

# Psalm 18

*Blessed Be My Rock*

*November 19, 2023*

## 1. Intro

- a. "Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. He thundered in the heavens, and he uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at his rebuke, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils."

### i. THAT is quite the visual isn't it?!

1. I've mentioned before that I am a huge fan of epic movies, especially the Lord of the Rings

#### a. This feels like something that comes right out of a Tolkien novel, doesn't it?

- i. The earth reeling and rocking...
- ii. Mountains trembling and quaking...
- iii. Smoke coming from his nostrils...
- iv. Hailstones and coals of fire raining down from the heavens...

1. If we didn't know any better, this could have come from any number of science fiction novels or movies

2. But this isn't the description of some great dragon in a work of literary fiction

- a. This is the description of our God
- b. Specifically, this is the description of the wrath and anger of our God when His loved ones, His children, have been attacked, and have fled to Him in refuge

### ii. Turn with me in your Bibles to our Psalm for this week, Psalm 18

- iii. As we can see from the title of this Psalm, David wrote this hymn as a hymn of remembrance, near the end of his life

1. David thought back on the many trials he had faced in his lifetime

- a. The encounter with Goliath...
- b. On the run from King Saul...
- c. His wars against the surrounding nations...
- d. The betrayal of his own son, Absalom...

2. David looked back on all of these things, and as he did, he thought about how the Lord had delivered him from every single trial

#### a. And Psalm 18 was the overflow of all these memories

- i. This Psalm is also recorded in 2 Samuel 22, with some minor variations
- ii. It is followed by chapter 23, which records David's last words

1. I love how the writer of 2 Samuel describes David in chapter 23, as he writes,

- a. "The oracle of David, the Son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel"

### iv. So let's look now at one of the last Psalms written by the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," Psalm 18

1. Because this Psalm is quite a bit longer than all the previous Psalms we've looked at, we'll tackle this a little differently

#### a. We'll look at it in four sections

- i. The PRAYER, the RESPONSE, the REASON, and then, the REAL reason

## 2. So first, the PRAYER

- a. Psalm 18:1-6 begins with...

- i. *To the choirmaster. 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. He said: <sup>1</sup>I love you, O LORD, my strength. <sup>2</sup>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 of my salvation, my stronghold. <sup>3</sup>I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. <sup>4</sup>The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; <sup>5</sup>the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. <sup>6</sup>In 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.*
- b. One of the first things we need to note before we look at David's prayer is what it says in the title
  - i. Did you notice how whoever wrote the title differentiated between David's enemies and Saul
    - 1. He said that David wrote this Psalm as he reflected on "the day when the Lord delivered David from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul"
      - a. He didn't say, "from the hand of all his enemies, INCLUDING Saul"
        - i. But instead, he set Saul apart from David's enemies
    - 2. I believe this is due to the fact that David ALWAYS honored Saul, even after Saul's death
      - a. Even though Saul repeatedly tried to run him through with a spear
      - b. Even though Saul continually pursued David throughout the Kingdom to try to kill him
    - 3. David ALWAYS spoke of Saul with honor and respect, as the one whom the Lord anointed as the first King of Israel
      - a. We can learn something from that, can't we?
- c. But then, notice how David opens this Psalm...
  - i. "I love you, O Lord, my strength"
    - 1. Goes against a lot of our modern-day views of masculinity, doesn't it?
      - a. There is something about starting out a prayer with, "I love you, O Lord..."
        - i. David was definitely a man's man
          - 1. He killed lions and bears with his own hands
          - 2. He was the only one in all of Israel brave enough to face Goliath
          - 3. He was surrounded by great warriors who had all sorts of incredible victories on their resumes
        - ii. But David, at the end of his life, isn't ashamed to begin this Psalm with, "I love you, O Lord, my strength..."
      - b. I pray that the men of the church would be filled with the fierce masculinity of David, but ALSO with the intimate love he had for his Lord
- d. David goes on in his prayer, as he exalts the Lord with name after name – names full of might and power and glory...
  - i. God is:
    - 1. My strength... my rock... my fortress... my deliverer... my shield... the horn of my salvation... my stronghold
    - 2. We don't have the time this morning to go through each of those, but what a wonderful study THAT would be!
      - a. To walk through what each of these different names mean for the follower of Jesus
      - b. We don't use words like these very often anymore, do we?
        - i. I think about how God is so often referred to as "the big guy in the sky," or "the man upstairs," or my "co-pilot"
        - ii. All these terms show us is that we have not TRULY experienced who God is
      - c. When we've gone through trials and afflictions like David did, and when we've seen God's hand in delivering us from every single one of them, it just isn't adequate to say that He's the "big guy upstairs," is it?
        - i. No... God is my ROCK... God is my FORTRESS... God is the HORN OF MY SALVATION
          - 1. THIS is the way a Christian ought to speak of our great God
          - 2. We exalt the God who is our shield

