

A PSALM OF PRAISE AND VICTORY

Psalm 18

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Tonight's psalm I call "A Psalm of Praise and Victory." Psalm 18 is one of the 13 "royal psalms" out of 150. Thirteen psalms relate to the office or ministry of the king. As we travel through the psalms taking one at a time, this becomes the second royal psalm we've looked at. The first is Psalm 2 which begins with "Why do the nations rage and why do the heathen imagine a vain thing?" It is a psalm evidently that was used throughout Israel's history whenever a king was inaugurated. It is an inauguration psalm saying the Lord has set His king on His holy hill and will protect him and guard him and keep him. Therefore conspiring against him, making war against him is in vain. This psalm becomes a very important psalm in the New Testament where it is used to indicate the enthronement of Jesus as King of all ages. Therefore, "Why are the nations raging? Why do the heathen conspire and imagine a vain thing? God has set His king on His holy hill." That's the first royal psalm.

Now Psalm 18, a lengthy psalm. Rather than reading it all, I'll set an introduction for it then we'll examine part by part. Those of you who already know the psalms know what a tremendously exciting psalm this is and how it leaps out with phrases that have become part of our Christian vocabulary, even though we need to dig a little bit to understand the culture of a monarchy, since most of us have not lived in one firsthand. The fact that we don't have kings today makes a royal psalm or a kingly psalm seem at a distance from us. But we'll draw them near because this psalm will speak volumes to our own life.

It is a psalm written after victory. In fact, the title of the psalm says, "For the director of music," which means it is a psalm set to music. It is by David the servant of the Lord. He sang to the

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Lord the words of this psalm when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul. That phrase “When the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul,” is a phrase that suggests to us that this psalm was not written after any one particular battle but when David had been through about everything.

In fact the chronology is tied in by 2 Samuel 22. The entire psalm, Psalm 18, is found almost word for word in 2 Samuel 22. All of 2 Samuel 22, with minor word variations, actually contains Psalm 18. In the setting in 2 Samuel 22 David is nearing the end of his life. Saul has been long gone. The revolt of Absalom is over. David is getting nearer to the time when he is going to transfer his kingdom to Solomon. That linkage of when David had settled the war with Saul and all of his other conflicts would suggest that this psalm is written maybe in the twilight of his life. There are no major battles ahead of him after this psalm except his own personal exodus.

This puts it in real contrast to last week’s psalm, Psalm 17, which appears to be a psalm written by David when he was a relatively young person.

The psalm itself has six divisions. Depending on the commentator who looks at it, it could have more. But for our purpose in breaking it down we’re going to look at the six different parts of this psalm.

I. The first part is what God means now to David as a result of his life experience.

What God now means to David as a result of his life experience, verses 1–2. What I’m going to suggest happens is David has an idea of what he’s going to be putting into this psalm by way of content. But before he begins to develop the theme he backs off sort of with an overture. The overture weaves the themes of the symphony together in kind of a statement piece declaring to the listener what’s going to happen. Verses 1–2 is an overview, a mature reflection, a condemnation of what the whole psalm is talking about. It begins “I love you, O LORD, my

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strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Psalm 18:1–2, NIV).

What these words are reflecting is that David has had a journey of life through terribly deep and difficult waters. His first response in looking back over this life filled with danger and threat and potential annihilation, his first response in looking back over the whole tapestry of his life is to say, “I love you, O LORD, my strength.”

The Hebrew word which he uses for “love” here is not the ordinary common Hebrew word. But it is a word which speaks of love of a tender kind. Impulsive and emotional. Luther translated it as “I dearly love You, O Lord.” It’s not a static kind of love. It has emotional content to it.

Therefore as David comes to the end of his life he does not do so with an ignorance of God or an enmity with God or fear of God. People have all those kinds of reactions to God at any stage of life if they do not really know Him. There’s either ignorance of Him, there’s enmity with Him, there’s fear of Him. But David sums it up by saying, “I love you, O LORD, my strength.”

Implicit in the phrase “my strength” is the admission of David’s own weakness. He has needed God in the fierce contests of life. The great thing that consoles him is that the strength of God was for him and not against him. “O God, my strength.”

