

PSALM 18:1-19

INTRODUCTION

This Psalm is what is known as a thanksgiving song. Here we find David looking back over a lifetime of God's saving interventions in his life and so in this Psalm he pauses, reflects and praises God for his deliverances.

1. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

We are told that David sang this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. This Psalm is found in 2 Samuel 22 even the title given to the Psalm comes from that chapter. Now no one is sure which of the two recordings of the Psalm came first.

We do not know whether an original independent Psalm was incorporated into 2 Samuel or whether a Psalm originally written for the historical book of Samuel was later extracted and made a separate composition which was placed in the book of Psalms. However it is certainly the case that it was written by King David, as both Psalms attribute it to him. But this leads us to ask; what is the historical situation of 2 Samuel?

In 2 Samuel the Psalm appears as almost David's final words. Hence it is a summary thanksgiving of God's many deliverances of him through his long life of service. These deliverances really fall into three categories.

First and most dramatically there were the deliverances of David from King Saul during the long years David had to hide from him in the wilderness. The second half of 1 Samuel tells this story beginning with Saul's jealousy of David because of the way the people of Israel praised him. While David was in Saul's court Saul tried to kill him on more than one occasion and so Saul had to flee for his life.

He went first to the Philistines and later to the cave at Adullam and other wilderness fortresses, yet wherever David went Saul who desperately wanted to kill him pursued him. But these years of cat and mouse contain amazing accounts of how God more than once brought Saul to a place where David could have killed him but David did not do so, because Saul was God's anointed. David spared Saul's life but God spared David's life on many occasions during these difficult years.

Eventually Saul dies by his own hand after a disastrous battle with Philistines and so David becomes King first over the large southern tribe of Judah and then over all Israel.

Secondly God delivered David during the years of fighting against Israel's enemies and gave him many victories. In 2 Samuel 8 there is a list of David's victories over his enemies including the Philistines, Moabites and the Edomites. It was during this period that God was establishing David as King and was establishing his kingdom.

The third category of deliverance is from the hand of his son Absalom. The young man had plotted to drive his father from Jerusalem and take his kingdom for himself. He succeeded to the extent that David had to flee the city of Jerusalem in order to take refuge again in the rocky wilderness. A battle followed in which the armies of Absalom were defeated and Absalom was himself killed. Once again God had intervened and David was rescued.

So it is appropriate that Psalm 18 is found in 2 Samuel 22 for it is a fitting expression of thanksgiving to God for his protection and deliverance during many dangerous and difficult years.

Now I will not have time to deal with this entire psalm we will just skate over the first nineteen verses but I want you to notice first of all:

1. WHAT GOD MEANS TO DAVID AS A RESULT OF HIS DELIVERANCE (vs. 1-3).

The Psalm starts off with a word that is used only here in the Old Testament. It is a word that implies a love of a very tender sort, we might want to translate it like Martin Luther did and say, "I dearly love you O Lord." David simply wants to express his intense feelings for God, God has shown such kindness to him, he has proven to be his deliverer on many occasions and therefore he is worthy of David's praise. David describes what God has done for him in picture language.

These metaphors are of two kinds. There are a number of metaphors relating to David's military victories, he pictures God as his strength, shield and horn of salvation. The other type of metaphor relates to the times when David was forced to flee from his enemies, these images picture God as David's rock, refuge, deliverer and fortress. David in his life knew what it was to experience God strengthening him and fighting for him, he was able to recount times when God acted as his shield to protect him from the enemy forces.

For David he saw God behind every aspect of his life, when he gained the victory it was because God was his strength and his shield and not because of his own military skill. David would also be able to recount the many occasions when he had to take refuge in the rocky wilderness in order to preserve his life. Well for David that was a good picture of God, when his enemies were out to kill him he found God to be his true rock, the one whom he took refuge in. God was his fortress and his deliverer, David was not depending upon those rocky crags to protect him but he was looking to and trusting in God to protect him from his enemies.

It is no wonder that David could say 'I love you O Lord.' But as we try to apply this to ourselves these images of God are even more appropriate to us.

In a completely different way we can say that God is our rock, our shield and our salvation. Just as God delivered David from physical harm so in Jesus Christ God has delivered us from our spiritual enemies; sin and Satan and the world. Just as Saul was out to destroy David so our enemies were out to ruin us. They were out to destroy us by running our lives and blinding us to the truth and keeping us from trusting in God.

These enemies had already killed us spiritually we were dead to the things of God as a result. But God stepped in just as he did in David's life and sent Jesus as our deliverer. He died to deal with our enemies to defeat them for us, for we were and are unable to do so and as a result of what Jesus has done for us we can call God our strength and deliverer. He daily gives us strength to resist the temptations that are thrown in our way from our enemies; he daily helps us to say no to sin.

If he left us to ourselves for one moment then we would cave in and sin freely, we would abandon God and go back to our sinful ways, but God gives us strength in Christ to live for him (Philippians 4:13). But the Philippian reference actually puts the application much wider. In the context Paul has been dealing with the question of living in a variety of circumstances (4:11-12). Paul can face all these different circumstances because of Christ who enables him; who gives him the strength to do so.

So whatever life throws at us we too can know that God is our strength he will give to us the strength that we need as we need it in order to live for him in whatever circumstances and situation we find ourselves in. Whether that be a particularly strong temptation to sin that we find difficult to overcome or whether it be particularly trying circumstances, we can know that God is our strength and deliverer.

