

AM Psalm 18 My Rock

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Date: 23 October 2022

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[0 : 00] Let's hear now from the Word of God, and I'm going to read Psalm 18, quite a long psalm.

Psalm 18.

I love you, O 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. [1 : 27] 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.

Then the earth reeled and rocked. The foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from Him.

He bowed the heavens and came down. Thick darkness was under His feet. He rode on a cherub and flew. He came swiftly on the wings of the wind.

He made darkness His covering, His canopy around Him. Thick clouds dark with water. Out of the brightness before Him, hailstones and coals of fire broke through His clouds.

The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. And He sent out His arrows and scattered them.

[2 : 46] He flashed forth lightnings and routed them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare. At Your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He sent from on high.

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.

They confronted me in the day of my calamity. But the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place. He rescued me because He delighted in me.

The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands, He rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His rules were before me, and statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my guilt.

[4 : 02] So the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. With the merciful, you show yourself merciful.

With the blameless man, you show yourself blameless. With the purified, you show yourself pure. And with the crooked, you make yourself seem tortuous.

For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. For it is you who light my lamp. The Lord my God lightens my darkness.

For by you I can run against a troop. And by my God I can leap over a wall. 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. For who is God but the Lord?

[5 : 05] And who is a rock except our God? The God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.

He trains my hands for war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your hands. You have given me the shield of your salvation. And your right hand supported me.

And your gentleness made me great. You gave a wide place for my steps under me. And my feet did not slip. I pursued my enemies and overtook them.

And did not turn back till they were consumed. I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise. They fell under my feet.

For you equipped me with strength for the battle. You made those who rise against me sink under me. You made my enemies turn their backs to me.

[6:09] And those who hated me I destroyed. They cried for help but there was none to save. They cried to the Lord but He did not answer them. I beat them fine as dust before the wind.

I cast them out like the mire of the streets. You delivered me from the strife with the people. You made me the head of the nations. People whom I had not known served me.

As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me. Foreigners came cringing to me. Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses.

The Lord lives. 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 delivered me from my enemies. Yes you exalted me above those who rose against me. You rescued me from the man of violence. For this I will praise you O Lord.

[7:13] Among the nations and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king. And shows steadfast love to his anointed. To David and his offspring forever.

Let's bow together. Let's bow together. Well let me ask you to turn please to Psalm 18.

We're not going to attempt to look at the whole of this psalm. Otherwise we'd be here till next week. At least.

Just going to focus on a couple of words in verse 2. I'll read the whole verse. 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.

[8:22] My stronghold. This verse is unique in the scriptures.

Nowhere else will you find so many titles of our Lord. Clustered together in one place. Except in 2 Samuel 22.

Where the whole of Psalm 18 is being quoted. Eight words. Are used in this verse.

To describe our Lord. All of them linked with the personal pronoun. My. My rock. My fortress.

My deliverer. My God. My rock again. Or in some translations. My strength. My shield.

[9:20] The horn of my salvation. And my stronghold. Add to that in verse 1. I will love you O Lord.

My strength. And you have nine titles altogether. More than enough reason. For David to love the Lord.

More than enough reason. For him to trust in the Lord. More than enough reason. For him to call upon the Lord. More than enough reason. For him.

To praise the Lord. I want to focus though. Really on just. One word. Beginning of verse 2.

The Lord is. My. Rock. That word. Rock. Occurs. Several times.

[10:18] In this psalm. It's a thought. He seems to keep coming back to. In the. ESV. It occurs. Four times.

In three verses. We have it twice. Here in verse 2. And then again. In verse 31. Who is a rock.

Except. Our God. And then in verse 46. The Lord lives. And blessed be. My rock. If there are any Hebrew scholars among you.

Then you may. Then you may. Want to point out to me. That different Hebrew words are used. In verse 2. It's.

Silah. The first time. And sur. The second. In verses 31. And 46. It is. Sur. I don't.

[11:17] Claim. To be a Hebrew scholar. I don't claim. To have noticed that. For myself. But. Looking. Into the. Lexicons. I've discovered that. To be the case.

That sent me into overdrive. Do they mean the same? Well. Actually. Yes. They mean. More or less. The same thing. Technically.

A silah. Means. A lofty crag. And sur. Means. A rocky cliff. But in the context. It's the same idea. It's a place of strength. And security. A place of refuge. In time of trouble. I want us to look today.

At each of those three verses. In turn. I have three very simple headings for you. The Lord is our rock. In verse 2.

[12:17] The Lord is our only rock. In verse 31. And the Lord is to be praised. As our rock. In verse 46.

But let's first look at the background. The title describes the occasion. On which this psalm. Was written.

To the choir master. A psalm of David. The servant of the Lord. Who addressed the words of this song. To the Lord. On the day. When the Lord rescued him.

