

God Our Rock and Fortress

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Psalms / Psalm 18

Please open your copy of God's most authoritative and infallible Word with me to [Psalm 18. I](#) have entitled today's sermon: *God Our Rock and Fortress*.

In this Psalm, we will see David reflecting upon the deliverance of the Lord that was provided for him.

We all have had moments in life when we have been rescued from some form of danger. Having two boys, I feel as though I am always rescuing them from danger. Whether it be telling them not to jump off of something or trying to keep them from the danger of their own unawareness. Young boys have no concept of danger. Everything is 100 miles per hour all the time. This results in them having bumps on their heads, scrapes on their knees, and bruises everywhere. Yet, as their father, I delight to have my two wild boys, and our daughter who for the moment is tame given she is only a month old.

You see, today, we are going to see that David has been delivered from danger by His heavenly Father. He has had enemies pursuing him and seeking to take his life. David has been protected time and again from the threats of the wicked seeking to harm him. This leads for him to delight in the provision of God who has delivered his soul. Not only does David delight in God, but God delights in David as well.

Given the length of this Psalm, I am not going to ask you to stand for the reading of the Word this morning. However, we will read the Psalm in its entirety for the sake of being honoring and faithful to God and His Word in order that this psalm would be read to its logical conclusion.

Look with me at [Psalm 18](#).

Psalm 18 ESV

This is the Word of the Lord. Let's us go to Him in prayer.

As we have found ourselves here in [Psalm 18](#), the main idea of today's sermon is:

The Lord is the strength and deliverer of His people by saving them from the pits of spiritual distress through His grace in Jesus Christ.

Setting the stage: The superscription of this psalm informs us that David writes this song of praise and thanksgiving following his deliverance from the hand of Saul and all of his enemies. David is reflecting upon the way in which the Lord has acted in David's favor and to preserve his life. These words are also recorded in [2 Samuel 22](#) almost verbatim. It was just prior to the final words of David in [2 Samuel 23](#). David is reflecting upon the providential supervision of the Lord over his life as God's anointed king of His people.

Sermon Structure: David reflects upon how God has strengthened him and delivered him. From this psalm, we will identify five trusts that strengthen us in the Lord.

- › Let's turn our attention to our first strengthening trust this morning...

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's character. (vv. 1-6)

Explanation: David begins this psalm with thanksgiving from a heart that is overflowing with gratitude to the Lord.

David begins in verse 1:

Psalm 18:1 *ESV*

He calls out to the Lord simply revealing the fact that he loves God and that God is his source of strength. This psalm is a distinction from [Psalm 17](#) wherein David was lamenting. Now, David is rejoicing and declaring his love for the Lord who is his source of strength. From [Psalm 17](#), David was declaring that he was righteous in the situation regarding his wicked pursuers. Now, having been delivered from his wicked pursuers, David knows that it is the Lord who has acted to deliver him from their grasps. David loves the Lord who is his strength and faithful to deliver him.

David further details:

Psalm 18:2 *ESV*

David in declaring praise to God identifies God with three nouns. God is his rock pointing to God as a place wherein David can hide himself. God is his fortress. David knows that

God is his protector Who prevents outside harm from befalling him. Third, God is his deliverer. God acts to free David from those who would seek to harm him. He takes refuge in the rock. He is protected by God like a shield as God is his fortress. He is delivered from the wicked as God is his fortress or stronghold who brings forth salvation from those who would pursue David's life.

David carries the idea of God as his Deliverer further in verse 3:

Psalm 18:3 *ESV*

David calls upon the Lord here as his Deliverer. He acknowledges that One person is worthy of being praised and called upon for help and that person is God alone. He is the One Who has saved David from his enemies. God alone has worked in David's favor. He has done so for His own glory.

David reflects upon the situation that he has been delivered from in verses 4-6:

Psalm 18:4-6 *ESV*

David had the cords of death all around him. He was amidst and surrounded by the wicked who sought to take his life. He says the torrents or the raging waters of destruction assailed him. In other words, the wicked were raging against him seeking to overtake him. Furthermore, the cords of Sheol or the place of death entangled him. David was wrapped, surrounded, confronted, and seeking to be overtaken by the wicked as they sought to end the life of David.

