

PSALMS

songs for all of life

PSALMS: BRAGGING ON GOD – PSALM 18

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Psalm 18:1-6

The Psalms of the Bible are a collection of songs from different writers, functioning like a hymnal for the full expression of human emotion. There are psalms of joy and psalms of pain, psalms of anger and psalms of peace. Join us for our third installment, asking the Psalms to teach us about God's heart, the heart of the scriptures, and the heart inside you and I. Visit doxa-church.com for service times or more details on how we make disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

Good morning, Doxa. Today we'll be kicking off our Psalms series with Psalm chapter 18:1-6.

I love you, oh Lord, my strength. 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. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. 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.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Morning, everyone. How're we all doing? Hey, who was here last week for the Faith and Work event? Was anyone here for last week Sunday or the event? Either one. It's pretty, I don't know, maybe? If you didn't know, last week was our Faith and Work Sunday. It went awesome. Pastor Toby blessed us with the sermon and also stuck around and did it. If you guys have not seen that, if you missed it or you'd like to know more about that, go on our app or go on our website; you can find that on our YouTube channel, find that on our website, and go watch his sermon on faith and work, integrating your faith with your work, and you can go watch his extra talk that he did at the end and even the Q and A session. It is worth absolutely worth your time if you at all feel like God is calling you to bring that aspect of you, which we all hopefully should, into the work, into our workplace. I hope you would go watch that. Okay. It was awesome.

Today we have the privilege of starting our Summer in the Psalms series. And last year we did this exact same thing, we know people are traveling and people are coming in and out of town, all that stuff. And

this is a great opportunity for us to sort of get into the emotions of God. Now, we're calling this the songs for all of life because I mean, really that's what the Psalms are. They're kind of the, they're the songs for all of life. They are the emotions, the collections of emotions and poems and songs that we all experience in our hearts, that God sort of connects with us. And these are songs that are meant to be sung and read together. And the range of emotions and feelings is crazy. It's all over the map.

In the Psalms, you get to lament, you get to doubt, you get to celebrate, you get to petition or ask, okay, you get to give thanks to God, and you could even just praise him. This is all those things. The Psalms really tap into our emotional centers. And by the way, at Doxa, we love our intellectual exercises here at this church. We absolutely do. The Psalms are not just intellectual pursuits that give us information about God. No. Rather, they help us communicate those emotions to God, much like we do in things like worship music where we're experiencing and expressing ourselves to him. They're designed to help us relate and emote to our maker.

For this series, we're doing things a little different, unlike last summer. So, this series we're going to bring, I'm going to bring in a few friends from some churches around the region, around the Seattle area. There are lead pastors at other churches, and they're going to bring in some of their favorite psalms to join us and teach on how their emotions and how they connect to God through the psalm that they choose. Okay? So, it's gonna be really fun. Now it's gonna be different.

We believe that it's important for the Capital C Church to all work together. By the way, by just guesses, how many churches do you think are in the Puget Sound region? Anybody have a guess? You got a thousand, two thousand, four? One. There's one church, right? It's a capital C Church. Come on, this is not a trick question. There's one church. It's Jesus' Church, right, and we're all connected. And I, we're firm believers that it takes all types of churches to reach all types of people. We believe, as long as you're believing the scriptures and you're teaching the Bible and you're all about Jesus, that it takes all types of churches to reach people, okay? And we're going to all work together to do this. And so some of my friends, some of other pastors are going to come in and teach, and I'm also going to go out to some of their churches and teach as well.

Most of it's going to be on the Psalms. It's going to be pretty fun, okay? If you're around the building, you might see a little schedule, the schedule that's laying around. It's on the walls. You can go check out, see who's going to be teaching for us, okay? It's gonna be fun. So let me pray for us. We're in Psalm 18. If you've got a Bible, please turn it there, and we'll get started.

All right, Lord. Well, as we get to talk about what it means to boast in you, <laugh>, Lord, I pray that our selves can get pushed back in the midst of this, I think it's nice to hear, just a moment of quiet. Such a long week. A lot going on this morning for a lot of people, a lot going on for people all over the country right now, Lord. It's just the stories I've heard have just been--it's just a lot. And so, a moment of quiet to hear from you is I think what we all need. So, Lord, would you speak to us? Would you be honest with us? Would you reveal yourself to us? And would we tap in, not to our thinking and to our knowledge, but to our emotions this morning as we try to experience you in a new way. And with these six weeks as we wrestle through some of the deepest and wonderful scriptures that you've crafted and that you've ordained, Lord God, would we get lost in you in that process? We love you, we praise you, and in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Like I mentioned, you get to give thanks in the Psalms, you get to petition in the Psalms, you get to get angry, you get to get sad, you get to get overwhelmed, you get to get frustrated. All these different emotions. You get to do all these different things. And today, in Psalm 18, you get to brag. You get to brag. That's right. I said it. Now, everyone loves a bragger, do they not? I mean, like, who doesn't love someone just pounding on their chest about how awesome they are, right?

