

Life of David: Embracing God By Declaring Our Love for the Lord

Psalm 18

As we open to Psalm 18, we are entering the last days of David. No one else in Scripture has more space devoted to their life other than the Lord Himself. David is God's object lesson to each of us on: how hard life can be, how much we can struggle, how greatly we can fail—and how incredibly God can use us.

As we will see in these 50 verses of David's longest Psalm, David extolled the Lord as his Master and King. **Psalm 18** shows us so clearly how David made it through a very long and difficult life, and then how he went on to overcome feelings of loneliness and uselessness in the waning years of life.

The words of this Psalm are recorded in God's Word twice. Once here in Psalm 18; and then again in II Samuel 22:2-51—it was like doubly saying that he wanted to end well for the Lord!

Learning to See All of Life From God's Perspective

First, before we jump into these verses, let me show you a quick map of what we'll be seeing. We find David summarizing his entire life in the context of triumphing over all enemies! Why did David use that context? Because, David had learned the habit from his youth, of seeing life from GOD'S PERSPECTIVE. Psalm 18 tells us the eight elements of how David saw God everywhere:

1. v.1-3 God was the greatest attraction of David's life;
2. v. 4-6 David was often in desperate condition;
3. v. 7-15 God's Power was awesome to David;
4. v. 16-24 God alone can rescue us;
5. v. 25-29 God is just in all He does;
6. v. 30-36 God reveals Himself to those who Trust Him;
7. v. 37-45 God Has conquered all our enemies;
8. v. 46-50 God is Worthy of our Life-Long Praise.

This Psalm is in God's Word twice. Please stand as we read this powerfully personal declaration of David's love for the Lord, and as we listen, may we share in his love and also seek the Lord so completely!

Psalm 18:1-50 (NKJV) 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:

***Part One: God was the
Greatest attraction of David's life***

- 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.

***Part Two: David was
Often in desperate condition***

- 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.

***Part Three: God's Power was
Awesome to David***

- 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.[a]
- 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.

Part Four: God alone

Can rescue us

- 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.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
- 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 22 For all His judgments were before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.
- 23 I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
- 24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.

Part Five: God is just

In all He does

- 25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;
With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
- 26 With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
- 27 For You will save the humble people,
But will bring down haughty looks.
- 28 For You will light my lamp;
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
- 29 For by You I can run against a troop,
By my God I can leap over a wall.

Part Six: God reveals Himself

To those who Trust Him

- 30 As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.
- 31 For who is God, except the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
- 32 It is God who arms me with strength,

And makes my way perfect.
33 He makes my feet like the feet of deer,
And sets me on my high places.
34 He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great.
36 You enlarged my path under me,
So my feet did not slip.

***Part Seven: God Has
Conquered all our enemies***

37 I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them;
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.
38 I have wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.
39 For You have armed me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.
40 You have also given me the necks of my enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.
41 They cried out, but there was none to save;
Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.
42 Then I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind;
I cast them out like dirt in the streets.
43 You have delivered me from the strivings of the people;
You have made me the head of the nations;
A people I have not known shall serve me.
44 As soon as they hear of me they obey me;
The foreigners submit to me.
45 The foreigners fade away,
And come frightened from their hideouts.

***Part Eight: God is Worthy of our
Life-Long Praise***

46 The LORD lives!
Blessed be my Rock!
Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
47 It is God who avenges me,
And subdues the peoples under me;
48 He delivers me from my enemies.
You also lift me up above those who rise against me;
You have delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name.
50 Great deliverance He gives to His king,
And shows mercy to His anointed,

To David and his descendants forevermore.

Pray

We've been walking for months, through David's life in many chapters—

- from his lonely childhood to his struggling years on-the-run from King Saul;
- from his triumphs on the battlefield to the defeats of his unguarded moments;
- from his consequence years to the final challenges of his home-going—all through the inspired record God gave to us.

And, although it's been 3,000 years since David's time, his fervor for life and deep desire to embrace God through his long obedience in seeking the Lord can still thrill our souls!¹

David's life was carved into the bedrock of God's Word for a wonderful purpose. Through his godly responses in life's unending struggles, the Lord was giving Divine Truth to help us learn how to overcome trials in our own lives.