When he has opened with this great exclamation, this “I love you, O LORD, my strength!” he then goes on to give us seven different ways in which the Lord has proven himself to be His strength. He has strong feelings about how God has helped him through his years of danger and trial. Sometimes when we have had a profound overpowering experience with God, instead of producing a torrent of words there may be silence. That is a pattern in Revelation when John sees Jesus. He says, “When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead” (Revelation 1:17). And he had no words for a while. Sometimes there’s the opposite reaction. We had an overpowering

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experience with God, the gates of speech are loosened, and we become ecstatic in an outflow of words. That's like somebody has turned the faucet of David's mind and vocabulary on full blast. Out tumble these metaphors which describe in a very turbulent way what God has meant to them.

What David does is draw upon his experience as a desert fighter, as a person who has lived in the hills of Judea and knows every nook and cranny of that Judean wilderness. He finds in the wilderness, where he spent so many of his years, metaphors that describe what God had meant to him. Metaphors like "my rock." If you look carefully at the verses you'll find that "my rock" is repeated on two occasions. The Lord is my rock. Then my God is my rock. The meaning for "rock" probably differs each time. The first instance where rock is used it seems to indicate a nook or a prominent single portion of a rock, a high ledge in which a person could stand inaccessible and call down to an opponent. Such a position David was in, in 1 Samuel 26:13 when he has taken Saul's spear then gone up to a high ledge where Saul couldn't get to him and called down. He said, "When I think of You God, I think of You as being in that place that sets me on high where my enemy cannot get to me."

Not only that, "You are my fortress." Here perhaps he's thinking of the cave of Adullam, 1 Samuel 22, which had been his hideout and his protected space. "God, You're this to me." Then he says again, "My rock."

The emphasis on this second use of "rock" is concealment. Not a place on which you stand but a rock behind which you hide. David had had an experience like this in 1 Samuel 23:25–28 when he was fleeing from Saul. Saul's guys were coming around one side of the rock and David was on the other. Just in the nick of time Saul got a message to go back because the Philistines were

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attacking and he needed to get back and take care of that and David's life was preserved. So

David says, "Now God, I think of You as my rock, the one who hides me when I'm in trouble.

My shield. The person who is carrying my armor to protect me. The horn of my salvation."

"Horn" (Psalm 18:2), is always a rough term to get a hold of. It is not in the Bible something you toot. But it is a reference to the horn of an animal, which is a point of the animal's strength that comes out in its horn. That is one thing you do want to avoid, the animal's horns getting you.

So "horn of salvation" for David means that God is the one who is mighty toward him and who comes into his life with penetrating force.

Then "my stronghold." The place where I'm absolutely secure and safe. The fortress in which I hide.

All of the analogies come out of his desert experience and made me, as I studied this psalm, realize and ask the question, does it require a hard life in order to find analogies of God that minister to the heart? Does it require tough trial and experience to develop analogies to God that minister to the heart? All of these analogies to God come out of when David has been on the run and in trouble.

I got to thinking how probably none of us draw much spiritual strength out of our up times. In times like if we're going through stuff later in life it seems God has met me in times when I've been down more than up.

In our southern California life how difficult it is to find analogies of God meeting with us. How would I in light of my context of life describe God meeting me based on things in my geography and culture? God is my freeway? God is my Jacuzzi? God is my Porsche? My IRA or my Palm Springs condominium? All which I don't have, by the way, I'm making these things up. God is my seatbelt! But a lot of our analogies in southern California we're not talking about hideouts

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and mountain crags and places like that. We're talking about having a good time for the weekend or something like this.

The good life. Yet David using these analogies of God says, "This is where I found You to be when I was in the tough times."

David heaps on God all the wonderful names he could think of. It's like seven metaphors in a row, all describing God. In David's deserts and dangers he gives us our own universal experience. The psalm therefore is an outcome of his life, of struggle, giving us help as we enter our life of struggle.

David is saying "I love God," as he comes out of the trial. It's there in the Scripture to help us develop a love for God as we go into trial. So there is this first opening statement—what God has meant to David as a result of his life experience. "I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock."

II. Then verses 3–19 would cover the second major part of this psalm.

The story of David's deliverance. We'll kind of pick our way through it verse by verse.