From the hand of Saul. From the hand of all his enemies. And from the hand of Saul. And that is confirmed. In 2 Samuel 22.

Where at the end. Of the life of David. This whole psalm is quoted. With that same explanation. David is giving thanks.

[13:19] In this psalm. For the Lord's deliverance. The Lord had delivered him. Out of danger. Countless times.

And for this. He is deeply grateful. He is also giving his testimony. Saying in effect.

The Lord has delivered me. He can deliver you too. Notice. How he seems almost to be.

Veering from speaking to the Lord. To speaking to us. It says. He addressed these words to the Lord. And indeed he begins. I love you. Oh Lord. But then it's as if.

He's glancing across to us. In verse 2. The Lord is my rock. He wants us to hear this. Not just the Lord. The tone throughout.

[14:18] Is one of. Reverent. Reliance. He refers to God. As the Lord. It's in capital letters.

To indicate that it is. The holy name. Yahweh. The God of Israel. The God of the covenant. The God of the promises.

The eternal. Unchangeable God. The great. I am. The almighty creator. Of heaven. And earth. He is trusting in this God.

To protect him from danger. And he's not been disappointed. God. God. Has protected him.

Particularly from Saul. And indeed throughout his life.

And what an action packed life it had been. Even as a shepherd boy. David had been in danger. Remember how the lion and the bear.

[15:20] Had attacked the flock. But God had delivered them into his hand. Even as a young man. He'd been anointed by Samuel.

As the future king. But that brought with it. Tremendous danger. He was in danger of course. When he fought against Goliath. The giant.

But God was with him. You come to me with a sword. And a spear. And a javelin. He said. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. Effectively saying.

In the spirit of Psalm 18. The Lord is my sword. And my spear. And my javelin. Then in Saul's army. God had given him great success. Saul has slain his thousands. David his ten thousands. But that only made Saul jealous. Saul was trying to kill him.

[16:18] Throw a javelin at him. But the Lord protected him. And he was unharmed. Eventually of course. He had to flee from Saul.

And for years. He was fleeing in the Judean wilderness. But often during those years. He was literally hiding amongst the rocks.

Those rocks were like a natural castle to him. A fortress for him. There. He was safe. Those years were like a.

An infernal game of hide and seek. Children loved to play hide and seek. This was like hide and seek only. This was not a game.

Saul was trying to kill him. But God kept him safe. Saul never caught him. Eventually.

[17:21] Saul died in battle. David became king. You would think now. Surely. Danger is past. Far from it. First he had to fight against Dishbosheth. The king.

The former king's son. Then there were the Philistines. And the Ammonites. And the Moabites. And the Syrians. David eventually conquered Jerusalem.

And he took over the stronghold there. The city of David. Zion. Surely there he is safe. But even there.

He knew he was still in danger. And indeed even there. His own son. Absalom. Rose up against him. And forced him out of the city.

But again. The Lord delivered him. The Lord delivered him again. And again. And again. So David. Certainly had cause to give thanks.

[18:21] But what about us? Is this just a warrior's psalm? Or does it apply to us as well? Well of course it does. We also have to face many dangers.

Don't we? As the hymn says. Through many dangers. Toils and snares. I have already come. Some of the Lord's people.

Do have to face physical dangers. From human enemies. As vicious as Saul. Many of our brethren around the world. Are persecuted. And even we.

May have to sometimes face up. To people who hate us. And in particular. People who hate us. For our faith. And even if we.

Escape from persecution. All of us. Will have to face up. To spiritual dangers. The world. The world. The flesh. And the devil.

[19 : 19] Are relentlessly. Against us. And we need deliverance. That's why we pray. In the Lord's prayer. Deliver us from evil.

And there is an even greater danger. The day of judgment itself. If you and I had to face. The day of judgment.

On our own. None of us. Would survive. How desperately. We need deliverance. From that. So where is safety.

To be found. Let's come. To those three verses. In Psalm 18. At first. In verse 2. The Lord.

Is our rock. David. Sees the Lord. Here. As a place of refuge. He actually says.

[20 : 14] Doesn't he. The Lord is my rock. In whom. I take. Refuge. It's very closely. Related to the word. That follows it.

My fortress. Which is another term. For a castle. Which is why. I chose to speak. About castles. In the children's talk.

Those two words. Go together. They go together here. They go together. In other psalms. As well. You may have. Noticed it. In singing Psalm 31.

You'll find it again. In our final Psalm. 62. Our rock. And our fortress. Are two thoughts. That are joined together.

When David was hiding. Amongst the rocks. In the wilderness. Those rocks. Were a natural. Castle. To him. But David knew. Even there. It wasn't the rocks.

[21 : 11] That kept him safe. The Lord. Was his true. Rock. Likewise.

When he was in Jerusalem. That city of David. He made it a great stronghold. And yes. It gave him protection. But he knew.