Yet, as death seemed certain for David, in his distress David called upon the Lord. He made his cry to the only God. He made his plea to the Lord Who alone could rescue His anointed

king. As David made his plea before the Lord, he reveals that the Lord heard the plea of His righteous king and from His heavenly temple acted to deliver David.

- › David had a resolved trust in the character of the Lord. He had a resolved trust in the Lord who is omnipotent, all-powerful.

Application: This psalm opens with praise. It is a praise that is rooted in God's character of being all-powerful. Believer, this text beckons for you to have a resolved trust in the character of God. God has made Himself known to us in His Word. In doing so, we turn to His Word and trust in the God Who has revealed Himself. God has revealed Himself as the sovereign Creator of the universe. His creation was marred by sin, yet God revealed that He has power over sin. He displays His power in the weakness of man. Following the fall to sin, God promised a coming offspring in Genesis 3:15-16 and renewed that promise to Abraham and Sarah who were in the weakness of old age. Isaac was born. He renewed the promise to Isaac as he and Rebekah battled the struggle of barrenness. Yet, God overcame and Jacob was born. Jacob had twelve children who became the twelve tribes of Israel. The Israelites were a weak nation that would fall to slavery. God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian captivity whenever Egypt was the prominent worldly power. God provided for His people in the wilderness though there was no food or water available. God empowered His people to conquer the nations that were far superior to them as they pursued the promised land. God looked after this weak people who demanded a king. God delivered David from the hand of Goliath though Goliath had the physical advantage. God delivered them from the fallen king, Saul. God delivered David from the hand of Saul. Then,

to demonstrate His ultimate sovereignty and power, God delivered His Son, the better David, to die on the cross to raise from the grave to conquer our greatest foe, the devil. God delivered us from the throes of sin and death as only He can through the promised offspring of [Genesis 3](#).

Furthermore, God delivered Peter from prison. God delivered Paul from prison. God preserved the life of His disciples in order that the Gospel would advance.

God has proven to be all powerful and the strength of His people. God, in His omnipotent character, acts in the favor of His people in order that His people would turn in praise and dependence to Him as His glory is made known.

When we stare in the face of the wickedness of our world, we have a rock that will not be moved. We have the rock of offense and stumbling Who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-8 ESV

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

The stone of stumbling is the Lord Jesus Christ. He demonstrates the power of God and character of God as He, Himself, is God. God is His infinite wisdom established Jesus Christ as the Lord of His people. Jesus died the criminal’s death on the cross and all who turn to Him must humble themselves to believe that Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant, is in fact the promised Messiah. Those who reject will face the wrath of God while those who turn to Him will experience joy in the rock of their salvation and entrance into the kingdom that will not be moved.

[1 Peter 2:9-10](#) continues to reveal this:

1 Peter 2:9–10 ESV

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Now, by God’s power, we are a chosen people set apart by God to display His glory. Amid a sin-fallen and distressing world, we must have a resolved trust in the all-powerful character of our God who has chosen us.

- › The Lord strengthens us by a resolved trust in His character. Now, let’s look at the second way in which we are strengthened.

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God’s action. (vv. 7-19)

Explanation: David has revealed his love for the Lord as his strength and deliverer. Now, David articulates the way in which the Lord has acted to deliver him. David uses symbolic language to draw forth the faithful action of God.

Pick up in verse 7:

Psalm 18:7 ESV

David is using symbolic language here to articulate the way in which God acted on his behalf to deliver him. He says that the earth reeled and rocked as the mountains were trembling and quaking. God was angry at those who were seeking to harm His anointed King.

David continues:

Psalm 18:8 ESV

Smoke going up from His nostrils symbolizes the anger of the Lord. He sends forth fire from His mouth and coals of fire are hurled by Him. He was angry at those who would seek to harm His people pointing to His wrath.

Continue into verses 9-11:

Psalm 18:9–11 ESV

God bowed the heavens and came down. David reveals that He came as though riding upon a cherub, which is an angelic being. He came in such force upon David’s enemies that He was swift as the wind and as sweeping as to cover the whole earth in darkness symbolizing His wrath. He points to the Lord

inflicting His wrath upon the earth. He is acting from heaven on the face of the earth to carry out His justice upon those opposing His king and His people.