"I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies" (Psalm 18:3, NIV). This is a general statement which is kind of like a mini-overture now. It is a mini-overture to verses 4–19. He's saying, "I called to the Lord and I was saved." Verses 4–19 describe what he was saved from and what the Lord did to save him. His language is graphic as he reviews his deep distress. Verses 4–5 really articulate his problem. "The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave [Sheol] coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me" (NIV). Here he is using extremely graphic language. "Cords of death" connote the idea of a person being tied up waiting for execution. "Torrents of destruction" suggest a shipwrecked sailor who is being helplessly driven along by the raging waters. "Cords

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of the grave” show someone tied up like a deer waiting for the final execution. “Snares of death” represent the idea of a bird trapped.

What David is saying was, “I and all my men were doomed. Death had wrapped its strong ropes around us. Strong currents like flash floods were sweeping us away to our destruction. The grave was not only yawning to receive us but it had actually already snared us in its tough tethers.

There was a rope coming out of death and it had laid its hold on our feet and tied itself to us and we were being pulled down.” Whether it’s a trap or whether its drowning one has this feeling of being sunk by life.

All we need to do to make this psalm practical is to make it existential. That is to take the external realities and draw it into our internal psychological problems and spiritual problems we go through. Has anyone ever felt like this situation you’re wrestling with now is going to pull you under all the way? You’re not going to emerge from this one. In the entrapment of death he calls out to the Lord “In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help” (Psalm 18:6, NIV). When David cried for help he meant business. His desperate cry for help brought the dramatic intervention by which God responds.

“From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears” (NIV). Now David is thinking his prayer has gotten through to the temple of God. The first thing he knows is God has heard his prayer. That’s a wonderful confidence when we pray. My prayer has gotten all the way to God.

We take too many things for granted. Prayer is one of them. We pray to the Lord and we have this confidence God has heard, but how far does the human voice travel? I’m using a mike tonight. My voice is only being heard within this building. If I wanted more people to hear, if I could get on television or radio, even then there’s a limit to who can hear my voice. Yet when I

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pray my words go into God's presence. In a millisecond of time I am instantly in God's presence. Prayer is a miracle. It blows all the categories of time and space because it's instantly one step out of this world into eternity. Out of human life into God's life. David says with the confidence of person who knows God, "I called to God and he heard me from his holy temple." What does God do when He hears the cry of His saint in trouble? Could it be too much to suggest that God gets really upset? Verse 7 would suggest that He is that way. It'd be like your son coming to you telling you that the bad kids at school had beat him up and stole his money. He complained to the teacher and the teacher had laughed at him. He'd gone to the principal. The principal told him to grow up and be a tough kid. If he didn't like it he could ship out of the school. If you heard that as a parent you would have steam coming out of your ears. That's exactly what happens with God. He's pictured here in what is called a theophany. A God appearance. God is upset as He hears His servant cry. "The earth trembled and quaked" (verse 7, NIV). That's throwing things around the room. "The foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils" (verses 7-8, NIV). You talk about smoke coming out your ears, this is the Hebrew way of saying God is upset. Only instead of our phrase "smoke coming out your ears" smoke is coming out of God's nostrils. Here the psalmist is using "anthropomorphic" language. That means man-structure. In helping us to understand the nature of God who is Spirit and does not have a body such as we, Scriptures use anthropomorphic language, language so we can understand. When we think of personality we think of man or a woman. We think of eyes and hands and arms and the like. So how is God going to communicate His nature to us when He does not have as we do body parts? Scriptures say God is a Spirit. The words are given to us to help us get an idea of what God is like in Spirit until that day when we see Him face to face.

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I don't understand everything about the nature of God, but David's using anthropomorphic language here and he's saying, "Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it" (verse 8, NIV). If that doesn't let you know God is upset when His people are hurting. God feels when His people are hurting and He's angry about the injustice they're experiencing. We have to know that that's not only His reaction when His servant David is in trouble. It's His reaction when we're in trouble as well. This psalm is not just written for David, it's written for us.

