

**The Lord is My Rock**  
**Psalm 18 (2 Samuel 22)**  
**ABC 7/2/23**

Here are a few advertising slogans. See how you do:

*Finger lickin' good!*  
*You're in good hands.*  
*Good to the last drop.*  
*Let your fingers do the walking.*  
*When you care enough to send the very best.*  
*Leave the driving to us.*  
*At the corner of happy & healthy.*

*Get a piece of the rock.* Prudential Insurance Company. Since 1860 their logo has included an illustration of the Rock of Gibraltar, signifying that they're solid, strong, & can't be destroyed. Do you have someone who is your *rock*, someone who is dependable & unshakable? Someone who won't bail out on you when you need them the most? We all need a *rock* that can sustain us, especially during the difficult times of life. Just so you know, the Rock of Gibraltar isn't the best *rock* around. Open your Bibles to Ps 18 where we clearly see that **the Lord is our rock**. This is a psalm of David where he says God is his rock 4 different times.

**The Lord is my rock (2)**  
**My God, my rock (2)**  
**Who is a rock except our God? (31)**  
**Blessed be my rock (46)**

Like last week's Ps 14, this psalm is also repeated, not in the book of Psalms but in 2 Sam 22 with some minor variations. The superscription of Ps 18 is a long one & reads, **For the choir director**. Again, this was to be sung. It continues, **A psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies & from the hand of Saul. & he said...** & then we have the psalm. There's no consensus as to when David wrote this. Some say it was shortly after becoming king, others during the middle of his reign, & yet others say it was at the end of his reign. Whatever the case, it contains David's praise to God for repeatedly delivering him from **all his enemies**, including from Saul. During the years David fled from Saul, & later Absalom, he often escaped to the rocky wilderness. But in reality it was God who was his fortress of protection. This psalm is the 4<sup>th</sup> longest having 50 vss. We won't be able to cover everything but we'll hit the highlights & I encourage you to study it on your own.

To appreciate what David had been through, remember David's background. He was in his late teens when he was anointed as king. But he was 30 before he actually became king over the southern kingdom & 37 before the whole kingdom was united under his rule. During those years, God was shaping him through adversity, allowing him in situations where he despaired of life itself & had to learn to trust God alone. For over a decade, the sometimes crazy King Saul pursued David throughout the wilderness, so that David said, **There is hardly a step between me & death** (1 Sam 20:3). Let's read it in its entirety & then look more closely at some of it. **Ps 18:1-50**

**1. David's Rejoicing** (1-3) David begins by declaring, **I love you, O Lord**, using a word for **love** that emphasizes the tender affection of his heart toward God. It's related to the Hebrew word for *womb* (Jer 21:7) & describes the kind of love a mother has for her baby (Is 49:15), a father for his children (103:13), & the Lord for His people (102:13; Hos 1:7; Dt 13:17).<sup>1</sup> It's a deep & fervent love, the kind of love all of us should have for our Lord (31:23). David will close this psalm by celebrating God's **lovingkindness** (50). While love isn't mentioned in the vss in between, everything is framed by the love David had for the Lord & the Lord's love for David. Do you love the Lord like this? We must determine to love God no matter what. Even when we don't feel His presence, even when we don't understand what He's doing, even when it feels like our prayers aren't being heard, we must continue to love the Lord our God (Mk 12:30). David knows & loves His God & uses a series of descriptive phrases to say what God is to him. Notice the repeated pronoun, **my**. God is David's God. It's personal. He knows Him & counts on Him. He begins with:

**My strength**, David knew it wasn't his own strength that brought him to where he was but it was his Lord's **strength**.

**My rock**, God was a foundation of stability & protection for David, more secure than the Mount of Gibraltar. This is an image of protection & shade. David is sheltered by God. It's because the Lord was his **rock** that David thrived. It also portrays God as a refuge for David. David knew the hiding places in the rocky wilderness. When he fled to the rocks, he knew he'd be safe. A **rock** was also a

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, p 73

sure foundation beneath one's feet.<sup>2</sup> Jesus used this image when He contrasts the person who builds his life on sand with the one who builds on the rock. The house that's built on the rock stands firm (Mt 7:25). God is David's shelter, stronghold, & firm foundation.