In the thirty-one psalms the Holy Spirit inspired David to write during his greatest struggles, he captured how the Lord was his Refuge. But even after all those wonderful psalms, I'm praying that Psalm 18 will become the most meaningful and precious to you!

I have dearly loved this study of David's life because of the way God's grace is so visibly brought forward as the ***grace that saves***, the ***grace that forgives***, and the ***grace that gives new beginnings*** each day and every hour.

For grace says: "I, the Lord God, am committed to finishing what I have started in your life! Even though I am going to keep cleansing you as often as needed, I will love you no matter what you do. Nothing can make Me love you any more or any less!" That means you and I must continue—

SEEKING GOD EVEN WHEN WE'RE IMPERFECT

David's whole testimony declared that it doesn't take perfection to please God. One of the reasons it's taken so long to study his life is that it requires time to cement in our hearts and minds that God does not demand nor expect perfection.

The example God presents us in His Word of David's life teaches us that **to please God:**

- **You don't have to be fearless**—*David was often afraid and had to flee to the Lord.* Remember that the next time you are afraid!
- **You don't have to be perfect**—*David was smitten by guilt and confessed his*

¹ 061105AM DSS-40; 061105PM DSS-41

sins to the Lord. Remember that the next time you are stained by sin!

- **You don't have to have a perfect marriage**—*David had marriage problems he gave to the Lord.* Remember that the next time you are weeping over the stress and pain in your relationship with your partner!
- **You don't have to have perfect children**—*David has no recorded children who followed the Lord to the end of their life.* Remember that the next time you feel the harsh blast of your children's disobedience, disrespect, or ingratitude!
- **You don't have to be constantly serene**—*David was often depressed and had to sometimes crawl back to the Lord.* Remember that the next time you feel too discouraged to even get out of bed, go to work, or look another person in the eye!

But to please God we **do** have to experience God's grace—and David's entire life was covered with grace. For he was imperfect; sometimes David flat out failed the Lord while at other times he was fearful, depressed, or troubled.

But God always looked upon him not as he was, but as he would be. The Lord saw his heart, knew his deepest desire, and forgave all the rest.

Through it all, in spite of it all, and in it all, this God-hearted servant said from start to finish: "I love the Lord!"

So when we get to stop at the Psalm of David's deathbed, in the not too distant future, we will witness his hope and peace as he walked with his beloved Good Shepherd through the Valley of Death's shadow—fearing no evil.

Psalm 18 can be summarized as one long testimony to God's great faithfulness—as David's Shelter, Stronghold, and Sure Foundation; and the same to all who will trust in Him.

We can call this final aspect of David's life his "long obedience in seeking God." That is what was most evident about David: he continually sought the Lord and served His purposes for almost his entire life. And—

SEEKING GOD BUILDS A LIFE GOD REWARDS

In Hebrews 11:6 God said that He is ... *a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

A life God *greatly* rewards is a life with a long history of pursuing or seeking God. Seeking the Lord and loving Him with all his heart was David's lifelong pursuit. He sought the Lord while facing giant enemies like Goliath, through protracted battles with foreign armies, and even when fleeing his own son. And during all his personal struggles and fears, One Person never left him—the Lord.

The sheer volume of information God has given about David offers an incredible opportunity to sift through those chapters and see what a long obedience looks like.

That is perhaps the greatest way David's life can impact us—by calling us to walk in the power of the Spirit to serve the Lord God in the same faithful and loving manner.

Psalm 18 is David's Long-Term Investment Record

The wording of Psalm 18 appears not only in The Book of Psalms as David's *personal testimony* but also in 2 Samuel 22 as the *historical record* of his final words.

His psalm is like an investment record, recorded by God, of the deposits made in David's account throughout his long life. This is similar to a long-term investment of our money, which is the best way to go in today's financial world. Let me explain a little further, and then I'll make my point.

Money, like time, is given to us to invest—not merely to spend. More than half of Jesus' thirty-plus parables spoke about money. Money drives the economy of our world, motivates the majority of the workers of this country, and is the target most use to measure their success and happiness.

