

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Series: The Psalms ***
*** Topic: Introduction: David's Life Part 1 * Psalm 18 * 3/9/25 ***

MAIN POINT

At least half of the 150 Psalms were written by David, who is described in the Bible as “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22). And yet we see David was a man who was far from perfect (just like us) and whose life was far from perfect as well. Understanding the major events in his life can help us better understand what he was going through as he penned these Psalms.

INTRODUCTION

Why do you think people tend to seek security and fulfillment in people or things like relationships, possessions, money, education, business, vacations, etc.? Why do these things ultimately fail us?

How would you describe the security and hope you’ve found in knowing Christ?

Scripture tells us time and again that God is sovereign, loving, and faithful. Like David, our lives are a testimony of God’s love and protection. Our response should also be one of praise and dependence.

UNDERSTANDING

Note to study leader: As we prepare for the sermon series on the Psalms, we are investing the first two weeks into looking at David’s life. Understanding the major events in his life can help us better understand what he was going through as he penned these Psalms.

Note to study leader: This week’s lesson will be reviewing some of the major events that occurred in David’s life before he became king. In next week’s lesson, we will be looking at some of the major events that occurred in his life after he became king.

Note to study leader: You won’t have adequate time to do a deep-dive into each of the scripture passages. Work to help the class summarize the lessons from the various events, allowing adequate time to discuss David’s thoughts about when God delivered him from Saul in Psalm 18.

REVIEW OF SOME KEY EVENTS FROM DAVID’S LIFE BEFORE BECOMING KING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 16:1, 7-13: SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

How do you think this event affected David’s view of his life?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 17:1-10, 32-37, AND 43-47: DAVID AND GOLIATH

Contrast the difference between how Saul saw this fight and how David saw it.

Saul was looking at the giant’s size, armor, and weapons compared to David’s. David on the other hand, was looking at the size of God compared to the size of the giant.

Contrast the difference between how Goliath saw this fight and how David saw it.

While Goliath looked at his size and his weapons, David looked at the size of God.

“The secret of David’s success was his ability to trust and obey God. Had he looked merely at the giant challenge facing him, he would have turned around and run away, as did the rest of the Israelites. But through faith, David saw what his countrymen did not.” Charles Stanley “The Thrill of Trusting God”

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 18:6-12: SAUL TRIES TO KILL DAVID

How do you think this event might have affected David?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 21:10—22:1: DAVID FEIGNS INSANITY

How difficult do you imagine this event was for David to go through?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 24:1-13: DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

What does the fact David chose to spare Saul when God placed Saul's life directly in his hands demonstrate about David?

David had been anointed by Samuel. He shows he understands that God will carry out what He promised, and He doesn't need David's help to fulfill it.

Based on all the verses we have read; how would you describe David's life from the time he was anointed by Samuel throughout his time before becoming king?

It was a common occurrence for David to be in peril, and a common thing to be dealing with deep interpersonal struggles. And we generally see that he was trusting God throughout these events. But it was probably common for his emotional bank account to have been running on empty, as we see this expressed in some of the Psalms he wrote.

How might God have been using all of these events in David's life (James 12-4)?

"You don't have to go looking for unhappiness, but when it comes, there's opportunity." Pastor Randy Hahn, The Heights Baptist Church, February 2nd, 2025

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-10 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-11

What do these verses add to the fact God was allowing a lot of bad things to be happening in David's young life?

God uses difficult circumstances to help us learn to continually rely on Him.

SELECTED READINGS FROM PSALM 18: WHEN GOD DELIVERED DAVID FROM SAUL

Note to study leader: We see from the introduction to Psalm 18 that David sang this Psalm to the LORD when the LORD delivered him from the hand of Saul. This places this Psalm in the timeframe we have been looking at.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:1-6

From verses 4-5, what impression do you get of David's circumstances when he wrote this Psalm?

David reflected on the years he spent running from Saul and battling the Philistines during his early years. At times, it must have seemed that this defined his existence. But when circumstances made it appear as if all hope was lost, David continued to call upon the Lord and trust Him. And God continued to deliver him.