**My fortress**, a high place of refuge & defense when under attack; a huge rocky plateau like Masada.

**My deliverer**, a Savior in the days of darkness & in fear of death.

**My God**, again it's a personal relationship David has with God.

Again, **my rock**, a different word than the previous one but used interchangeably.

**In whom I take refuge**, the Lord is his rock & refuge.

**My shield**, his defense against his enemies' attacks.

The **horn of my salvation**, a description of power in battle taken from the image of a bull or a ram.

**My stronghold**, meaning God's care for his servant in giving him a place of safety.

David didn't just know about God; he knew God as his own God. God was all this to David. This prompted him to call on the Lord, who he knows **is worthy to be praised**, when his enemies attack & **the Lord** saves him (3).

**2. David's Reasons** In vss 4-45 David gives reasons why God is all this to him by telling what God has done for him. God is always working powerfully & passionately for His people even when we don't see it. In vss 4-5 he describes in poetic language a man who's in turbulent waters. Weeds or vines are wrapping around him so that he can't break free. In the terror of the moment, all he can think is, *I'm going to die!* **Cords of death, cords of Sheol, & snares of death encompass, surround, & confront** him & he's **terrified by the torrents of ungodliness** around him. He's come to the end of himself. David responds to his distress by calling upon the Lord (6). He cries out to his God who is his **help**. He knows who his God is; He is Yahweh. He knows where He is to be found, in His **temple**, in heaven where He dwells. David's God isn't like the deaf idols; He hears our cries.<sup>3</sup> What's most impressive about this is the way David describes God rising from His throne in heaven in response to his cry, parting the clouds, & descending to fight his battles accompanied by earthquakes,

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Blaiklock, "New Light on Bible Imagery: The Rock," *Eternity*, June 1966, pp 28-29

<sup>3</sup> Donald Williams & Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Psalms 1-72*, p 146

thunder, storms, & lightning (7-18). It's not recorded that David ever experienced an actual display of God's presence in these ways. But this doesn't mean he made them up. A comparison of passages shows these are the same words from the accounts of God's self-revelation at Sinai. It's the language of God's descent to Mount Sinai to give the law through Moses accompanied by a shaking of the earth, dark clouds, & lightning. The author of Hebrews describes Sinai as **a mountain ... a blazing fire, & to darkness & gloom & whirlwind**, ... so terrifying that even Moses said, **I am full of fear & trembling** (Heb 12:18, 21). **The earth trembled & quaked & mountains shook** to overturn David's circumstances. God **parted the heavens & came down** in wrathful vengeance to deal with David's enemies. David compares God's coming to help him to earthquakes, volcanos, lightning strikes, tornados, floods, all kinds of events of nature. He uses descriptive language to try to put into words God's saving greatness. He wants us to recall when we experienced an earthquake or storm or experienced the sheer terror of a tornado. He wants us to associate nature's upheaval with the great truths of the Lord. God makes His powerful presence felt in unforgettable ways. David's earth-shattering, cataclysmic language applies to the much less spectacular but no less dramatic encounters with God that we experience. When he describes God reaching down from on high & taking hold of him & drawing him **out of many waters** (16), we're invited to recall the times when God intervened to save us. God our Father draws us out of deep waters. He's there to protect & comfort us in the midst of loss & suffering. David uses this language to drive home the truth that the presence of God is living & eternal.

In answer to David's cry for help (6), God reached down & took hold of David in order to deliver him **out of many waters** (16). He delivered him from his enemies who were too strong for him, but not so for God. **The Lord was David's stay & support** (18). He rescued him out of the **cords of death** into a **broad or spacious place** (19). David didn't say, *Wow, I sure was lucky! A thunderstorm hit at just the right moment & I defeated my enemy!* No, he knew God was the One who delivered him, not his own strength or cleverness. Without God's work, David was helpless. Although David's foes are too strong for him, they aren't too strong for God. David concludes God's motive for His action was that **He rescued me, because He delighted in me** (19). The verb **delighted** means to be mindful

of, to be attentive to, to keep, to protect, to have pleasure in. Think about that. God **delighted** in David. David has experienced deliverance from his enemies as **rewarded** by God. 20-24