God then moves from darkness to brightness in verse 12:

Psalm 18:12–15 ESV

He sends forth hailstones and fire drawing the reader to consider Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord speaks as thunder drawing one back to Exodus when God was giving the Law on Mount Sinai. He scatters all of the enemies of His people. David draws forth the imagery of lightning as arrows from heaven to strike His opponents. God has acted in terrifying power toward the wicked to deliver His people. He will lay the earth bare to rescue His people.

David sings praise to God using this symbolic language to depict the mighty power of God in delivering him from his enemies. Then, David turns attention to God's action toward himself.

Psalm 18:16–19 ESV

The enemies of David were too strong for him. Yet, these enemies were not too strong for God. God utterly brought them to ruin all for the sake of delivering His anointed king. He destroyed all of David's enemies. Yes, it was to preserve David. It was also to demonstrate God's power and sovereignty and all for His glory.

God defeated David's enemies and rescued Him. This is because God delighted in David.

- › David had a trust in God's action on behalf of His people.

Application: Today, believer, you have been purchased by the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Because of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been brought into covenant relationship with God. God had a covenantal love for David. He has a covenantal love for you. In that, God delights in you as He delights in His own Son.

When we are brought to faith in Jesus Christ, by God's grace, we are also brought into union with Christ.

Romans 6:5–10 ESV

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

By grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we are brought into union with Christ. His death on cross was our death to sin. His resurrection to life is our resurrection to new life. We have the assurance that just as David was delivered from his enemies.

We too will be delivered from our greatest enemy, sin and death.

Believer, understand that in Christ, you already have been delivered from death by God's action. He has saved you by drawing you to salvation in His Son. In doing so, your salvation is certain as well as your future resurrection. Death has no power over you. Likewise, you are also being delivered. You have not received your glorified body yet. You are awaiting perfection. As you are walking with Christ, you are killing your sin daily.

Romans 13:14 **ESV**

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Every day, by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within you, you are putting to death your sin in order that you would walk in righteousness.

Believer, this is all God's doing in you. He has delivered you from the domain of darkness by His action in sending Jesus to die in your place and be raised from the grave. In your union with Christ, your salvation is certain by God's action. God is continuing to act in your life as He is conforming you more into the image of Jesus every day by leading you through the power of the Holy Spirit to kill your sin.

You are strengthened by a resolved truth in God's character and in God's action.

- › This leads us to our third way in which we are strengthened.

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's faithfulness. (vv. 20-30)

Explanation: David's psalm of praise and thanksgiving continues.

Look with me at verses 20-24:

Psalm 18:20–24 **ESV**

David now articulates his righteousness again. David can point to his righteousness because it is a righteousness not derived from himself. It is a righteousness imputed to him by God based on faith in God's promise. Likewise, David was righteous in consideration of his dealings with his enemies. He did not seek violence against those who were seeking violence toward him. David reflects upon his desire for faithfulness to the Lord. He says he has kept the Lord's ways. He has not departed from God. He has kept God's law and statutes before himself and sought to keep himself from guilt.

In summary, David has sought complete obedience to the Lord. The result is that the Lord has been faithful to His faithful servant. David reflects that the Lord has been faithful to reward David on the basis of righteousness.

David is then drawn to reflect upon the character of God once more.

Psalm 18:25–29 **ESV**

God in His faithful character has been merciful to those who show mercy. Blameless to those who are without blame. Pure to those who seek purity and have been purified by God. Yet, to the wicked God has appeared crooked because the wicked

receive God's wrath. God saves His humble people who turn to Him for refuge. Yet, he brings the arrogant down to humility.

For the faithful, God is faithful to light their way and enable them to conquer as David says that God makes him to leap over a wall.

Again, God is faithful to the faithful.

David then concludes this section:

Psalm 18:30 ESV

God is perfect and a protector of all those who turn to Him for safety. In light of this, God is true and His Word proves true. David only understood righteousness because he had the Word of God ever before him. Notice, he said, he kept the ways of the Lord, his rules were before him, and His statutes he did not put away. David's righteousness is on the basis of faith, and because of His faith, he was dependent upon the Word of God which proves true to help him be holy before the Lord and delivered by the Lord.

