

Psalm 18  
Psalm 18  
Galatians 2

“I Love You, LORD”

February 26, 2023

Why do you love God?

(Read title)

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:*

Psalm 18 is almost identical to 2 Samuel 22.

Indeed, the title here is taken from 2 Samuel 22:1.

It is an interesting description.

David, after all, had many enemies –  
and many of them came long after King Saul.

Since the song is placed in 2 Samuel 22 – at the end of David’s reign –  
it takes the form a retrospective –  
a reflection on God’s faithfulness to David

And, indeed, this is emphatically David’s story.

God’s love for David was shown in that when David was in trouble,  
God rent the heavens,  
smoke came from his nostrils, fire from his mouth  
(think of God as the heavenly dragon coming to rescue his people from their foes!)

When David was in trouble

God moved heaven and earth—laying bare the foundations of the world—  
in order to deliver his chosen servant.

As we keep seeing in Book One –

Israel sings these songs with David.

In 2 Samuel 22 it was just David’s story.

But we are not singing 2 Samuel 22.

We are singing Psalm 18!

We are encouraged to sing this song *with David* –  
and of course, especially – with Jesus.

Why do you love God?

Because he has first loved you.

And he has loved you *powerfully*.

God’s love is not some warm fuzzy feeling.

God’s love is *demonstrated* in action.

God has loved you by moving heaven and earth to save you.

Sing Psalm 18 (stanzas 1-7)  
Read Galatians 2

I am crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

The same principle that was implicit in Psalm 18 – as Israel sang with David –  
Paul now makes explicit in Galatians 2.

What Israel once sang with David – we now sing in Christ!

The difference is that in David, it was aspirational.

Psalm 18 – in David – has to see beyond the reality of David’s flaws.

Think of where we ended in singing the first half of Psalm 18:

“he found me righteous, with clean hands, and so the LORD rewarded me.”

It could be challenging for many Israelites to sing that!

If you just look closely at David’s life –

you might have trouble with that whole “clean hands” business!

But that is why God’s covenant with David matters!

Pay attention to verse 50 of Psalm 18:

“Great salvation he brings to his king,  
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,  
to David and his offspring forever.”

The word translated “anointed” in Psalm 18 is the word *meshiach* –  
which is translated *christos* in Greek.

So every time Paul says “Christ” he is saying “Meshiach” –  
“anointed” – Son of David.

I am crucified with the Son of David.

It is no longer I who live, but the Son of David who lives in me.

And the life I now I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law,  
then the Son of David died for no purpose.

That’s why I included the name of Jesus in every part of the outline!

### **1. Because He Is Jesus’ Refuge and Mine (v1-3)**

*18 I love you, O LORD, my strength.*

*<sup>2</sup> The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,*

*my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.  
<sup>3</sup> I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.*

In verses 1-3, David says I love you, because you are my refuge.

I call upon the LORD and he saves me.

This serves as the introductory survey of the Psalm.

Everything else flows from this.

God is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer.

Let me tell you about how he delivered me!

## **2. Because He Has Heard Jesus' Cries and Saved Me from My Enemies (v4-6)**

<sup>4</sup> *The cords of death encompassed me;  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;<sup>[a]</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> *the cords of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.*

I was in trouble!

David faced death many times—

whether facing Goliath or having Saul throw a spear at him,

or being pursued through the wilderness by Saul,

or fighting against the Philistines—

David says that he was entangled in the cords of Sheol—the bonds of death.

Death seeks to ensnare us.

I think that sometimes we take this too literally.

David is *not* just referring to Saul's army marching against him,

or the Philistines seeking to capture him.

Sure — those moments count too! —

but he states it generically —

because he is inviting you to fill in the blanks with your experience!

The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

Does that sound like an army?!

No.

That sounds like something that has me trapped.

When have you felt trapped?

Nowhere to turn?

No one to rescue you?

There are many ways that this can happen.

And Psalm 18 invites you to insert your own story into the story of David –  
into the story of Jesus –  
because Jesus has joined your story to his!