What's going on here? This seems to say that God's deliverance is based on David's performance. Is this a works theology? & if this psalm was written late in David's life as a summary of God's deliverances of him, these words immediately raise the question of how David could say all this in light of his sin with Bathsheba & Uriah. How could he claim to have been righteous, blameless, kept himself from iniquity, & to have **kept the ways of the Lord**? It sounds as if David's boasting in himself & saying God owed him deliverance because he was such a good guy. But that's to misinterpret these vss. David was a devoted follower of the Lord even though he did fall into sin. When Nathan confronted him with his sins, he repented & grieved deeply for them. He expressed his repentance in beautiful psalms of repentance such as Ps 32 & 51. His life as a whole was characterized by his faithful keeping of God's covenant in obedience & repentance.<sup>4</sup> David isn't comparing himself with God, in whose sight no one is righteous, but with his enemies, who don't follow God. Also, David isn't denying his own sinfulness any more than God denied Job's sinfulness when He affirmed Job's righteous life to Satan (Job 1:8). Again, David isn't making a claim for sinless perfection. He's simply stating that he'd devoted himself to following the Lord & this resulted in a godly life that God rewarded. What David pleads isn't perfection. He recognized that by such a standard he'd never stand: **do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous** (Ps 143:2). Rather, he pleads his faithfulness in comparison to the wickedness of those who hate God & His king. He makes this comparison not to claim he deserves or has earned God's favor, but to show that God's saving grace has made him different from the wicked in the ways in which he thinks, believes, & lives. David loves the Lord & His law, so his sin is grievous to him & he willingly repents & seeks to lead a godly life. God has brought him into His covenant & given him the integrity that he has. It's **God who girds me with strength & makes my way blameless** (32). He belongs to God & follows God & therefore knows that God will be kind to him.

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<sup>4</sup> W. Robert Godfrey, *Learning to Love the Psalms*, p 64

Remember, the psalms were Jesus' songbook. Look beyond David to David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Could Jesus sing these words? Absolutely & God the Father rescued Jesus from death because of His perfect **righteousness**. David, inspired by the Spirit, anticipates the coming of the Righteous One who alone can say He was righteous, clean, blameless, & kept all the ways of the Lord. As Paul puts it, **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes** (Rom 10:4). Righteousness is accomplished in Christ who in His sinlessness is our righteousness & who makes us righteous by faith alone (Rom 1:15–17). While the assertions of innocence in the psalms are difficult for us to understand, David's righteousness, David's victory over his enemies, & David's kingdom all point to Jesus. It's Jesus who is the fulfilment of David's prayer.<sup>5</sup> David is convinced that God is being honored in his life, not in sinless perfection, because only Jesus was without sin (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pt 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5), but by the grace of God. He isn't obeying the law as an imposed duty but as a privileged delight. He doesn't see God as a prison warden standing over him demanding compliance, but as his heavenly Father loving him & wanting only what is best for him.

In vs 25-27 we see that God rewards people according to their character, as He did with David. To those who are **faithful** to God, the Lord, in turn, is **faithful** (1 Sam 2:30). Likewise, God shows himself to be **kind & blameless & pure** to those who are the same. But those who are **crooked** find God to be **astute** or **shrewd** to them. Translators have had difficulty with the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of vs 26, **with the crooked You show yourself astute** or **shrewd**. It's easy enough to say that when a man exhibits a good characteristic toward God, God shows the same good characteristic to him. But if man shows a bad or evil characteristic, can God show a bad characteristic back? Of course not. God can't do evil. So David expresses the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the vs by a somewhat ambiguous word which has the root meaning of *twisted*. *To the twisted or crooked You will show Yourself twisted or crooked*. The idea seems to be that if a person insists in being devious in his dealings with God, God outwits

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<sup>5</sup> Donald Williams & Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Psalms 1–72*, p 149

him, as he deserves.<sup>6</sup> If a person insists on pursuing devious ways, God will reward him accordingly, giving him what he deserves. According to David, **27**.

The human cancer that God is patiently & lovingly cutting out of His people is pride. Since the fall, we all suffer from the sin of pride. At its root is relying on ourselves rather than on God. Pride is looking within ourselves for our sufficiency rather than looking to Christ. It's thinking too highly of ourselves & too lowly of God. Pride thinks that God owes us something because of who we are or what we've done. In pride we think our own righteousness commends us to God. Pride is putting ourselves above others, thinking we're better than them. Everyone suffers from pride in one form or another. God brings affliction into our lives to humble our pride. **God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble** (1 Pt 5:5). When God humbles us so that we no longer trust in ourselves, then we call out to Him for salvation & He gets all the praise because we know that it was all due to His grace, not at all due to our merit; we have none. We cannot save ourselves. We must come to the end of ourselves & call out to God. Then, when He saves us, we praise Him. God lovingly keeps bringing us into situations where we are helpless, where we're forced to trust in Him alone.