› **David was strengthened by a trust in God's faithfulness.**

Application: Believer, God is faithful to the faithful. The way in which we are faithful to the Lord is by looking to His revealed Word that He has given us. We have the promise here that His Word proves true. Therefore, we must turn to the Word that gears us toward faithfulness to our Lord.

Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith and pastor of the church in Ephesus:

2 Timothy 3:16–17 ESV

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

David had the Word of the Lord, and it guided him toward obedience to the Lord. Believer, we have the inspired, God-breathed Word. We have the Bible. The Bible proves true for training us in righteousness. The way in which you and I know how to live a life pleasing to the Lord is through the Word. We have the Word of God that corrects us as it informs us of sins to abandon and good works to take up.

Likewise, it is the Word of God that teaches us of God's faithfulness. God has been faithful to His people in every generation. God does not change as is found in Scripture which leads us to understand that He does not change His mind or love for us. David had a resolved trust in the Word of the Lord that he would be protected and preserved by the Lord.

Believer, we must have a resolved trust in the Word of God. It is through the Word of God that we know the truth of the Gospel. It is through the Word of God that we know that God sent His One and only Son to die on the cross in our place. It is through the Word of God that we know that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day. It is through the Word of God that we know that for who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. It is through the Word of God that we know that we will be resurrected at the return of Christ. It is through the Word of God that we know that we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone and it is through the Scripture alone that we know this. It is through the Word of God that we know

that God will be faithful to carry forth our salvation to completion because He is the One Who brought it about in the first place.

Philippians 1:6 ESV

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Likewise, [Romans 8:29-30](#)

Romans 8:29–30 ESV

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's faithfulness that is found in His Word which proves true.

- › We have seen that we are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's character, action, and faithfulness. Now, we turn our attention to the fourth trust that strengthens us.

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's provision. (vv. 31-45)

Explanation: David now goes forward to ponder once again the action of the Lord. In evaluating God's actions once more David has a focus upon the way in which God was acting on David's behalf providing for him.

Pick up in verse 31:

Psalms 18:31–32 ESV

In the Hebrew, the text reads, "For who is Elohim, but Yahweh." David is saying here that there is only one God, and He is Yahweh. All other gods are false gods. There is only one true God and He is Yahweh. He is the only One who is a rock or a shelter or support or sure place for refuge. Likewise, God is the One who has equipped David with strength and worked in David to keep him blameless in the situations of his enemies surrounding him.

David articulates the ways in which the Lord provided for him.

Psalms 18:33–36 ESV

God made his feet swift and secure, hands ready for war and strong. God gave him a shield and supported him with His own strength. God ensured that David never slipped into the hands of his pursuers.

Because of God's provision, we can see the results that came about in verses 37-40:

Psalms 18:37–42 ESV

Because God had equipped David, all of his enemies were vanquished. God had equipped David and strengthened David to win all his battles. Those who hated David were all destroyed.

David was delivered by the Lord's provision and that provision continued in verses 43-45:

Psalms 18:43–45 ESV

By the Lord's provision, David was saved from his enemies. Not only was David saved from his enemies. He was placed by God as head of the nations and foreigners heard and respected David. They trembled in fear before him as the Lord was on David's side.

David had the Lord as his provision during all of his distress from his enemies.

› **We too have provision in moments of distress.**

Application: David was seeking physical deliverance from his earthly enemies. Believer, you may find yourself in a situation that is physically perplexing and endangering your livelihood. If so, seek the Lord and ask for Him to provide for you in that situation. Call out to Him in prayer. He will hear you, believer, as His child. He will act to provide for you. However, just like David had to wait while also receiving the Lord's provision from enemies, your provision may be provided but the rejoicing in the result of that provision may surface later.