And if you're over 70 years old, you definitely like can't stand watching the NFL. And there's guys who're like pumping their chest and now you're like, look at that. Just being arrogant, like boasting in himself. What about Jesus? You know? And you just get all, you know, people do that all the time, right? Everyone loves braggers, right? When someone boasts about how awesome they are in something, everyone around them just seems to light up with joy. It's just a glorious moment because everyone knows they're awesome, right? Of course not.

Is bragging always wrong though? Is it always wrong? I mean, you might think, why would a psalm encourage me to brag? Because that's what Psalm 18 is about to do. Now, if you're curious, just for fun, there are two main types of bragging. So, I want you to help evaluate with me these two types, and maybe see where your brand of bragging lies, because let me assure you, it'll be here. Okay?

The first type of bragging is the boastful brag. And unless you just lack total self-awareness, this is this idea that--it's really easy to spot, and I'll just say this, it's as simple as saying things like this, "Look at all the money I have", right? It's a boastful brag, "Look at all the money I have. I've got a lot of money." If someone asks you if you have a new, you know, about your new car, and you say, "Yeah, it was expensive, but you know, it's just money, it's not a big deal", you know? Wow, geez, that's awesome. This is your bare bones basic brag. Well, you know, "I know a lot of answers to questions 'cause I'm smart, and I've learned a lot of things through my life." Right? It's just very simple, very straightforward. Or in the words of Ron Burgundy, "kind of a big deal" right? "I have many leather-bound books." "My house smells of rich mahogany." "I know Ted Koppel, he comes over on occasion." Things like that. You're like, what?

There are other forms of the boastful brag, though. If you're just saying, like, who actually talks like that? Okay, maybe fictional characters in the 2000s, but almost nobody talks like that. There's a few hidden forms of this boastful brag, for instance, like the storyteller brag. This is when we put ourselves as the hero of every story we tell. And you tell a story in the past, and the only ones you remember are the ones where like you did something really awesome, right? Yeah. Their marriage is really on the rocks. But then I came in with that information, I saw Oprah that afternoon, and I just boom and I hit 'em with it and they all of a sudden came to see the light.

And all of a sudden, you're--by the way, be very afraid, if your preacher does that every week, because the hero's Jesus, that's the hint, it's not us. If that brag doesn't get to you, there's also the one-upper brag. And the one-upper brag is when you share something and the one-upper has got a slightly better share with slightly better results, almost immediately, right? This is like, you know, you say maybe like, I went on a vacation in Miami and it was, it was awesome, it was beautiful. And they say, oh yeah, well I went to Barbados. So, similar climate, similar region, but a little more exotic, a little more tropical, a little more private. So that's not a big deal. How long did you go? 10 days? Oh, I went 14. Yeah. Yeah. Rented a Porsche. It was awesome. Yeah, you would've loved it. Did you get, what'd you get? A Geo Metro? They still make those? Oh geez.

It's just that sort of vibe, right, the one-upper, and you're like, oh my gosh. Now, maybe that's too aggressive of a brag for you, right, that's a bit much. And if that sounds like it's too aggressive or over the top, which by the way it is, there's always this second type of bragging. And this is like we talked about, the humble bragger. The humble brag. Now, if you're wondering what that is, and you didn't get that in the passing of the peace, this is for those of you without the courage to just say what you mean, right? You want to brag, but you just don't know how to say it, and this comes in various forms.

For instance, like a pretending-to-hate-compliments brag. Gosh, don't you hate it when our manager tells me I'm doing the best on the team? Oh my gosh, <laugh>, it's so frustrating. I can't believe I'm top three in sales again. This is like, stop looking, you know? <Laugh> Oh geez, employee of the quarter again, here we are. Or you know, you hate when you get told you're good-looking all the time and

you're like, oh my gosh, not, stop it. Okay, I get it. Okay. It's frustrating, it's overwhelming guys. We know you're perfect. You get it, you're perfect.