Although David emphatically maintains his integrity before God because of God, the emphasis at the end of this section (28-36) shifts to God's faithfulness, God's blamelessness, God's purity, God's perfection, & God's flawless Word. David is confident, not in himself, but in God. This is why he credits God with everything good in his life (28-29). If there's any boasting to be done, it's in the Lord who is his refuge. He alone deserves all the praise & glory. With the Lord's **help** he could advance against all opposition. Because God was his **shield & rock**, the Lord enabled David **to stand with strength** on the **heights**, a place of victory. David could fight triumphantly because God empowered him to **bend a bow of bronze** (33-34). God alone sustained him to make him **great** before his enemies. The Lord made David's footing sure on the **path** to victory so David wouldn't fall. If we want to know God as our all-sufficient rock & refuge so that we can flee to Him in our

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<sup>6</sup> H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, p 169

trials, so that we praise Him for His salvation, then we must know who He is & how He acts as David did.

Then we have an unusual statement in vs 35, **Your gentleness makes me great.** It could also be translated as *humble* or *meek*. David's witness to God's **gentleness** in the context of his military might & his graphic portrayal of his defeated enemies is remarkable. For David to reason that it was the **gentleness** of God that made him truly great is unexpected.<sup>7</sup> God, in His **gentleness**, provided for his every need. He gave him **the shield of Your salvation, & Your right hand upholds me** (35). David is humbled by the humility of God who would choose him to accomplish His glory. David recognizes his humble position in regard to God. But God's stooping was even greater than David realized, as we see in Christ's humbling Himself.<sup>8</sup> The exalted Lord of creation made Himself known in the God who kneels & washes the feet of the disciples (Jn 13). As Paul says, **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich** (2 Cor 8:9). The full extent of God's humility, His ability to stoop, & empty Himself only became apparent when Jesus humbled Himself & became obedient to death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:6–8).<sup>9</sup>

Empowered by God's strength, David defeated his **enemies & overtook them; they were consumed, shattered, destroyed, & David... 42.**

Every victory David won was due to God's empowering him & he knew that & gave God the glory. It's God who armed him with strength (1, 32). It's God who has broken his enemies & their cry for mercy goes unanswered by men & God (41). David fights only as God gives him the strength & the victory. Indeed, **the Lord is my rock & my fortress & my deliverer** (2). If this is true for David it must be true for us. We're victorious only in Christ. He's the one who's at God's right hand interceding for us. Although in this world we experience tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, & sword, **But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us** (Rom 8:37). We too are called into a spiritual battle to fight against the powers of evil

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<sup>7</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, p 95

<sup>8</sup> Cyril Okorochoa, *Psalms*, p 627

<sup>9</sup> Douglas D. Webster, *The Psalms: Jesus's Prayer Book*, pp 158–159.



(Eph 6:12–13), & in this, we can expect a victory like David's. As Paul tells the Romans, **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet** (Rom 16:20). Having routed his enemies, David was elevated by God to rule over them (43-45). He testified, **you have placed me as the head of nations** (43), a position of political & military strength. These once-imposing foes were now **subject to** & obeyed him because God had given him the victory. So complete was this God-given triumph that they submit to David & **come trembling out of their fortresses** (45).

**3. David's Refrain** In the final 5 vss (46–50) we come back to where we started & the theme of God being his rock reappears. After looking back at God's goodness to him, what else could David do but praise Him? Vs 2 says, **The Lord is my rock & my God, my rock**. Now, vs 46: **The Lord lives, & blessed be my rock; & exalted be the God of my salvation**. Because of this... **49**.