What metaphors did David use to describe the Lord in verses 1-4, and what do they demonstrate about his view of God?

David's metaphors to describe God included a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, refuge, and savior. David thanked God for protecting and delivering him.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:25-36

Was David more impacted by his fear of the enemies that surrounded him, or by his trust in the Lord? Explain your answer.

Though it would appear to others that David defeated his enemies (see for example 1 Samuel 30:16-20; 2 Samuel 5:17-25, 8:1-14, 10:1-19, 12:26-31, 21:15-22), he knew that it was the Lord who delivered him from each situation—a characteristic that is seen as early as his fight with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:34-47). In addition to his years fleeing from Saul and the ongoing wars he faced.

What is special about the feet of a deer that causes David to reference them in verse 33?

What is the significance of footing in verses 33 and 36? Why is sure-footing important when you are surrounded?

The cloven hooves of the deer David mentioned are adept for climbing in precarious situations. The two digits that compose the hoof have a hard exterior shell with a soft pad underneath, similar to the fingernail and finger on human hands. The two digits can spread apart and flex in order to land on uneven surfaces or grasp small projections in the rock face. The soft pads provide an anti-slip ability on small or slippery ledges. These factors allow the deer to ascend and descend on steep rock faces that have minimal projections, where predators are unable to follow. David expressed that God provided him with secure footing on ground that seemed otherwise impossible to traverse (see other references to God giving sure footing such as Psalm 40:2 and Habakkuk 3:19). As David turned to God, God set David's feet on the secure path.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 18:46-50

What major thoughts did David focus on as he concluded this Psalm?

APPLICATION

When you are on the secure path—the path of righteousness on which God has placed you and called you—does that necessarily mean that it will be an easy path? The feet of the deer are secure on the rock face, but does that mean his climb is easy?

Which of the metaphors David used to describe the Lord in these verses is most meaningful to you? Why?

David's metaphors to describe God included rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, refuge, and savior. All of these metaphors emphasize safety and protection. David specifically thanked God for protecting and delivering him. David knew of God's salvation not only from stories of how God had worked in the lives of others, but also from God's work in his own life.

PRAYER

God, we praise you that you are our strength, our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer. Help us choose by faith to take refuge in you. Thank you for making our feet like the feet of a sure-footed deer. Help us to fully realize this as we step out in faith.

COMMENTARY

Psalm 18

Psalm 18 Introduction: This introduction contains more information about its setting than any other psalm. It is linked with the Lord's deliverance of David from all his enemies and from Saul. This rescue is not specified or described any further in the title. Neither does its parallel, 2 Samuel 22, give any detailed information about its precise setting in David's life. However, it is clearly set against the backdrop of a military victory where Yahweh fought for David and delivered him from his enemies. Such was the promise for those who obeyed Yahweh. He would fight for them and bring them victory (Dt 32:41-42). Elsewhere in the OT, only Moses and Joshua are called the servant of the Lord (cp. Ps 36 title).

18:1-2 In no other psalm is there such a large number of metaphors used to convey God's attributes. All of these relate to a military setting where God is seen as the real strength behind the person who fights. He also protects the psalmist as a hiding place from the enemy (his rock...fortress... mountain, and stronghold). God also protects him by guarding him against the onslaught of weapons (He is his shield) and rescues him from his enemies (He is his deliverer and his salvation). In keeping with the military imagery in this psalm, the horn of salvation may refer to one of the horns of the altar, which represented a place of refuge (1Ki 1:50-51). However, it more likely refers to the horn of a wild animal that gored its enemies (Dt 33:17; Ps 92:10), signifying military strength.

18:3 Worthy of praise in some contexts is based on the attributes of God (48:1; 96:4; 145:3), but here it is clearly connected with specific events in the life of the psalmist.