But then there's any parent's favorite type of bragger: the oh-let-me-help-you brag. You know what I'm talking about? Or I'll put it another way, the unsolicited advice brag. Oh, you see, the reason your child can't sleep is that you're unwilling to let them cry for a few moments. You understand that, right? If you've tried Babywise, you know that you let 'em cry in five-minute increments and you wake up and five minutes, you touch 'em, you put 'em back in the crib, 10 minutes, you put 'em back in there, 15 minutes, and then they sleep. My baby has been sleeping from basically the womb. It has not woken up 16 hours a night, wakes up for one meal, back down immediately. <Laugh> I sleep like a baby every night. I wake up at 5:00 AM and meditate. I'm a perfect parent. Frustrating, right? Oh, the reason why your baby can't walk, isn't walking. is because you're coddling them. You're not supposed to coddle them. You know, my baby's five months, she's been walking, can't hold a bottle but can walk. I don't understand. I think it's because of my parenting. You should probably try some of the solutions. You want a book? Another book recommendation from a new parent. I mean, new parents, you know what I'm talking about. It's horrible. Stop it. Like, we don't want your book. We don't want your book, okay? Humble brags.

But then there's the king of all humble brags. And if you have a job and you've been on LinkedIn, you know exactly what I'm talking about. This is the LinkedIn humble brag. This is where we write massive soliloquies about getting new jobs and how when we were young, we've always wanted to be the VP of a SaaS or company. And now that we've finally made it, we've accomplished everything, and it came with a sizable pay raise and I can't believe it. It's just this long. All that to say I'm the new such and such at (dot dot dot). One score and three years ago, I was an infant, but I had a dream that one day I would elevate myself amongst the greats in B2B software solutions to become a mid-size account executive at this company. And today, my dream has come true. Fin. Right?

And that's how they go. And they are brutally cringey. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, you've probably done it. And you're amongst them. Guys, nobody likes that. Stop. Please. That's why we can't go on LinkedIn anymore, guys, okay? But I think what's important: why do we brag, though? Because bragging is sort of cringey. It makes us uncomfortable when we witness or hear it. It does, it makes us uncomfortable. Why? I think it's because we sort of know the reality that bragging is not usually the whole truth. It projects us sort of more than we are. It makes us look more self-sufficient than we could ever be, and the truth is, we are actually weaker and more dependent and more needy and less perfect than our bragging might let on.

But again, why do people do it? There are a ton of reasons. But reading Psalm 18, I think you can actually see some reasons. There are actually several big reasons we brag, and I'll give you a few. First is we can be insecure and we lack stability in our own hearts. We're not secure with who we are and our emotions, and our feelings are unstable, and so bragging is a way to sort of earn security relationally and emotionally from other people. And so, we kind of want people to celebrate us because no one maybe does. And we're experiencing that lack and we're insecure in that.

There's other ways, other reasons, we brag. We brag because sometimes we feel vulnerable and unprotected, and bragging sort of helps put a shield of protection around us. It gives us a covering of invulnerability because, see, I got everything working out. You don't need to comment, like, everything's fine. We also brag because sometimes we feel weak. We're not as strong as we think, and bragging is a way to appear strong and put together before people, because everyone else seems so strong and put together. And really, though, often we just lack confidence in ourselves, in the world, and bragging is like talking ourselves into what we're saying. When we brag, it helps reinforce what we want to believe about ourselves. Bragging on ourselves really though, guys, if we're honest, unless again, you lack total

self-awareness, never comes from a hundred percent honest place because humans know deep down, we're insecure, we're vulnerable, we're sometimes weak and we might even lack a lot of confidence. But Psalm 18 does tell us there is a scenario and a season for which we should all brag regardless of who we are.

This Psalm shows King David, the author of the Psalm, celebrating, really bragging, not about himself and his kingdom, but about God and his kingdom. We get to see David showboating, high stepping about his God to the world. God's grace is shown on display in delivering him time and time again from his enemies. And guess what? He had a lot. You see, you and I, we can do two things with the favor and the victories and the positives that we receive in this life. And really the negatives and the failures. We can take credit. You can make yourself out to be the hero like we talked about in that example, even though there's at least a small part of you, who knows--I don't know if that's really true. Or you can make much of the real author of your success and positives in your life. Psalm 18 just does just that. It is a resounding victory lap by David, grandstanding, hot-dogging, making much of the real king who's delivering him from those who hate him.