For us as Christians, we walk in a world that is perplexing and distressing. We are seeing constant cultural shifts in our country. We are seeing a rise of tyrannical social movements. We are living in a culture where what was basic morality just ten years ago is now considered hate speech. We are in a battle just like David was. Our battle is a spiritual battle as Paul has already informed us of in [Ephesians 6:12](#)

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are in a battle right now. It is a spiritual battle that has simply been labeled a political battle. It is a spiritual battle that has been called a cultural battle. The battle that we are fighting is a spiritual battle that requires us to have our first provision be that of new life in the Lord Jesus Christ resulting in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

God provided us spiritual life and freedom from spiritual death. He provided for us to no longer be His enemies, but to become His sons and daughters. Therefore, having the ultimate provision being that of salvation, reconciliation to the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, we must equip ourselves for battle with the further provision provided by God which is the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:13–20 ESV

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance,

making supplication for all the saints,

and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

The only way in which we can stand in the war that we find ourselves in is through the provision of salvation and armor of God. We have the truth of the Word that situates us. We are covered by the righteousness of Christ. We have shoes ready to go forward proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the ultimate protection that is salvation in Christ alone. Now, we must take the sword, which is the Word of God, into the world and allow for God to do His work in drawing His people to salvation in Himself.

We want to conquer and confront the culture and spiritual darkness in our land; we must put on the provision of God to do so.

We are strengthened by God's provision.

- › We are strengthened by a trust in God's character, action, faithfulness, provision...and finally.

We are strengthened by a resolved trust in God's salvation. (vv. 46-50)

Explanation: David brings this psalm of praise and thanksgiving to a close in these final four verses.

Look back with me at verses 46-48:

Psalm 18:46–48 ESV

David celebrates here. The Lord lives. Yahweh lives. He is the blessed rock and protection of His people. He gave vengeance to David by defeating his enemies for him. He rescued David from all of his enemies. Now, God has exalted David above his enemies.

This leads to David's culminating praise in verses 49-50:

Psalm 18:49–50 ESV

It is because of who God is and His faithfulness to David that David praises God. David has been delivered and will sing the praises of God before any person. He is the God of great salvation. He shows His steadfast love to His anointed King and his offspring. David is rejoicing and worshiping in the salvation that God has brought to him delivering him from his enemies.

- › David is rejoicing.

Christological Focus: As we read this psalm, David concludes with the way in which God has shown His steadfast love to His anointed king, David. Yet, as we have seen in the previous psalms, [Psalm 18](#) is no different. It points to the greatest King. It points to the true and better David. It points to the anointed King Jesus. Jesus is the One who stepped down from the Father's right hand to this sinful world. As He was in this sin-fallen world, the cords of death surrounded Him. The torrents of destruction sought to assail Him. He was the true One who could say, "I have kept the ways of the Lord. I have not wickedly departed from my God. All His rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me." He was the truly righteous one. Yet, He was mocked, scourged, and

crucified in our place. As He hung on the cross, God's wrath for sin poured forth upon His Son in our place. You see, David was delivered from physical harm. Jesus was delivered over to physical harm to free you from spiritual harm. Jesus died bearing our sins. Then, Jesus went to the borrowed tomb. His enemies rejoiced thinking they had won. But, as assuredly as David was avenged so too God avenged the Lord Jesus Christ. On the third day, verse 46 of [Psalm 18](#) could be sung loudly:

Psalm 18:46 ESV

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—

Jesus Christ rose from the grave and the Lord Lives. He is the blessed rock upon which His church is built. He is the blessed rock to which all who call upon Him in repentance and faith run to His refuge knowing that they are saved by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. He is the exalted God sitting at the right hand of God the Father and He is the salvation to all who will call upon Him. And He is the condemnation for all who would oppose Him.

Just as in verses 7-19, the earth reeled and rocked. The mountains were trembling and God bowed the heavens and came down. So too, at the end of the age, the Lord Jesus Christ will break through the heavens again. This time, He will be coming as the King to take home His people and to vanquish His enemies.

Now, the nations bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ alone. And those who do not bow today, they will bow down one day when He comes again to demonstrate that He is the anointed King to whom all must and will bow down in submission,

Conclusion

Believer, Jesus Christ is your rock and your fortress in this life and the life to come. God has delivered you by His grace in Jesus Christ the Son. Cling to the rock today.

This morning, if you are yet to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, He is either the rock of refuge or the rock of stumbling. What that means is that either you will find shelter in Him from the wrath of God by turning from your sin and calling up Jesus in faith in His finished work on the cross and resurrection. Or, you can reject Him thereby stumbling over Him and bearing God's wrath for rejecting His Son.

May those who have ears hear what the Spirit says today.

Let us pray.