18:4-5 The perception of the inevitability of death is pictured in a number of ways in the psalms (such as being near Sheol; 88:3). In this case it is pictured as being entangled in ropes and unable to escape (116:3; 119:61). Torrents is an image of being overwhelmed with water and in danger of drowning (Jnh 2:3,5). When pieced together such imagery describes being tangled in ropes while overtaken with a flood of water. There was absolutely no chance to swim away since the psalmist's limbs were bound and unable to move. Death itself confronted him in the same way enemies did (17:13) and would not allow him to escape.

18:6 Temple most likely refers to heaven in this context as the earthly temple was not yet built.

18:7-15 These verses describe a theophany where God reveals His power through natural phenomena such as an earthquake (v. 7) and a thunderstorm (vv. 13-14). Mountains represent stability within the natural order, so their shaking and trembling describes God's power to bring upheaval to what seemed secure (Jdg 5:5; 1Sam 14:15). Smoke and consuming fire combined with God's voice that thundered from heaven is reminiscent of the Sinai experience (Ex 24:17; Dt 4:12,24; 9:3). The image of God acting as a warrior who fights for His people and uses the natural elements as His weapons is also connected with Israel's past experiences (Jos 10:11; Jdg 5:4,20). God's riding on a cherub—imagery found in creation hymns (19:1; 104:3)—blends the supernatural with the natural. Such a mixture is a common feature in many ancient Near Eastern myths, particularly those related to Baal, the Canaanite storm god. Some interpreters see this section of the psalm as a polemic against Baal, showing that Yahweh is the sovereign Lord of creation. Psalm 18:15 seems to be connected with the exodus event when the depths of the sea became visible because of God's breath (see Ex 14:21).

18:16-19 Reaching down, taking hold, and pulling out are anthropomorphic descriptions of God's condescension to rescue the psalmist in his time of need. These terms also allude to the image of a well as the place where one feels trapped during times of distress, connecting the concepts of "drawn up" and rescued (30:3; 40:2; Jer 38:10). The deep waters are related to the "torrents of destruction" in verse 4 and are identified more specifically as enemies. The spacious place is another illustration of being delivered from one's enemies. There is assurance that God delights in His people when He rescues them from harm and protects them from their enemies (41:11).

18:20-24 This declaration of innocence is set off by the same statements in verses 20 and 24. Unlike its use in prayers, these statements of innocence are part of thanksgiving for answered prayer, indicating why God delivered the psalmist from his calamity. Righteousness is further clarified as cleanness of...hands, meaning integrity in his obedience to God's commands (24:4). The psalmist was not absolutely perfect and free from sin, but he was blameless in terms of his faithfulness to God (15:2; Dt 18:13).

18:25-26 These verses make the connection between the statements of innocence in the previous section and Yahweh's covenant faithfulness. This is an outworking of the covenant stipulations in Deuteronomy 28 whereby God is faithful to those who are faithful to Him.

18:28-29 Light is sometimes connected with salvation (deliverance) and provides security and assurance that God protects His own (27:1). The security becomes confidence in 18:29 with the sense that the psalmist could leap over a wall. In other words, he could accomplish the impossible with God on his side (Mt 19:26; Mk 9:23; Lk 18:27).

18:31 The uniqueness of Yahweh is significant in Israel's theology, and it forms the basis for the distinctiveness of Israel among the other nations (35:10; 89:8; Ex 15:11; Dt 4:32-40).

18:32-36 The descriptions in these verses are of traits that are important for warfare. Strength is the clothing (1Sam 2:4). Feet of a deer represent swiftness (2Sam 1:23; 2:18). God made the psalmist more skillful by training his hands. The bow of bronze is unusual since bows were not covered with metal. The point seems to be that it was strengthened and made more effective as a weapon (Job 20:24). The shield is perhaps related to its earlier mention where it was identified with God Himself (vv. 2,30).

18:37-45 In these verses, David describes how God has given him victory over his enemies.

18:46-50 In these concluding verses, David praises God, calling God his Rock and Savior, and remembering how God has avenged him, subdued nations before him, exalted him, rescued him, and shown unfailing love to him.

18:50 David remembers he is God's anointed and realizes that God will show unfailing love to David and to his descendants forever. This is part of the Davidic Covenant given by God to David through the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7:10-17)