So, for the next few minutes, let's brag on God together, that's what the psalm does, but pay careful attention. Let's also see how God can actually solve the deepest faults in our own heart that makes bragging about ourselves just so uncomfortably misguided. Okay. Let's start at the top. Verse 1. King David says, "I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock" again, "in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn"--that means strength--"of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies." You hear that? He says it a few times. The Lord is my rock, my protector, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, he says it again, my rock in whom I take refuge.

I mean, what is a rock exactly? I think we can kind of surmise it, a little bit, what he's saying. What does he mean by rock? What is a rock? Well, it's stable. A rock is stable. It's foundation, it's sure, it's solid. It's kind of just the opposite of us at times, right? And here's our first point. In the midst of our instability and insecurity, God is our rock who is stable and is secure. You know, one thing that's helpful for you to know about Psalm 18 is that it's sort of a carbon copy of 2 Samuel 22. If you read 2 Samuel 22, you're gonna see almost a shot-for-shot remake. Okay? That's basically what it is. And essentially, it's at the end of David's life, and he's sort of singing this song that he probably wrote earlier after overcoming the former King Saul, who as you may or may not know, was trying to kill him.

Saul is David's predecessor. And before David was king, Saul wanted him dead. He was literally trying to kill him. He was a man that David once looked up to, one that he once served, one that he once trusted, and this man Saul in his own rage and jealousy, wanted David dead. And he had the power to get that done. And there were times when Saul, I mean he almost had him, and we're talking like that close. And somehow David narrowly escapes death. Now, I don't know about you, but if that was me, if that was me, I would've probably seen the fact that his mentor and someone he looked up to was trying to kill him was probably a curse, not a blessing. It'd be awfully hard to sing to God how well he's delivering me when I feel like I'm spending years of my life on the run from the man that he appointed to be king.

That would be pretty tough. David could have seen the fact that his mentor and someone he once looked up to is trying to kill him. I mean, look, he says it in verse 4, check this out. "The cords of death encompassed me." I mean, how many of you say that about your office job? <laugh> The cords of death encompass me. Well, it's only 11:30! God! <Laugh> And it feels like that some ways. But actual death was encompassing David here. "The torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me." The King James says that Hell, Hell encompassed me.

Does that feel like security or insecurity? It feels like someone might be a little insecure. Does it feel like David's life is unstable? Yeah, I mean, at the very least, right? We're talking about the rock being stable.

Does this life feel stable to you, to anybody? Being on the run from a wicked king who's got unlimited resources to have you killed. Stable or unstable? Unstable.

I remember being in seasons of not running from a wicked king trying to kill me, but I do remember having seasons of tremendous anxiety and fear in my life. Maybe some of you have been there, you've experienced those moments of your life where you just don't know how you're gonna get out of 'em. About nine years ago, I hit the spot where, after I was done playing football, I played professionally for a while in case you don't know that. And when I was done, I spent some time working at a technology company, and so I get the struggle at the desk job. And there was time where I actually hit adrenal burnout. I burned out my adrenals. I went to a few doctors, and how I knew was I couldn't get up. So I laid on a couch for three months. I remember having to call in sick, call in sick, call in sick. And eventually I quit the job and then didn't take the next one so I could have time to lay there. And I'm laying on the couch, and I don't know if my wife probably didn't appreciate that very much. And we had a new baby at the time and another toddler, and it was really, really hard for her to manage that.

But there were days where I would try to get up and I'm like, I'm looking at stuff like, why is that shaking, you know? And is there more, is there some forest fires again, it's so foggy in here. It's like, no, there's no forest fire. You know? And there would be times where I would finally go outside and I would be, I'd catch myself staring at clouds to see if the cloud was blurry or clear. And I would ask people, Hey, is that cloud blurry to you? And he'd go like, there's a thousand clouds. Like, which one are you talking about? Never mind, I'm losing my mind. And I would just be laying there. And it was so hard. It was funny after, like, looking back on it, but while I was going through it, it was torture, it was absolutely torture. And I would go on a walk just to get a little relief from not feeling like I couldn't see, I couldn't think. I was like looking out of a fish bowl, for like three straight months. And I was exhausted, but I was also tired and wired. And there were moments where I felt like life's walls were closing in on me.

I got dark a bit, and I remember thinking, man, I don't want to harm myself or anything like that. But for the first time in my life I could see why death wouldn't be so bad. Like, maybe just like this going away would be okay. And I wasn't on the run from a wicked king, but I, I do remember what it feels like to be desperate. And you know what, David could have ended the psalm right there. The snares of death confronted me. Psalm over. I mean he has some of those. He could have ended it right there. And you know what I think? I think many of us are tempted to end the psalm there too. We could stop reading. How many of us, how many of you have had something happen in your life that just feels helpless? Like, the walls are closing in, you have no idea if this is gonna end, and you feel like you can't get out of it. Some of us, yeah.

