering power.

David was God's chosen king (1 Samuel 16:1-13); God was very faithful to David and delivered him from his enemies. But we must look beyond David to the One greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42, Luke 11:31), to David's greater Son. He was the One born in that same Bethlehem (see Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12) of the seed of David (John 7:42, Romans 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:8). The man Christ Jesus the Lord Himself, will one day subdue every enemy and make them His footstool (see Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Hebrews 1:13, 10:13). He alone is the One whose right it is to sit upon the throne and receive the glory and the honour. He will reign supreme in righteousness from the rivers to the ends of the earth (see Psalm 72:8). He alone is worthy of all our thanksgiving, worship and praise. To Him be the glory forever and ever, Amen.

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