That potentially. There could be an enemy. Who would overcome him. He himself. Had conquered Jerusalem. Why shouldn't there arise. Some other great warrior. Who would conquer him.

In Jerusalem. The only thing. That kept him safe. Was. The Lord. Same is true. Of all those. Great historic. Castles.

That I was showing. The children. Mighty castles. Some of them. Built on a rock. Yet they were all. Captured. And ruined. One of my favorite.

[22 : 06] Castles. Though I didn't have a picture of it. Is Stirling Castle. 250 feet. Up on a rock. Always loved driving along the A9. And seeing Stirling Castle. What a mighty fortress.

And yet it was captured. Time and time again. Our safety is in the Lord. As Martin Luther says. A safe stronghold.

Our God is still. As the psalmist says. The Lord is my refuge. And my strength. Now the primary thought here.

Is security. But there's a secondary thought. Also of permanence. Those rocks that you see. On our mountains and hills. They have been there.

For centuries. And nothing can move them. The winds may blow. The storms may come. But those rocks are still there. If you're standing on a rock.

[23 : 07] Like that. A rock that will not move. Then you're truly safe. Likewise. In a greater sense. With God.

The rocks of this world. Will eventually erode away. But God will never. Be moved. He is the eternal God. God never changes. And his promises.

Will never change. Therefore we are absolutely safe. In him. Now this wasn't a new thought.

You do find as you read through the scriptures. That very seldom is there a completely new thought. The scripture writers themselves. Are constantly quoting and developing thoughts from earlier.

In the scriptures. David would have found this in Deuteronomy chapter 32. Verse 4 there. The song of Moses. When the Lord had brought Israel safely through the wilderness.

[24 : 08] Moses teaches them to sing. Ascribe greatness to our God. The rock. His work. Is perfect. It's a thought that.

The psalms often come back to. Quote just a few. Psalm 31. We've sung. You are my rock and my fortress. Psalm 61.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 95. Shout joyfully. To the rock. Of our salvation. In the New Testament.

It's made clear that. This rock. Is Christ. The son of God. Jesus himself.

During the days of his flesh. Trusted in God. As his rock. You could read Psalm 18. As the words of Jesus. But he himself.

[25 : 08] In turn. Is our rock. Says in Matthew 7. Doesn't he? Whoever hears these sayings of mine. I will liken him to a wise man.

Who built his house. Upon a rock. The rain descended. The floods came. The winds blew. And beat upon that house. And it did not fall. For it was founded on.

A rock. Anything else he says. Is building on sand. Paul speaks of being. Hidden in Christ. The book of Hebrews.

Speaks of us. Fleeing. For refuge. In Christ. And many hymn writers. Take up the same thought. There's the hymn that we sang.

Rock of ages. Cleft for me. And others perhaps that you may know. Hiding in thee. Hiding in thee. Thou blessed rock of ages. I'm hiding. In thee.

[26 : 05] Or in that great hymn. For all the saints. Thou wast their rock. Their fortress. And their might. Christ is our rock.

From all kinds of dangers. But especially. He saves us from that greatest of dangers. The day of judgment. Hiding in him.

Trusting in his redeeming blood. We are completely safe. In that greatest of all storms. The question is of course.

Whether you can say. The Lord is your rock. Are you personally. Trusting in him. That personal pronoun.

My rock. Makes all the difference. Simply knowing that there is safety in Christ. Is of no use to you. Unless you.

[27 : 03] Personally. Are trusting in him. And you must trust in him. Because there is no safety. Anywhere else. Which brings us to our second point.

The Lord is our only rock. Glance down to verse 31. Who is God but the Lord. And who is a rock. Except our God.

David will have found that also in Deuteronomy 32. It's in verse 31 there. Where Moses says of the nations. Their rock. Is not as our rock.

In other words. Their gods can do absolutely nothing for them. They're just gods of wood and stone. The Lord alone. Is the true rock. You find that thought again in Psalm 62.

Twice in fact. Verse 2. And verse 6 there. He alone. Is my rock. And my salvation. And my fortress. Likewise in the New Testament.

[28 : 13] It's made very clear. That Christ alone. Is our savior. I am the way. The truth. And the life. No one comes to the father. Except by me.

There is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven. Given among men. By which we must be saved. Futile.

To trust. In anything else. Futile obviously. To trust in other gods. I hope none of us here is tempted to do that. But equally it's futile to trust in other people.

No matter how good or powerful they might be. You sometimes hear a wife say of her husband. He is my rock. You hear that sometimes at funerals.

He was my rock. And you know what they mean. He was always faithful. He was always reliable. And that's good of course. But the best of people have their limitations.

[29 : 20] And one day they will die. Psalm 146 says. Do not put your trust in princes. Not even in princes.