What is God going to do about it? God is going to make an appearance. So in verses 9–12 we're going to be told how God begins in the language of poetry to come out of His holy temple to make an inspection on earth. "He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet" (Psalm 18:9, NIV). Clouds in the Scripture are sort of used as the chariot of God. "He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning" (verses 10–12, NIV). In other words David is pictured God's coming in the form of a thunderstorm. The heavens themselves are rolling, the earth is shaking, hailstones are dropping. Thunder is rolling in the sky and bolts of lightning are flashing out.

That's quite a display. I looked at all the parts of nature that are affected. Earthquakes, fire and smoke, thick darkness, strong wind, hail and brimstone, thunder and lightning, and finally in verse 15 the valleys of the sea themselves are exposed. God, David says, even dries up the valleys of the sea so that the deep parts of the sea are laid bare. Why is God drying up the sea? Because in the poetry David is on the sea of life. He's sinking in its waters. The torrents, he says,

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nearly overwhelm me. So what's God going to do? He's not just going to pick him out of the boat. First of all he's going to dry all the water up so he's not in any danger of the water at all. Here David is not intended to be interpreted literally. He's speaking poetically, metaphorically about life.

He finds that his waters of troubles are blasted aside. The universe with all of its might is cooperating in the rescue that God has for him. Nowhere by the way, in this description of God's thundercloud appearance, is the form of God described. Just the impact of his activity.

I love phrases like "He shot his arrows and scattered the enemies, great bolts of lightning and routed them" (verse 14, NIV). One wonders if there wasn't a time somewhere along David's experience where he was just about to get caught by Saul or an enemy and he was rescued by a violent storm. You can't attack in the desert when you're in a violent storm. And that gave him enough cover to slip away. And later as he interprets life he sees it in the form that God rescued him. God was always rescuing him. He rescued with dramatic visual imagery.

One commentator said, "Many a person has found himself lifted from the waters in which he might have drowned. Waters of sin and bitterness and grief, by the strong arm of God in Christ." Not only does God lift him out of disaster but, verses 16–19, "He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me" (NIV).

God just didn't deliver me, David says, by the skin of my teeth. But when He delivered me, He set me in a large place, a spacious place.

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Sin invites us to a narrow place but God brings us to a large place. He does not leave His work half done but having routed the foe, He leads the captive into victory. “He rescued me because He delighted in me,” says David. Ponder that—God rescues us because He delights in us. Even angels get stumped at that one. But God dearly delights and loves us.

So what David says in these nineteen verses are an account of how God worked on his behalf.

We might describe God rescuing us in different analogies than David. But the fact is that he does it in soaring language that elevates our hearts in praise.

III. Verses 20–24 then bring to us the third part of this psalm, which is why God delivered David.

The language will kind of surprise us. “The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness” (verse 20, NIV). We would expect it to read, “The LORD has rescued me according to *his* righteousness.” But instead, “*my* righteousness.” “According to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight” (verses 20–24, NIV).

We look at those verses, verses 20–24, and say to David, “Are you forgetting anything, David? Somewhere along the line haven’t you done a few things?” I think that we can say when we read these verses where David is saying, “God delivered me because I’m righteous,” we need to ask several things. Is David really telling God the truth about his life? Is he righteous? Probably given our standards of righteousness we’d look back and say no, he was not a righteous man. He was a mixture of sand and clay. But given the moral and spiritual climate of his day, given the

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fact that when he sinned he sought God's forgiveness, given that throughout his kingship he supported loyalty to God and demonstrated a loyalty to God which affected his people, probably in view of all these things we need to perhaps make a distinction in his life between frailty and outright iniquity. He was like all people—sometimes frail. He could deny that he had had moments of outright iniquity that were outside of God's forgiveness. He could look at this life and say, "I stand in righteousness before God."

That is the kind of testimony God wants of His people. He doesn't want His people to say, "God, I find as I'm serving You, I'm slipping into more and more sin and wickedness. But praise Your holy name anyway." We looked at that last week in Psalm 17. What God is wanting is a confession out of our lips and our life that our conduct is right. I think within his context he's telling the truth.