Paul quotes this vs to prove the gospel of Jesus is not just for Jews but also for Gentiles, for all the nations (Rom 15:8–9). **50**

Is David safe & secure because God is his refuge? Yes. David reveals his confidence & security is much more long-lasting than just during his lifetime. He knows that as God has shown lovingkindness to him, He will show it to his **descendants** as well, & that these blessings are eternal. God hasn't only kept His promise to David, protecting him from those who would destroy him, & establishing his throne, God will also install the One who fulfills the Davidic Covenant, God's anointed One, the Messiah. When David mentions his **descendants** he probably has in mind God's promise to him in 2 Sam 7 (8-17) where God promises David that he'll have an offspring, a son, who reigns as king forever. God's **anointed** & David's future Son are the same. While David seems to have appealed to his own righteousness (20–24), we point to the righteousness of Christ & His promises to be with us in our difficulties. We can read Ps 18 as a song of Jesus, David's greater Son. He suffered the cords of death (4) in His crucifixion, but also experienced the power of God who raised Him from the dead (Rom 8:11). God dealt with Jesus according to His righteousness (20) & He conquered His enemies of sin, death, & the devil.

We don't know how much of the **anointed** One's future work David saw. But we, who stand on this side of the cross, know what Jesus did. We know He was smitten & crucified for us, that we might

be saved from sin & protected from all harm. Are you sheltered in Him as your Rock? If you are, you can sing David's song, **The Lord lives, & blessed be my rock; & exalted be the God of my salvation** (46). David's example in this psalm calls out to every believer to make God your rock at all times, trusting Him for deliverance. No enemy can overcome God; He's a fortress to everyone who takes refuge in Him. With unwavering hope, we need to rest in the Lord, assured of His ultimate victory & place all our **faith** in God, the rock who cannot fall or falter. God is our Rock in many ways, the greatest of which is the deliverance He's provided through the death of Jesus Christ. The 1<sup>st</sup> & most important way we can experience God's rescue is by receiving the gift of salvation from the guilt & penalty of our sins, by trusting in the sacrificial death, burial, & resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. & then, day by day, we must look to Him as our Deliverer, our Fortress, our Refuge, our Rock in whose care & keeping we're eternally secure.

David's song of salvation is a psalm which looks forward to the time when the eternal throne of Jesus will be established on the earth & when all His enemies will be pulverized & punished, while those who trust in Him will be saved. What a day that will be! Another David has come. He's defeated God's enemies & established His reign. Even gentiles now come to Him. As a result, a great chorus of praise ascends to the throne of God. Ps 18 reveals the God who controls nature & history, who establishes His King & His kingdom. He isn't absent but present, not distant but near, not aloof but active, not powerless but powerful. In His Son, the kingdom has come & is coming. Some of you are in the midst of difficult trials right now. If you'll come to the end of yourself, run to God as your all-sufficient Rock, & express your gratitude to Him in worship, you're on your way to becoming a person of praise, a person after God's own heart. No, we don't live perfect lives & we stumble many times. But when we come to the end of life & look back on it, we confess that whatever our failings may have been, our God has not failed us. We confess as a true saying: **If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself** (2 Tim 2:13). There is no rock like our Rock. Praise be to the Rock of our salvation! He's a shelter which we can be protected, a fortress we can run to & be safe in, a firm foundation upon which our shaking feet can stand & upon which

we can build. Augustus Toplady put this into a well-known hymn, *Rock of Ages*.<sup>10</sup> He was traveling when a storm hit & he was forced to take shelter in the cleft of a great rock. While he was waiting for the storm to pass he reflected on his situation & the words of a hymn began to form in his mind. Looking down, he found a playing card that someone had dropped. He picked it up & used it to record these words:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water & the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt & power.*

PRAY – men come

Who is the anointed One & final descendent of David? It's King Jesus. Jesus stepped out of the glory of heaven & into our dark world. He stepped down into sin & pain & hurt & despair & depression, bringing hope with Him. But that doesn't mean it was easy. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed for His father to take the cup of the cross from Him (Lk 22:42). When He hung on the cross, for 3 hours darkness covered Him & the whole land (Lk 23:44). But God delivered Him when He raised Jesus from the grave 3 days later, conquering death with life, despair with joy, darkness with light. Jesus swam in the waves of death so we can have eternal life. We remember & celebrate that through the bread & cup of communion. PASS ELEMENTS

Isaiah writes prophetically, **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed** (Is 53:5). The promised anointed One, the Son of David, Jesus, humbled Himself & came to earth to die in our place. We remember His death for us as eat of the bread together.

**the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand** (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus died, shedding His blood, for us. The anointed Son of David died in our place so we could have His righteousness & have a relationship with God. We remember that as we drink of the cup. Isaiah 53 concludes:

**As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors** (11-12).

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<sup>10</sup> #209 in our hymnal