We can also know that Christ is our rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). Now the idea of rock suggests a number of things. Here in the Psalm it is the idea of security and protection. David knew what it was to hide among the rocky hills; he would hide in crags and feel reasonably secure from his enemies. Well in the same way God has delivered us from our enemies in Christ and although those enemies are defeated they are still out to pursue us and destroy us if they can.

But as long as we take refuge in Christ then we will feel secure, there is nothing our enemies can do to us to destroy us spiritually, and he will protect us. So when you feel most vulnerable and at your weakest, flee to Christ, meditate upon him, draw near to him and find him to be your protector. When you are feeling insecure because of trying circumstances then draw near to God through your deliverer the Lord Jesus and find him to be your security.

It is no wonder that David could say 'I dearly love you O Lord.'

What about us? As British people we do not find it easy to express our feelings for anyone, but we need to ask is there a genuine love for God in our hearts, could you honestly say 'I love you O Lord.' Have you told the Lord that you love him? If you find it difficult to genuinely say that you dearly love the Lord then just reflect upon your life. Think about your life before you were saved and then think about the price the Jesus paid for your sins in order to deliver you and grant you salvation.

Think about your enemies who were out to take you to hell but God intervened and saved you and now as a result he is your rock the one where you find security and protection. Can you think of specific occasions where you knew God's strength that enabled you to resist sin and Satan and enabled you to do something that you thought you could not do? Just ponder those things and now quietly in your heart tell the Lord you love him and praise him for all that he has done for you in Jesus Christ.

2. DELIVERANCE DESCRIBED (vs 4-19)

In verse three David tells us that he called to the Lord and he was delivered. But just look at how desperate his deliverance was. He was in a helpless situation. Now obviously David is using figurative language here but for David it's as if death had its hand around his throat and was squeezing his life from him. He was completely overwhelmed by his enemies (v 4). Death for David was very close if Saul or his men had of caught him then his life would have been taken from him.

For David death confronted him every day, it was a very real possibility. What can you do in such a situation; you can pray and call to the only one who can deliver you? That is what David did (v 6). He was distressed so he called to the Lord and the Lord heard him. When the Lord hears the Lord acts and that is what is being said here for the rest of these verses describe for us in very poetic language the Lord's coming to rescue his servant David, accompanied by earthquakes, thunder, and storms and lightening.

Now the terms that David uses here are all borrowed from the accounts of God's self-manifestations in Egypt, at Sinai and during the days of Joshua and the Judges. Verses 7-11 use language associated with the descent of God to Mount Sinai to give the law through Moses. The shaking of the earth, dark clouds and lightening accompanied this. Listen to how the writer to the Hebrews describes Mount Sinai at this time; it was so terrifying that even Moses said that he trembled with fear (Hebrews 12:18-21).

Verses 12-14 are probably referring to the time when God intervened in the battles against the Canaanites at the time of Joshua (Joshua 10). For that is the occasion on which God sent

hailstones against the enemies of the people of God. Verses 14-15 probably refer to the parting of the Red sea at the time of the Exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Jordan River at the time of the crossing into Canaan.

What David is doing is saying that just as God came to rescue his people in the past and went to great trouble to do so, so he has come to David's aid. His God is the God who worked powerfully in the past to deliver his people and did it again for David. Notice how his deliverance is described (vs.16-19). He reached down and took hold of David. He lifted him out of the danger by delivering him from his enemies who were too strong for David.

He brought him out from hiding in the rocks into a spacious place. The reason why God acted on David's behalf is because he delighted in him (v 19). But why did the Lord delight in him? Was there something in David that made God delight in him? The answer is that God had entered into a relationship with David. God chose Israel to be his people (Deuteronomy 7:7-8) he placed his affection on this nation and therefore he chose out of his own free and sovereign will to elect David as one of his precious people.

It is for this reason that God steps in to rescue David, God delights in him because God has chosen him. The picture language here describes God's anger because one of his people is being persecuted and as a result of his cry for help God who has set his affection on David and therefore delights in him comes to rescue David from his enemies.

Now the application for us is that God delights in us and as a result sent his only beloved Son into our world to die in our place as our substitute and for our sins. Just as God coming at Sinai was accompanied by earth shattering events so the death was Jesus on the cross was accompanied by earth shattering events (Matthew 27:51-53). God was angry at sin so he sent Jesus to deliver his people. Just as he delivered David from his enemies so Jesus came to deliver us from our enemies of sin and Satan.

He heard our cry for help and he came to us and saved us. Our plight was like David's we were in a hopeless and helpless situation our sin was running our lives and ruining our lives as well. There was nothing that we do to change the situation; nothing we could do to help ourselves.

All we could do was to do what David did (v 3) to call out to the Lord who is worthy of praise and as a result we are saved from our enemies. The reason why we are saved the reason why we called is not because God saw that we were basically good people or that we were clever and humble enough to call out for help but simply that God delighted in us. Why did God delight in us because before he made anything; he chose to save us in Christ Jesus? (Ephesians 1:4)

He numbered us with God's people with those that His Son would die for. Now Christian we are saved people not because of ourselves but because of Jesus Christ. Isn't that marvellous? This is why we ought to love him and tell him so, and this is why our service to him should not be grudgingly given but should be given joyfully and our service should not be miserly but sacrificial.

So as I finish let us reflect upon our salvation let us reflect upon his election of us in Christ, think about the cost of our salvation that Jesus being God became man in order to rescue us from our enemies. Then let us praise God for his salvation, let us exalt and magnify his wonderful name and finally let us show our love to him as together we seek to serve him in obedience to his word.

Amen