

Psalms 18:1–19

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To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David The Servant of the LORD, Who Spoke to the LORD The Words of This Song on the Day that the LORD Delivered Him from the Hand of All His Enemies and from the Hand of Saul. And He Said:

- ¹ I will love You, O LORD, my strength.
² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³ I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.
⁴ The pangs of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.
⁵ The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.
⁷ Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.
⁸ Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
⁹ He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.
¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.
¹¹ He made darkness His secret place;
His canopy around Him was dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.
¹² From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.
¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
¹⁴ He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe,
Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.
¹⁵ Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.
¹⁶ He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
¹⁹ He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

We love Him, because He first loved us, v1–3, 16–19.

Many will recognize this as the Psalm from 2Samuel 22, reflecting upon the whole of Yahweh’s goodness to David throughout his life. In v1, “love” translates a word that is almost always used of God, but in a more intense Hebrew stem. The conclusion in v3 is that, knowing God’s great love for us and sure salvation of us, we call upon Him out of a desire that He would receive praise for that love and salvation.

The word-picture names for God in v2 call to mind many specific places and events of deliverance in David’s life, made more personal by use of “my”—in this Psalm. The massive Almighty-God-vs-all-evil scale of vv4–17 is sandwiched between two, intensely personal sections. Because of His delight in His servant (v19), God has chosen the salvation of that servant as the canvas upon which to paint the masterpiece of His glory. Ultimately, the Servant is Christ of Whom even great David is a very inferior picture.

Now, out of a desire that this glory would be praised, David is reflecting love back for a lifetime of being loved. And here especially is the reciprocal love of the Son in Whom we too have received infinite love, Who has responded with perfect love on our behalf, and through Whom we too grow in loving the Lord back.

Even more dramatic action in heaven by God than the drama we can see in the circumstances on earth, v4–15.

vv4–5 are extremely intense. Pangs of death are personified as enemies (4a), closing in like a noose around him (5a). Floods of antigodliness (lit. “Belial”) are described as rushing on in menacing intimidation (4b), so also are snares of death (5b).

v6, however, stirs up something far more intense in heaven than the situation on the ground in earth (or under the earth). What a holy and terrible instrument and weapon prayer is! It provokes the living God by means of the character of the living God!

It is difficult to convey the intensity of God’s response in vv7–15 to the crying out of this individual human in v6. The images conveyed by the poetry are great in their own right. Just read them in a voice that attempts to reflect the image, and “see”! But behind them is a much greater amplification than poetry: theology.

The images here are mixed in from the creation, from the flood, from Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Red Sea crossing, from Sinai, and from the Tabernacle. Lightness upon dark waters. Brightness before Him. Waters separated to expose the land. Quaking and fire and smoking and thunder. Brightness and cloud.

It’s like the Holy Spirit was wadding up into one all of the greatest displays of the power of God thus far, and reminding us that it is this very God Who is pleased to move to action by means of our prayers. In our pride and unbelief we sometimes think to ourselves as if things might be different if God would only take notice how intense our circumstances are on earth. But how very different would our hearts be, if we would only take into account by faith the infinitely greater intensity of our God and His response in heaven! And so, in this Psalm, the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain to rub our noses in this glorious reality!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

So Psalm 18.

The title and then verses 1 through 19. To the chief musician. Psalm of David the servant of Yahweh who spoke to Yahweh the words of this song when the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said, I will love you oh Yahweh my strength.

Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer my God my strength in whom I will trust my shield and the horn of my salvation my stronghold. I will call upon Yahweh who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from my enemies? The pangs of death surrounded me and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid the soils of sharols surrounded me.

The snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon Yahweh and cried out to my God he heard my voice from his temple and my cry came before him even to his ears and the earth shook and trembled the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken because he was angry smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth corals were kindled by it, he bowed the heavens also and came down with darkness and, were his feet and he wrote upon a chair and flew he flew upon the wings of the wind, he made darkness his secret place his canopy around him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies from the brightness before him his thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.

Yahweh thundered from heaven and the most high uttered his voice. Heil stones and colds of fire. He sent out his arrows and scattered the foe lightnings and abundance and he vanquished them then the channels of the sea were seen. The foundations of the world were uncovered at your rebuke, oh Yahweh at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

He sent from above. He took me. He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy from those who hated me for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity. But Yahweh. Was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place.