Sometimes when we're in the midst of those situations and we start to believe that we ourselves are the only reinforcements we have, like our resources, our ability to call the right doctors, our ability to talk to the right people, our ability to get ourselves into the right school, our ability to talk to the right people to get us into that job, or whatever it is, if we believe that we're the only resources we have, we'll spend a lot of time feeling really helpless and really insecure. Because the truth is, we are helpless and insecure.

But David decides to keep singing. Look at verse 6. "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." God. The imagery in Psalm 18, God's sitting in this mighty fortress of a temple and hears the cries of David and he gets up, and when he gets up to go answer him, earthquakes happen, volcanoes erupt, the winds rush. And God goes, "What is it David?" God wants to hear us. The rock answers us.

You need to know that your life's not always going to feel stable. Spoiler alert. Okay? You already know that, maybe. Your life's not always going to feel stable. And even the little control you think you have is probably an illusion anyway. You didn't create stability in your life with good schools or great retirement program or good family or some wealth. You didn't do that. All of that, friends, I'll just break it to you, is

an illusion of stability. And any of that can be taken from you in an instant, just like that. And who are you?

Real stability isn't in anything you've got. Real stability is a spiritual stability. It's knowing that whether your bank account is full or empty or whether you're safe or whether you're on the run from one of your enemies, whether you're safe in your house, or whether you are being fired from your job, or whether you've been, you just signed a new contract and you're going to be there for a long time--no matter what the circumstances, the rock has you. Because he's stable, then you can be secure and stable emotionally and spiritually. And then you're able and equipped to handle life's challenges. The illusion of a nice full bank and a good job and a spouse that cares about you, all those things are blessings from God. But that is not stability, not in this world.

Verse 31: "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?" This is a real question we could all ask ourselves, guys, what is real stability? What is real stability? What is it? What is real security? What is real security? Is it money, family, good grades? Getting a boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse? Who is your rock that you lean on when times are tough? David says, who is a rock, but my God. Guys, we don't brag on ourselves. Don't brag on yourself so you can appear secure. Brag on God because he is security.

We don't just brag on ourselves for those reasons. We also brag on ourselves, again, not just because we feel unstable or insecure, but because we feel vulnerable sometimes. We feel vulnerable like we're exposed. And remember, it's a way for us to appear invincible and invulnerable to brag. We call this projecting, right? We project an image of invincibility or power, so people will sort of leave us alone. Like, I'm strong, see? Like, look at what I've done, see? Look at what I have, see? Look how people treat me, see? I mean, doesn't that prove to you that everything's great? Right, right? But really strength and invincibility in this life, again, is an illusion. The funny thing is, we think a well-funded bank account and friend circles and families and even clean bills of health represent real security. But for humanity, for us as people in and of ourselves, there is no such thing as real invincibility or real strength. There's no such thing. But you might say, well, if I had money like Bezos or Musk, feels pretty secure, or power like the President, or maybe fame like Messi or LeBron, where everyone knows who I am? Michael Jackson in 95?

Maybe no one wants that. <Laugh>. If I had those things, then that would feel like invincibility. That would feel like real security. That would be strength. But again, consider Saul, David's enemy, again. He was Israel's first king. First king, God's chosen people. This guy's put in charge of God's chosen people. Check. He's wealthy, he's powerful. He had men at his service. He commanded armies. What else is security if not that, and include this fact: he was literally chosen by God himself to be in that role. That sounds secure. Like if God elects me to do so, I mean it's, it's going down, right? That's, that's the truth. How'd it go for him? In his pursuit of David and trying to kill him, he found out David was staying with Samuel, a prophet. And so Saul decides he's going to send many messengers to take him, bring him back and kill him.

And look how it goes for Saul. 1 Samuel 19:20-24: "Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. Then he himself went... And he asked, where are Samuel and David? And he went there... And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Rama. And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night..."

Now, I'm not sure why he got naked <laugh>, commentators don't say <laugh>, but he is definitely vulnerable. All that power. I'm King Saul. I got messengers. Go get him. What happened to him? Doesn't matter. Got more. Go get him. I don't know. Okay, that's weird. Okay, you guys go, okay, fine, I'll go myself. He shows up and the power of God meets him and ransacks him and he drops to his floor. And the power of God is so potent in the room. He has no choice but to prophesy and worship and proclaim God is good, for a day and a night, he doesn't even know, and he wakes up without his clothes. All that gold and all that silver, all those chest plates mean nothing, not before a mighty God. Naked, vulnerable, and weak.