This raises another question. Does God always deliver the righteous? If we look at verses 21–24 when we get in danger and say, "God, I don't deserve this. I've been faithful and this is happening to me. Is what is happening to me that's bad a demonstration that I am not righteous?" Here we need the whole of Scripture to take things into focus. Job will tell us that God may take His time. David's life tells us that God may take His time to deliver us. But ultimately the answer is yes. God always delivers the righteous. Yes. God delivers the righteous. Why do you think we believe in resurrection? Why do we believe in heaven? Why do we believe that if God doesn't right the score now, He will right it then? Because God is committed to justify the righteous. Then the third thing that arises, in verses 20–24 I ask this question, "Are not these words most appropriate on the lips of Jesus?" You cannot appreciate Psalm 18 until you read it as a psalm of Jesus himself. He is the only one who lived who was ever completely righteous and therefore probably the only one who can pray without ever needing to be forgiven anything, verses 20–24.

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Certainly in the hours that Christ faced death and the torrents were coming over Him this must have been a psalm very much on His heart. In fact, if you look at Psalm 18 and see these climatic things that happen, the thunder and the lightning and the earthquake, what happened at Jesus' own death? At the moment of His death, from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over the whole land. At the moment He died the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom the earth shook and the rocks split; in the resurrection itself there was a violent earthquake. In other words, God coming to rescue David's Son. The King himself shook the elements as is reflected poetically in this psalm.

Third part of this psalm why God delivered him. Because of his righteousness.

IV. The fourth part of the psalm is the basic principle of God's deliverance with application to all.

“To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty” (Psalm 18:25–27, NIV). What the Scripture is saying there is a great relationship between sowing and reaping. If you sow righteousness you reap it. If you sow crookedness you reap shrewdness. David is saying here in this psalm this principle applies to my righteousness is one that's meant to apply to all. God will come through on behalf of all who put their trust in Him.

V. The fifth part of the psalm comes in verses 28–45.

David retells the deliverance now in different language to tell the same story. In verses 4–19 he tells the deliverance from one point of view. In verses 28–45 he retells the deliverance in another frame. Some have said that these two accounts of his deliverance are like the two spires of a cathedral. They both soar in a mighty hymn of praise toward heaven. He says, “You, O LORD,

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keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light” (verse 28, NIV). That’s a good phrase to use of God, isn’t it? “With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall” (verse 29, NIV). Great phrases in the day when people are talking about positive imagery. I take it all with a grain of salt. I always try to stay in the center in the body of Christ. I don’t get on the extremes. It seems to me there’s a lot to be said for positive mental imagery. The psalms are filled with it. It’s not idolatry to have a positive mental image. As long as the mental image one has is not in itself contrary or foreign to God. We all need pictures with which we live. David has pictures in his mind with which he lives. He sees himself as single-handedly taking on a whole troop of soldiers and marching against them. “By my God I can leap over a wall.” What a great way to face a trial.

What this second telling of the victory involves is David letting us see his part in it. In the first telling he sees God’s part. In the second telling he sees his part. He says one of the things that happened in my deliverance is I walked into those things with confidence in God. That helps immensely to have that kind of confidence. To say, this one isn’t going to do me in. By my God I will leap over wall. “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great. You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn” (Psalm 18:30–36, NIV). Here he is using in these verses the language of a warrior. His feet, for example, are trim and fast like those of a deer and they can stand on high ground and very narrow places. He says his stance is on good strategic territory. God trains his

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hands and arms for battle and helps him to bend a bow of bronze. And “God, You’re my support and protection. You hold my right hand and my shield and my stride is long.” That was important for a warrior, to take long steps in order to overtake his enemies. His firm ankles keep him from slipping.

He is successful. Verses 37–42: “I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet.

You armed me with strength for battle; you made my adversaries bow at my feet. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them—to the LORD, but he did not answer. I beat them as fine as dust borne on the wind; I poured them out like mud in the streets” (NIV). The victory was complete. And when God was done working in my life there was nothing left of the opposition.

He goes on to say in verses 43–45 as he retells this victory that God’s deliverance is told to others. “You have delivered me from the attacks of the people; you have made me the head of nations; people I did not know are subject to me. As soon as they hear me, they obey me; foreigners cringe before me. They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds” (NIV). God indeed has given him a great victory. Again the psalm is there so that when we get in a situation we don’t feel like life’s going to beat us up and we’re going to lose.