He delivered me. Because he delighted in me. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word. The Psalm begins the first three verses are a bit of an introduction to this section doxology to the Lord and then when we get finally to the end of the Psalm verses 46 through 50 are gonna close in much the same manner in a doxology at the end of the psalm and so there's these bookends of great praise onto God at the beginning and end of this psalm.

But even in this section from verses 1 through 19, there's this very personal. Bookends versus 1 through 3. And then verses 16 through 19 and David's personal interaction with the Lord. And it starts out a little bit oddly, you can't see the oddness of it. I think in the English it says, I will love you but the word love there and it's not okay I said with which we're familiar and it's not a hob which the Hebrew students might remember but it's from Rockham.

It's a verb that usually is found in a Hebrew stem that is intensive and God is almost always its subject. It is that warmness of compassion that God in. Tensely with in which God intensely responds to us. And here it doesn't appear in the intensive stem. It's it's a little more muted than the wonderful use of that word that we often find translated he had mercy or he had compassion and the idea is a warmness of God towards his people and it's it's.

Kind of a linguistic way of saying David loves him because he first loved him. David loves God because God first loved him this is that warmness that started with God towards his servant and it's now being reflected back up to God from his servant because God is the one who has put it there, so we love him because he first loved us and.

We want God to open our hearts and open our minds to know his love for us will be singing as we're singing through the the red book and the first part of the worship services by the Lord's help or we trust the Lord to sing number 463, oh the deep deep love of Jesus at the beginning of the worship services coming words day morning and so the the portion of scripture that we're going to have opened as we come to that is the apostle Paul's.

Marvelous prayer that God the Holy Spirit would help us just be able to see how great the love of God has been to us and so you take that and you take first John we love him because he first loved us and you have something of what's even being communicated and just the first forwards here and it's less words even in the Hebrew I will love you.

I will love you we want the Lord to open our eyes to see his love that the warmth of his love towards us would kindle the fire of love back to him. In verse 2, we could spend or the rest of verse 1 and verse 2 my strength he always my rock and so forth each of these word picture names that he uses for the Lord you could you could almost pick an event or events in David's life and that would be very pleasant study to just the times he needed a rock or the time he needed a refuge or the timing he went back up to the stronghold for instance or came down from the stronghold the situation before the flist and king in which, He needed marvelous deliverance, how is he ever going to get out of this one and that's probably beyond the scope of what we have time for but there is a very personal knowledge of how God has loved David that that you see in the end of verse 1 and in verse 2 and we too could do the same.

I'm sure even with events from our own lives, but especially with events from scripture. And the life of Christ even the events that are referred to or in the background of verse 1 and 2 are events in our spiritual life. Because God was bringing Christ through David and that was the wisdom and the desire and the design behind all those deliverances was to send his son into the world and to give us ahead of time a small picture of what he would do with his son and for us in in his son.

And so you have this very kind of personal beginning and personal end but in the in the middle in verses 4 through 15, you have verses 4 through 4 and 5, especially extremely intense picture of hell itself attacking David and then in verses 7 through 15 a much more intense picture of heaven coming to David's rescue and so the you know, the amazing thing is that you have this cataclysmic battle this is tremendous battle between heaven and hell.

And it's over this one, man. And yet that is how God has decided to value us that's the value he has assigned to us in his image and in his anointed David especially here being a picture to us of Christ and so we love him because he first loved us and if you look at verse three.

The reason he's calling upon Yahweh or has called upon Yahweh and will call upon Yahweh is because he wants the Lord to get the praise. For what the Lord is doing. The Lord is promised to save him from his enemies. The Lord has commanded us to pray he says, I will call upon Yahweh who is worthy to be praised or just in order that he might be praised the English has supplied the who is worthy there, but he's saying the reason I'm calling upon Yahweh who is going to save me from my enemies is so that he can get the praise out of saving me.

Because he has loved me and I love him and I want him to be praised as as we whenever we sing this psalm or if you ever use this psalm as father for your prayers ask God to produce in you the desire for his praise that David has exhibiting here it is the desire, of course that comes from Christ you remember Christ at the end of his earthly ministry praying to his father and say I have glorified you.