Because ultimately they will let us down. Much more so with ordinary people. The Lord in contrast has no limitations.

With God all things are possible. And he will never die. It's even more futile to trust in ourselves. To trust in your own wisdom.

Or your own wealth. Wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. It will let us down. And the riches of this world. They can fly away in a moment.

Psalm 62 says plainly. Trust not in riches. Paul says. As for the rich in this world. Charge them not to be haughty.

[30 : 21] Nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches. But on God. Who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. Above all on the day of judgment.

It's futile to trust in anyone or anything else. For our salvation. Futile to trust in your own righteousness. Futile to trust in religious rituals.

Futile to trust in a Christian upbringing. Trust in Christ. He is our only rock.

Finally. He is a rock to be praised. In verse 46. The Lord lives and blessed be my rock. And exalted be the God of my salvation.

The rock like reliability of God requires many responses. Verse 1 speaks of love.

[31 : 22] I will love you oh Lord. Verse 3 speaks of prayer. I will call upon the Lord. But also praise. Verse 3 again.

He is worthy to be praised. And that's the thought in verse 46. Now it might seem strange to praise a rock.

That's the kind of thing poets do, doesn't it? Oh rock. What a wonderful rock you are. It sounds odd to us. But remember we are speaking metaphorically. This rock is our wonderful God.

And he deserves all the praise that we can give him. Especially for delivering us from our enemies. And for delivering us from our sins.

And he deserves not just private praise. But public praise as well. David goes on in verse 49.

[32 : 20] I will praise you oh Lord. Among the nations. I will sing praise to your name. He's not just praising God in his heart. As his own secret belief.

But he's opening his mouth. For others to hear. Praising God before the world. Paul quotes that 49th verse by the way.

In Romans 15. As evidence that the gospel of Christ is for the whole world. For the Gentiles as well as the Jews. For the nations.

For Rome as well as Jerusalem. And by extension for Dumfries as well. That's the basis of Paul's ministry. And it's the basis of ours.

We too must praise God in our public worship. And preach him to the people all around. Remains for me to ask once again.

[33 : 22] That all important question. Is he your rock? Let me remind you of all those personal pronouns. In verses 1 and 2.

My strength. My rock. My fortress. My deliverer. And so on. That personal response. I will love you. Will only happen. If. He is your strength. If he is your rock. Personal love. Personal love. It depends on those personal pronouns.

Otherwise there will be nothing else. But a kind of distant intellectual admiration. Imagine if David had looked at all those rocks in the wilderness.

While he was fleeing from Saul. And thought to himself how beautiful they were. How lovely they looked. In the glow of the setting sun.

[34 : 22] And he had sat there. And looked at them. Saul would have been on his back. Within moments. And he would be dead.

He had to go inside. He had to hide amongst the rocks. Or again. If you had lived in the days of old. When the castles were still in use. There you are being pursued by the enemy. And you can see the castle ahead of you. And you know that there is a friend of yours. In charge of it. And you could be let inside that castle.

But you don't go in. You sit outside admiring it. What beautiful stonework. Or you start wondering about its construction.

Why did they use that particular kind of stone? I wonder where they got the wood for. Wood from. For the drawbridge. Or maybe you even start arguing with your companions.

[35 : 23] I don't think it's that kind of stone. You'd die. Your enemies would destroy you. While you're thinking about it.

Discussing it. Arguing about it. Get inside. Take refuge. In the rock. Or again.

If you simply stood outside dithering. Sadly there are so many people today. Who do that. They know the gospel. They know what is required.

They know they must flee to Christ. But they won't come in. They hesitate outside. They're wondering. Am I going to be welcome?
Am I going to be able to stay there? Am I elect of God? And all the questions that people ask. All kinds of reasons people can think of.
[36 : 22] To dither. Outside. Remaining in danger. When they should simply come in. Take refuge. Take refuge. In the rock. Outside of Christ. You have no protection. Either against the storms of this life. Or against the more terrible storm of judgment day. Inside. Inside. Inside. Hiding in Christ. There and there alone. You are safe. It's the church's task to call out to a lost world. Calling them to come in before it's too late. And we do have to call them in. Because they won't come in of themselves. They don't realize their danger. They don't see their need of Christ.
[37 : 20] But we do. And we must tell them. Even today. To anyone here. Still. Hesitating. About Christ.
Still trusting in yourself. Still trusting in your own good deeds. Still trusting in religious observances. Trusting in the fact that you come to church. Or whatever it might be. I say to you simply. Come. To the rock. And to all who are his. To all of you who have trusted in Christ. I say to you. Praise the rock of your salvation. Appreciate all that he has done for you. Give thanks and praise to him. And whatever trials arise. Whatever dangers surround you. Whatever fears rise up in your hearts.
[38 : 18] Trust in the rock. There is safety. In him. Amen.