- a. We lift high the name of the God who is our stronghold!
  - b. For He is indeed worthy to be praised!
3. So David recalls the names of his God, as he recalls the many times he cried to the Lord for help
- a. And what an amazing statement David makes at the end of verse 6...
    - i. *"From His temple, God heard my voice, and my cry to Him reached His ears"*
  - b. Brothers and sisters, have you ever just sat and thought about how incredibly wonderful this reality is for us?
    - i. The God who created the entire universe, the God who is majestic in holiness and perfection and glory, the God who dwells in unapproachable light... hears OUR prayers?!
      - 1. Revelation 8:4 tells us that there are actually angels around God's throne, burning incense before Him in these golden censers
        - a. And the smoke of the incense, mingled together with the prayers of the saints, rises before God Almighty!
4. He hears our prayers, and Psalm 18:7-19 shows us that He responds in GREAT power
- a. The first section of Psalm 18 is the Prayer... the second section is the RESPONSE

### 3. The RESPONSE

- a. This is the section we opened up the sermon with, but let's look at it now together...
- b. Psalm 18:7-19
  - i. *<sup>7</sup>Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. <sup>8</sup>Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. <sup>9</sup>He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. <sup>10</sup>He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind. <sup>11</sup>He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. <sup>12</sup>Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. <sup>13</sup>The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. <sup>14</sup>And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. <sup>15</sup>Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils. <sup>16</sup>He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. <sup>17</sup>He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. <sup>18</sup>They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. <sup>19</sup>He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.*
- c. Now, this is certainly poetic language, as the sweet Psalmist of Israel imagines in his head what it might look like when the God of the heavens comes down in His wrath, but its not JUST figurative, is it?
  - i. David sings of God showing Himself in the hail and the darkness and the splitting of the seas, but these were all things that the Israelites had SEEN when God delivered them out of Egypt
  - ii. David sang of the smoke and the devouring fire from the mouth of God, but this was what the Israelites had SEEN when God consumed Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for coming before Him in a way that He had not commanded
  - iii. David sang of the earth reeling and rocking, and the foundations of the earth being laid bare, but this was what the Israelites had SEEN when God opened up the ground under the tents of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, and they and their entire families were swallowed up before the eyes of Israel
    - 1. Friends, the Old Testament is FULL of stories of God acting and moving in POWERFUL ways, as His wrath is revealed against the enemies of His people
      - a. But it's not just the Old Testament, is it?
        - i. Didn't the ground reel and rock when Paul and Silas were in prison, singing hymns, and there was a sudden earthquake and all their shackles fell to the ground?
        - ii. Didn't the foundations of the earth tremble, and thick darkness cover the land, when the Son of God was crucified by sinful men?