Because

*<sup>6</sup>In my distress I called upon the LORD;  
to my God I cried for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry to him reached his ears.*

When David died,

the earthly temple had not yet been built,  
but then again, the reference here is not an earthly location at all.  
Israel understood quite well that God dwelt in his heavenly temple,  
of which the earthly tabernacle/temple were shadows and pictures.  
But God heard David from his heavenly temple.

Notice what happens when God hears the cry of his anointed:

### **3. Because He Has Moved the Heavens and the Earth and the Seas in Order to Rescue Jesus – and Me (v7-19)**

*<sup>7</sup>Then the earth reeled and rocked;  
the foundations also of the mountains trembled  
and quaked, because he was angry.  
<sup>8</sup>Smoke went up from his nostrils,<sup>[b]</sup>  
and devouring fire from his mouth;  
glowing coals flamed forth from him.  
<sup>9</sup>He bowed the heavens and came down;  
thick darkness was under his feet.  
<sup>10</sup>He rode on a cherub and flew;  
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.  
<sup>11</sup>He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him,  
thick clouds dark with water.  
<sup>12</sup>Out of the brightness before him  
hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.  
<sup>13</sup>The LORD also thundered in the heavens,  
and the Most High uttered his voice,  
hailstones and coals of fire.  
<sup>14</sup>And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;  
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.  
<sup>15</sup>Then the channels of the sea were seen,  
and the foundations of the world were laid bare  
at your rebuke, O LORD,  
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.*

Notice that God's response rocks the earth, the heavens, and the seas.

The earth, the heavens, and the seas are the three realms of creation.  
When God acts – the creation itself is shaken!

The earth reeled and rocked (v7)  
the foundations of the mountains quaked because he was angry (v7)  
smoke went up from his nostrils/fire from his mouth (v8)  
the heavens bowed (v9)  
he flew swiftly on the wings of the wind (v10)  
darkness and cloud covered him, (v11)  
and hailstones and coals of fire poured down upon the earth (v12, 14)  
the LORD thundered in the heavens (v13)  
the channels of the sea were seen, (v15)  
the foundations of the world were laid bare (v15)

All this, because his anointed – his Christ – was in trouble.  
How much does God love David?  
God will move heaven and earth to rescue his anointed king!

Verses 16-19 then recount the rescue:

<sup>16</sup> *He sent from on high, he took me;  
he drew me out of many waters.*  
<sup>17</sup> *He rescued me from my strong enemy  
and from those who hated me,  
for they were too mighty for me.*  
<sup>18</sup> *They confronted me in the day of my calamity,  
but the LORD was my support.*  
<sup>19</sup> *He brought me out into a broad place;  
he rescued me, because he delighted in me.*

And He rescued me!  
Because he delighted in me.

And why did God delight in David?

#### **4. Because He Is a Righteous and Merciful Judge for Jesus – and Me (v20-30)**

<sup>20</sup> *The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.*  
<sup>21</sup> *For I have kept the ways of the LORD,*

*and have not wickedly departed from my God.*  
<sup>22</sup> *For all his rules<sup>[c]</sup> were before me,  
and his statutes I did not put away from me.*  
<sup>23</sup> *I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from my guilt.*  
<sup>24</sup> *So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.*

20-24 because I am blameless

David insists that he is righteous before God.

*I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God  
I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt.  
So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.*

David is not claiming to be sinless.

He is rather claiming that he is blameless and righteous!

How can David be blameless and righteous before God?

Remember what we have seen from Paul.

Justification is *not* saying that a person is *actually* innocent, but *legally* innocent.

Before the judgment seat of God, David is innocent.

He is legally righteous, because his sins are covered.

But David is saying something more than this.

When David says I am righteous,

he is also saying that he has devoted himself to living righteously.

David did not say, “hey, my sins are forgiven, so I can do whatever I want!”

No – when David sinned, and yes, he sinned grievously! –

but when David sinned, he repented – which means he didn’t do it again!

If you know anything about the kings of Europe,

you know that they were often very immoral.

They imitated David’s sins over and over and over!

How many imitated David’s repentance?

How many sinned – repented – and then stopped doing it?!!