If your life is being lived the opposite of God's will, then what we perceive as security isn't security. Saul's kingship was reduced to him prophesying naked all day for a whole day. All that power torn away. You see, guys, we are pretty vulnerable, and we're pretty weak, and that's okay. No one's saying that's bad, not here.

Second point. In the midst of our weakness and vulnerability, God is our shield who is strong and protecting. You see, for David real strength came from realizing his dependency and his weakness, not from projecting what he thought he had. He wasn't enough to beat Saul on his own, and he understood that. He wasn't making phone calls to important people in different places and trying to solve his own issues. That's not what he did. He needed to depend on someone greater. Look at verse 16. "He sent from on high, he took me." It's David talking about God. "...he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me." There He admits he's weak. "They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place." That's a safe place. And "he rescued me, because he delighted in me."

Where do you go at the end of yourself? Hmm? You see, Saul and David went to two different places. Saul went to his own self-sufficiency, and what happened? It failed him. But where do you go when you're at the end of yourself? Hmm? Do you go to independence or dependence? Do you fall back on the things you do so well and so great and so awesome and so amazing that, just got this, this is my bread and butter, this is who I am. Or do you go somewhere where you have to admit you're weak and lost?

David lived purely in the will of God, and by the way guys, there's no better place to live. You can live out here where you're really strong and awesome and there's a little insecurity, but you're powerful and you're wealthy and you've got it all together, or you're working your way there, and not be in the will of God. Or you can come over here and be weak and dependent and lost and broken and a broken sinner, and be living directly in the will of God. And this is always a better spot. It's always a better spot, right in the midst of the will of God.

This is another question we have to ask ourselves. What is real strength, anyway? What is real dependence? What is real invincibility rather, anyway? What is it? What is invincibility, what is strength? Is it physical power? Is it financial power? Is it relational power? See, both David and Saul found out there's actually only one real invincible person. There's only one real shield. And it's not money and it's not relationships and it's not your knowledge. The shield's name is God. Dependence. You see, even the apostle Paul said that God said to him, my power is perfected in your weakness, not your strength. He says, I will delight in weakness because when I'm weak then I'm strong, because the power of God is in me, because I'm living in the will of God, because it's a recognition, it's an act of worship to realize I do not have it all together, and I can stop pretending. Don't brag on yourself to feel stronger and invulnerable to others. Brag on God because he is strength.

We brag for other reasons, though. Sometimes we brag on ourselves because, well, we lack confidence. We talked about that. We lack confidence in our abilities and in our resources. We lack confidence in the

people we know, the people we don't. But sometimes we lack confidence in things that are much deeper than that. Especially if you've been alive long enough, you sort of realize that creating for yourself an identity for other people to be proud of so you can be more confident of it, even for yourself to be proud of and more confident of it, sometimes it doesn't work out so well, if you've been alive just long enough. Our identities that we create need to be rooted in something deeper than my own will and how confident I want to be, and we need more than that, not just your opinion.

I'll give you an example. My own life is a good example of this. I remember my dad left when I was young. My mom passed away when I was 13, and I sort of had an identity crisis after that, which makes a lot of sense. But as I got into high school, you know, that's kind of where you come of age, and you sort of decide, this is who I'm gonna be. And I was kind of trying to solve that problem as a 17-year-old kid, I'm trying to go to college, like who am I gonna be as a person, you know? And you know, I thought about it, and I was like, I can't really be like, "well, I can fall back on the family name, the Williams family name, I can fall back on that". Because nobody has my last name in my family except for my dad. My sister doesn't even have my own last name. That's how complicated my family story is. My dad's last name is different from all of his other family. Really long story. I can't fall back on that, and besides, there's a million Williams' in Redmond alone, you know, it's not all that unique, right? So I can't fall back on that. What do I, like, well then, who am I?

Well, I moved so much as a kid, I didn't have a city I could say, well this is my home. I didn't, I had to move so much. I lost all friends during the moves and I knew I wasn't gonna go live on the streets and be a gangbanger or a drug dealer. That could have been the easy solution. I didn't want to do that. So in the midst of all this, in sort of my high school years going into college, I thought, you know what, I think I'll just be like the athlete. Like that's who, like, that's what I'm gonna wear. I want to be the athlete. I'm gonna, I'm gonna eat good and I eat well and I, and I'm gonna work out and I'm gonna play sports. I'm gonna be the athlete and that's how people will see me. And that's how I'll project to the world. And so I'll do the things that athlete people do. And I'll do that.