- iii. And will not this same Jesus return, as the sun is darkened, the moon will be blotted out, the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?
    - 2. This is what makes David's Psalm so amazing...
      - a. David knew the history of how God had moved in mighty ways on behalf of His people
      - b. And WE know that God will move in such a way again!
    - 3. This is the promise for US, Christians
      - a. Our enemies will confront us in the day of our calamity
        - i. But what they will never understand is this: the Lord is OUR support
          - 1. He WILL bring us out into a broad place
          - 2. And He WILL rescue us
            - a. For he delights in ALL who are His children
      - b. As Jesus said in Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's DELIGHT to give you the Kingdom!"
        - i. Which leads us to the third section, the REASON for God's response
4. The REASON
  - a. Psalm 18:20-27
    - i. *<sup>20</sup>The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. <sup>21</sup>For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. <sup>22</sup>For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. <sup>23</sup>I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt. <sup>24</sup>So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. <sup>25</sup>With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; <sup>26</sup>with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. <sup>27</sup>For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.*
  - b. As David extols the Lord for coming to his rescue, he reminds us of this biblical truth:
    - i. Our Father delights in His children, but He especially delights in their OBEDIENCE
      - 1. Now, we've run into this before in earlier Psalms, but we have to be honest in our assessment of David's life, don't we?
        - a. He says in verse 21, "For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God..."
          - i. So we all know that wasn't quite the case, was it?
            - 1. We all know of David's adultery with Bathsheba
            - 2. We all know of his attempted cover-up, and the murder of Bathsheba's husband in the end
              - a. So the question we have to ask is, "Is David LYING in this Psalm???"
              - b. Has he grown delusional in his old age??
      - b. Again, this Psalm was written in his later years, possibly before he took the census that angered the Lord, but still LONG after the incident with Bathsheba
        - i. So how can David say that God rescued him because of his righteousness?
        - ii. How can he say that God rewarded him for the "cleanness of his hands"?
        - iii. How in the world could he say that he was "blameless" and "free from guilt"???
    - ii. I believe we find our answer to this dilemma in Psalm 51
      - 1. Psalm 51 might be a familiar one to many of you
        - a. It was written after Nathan, the prophet, confronted David about Bathsheba
          - i. And it is VERY instructional for us to see David's response
            - 1. David COULD HAVE said, "I am the king, and I will do whatever I please"
            - 2. He could have said, "I am the Lord's anointed, out of presence, prophet"

3. He could have defended himself in any number of ways, but that's not what he did, was it?
2. In Psalm 51, we find David broken and humbled
  - a. He has realized that, as grievous as his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah was, the most devastating reality was that he had sinned against God
    - i. And so he repented, DEEPLY for his sin
    - ii. He pleaded for the Lord to have mercy on him, and cleanse him, and to purge the evil from within him
    - iii. He had the means to sacrifice thousands of bulls to try to atone for his sin, but instead he prayed this in verses 14-17...
      1. *<sup>14</sup>Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. <sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. <sup>16</sup>For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*
- iii. David was FAR from being a perfect man
  1. But what he was, was a REPENTANT man
    - a. He was broken over his sin, and his heart was contrite
    - b. I believe that THIS was why God Himself would say of David, "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will"
      - i. David had plenty of issues that he had to deal with in his own heart
      - ii. But what we see, all throughout the Psalms, is a man who was broken over his sin – a man who was deeply humble over his sin
        1. And in THIS regard, David was blameless
        2. And David's hands were clean
  2. For as he wrote in verse 27, God saves a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down
- iv. As I said a moment ago, this is very helpful for the followers of Jesus today, isn't it?
  1. For we are ALL sinners who fall FAR short of the glory of God, each and every day
    - a. But when we come to him, broken and contrite over our sin, He will not despise us
      - i. Instead, incredibly, he looks at US, as blameless
      - ii. He looks at US, as clean
    - b. With the merciful, God will show Himself merciful
    - c. With the blameless, God will show Himself blameless
    - d. With the purified, God will show Himself pure
      - i. But the end of verse 26 puts forward the clear distinction, doesn't it?
        1. With the crooked, you make yourself seem TORTUOUS
- v. This is what the Pharisees couldn't understand in Jesus' day
  1. They made all the right sacrifices... they followed all the right laws... they gave all the burnt offerings, all with the right animals and at the right times
    - a. They did everything PERFECTLY
      - i. But then Jesus comes along and says, "It's not about your actions, it is about your HEART"
      - ii. And he looks at the Pharisees and says, "YOUR heart, is CROOKED"
        1. With the crooked, you make yourself seem tortuous
          - a. This was indeed how the Pharisees felt about Jesus
            - i. And they gnashed their teeth at him, and tore their robes in his presence
- vi. David could come before the Lord and say things like, "The Lord has rewarded me according to the cleanness of my hands," not because his actions were always perfect, but because his HEART was humble before the Lord