Those who have obtained great wealth always talk about the power of long-term, compounded investments. When we lived and served at a church in New England we saw the reality of long-term wealth's growing power. For six years we lived in a lovely New England parsonage built around 1828 for the pastor of the Quidnessett Church. Those who donated the money to build that house were part of the E.I. DuPont family. After it was built, one \$25 share of stock in the DuPont Company was provided—the dividends to be reinvested to maintain the house on an allocation made annually from that account's value.

When we moved into the home in 1988, 160 years later, the house was lovely, and the acre of grounds looked like a botanical garden. As for the maintenance account, it had grown to be worth nearly \$1,000,000! The unbroken compounding of the dividend yield, stock splits, and appreciation of each share through the ups and downs of the Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean and Viet Nam Wars, and onward had turned the original \$25 into a million dollars, even after all the expenses were paid for the upkeep of the house.

What an amazing power there is in compounded investment in the long-haul of American financial history. Financial planners tell us that real wealth is found in long-term investments. Even Solomon recognized that wealth "hastily gained" is elusive (Proverbs 28:20).

So, as the most written about man in God's Word what was:

David's Long Term Investment in Trusting God

So then, Psalm 18 was God's long-term investment record of the deposits in David's account—written after a lifetime of facing enemies at every turn.

1. As a shepherd, David faced enemies in the form of wolves and lions.
2. Then he stood against the Philistines of both the Valley of Elah (Goliath) and those who were around him while on King Saul's staff. So enemies abounded for years before his marriage.
3. As King Saul's son-in-law, David's enemies multiplied when Saul and the armies of Israel were continually hunting him to kill him.
4. Then, when David was crowned King, he not only had to face the Philistines but also the combined armies of all the pagan nations surrounding the Land of Israel.
5. Finally, when David was older and nearing the end, the pagan nations were joined by those of his own children who sought his throne and had become his enemies as well.
6. However, though David never seemed to have stopped facing enemies, in his last recorded words he extolled the Faithful God who had delivered him from murderous Saul, pagan armies, and even wayward sons. And throughout these challenges, David described his intimate walk with God by possessively saying, "The LORD is my ..."

Like David testified, God will not be distant in your relationship with Him if you—in both heartaches and joys seek to have David's deep passion for God drew him to seek the Lord with an embracing kind of love.

Psalm 18 needs to become a part of our long-term spiritual investment strategy for how to love the Lord, trust the Lord, and seek the Lord for as long as you live. May God empower you, like David, to form a lifelong habit of—

David's Long Term Investment in Embracing God

Psalm 18:1 is the full-hearted expression of love to the One who was more than life itself to David:

I will love You, O LORD, my strength.

The word translated "love" (Hebrew: ***racham*** #7355, used 47x) is a rare verb form of a word group that expresses tender intimacy through physical expressions like hugging or embracing.

David's word choice was intended to express very strong devotion—like Mary's love on Resurrection Morning when she longed to dearly hug Jesus (John 20:17).

The Hebrew word ***racham*** was always used in Scripture in a positive sense about God, and by God, to express His love for His people. It is a word which speaks of a love that draws someone close and hugs them—a love which yearns for someone who has been away for awhile and can't wait to welcome them back with a hugging, embracing love.

Psalm 18:1 is the sole time in the Bible that this term for a "hugging, embracing love" was used by a person describing love for God.

In other words, David was the only person in the Old Testament to take this word for God's love of His children, and turn it around to use it to express his own personal love for the Lord. So this was very much a part of the reason why God said that David had a heart for the Lord!

In essence, David was saying in verse 1:

*"Lord, I love You so much that I am passionately drawn to You;
I long to run and throw my arms around You to show the immensity of my love for You!"*

That is "embracing love"—a "seeking love"—a description of David's own heart after God.

Responding to Our Great God

The fifty verses of Psalm 18—are David's reflections on a lifetime of deep love for his all-satisfying God.

A response that God would so deserve is for each of us to lift our heart, our face, and our voice up to the Lord and sing a simple chorus as a personal love gift of worship to Jesus. Please stand with me and we will close as we sing these words:

*I love You, Lord,
and I lift my voice to worship You.
O my soul, rejoice!
Take joy, my King, in what You hear:
May it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.
—Twila Paris (1958—)*