Not so many!

When David says “I kept myself from guilt” –

he is not saying that he *never sinned* –

but that he did not remain in his sin.

He turned.

David is saying, not only am I legally righteous before God,  
but I strive to *be* righteous in my conduct.  
And God has blessed David and rewarded him according to his righteousness.

And this is because

<sup>25</sup> *With the merciful you show yourself merciful;  
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;*  
<sup>26</sup> *with the purified you show yourself pure;  
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.*

In each of the first three parallels, the verb is based on the same root as the noun.  
With the *Hasid* you show yourself *hesed*  
With the blameless you show yourself blameless  
With the pure you show yourself pure...

But then with the crooked the Psalmist will not say that God shows himself crooked –  
because God is *not* crooked.

Rather – and here I can only praise the ESV for its excellent translation:  
“with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.”

Or in the words of Gandalf, “to crooked eyes, truth may wear a wry face.”

To the one who is bent, the straight appears to be crooked.

This is our challenge in our day!

We are often tempted to think that *we* are those who see and walk straight!  
And as our culture grows more bent and twisted,  
we are in danger of becoming more and more convinced of how right we are!

But David points us in a different direction (v27)

<sup>27</sup> *For you save a humble people,  
but the haughty eyes you bring down.*

When we march into a situation with all the answers –  
we are not very likely to be very useful.  
(I say that as one who often thinks that he has the answers!)

But David says that God saves a humble people.

Do we trust God?

Are we content with his wisdom and strength?

(read)

<sup>28</sup> *For it is you who light my lamp;  
the LORD my God lightens my darkness.*

(notice the wisdom theme there – the LORD brings light to my darkness)

<sup>29</sup> *For by you I can run against a troop,  
and by my God I can leap over a wall.*

(and there you have God as my strength)

<sup>30</sup> *This God—his way is perfect,<sup>[d]</sup>  
the word of the LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*

This reminds us that David is not saying that God’s ways fit exactly what I want!

His way is perfect –

but David suffered for many years before he was exalted!

And Jesus endured thirty years of tribulation and affliction –

before going to the cross! –

and only *after* the cross was the word of the LORD proven true,

and God raised him up from the dead and seated him at his right hand!

Will you take refuge in the LORD?

Because as long as you are sitting there saying,

“sort of – maybe – I’ll think about it” –

you are not taking refuge in the LORD!

As long as you are saying “I’ll trust Jesus *and something else*” –

then you are not trusting Jesus.

To be clear, trusting Jesus *will* involve doing many other things!

I was talking with the junior high boys on Wednesday

about the importance of loving God with all their heart

while they play computer games during break this week!

Trusting Jesus means relying entirely on him –

and therefore resting in his strength day by day and moment by moment

in *all the things* of life!

## **5. Because He Gives Jesus (and Me) Strength Against My Foes (v31-42)**

<sup>31</sup> *For who is God, but the LORD?*

*And who is a rock, except our God?—*

<sup>32</sup> *the God who equipped me with strength  
and made my way blameless.*

<sup>33</sup> *He made my feet like the feet of a deer*

*and set me secure on the heights.*

<sup>34</sup> *He trains my hands for war,  
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

Because (v31-42) God is the one who equipped me with strength.

He is the one who made my way blameless (v32).

He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze (v34).

Have you ever tried to bend a bow of bronze?

David is claiming divine strength here!

A bronze bow is beyond human strength!

Verses 35-42 then speaks of what David did with this divine strength.

<sup>35</sup> *You have given me the shield of your salvation,  
and your right hand supported me,  
and your gentleness made me great.*

<sup>36</sup> *You gave a wide place for my steps under me,  
and my feet did not slip.*

<sup>37</sup> *I pursued my enemies and overtook them,  
and did not turn back till they were consumed.*

<sup>38</sup> *I thrust them through, so that they were not able to rise;  
they fell under my feet.*

<sup>39</sup> *For you equipped me with strength for the battle;  
you made those who rise against me sink under me.*

<sup>40</sup> *You made my enemies turn their backs to me,<sup>[e]</sup>  
and those who hated me I destroyed.*

By the grace and gentleness of God, he pursued his enemies and utterly destroyed them!