1. But, ultimately, even David understood that this was not the REAL reason for God's delight in him
5. The REAL reason is found in verses 28-50
    - a. Psalm 18:28-50
      - i. *28For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness. 29For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. 30This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. 31For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?—32the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. 33He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. 34He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 35You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. 36You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. 37I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed. 38I thrust them through, so that they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet. 39For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. 40You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated me I destroyed. 41They cried for help, but there was none to save; they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them. 42I beat them fine as dust before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets. 43You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. 44As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me. 45Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses. 46The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—47the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, 48who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence. 49For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. 50Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.*
    - b. I know that was a long passage, but I hope you could feel the change in David's language in this passage compared to the previous one
      - i. In the previous passage, it was all about David, wasn't it?
      - ii. He spoke of HIS righteousness, and HIS cleanness, and HIS obedience
    - c. But in this passage, it is ALL about GOD
      - iii. Over and over and over again, David points his readers not to himself, but to his great God
        1. It is YOU who light my lamp...
        2. By YOU I can run against a troop
        3. YOU have given me the shield of your salvation
        4. YOU gave a wide place for my steps under me
        5. YOU equipped me with strength for the battle
    - d. And in the midst of all this praise for all that God has done, tucked away in verses 31-32, is the key to the ENTIRE Christian faith...
      - iv. "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? – the God who equipped me with strength, and MADE MY WAY BLAMELESS"
        1. What was the REAL reason for God's delight in David?
          - a. Ultimately, it was the blamelessness that God Himself GAVE to David
          - a. In New Testament language, we would say that it was ALL by the GRACE of GOD!
    - e. The Apostle Paul understood this truth more than many
      - v. He was, in his own words, the "Chief of Sinners"
        1. He had stood by and approved the death of the first martyr of the Church, faithful Stephen
        2. He had persecuted the Church far and wide by his own hands
        3. He sought to destroy all who would claim to be followers of Jesus
          - a. Until, the chief of sinners met Jesus Himself!
      - b. And as a result of this encounter, Paul would write to Timothy many years later, in 1 Timothy 1:12-17,
        - i. *12I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and*

*insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>16</sup>But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. <sup>17</sup>To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

- ii. The grace of the Lord overflowed for Paul
  - 1. And the chief of sinners received MERCY
  - 2. What was Paul's response to this incredible truth?
    - a. Well, with his words he praised God by saying, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the ONLY God, be honor and glory forever and ever"
    - b. And with his actions, he poured himself out in humble, faithful obedience, as he took the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, at the cost of his very own life
- 6. My friends, Psalm 18 paints for the Christian a beautiful picture of what it means to BE a Christian
  - a. As followers of Jesus, we have been adopted into the family of God
    - i. And therefore He hears every prayer we lay before Him, as they are intermingled with the incense of the angels around His throne
  - b. And, when His children face persecution and opposition and affliction, the promise is astounding
    - i. The earth will tremble and quake
    - ii. The Lord will thunder in the heavens
    - iii. And He will rescue us, for He DELIGHTS in us
  - c. He delights in us, Christians, because in us He sees a broken and humble people
    - i. He doesn't see a perfect people – far from it in fact
      - 1. But He sees a repentant people... a contrite people... a people poor in spirit, who mourn over our sin, and look to His Son for our forgiveness
  - d. But the most amazing truth of all of this is that it is ALL by the grace of God
    - i. David could say that he was blameless before God, ONLY because it was God Himself who made David's way blameless
    - ii. Paul could say that he had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, ONLY because the grace of God overflowed within him enabling him to have that faith in Jesus
    - iii. It is the very same for us, brothers and sisters in Christ
      - 1. We ALL have been saved BY GRACE... as a gift from God
      - 2. Not as a result of any of our works, lest anyone should boast before Him
        - a. We stand blameless before God, for HE has made our way blameless
          - i. By HIS grace, He will rescue us from our trials
          - ii. By HIS grace, He will come in might and power and strength
          - iii. By HIS grace, He will hear our prayers
  - e. Friends, the ONLY reasonable response to all of this is to join with Paul and to cry out, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the ONLY God, be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen!!"