And you know, it actually kind of worked out for a while. It wasn't so bad. It got me through tough times. It got me through college. I played in the NFL for a while and then it kind of ended. And here I am in my mid twenties without any of that. Like who am I gonna be now? I mean, I just crafted this persona and I've lived it. I've embodied it for so many years. I didn't know who I would be anymore. I didn't have an identity. It was gone from me. How could I be confident in this persona I created when that person's gone? I remember once talking to a mentor about this and I was sort of complaining at him in my lack of confidence in myself and my identity. And, and I said, I just don't know who I am anymore. The things I used to brag about, like I no longer feel like I can brag about those things 'cause they're gone.

And he said, this is some years ago, he said, you know, I don't know a single man who has ever known who he was before age 35. And that's like at the absolute earliest. And of course I was, you know, maybe 26 at the time so, I was offended. And like young men get offended, I'm here crying about, I don't have an identity; he tells me I don't have one, and I go, hold on a second, I might have a little. But the truth was he was right. Around that age, and honestly for a lot of people, you live long enough to see your faulty self-confidence that we have in our ability and the facade of an identity be challenged or broken by the world.

If you've been, if you're old enough, you know, that's why people have midlife crises. They expected more and they realize they're not going to get it, and they go sideways. Who am I anymore? So I buy a Porsche, get a comb-over, I don't know <laugh>, sorry guys, sorry. You get all these things and project these different images because you don't know who else to be. That was my story. The truth was he was right. And the greater truth is it's legitimately possible, guys, that everything in this life we have is going to fail. Everything. Nothing lasts forever. As King Solomon even once said, he said, I observed everything

going on under the sun, everything. And really it's all meaningless. One translation says it's like trying to grab the wind.

That's illusion. That's a facade. Nothing lasts. In the end, everything's going to end, guys, your company is going to end. No matter how big or massive it is and how rich the shareholders are, your company's going to end. Our reputation is certainly going to end if it hasn't ended already. Your good looks, they're gonna be gone. And even your country will all end. The Roman Empire didn't think it was going to end. The Persian empire didn't think it was going to end. The United States will end, but God's not going to end. King David wrote these words thousands of years ago and you know what's around from then? Almost nothing except for this thing. The Bible says the grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord will stand. God will always be here.

Look at verse 46. "The Lord lives" says David, "and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation--the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence. For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name." David's ending lines here are triumphant. They are a triumphant high-step on the way to celebrate his victory. And he is beaming with confidence, but his confidence is not in him.

And here's the third point. In the midst of our lack of confidence and assuredness, God is our confidence, who is guaranteed to win his battle. God's word never fails, either. Look at verse 30. "This God--his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him." Look what it says, the word of the Lord proves true. It does not fail. Yes and amen, it is so good. But a warning, to end, I think if we're not careful, we can do what most modern Americans do and make this somehow all about us. We just spent a good deal about talking about how's not us, and we can make it about us somehow. We're really good at this. You see, if we're not careful, Psalm 18 can become about how God can give us confidence to fight our battles, or how our God can give us security and us protection and receive motivation for our life's challenges.

Now can he do that? Of course he can. Of course he can. Does he? Absolutely. But that's not the point of the Psalm. You see, all of a sudden the Psalm becomes about our receiving motivation to fight life's challenges of low self-esteem, lack of hope, bully at school, lack of courage to start your business. You know, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, right? You're starting a insurance company like great, good for you. But when Paul was in jail chained to that floor, I don't think he was thinking about starting your insurance company. The Bible's a book for us but not about us. That's the big thing here. There is such an American flinch here to make this book about God and this passage about God and how he can deliver me, with implications for God's plan, when the real perspective is how God fulfills his plan with implications for us.

Can you be delivered from brokenness? Yes. Can you be healed of sickness? Absolutely. Can God provide and protect you? Of course he can. But those things are byproducts of following God and his story, not the other way around. This is true for David and it's true for us. And guys, the church is guilty of this, just like anyone. I'm a pastor, we're guilty of this. Pastors like me are guilty of this, making the church as much about us as it is about God. So many sermons about finding purpose and not any about finding God himself. Is David happy he's king? Of course he's happy he's king. That's great. Is he happy the Davidic monarchy stays? Of course he is. The Davidic monarchy and David sitting on that throne has value to be sure, however, its greatest value is in its foreshadow that the coming Messiah is going to sit upon that throne. It's not about David's butt on that throne, it's about Jesus's butt. All that David was Jesus is, and far more. Throw something in there for the 10-year-olds in the room.