“I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise”

verse 41 may call for special comment:

<sup>41</sup> *They cried for help, but there was none to save;  
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.*

<sup>42</sup> *I beat them fine as dust before the wind;  
I cast them out like the mire of the streets.*

Plainly, David does not think that their cry to Yahweh was sincere.

They did not cry to God out of humility or faith.

They cried out to God because they were afraid of death.

And God did not answer them.

The controlling phrase is from verse 26

“With the purified you show yourself pure;

and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous”

Remember that God has promised David that his offspring would inherit the nations.  
God's purpose in history is to bring humanity to himself in the person of his Son.

And he will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2).

**6. Because He Is Faithful to His Promises to David (Jesus) and His Offspring (Me) Forever (v43-50)**

<sup>43</sup> *You delivered me from strife with the people;  
you made me the head of the nations;  
people whom I had not known served me.*

<sup>44</sup> *As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me;  
foreigners came cringing to me.*

<sup>45</sup> *Foreigners lost heart  
and came trembling out of their fortresses.*

And in the end (v43-45), the nations yielded –  
foreigners came cringing – the nations fell down before David.

When you study the ancient near east,  
this is a remarkable moment.

David was born during the Bronze Age Collapse –  
when the Mycenaeans, the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Assyrians,  
and the Babylonians all fizzled out.

God arranged all of history so that David would arise at just the moment  
when there was no super power around –  
and so the itty bitty kingdom of David and Solomon could thrive for a moment,  
before Assyria and Egypt recovered!

And God continues to arrange all of history in some very strange ways!

As long as we try to sit in judgment over God and tell him how badly he has messed up –  
we will never actually see what he is doing.

Because if you think that you know better than God,  
then you are not approaching him with humility –  
but rather, you are approaching him with pride

So the LORD's Anointed – the Christ – concludes:

<sup>46</sup> *The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,  
and exalted be the God of my salvation—*

<sup>47</sup> *the God who gave me vengeance  
and subdued peoples under me,*

<sup>48</sup> *who rescued me from my enemies;  
yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me;*

*you delivered me from the man of violence.*  
<sup>49</sup> *For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations,  
and sing to your name.*  
<sup>50</sup> *Great salvation he brings to his king,  
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,  
to David and his offspring forever.*

This is David's story.

It was also sung for a thousand years as Israel's story—  
especially during the period of the monarchy  
when the Son of David reigned on the throne.

And therefore it is also the story of Jesus.

He is the righteous one whom God strengthened to do battle against his foes.  
He is the one who has triumphed over his and our enemies.  
He is the one who has been exalted over his foes,  
and now praises the name of the LORD among the nations.

And so therefore it is our story as well.

As we've seen from Paul in Galatians,  
we cannot tell our story without Jesus at the center.  
He is our life.  
He is our righteousness.

Therefore we sing Psalm 18 as those who have been declared righteous in him.

And he has strengthened us for spiritual warfare.  
Our warfare may differ in its outward manifestation from David:  
we are not engaged in hand-to-hand combat with flesh and blood.  
But we are engaged in hand-to-hand combat.  
We fight against principalities and powers.  
We do battle with the powers of sin, death and the devil.  
And not just in our own "private" personal lives.  
When you deal with that annoying, angry person at work,  
you are engaged in spiritual warfare.  
Your character, your conduct, your relationships with your neighbors  
are a part of the way in which the kingdom of God advances.

Why do you love the LORD?

1. Because He Is Jesus' Refuge and Mine (v1-3)
2. Because He Has Heard Jesus' Cries and Saved Me from My Enemies (v4-6)
3. Because He Has Moved the Heavens and the Earth and the Seas in Order to Rescue Jesus – and Me (v7-19)
4. Because He Is a Righteous and Merciful Judge for Jesus – and Me (v20-30)
5. Because He Gives Jesus (and Me) Strength Against My Foes (v31-42)
6. Because He Is Faithful to His Promises to Jesus and to Me Forever (v43-50)