Now glorify me. Why? Because God is glorified in His Son and He wants the Father to receive even further glory. So we love Him because He first loved us and this is the playing field or the battlefield or the canvas on which He paints the glory of His love to us.

By saving us from the very powers of hell. The pangs of death surrounded me the death here is described as this multi-personal enemy who is closing in creeping up from from every direction and the noose is closing around. David as death itself surrounds him again, you have the the parallel in the beginning of verse 5 the sorrows of sheols surrounded me and then in the paralyzed parallel between verse 4 and verse 5 the second.

Half of each verse also describes something same similar the floods of ungodliness made me afraid the word there is belyle that which is opposed to God, you might say anti-godliness. I know that's not a word but we wouldn't be the first one to invented a good word in English to translate a word in Hebrew the the, Floods of anti-godliness and it's an intimidation tactic.

They're closing in on him now not secretly surrounding but had on to intimidate to make him afraid and you have the same the same kind of thing in the end of verse five the snares of death confronted me. So it's very very intense and verses four through five and he cries out in my distress.

I called upon Yahweh and cried out to my God. Often when we see things and they seem very intensely bad to us on earth. God uses it to provoke us to call upon his name. But what we cannot see except by faith responding to the word of God is that the response in heaven is far more intense than the crisis on earth.

So you do have this kind of intense description and verses four through five but the description and verses seven through fifteen is not just many times longer but it's the amplitude it's meant as many times as much as well. It's many times more intense. So in my distress, I called upon Yahweh and cried out to my God.

He heard my voice from his temple. And my cry came before him even to his ears. Now. If you haven't read. If you haven't read Tolkien or you know not sure I would recommend seeing the films but there's that point where you know, one of the little hobbits knocks a little rock and it goes down the shaft and it bangs around and it goes down down down until it gets old way down to where and this this great big demon thing called a balrog the balrog is and the balrog is awakened and boy are they in trouble now?

Well Psalm 18 gives us the inverse but infinitely greater the little cry of the beloved servant of God goes up up and it does not stop until it reaches the ear of him who sits upon the throne and the one who is awakened and moved to action his infinitely greater and perfect in love.

Than talking's little demon by comparison. And you can hear it just in the language of bears reading again. My cry came before him even to his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled the foundations of the hills also quick and were shaken because he was angry smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth.

Cools were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down with darkness under his feet and he rode a, Herb and flew he flew upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place. His canopy round him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies from the brightness before him his thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire Yahweh thundered from heaven.

And the most high uttered his voice Hillstones and claws of fire. He sent out his arrows and scattered the foe lightnings and abundance and he vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen the foundations of the world were uncovered at your rebuke, oh Yahweh. At the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

Now this isn't just much more intense just in the amount of imagery and the the word pictures that are given there's intense poetry here, but there's even more intense theology. The images are borrowed from the creation from the flood from Sodom and Gomorrah. On the crossing of the Red Sea from the glory cloud and the fire by night and the cloud by day and the the glory of the Lord coming down upon and indwelling the tabernacle so when we read this not just with the eyes and ears of those who can appreciate literature but with those who by faith our appreciating what God has already revealed of himself he is saying that when his little one.

Cries under the attack from heaven when that one man cries all of whom he has revealed himself to be up until this point in scripture is marshalled to his aid. It is something that earlier saying if we could yeah, we would pray like the apostle to be able to see the love of God so that we would be warmed to love him because he first loved us we ought to pray like the apostle that we would also see the glory and the power of God and what is called the simplicity of God that he never does anything by abs the whole God does everything as is whole self and he is.

Responding to us with all of who he is in his actions on our behalf. Now. Think about what the Lord has done for us in giving us this psalm on the week that we had Exodus 1 verses 15 through 21 and. You know, the two Hebrew midwives and Pharaoh and all the powers of hell.

And it seems like a mismatch and you write it is a mismatch. Because with those two Hebrew midwives is the God whom they fear. And we too are in this perpetual mismatch. Where hell surrounds and confronts and intimidates, but our voice goes all the way to heaven. And he who sits on the throne as Psalm 2 says laughs.

In God, I trust. What can man or devil? Do to me. When I am afraid I will trust in you and God whose word. I praise.