This Psalm shows David celebrating, bragging, that it's not about himself, it is about God and his kingdom. And God is violently committed to his plan of keeping David on the throne, not for David only,

but because he plans on bringing about a kingly Messiah through that throne. That's the point of the Psalm. You see in the beginning, you and I were sinners. We failed. God creates this beautiful world; we rebel against God. That's the story of the Bible. You and I wander away in active, open rebellion against him. Our sin separates us from God. God's own people, Israel, wander from him. He's trying to preserve them. He even puts David on this wonderful throne and Israel wanders away anyway. God wasn't content in that. And so he says that king that I established that David, I established I'm going to bring a new king.

I'm going to bring a new king through that line. One that will do all of the things David couldn't, all of the things that Solomon and Saul and every other king that's sat on that throne could not do. He's going to protect my people, and he's going to create an environment, and he's going to be in a land, in a place, with the people, and they're going to thrive, and glory's going to happen. And his name is Jesus. And Jesus is going to come to the world and he's going to live a life without sin. And he's going to be punished by sinners like us. His own people are going to kill him. Talk about a fail. And he's going to rise from death three days later, coming out to establish the throne of David. And Jesus would conquer the elements that David and all the other kings could not overcome. You see this psalm is about God's plan being fulfilled through David, not David's plan being fulfilled through God. And so it is with your life. Your life is about God's plan being fulfilled through you, not your plan being fulfilled through God.

You know, a lot of modern worship music takes songs and makes them about how God makes their life so great, and how they finally now have the courage to worship God. And they say things like, God is making this so great. I love you God, I've done so well. Now look at all I have and all I am, my purpose is found, my meaning is found, yada, yada, yada.

Worship is not about how we benefit from God. Worship is about God. David says in a song: for this, I will praise you, oh God, among the nations, and what? Sing to your name. And what is worship if it's not bragging? It is bragging on Jesus, showboating and boasting in his power, in his goodness. We can do that to ourselves so easily, or we can put God on the throne that he built himself and worship and brag on him. You see, David's reign was a foreshadow of the type of victories that Jesus would soon have. Although he looked death in the face, he overcame, showboating out of the grave with death in his hand. Jesus comes from the grave resurrected for you. Guess what? Bragging that anybody, anybody who believes in him would not taste death, but would live forever. Jesus is the only person ever, that's ever walked the earth, that can and should brag. In him, there's confidence. You feel unconfident, you feel like you don't have it all together, you feel like maybe you lack stability or lack security, or maybe you lack strength or you're weak or you're sick, any of those things? That's okay. That's okay to be weak and vulnerable and lost.

We, our culture wants us to project strong images, but none of us know that's real. All of us know that deep down it's not like that. And that's why we don't like wearing masks and facades to places, we're getting sick of it. That's why we don't like our politicians anymore, because we know they're lying. They're talking out of both sides of their mouth. That's why we don't trust authority figures when they're so perfect and squeaky clean, because we know it's not true. It's okay to be vulnerable and weak and lack confidence because God is your invulnerability, God--Jesus--is your stability, God is your confidence, and God is your strength if you go to him.

And so it is. Let's pray. Father, I ask for the Holy Spirit to come for my friends all throughout the building, those watching online, those on vacation, with a spirit of rest, with a sense of peace and contentment on us, as we hear from you that we're okay and we don't have to be more than we are in order to make people feel more comfortable with who we are, in order to make people know that we're stronger than we actually are, that we can give people not what they want, but just what we have. And what I am is good enough for today because you've put me here in this moment. And that's going to have to be

because I trust you and you're the king, not me and not anybody else. I pray for a radical confidence, not in ourselves, but in one who actually deserves confidence.

And might we brag on our God this week? Might we brag on our God to our coworkers and our neighbors, my friends in here that are far from God right now? Maybe they're Christian or not Christians, and that's okay too. You know, I pray that you would give them a sense of confidence that, hey, maybe something I heard today, maybe that's what's going on in my heart. I pray for clarity and calm and courage for all my friends this week as we go. Might we be mighty messengers; might we brag in Jesus' name. Amen.