Have you felt that way? We need the confidence to say God’s helped us win all the rest. He’ll take care of this problem and this need too. I think that’s why we all like the psalms. Every time we pick up a psalm it seems to be what we’re going through.

VI. The concluding in the sixth part of the psalm is this conclusion, verses 46–50.

“The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me, who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my

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foes; from violent men you rescued me. Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O LORD; I will sing praises to your name. He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever” (NIV).

In these verses David sings of the living God. Not the dead god of the heathen. If anyone doubted that God was alive let him survey the littered battlement that God had left behind. David sings not only of the living God but of the saving God. No one who would weight the odds against him could give any better explanation than the fact that God had saved him.

Then David sings of the loving God. He started the psalm by singing, “I love God.” But he closes it by singing, “God loves me.” The Lord loves. He witnessed to his persistent pattern of love. Testified to the fact that God loves.

The word “anointed” occurs in the last verse, the king showing again that this is a royal psalm, one belonging to the Christ whose very name means anointed. Paul picks up on Psalm 18 in Romans 15:9 to show that the Early Church understood it to be a psalm in its entirety which referred to God’s victory in Christ. He says in Romans in quoting the psalm, “The Gentiles are now glorifying God for his mercy.” By quoting this psalm Paul is saying the Old Testament looked forward to that day when all the nations would give praise to David’s King. To Jesus, David’s Son, God’s King.

The psalm therefore is meant to be used by us when we’re going into trial, when we’re coming out of trial, to say when we’re in the deep waters of life and we have no human resources to deal with the problems that we’re wrestling with, “Let us call to God. If we call to God He hears in His heavens. He gets upset with what is happening to us. In addition to getting upset He allows us to be armed for battle.” That’s weaving both elements of the psalm together. He gives us the positive imagery. Instead of approaching that by saying this time I’m going to be done in, He

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gives us the mental and spiritual attitudes to go into it to say with His help we can win. Then He works in ways that we cannot work to deliver us. In the process He wants us to come through that trial with righteousness and with integrity. So that we may attribute His work to His covenant relationship with us. God has a stake in us. He seeks to delight in us.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank You for Your Word this evening. A kingly psalm. We're all royalty for we've been made an heir of the covenants that were given not only to Abraham but also to David. For Christ, our Lord, the anointed one. Probably if each of us here bared our heart with one another we could all tell past or present stories of being overwhelmed by life. Overwhelmed with difficulty. We too have experienced David's feeling that we're being tossed along violently in the torrent of life. The underworld has snared our feet and seeks to drag us into a death of various kinds. Sometimes physical. Sometimes spiritual. Sometimes mental. Sometimes emotional. In the midst of that downward pull in that wild turbulent tossing of life You let us know that when we cry out to You, the cry is not lost in the noise of the wind and the waves. But our cry comes to Your attention. Unless we despair in the midst of our storm You let us know that You gird Yourself up for action. You do not stand idly by and passively watch us sink in the terrible seas of life. But You come to our aid and to our rescue. Lord, there are times when we're waiting for You to come to our aid that we wonder if we are going to survive the next gulp of water that we take in, in the storm. It is in those moments that we need Your sure Word that You are guiding our feet. That you are lengthening our stride in order to get us through. You'll make us a path, a broad path. Lord, even through the time when we go through these terrible desperate moments of life, You even choose to bring us out of that and set us in a secure place. For while life has its narrow places it also has its broad places. Its places of security and enjoyment. We set all those

A PSALM OF PRAISE AND VICTORY

Psalm 18

things before our mind because You desire to work a victory in our life and a deliverance that we may have surety ourselves and that we may have a testimony to share with others. For what are our trials worth if they can't also be used as instruments to praise You? What are they worth if we only go through them and endure them and escape by the skin of our teeth? What are they worth unless out of the abundance of suffering there may come an abundance of praise and honor and glory to You? We think, Lord, of Paul's words, of how he found when he was weak then he was strong. It is in those painful moments when his back was up against the wall that he found that You came and You gave him a strength and it was his prison moments that gave him his praise experiences. Teach us, Lord, that great lesson of life reflected here in the psalm. From prison to praise. From trouble to triumph. From catastrophe to calmness. From heartache to hallelujah. Bring that into our hearts. Live with us in these truths in a deep and profound way. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.