

I love you, O Lord, my Rock

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[0 : 00] I think you could say that David was in a good space when he wrote this psalm. And he thinks on the majesty and the glory and the power of God.

And we have 50 verses to read together. So fasten your seatbelts. I hope you have the text in front of you. And let's see if we can identify with David and his thoughts.

Psalm 18. 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 delivered him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

He said, 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.

[1 : 10] 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. 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.

[2 : 18] And he sent out his arrows and scattered them. 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 took me. 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 his statutes I did not put away from me.

[3 : 22] I was blameless before him and I kept myself from my guilt. 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? And who is a rock except our God? The God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless.

[4 : 29] 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 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. 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.

[5 : 32] I cast them out like the mire of the streets. You delivered me from strife with the people. You made me the head of the nations. People whom I have 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 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. Great salvation he brings to his king. And shows steadfast love to his anointed. To David and his offspring forever.

[6 : 34] And I'm sure we look forward to Dave expounding that psalm to us shortly. Well good morning everyone. I was relying on that song to finish my sermon.

But we'll see where it ends. That is a joke by the way. It is written. Congrats to Bo and Lay wherever you are. Yeah. Your grandson Thomas. That's wonderful. Why don't we pray as we come to God's word. Let's pray. Lord. As Alex prayed. I echo a similar prayer. That you would. By your powerful word. Not mine. That you would. Turn each of our hearts.

To you. That you would teach us. What it means for you to be. Our rock. Our place of refuge. And that we would look nowhere else.

[7 : 47] And rely nowhere else. So Lord be with us now as we come to your word. In Jesus name. Amen. Well we all need a place of safety.

To feel safe. To be safe. The only question is. Who or what rock. Do we take refuge in. Perhaps we would feel this need a bit more.

If we lived in a country that was. In a time of war. But I even find this. Becoming a parent. My radar for safety just went nuts.

As soon as I became a parent. I've got to be careful. Because I've got children listening. But. How I word this.

But. The recent injury. Confronted me. How much I can't. Be that rock. I want to be. Even for my family.

[8 : 46] And. Every time we go to. A cremation. Or a burial. We are reminded of that ultimate. Question. Can I be saved.

From that casket. It is a confronting. Image. This song. In Psalm 18. Is David. Looking back on his life.

And we need to hear this song. So that at the end of our lives. We can look back. And we can sing. We can sing. With David. I love you.

Oh Lord. My rock. This is a. What's called a messianic psalm. In other words. It's not about you or me directly.

It is about. God's chosen king. Now does that make you lose interest? It shouldn't. It really shouldn't. Because. More important than whether God hears your prayers or not.

[9 : 46] Is whether God hears his king's prayers. That is much more important. Because. If God saves his king. He can save you. If God saves his king.

He can save you. The king can save you. This is a messianic psalm. And we need to hear it. We need a king. Good.

And great enough. Who can bring us into God's promised place of safety. That's what the promised land was meant to be. Or a picture of anyway.

Safety from all our enemies. Safety even from death. So last week. In Psalm 17. If last week was David's cry.

When he was still in the midst of the threat. The threat was very real. Psalm 18. Is David looking back. Just going. At the remarkable ways. God has delivered him.

[10:46] Through all. His afflictions. He cried out. In verse 7. Of chapter 17. Wondrously show your steadfast love. Oh saviour. Of those who seek refuge.

And here is his song. Going. Wow. You heard. You heard my prayer. You wondrously showed your steadfast love. Getting into this psalm.

I was. I was struck this week. You guys give me the best job in the world. Because I just have to. Just get stuck into God's word for the week.

So. Thank you for that. But I didn't realise. Psalm 18 is. There are so many connections here.

There's heaps of references in your outline. Go away and look. Look them up. This is a huge psalm.

I didn't realise it until this week. It's. It's quoted almost word for word. At the end of 2 Samuel. So. When David wrote this.

[11:46] Certainly it was after. He was delivered from Saul. But. That doesn't quite matter. What matters is. It's. It's placed at the end of David's life. And he's looking back on all of it.

And. And. This song. Is being sung. In reflection of all of it. So maybe he's thinking. Of the time he came in.

As a young lad from the field. And. To his surprise. His dad's surprise. The prophet Samuel. Anointed him. Why did he do that?

Maybe he was thinking. Of the time with Goliath. I've got a theory. I can't prove it. But I reckon. He might have chosen. Those five stones. Not because those stones. Represent faith.

And hope. And all those other things. Maybe he. He chose five stones. Because if those five missed. He was gone. That's my theory. I can't prove that. But God. God delivered him.

[12:43] From Goliath. All the success he gave him. As a warrior. Against the Philistines. Who occupied God's place. The slightest misfortune. In any of those battles.

And he could have been gone. Capturing Jerusalem. And his most ferocious enemy. Was internal. In the kingdom. Was Saul. Just hunting him. Just relentlessly. Hunting him. He even survived. The betrayal.

Of his own son. Absalom. Perhaps the greatest salvation. He was looking back on. Was the Lord. Not putting him to death. Because of what he did. With Bathsheba. And Uriah. This is all of it. He's looking back. And he's seeing that God.

[13:41] Heard his cry. Heard his cry. Heard his cry. Heard his cry. Heard his cry. In fact. Even before David was born. This is a song. Celebrating that God heard. Heard his cry.

If you go look that up. He heard his cry. And in her song. She says. The Lord will give strength. To his king. And he's celebrating that. God keeps his word.

He heard his cry. He heard his cry. David's cry. And David can't help. But burst out in thanksgiving. Just full of emotion.

And passion. I love you. Oh Lord. My rock. This is a song of thanksgiving.

All the themes throughout it. The whole thing is thanksgiving. We see in verses 4 to 6. The overall reason.

[14:41] Death. Destruction. Sheol. The place of the dead. Were overwhelming. So many times. He was so close to dying.

So many times. Like waves in the ocean. His head was barely above. What he was about to go under. I'm picturing like Luke Skywalker. In that garbage contraption thing.

He was being confined. He was being squished in. That word distress. He was in a narrow place. He cried out to God in heaven for help.

And the word for love here. Apparently. You don't find it being addressed to God. Anywhere else in the Old Testament. Like I don't know Hebrew well enough. But a commentator is saying like.

You would be hesitant to use this word. But David uses it. He's gushing. It's really emotional. It's impulsive. And the picture here.

[15:41] The primary picture we see throughout this song. Is that God is a rock. He is a rock. And we've got to get into this.

Because at first rock. I don't know what's so attractive about that. But we'll see. At the end of Moses' life.

He too sang. Of God being Israel's rock. Henna. In her song. God is a rock. In these first few verses.

We get lots of different metaphors. That elaborate on what it means. For God to be a rock. And it all points to one truth. David's God made him safe.

That's what all these images are for. David's God made him safe. If we think of David's life.

[16:39] He probably at least recalled what happened in 1 Samuel 23. Before he was king. David hid at the place called the rock.

When Saul was pursuing him. And he's on one. Him and his band of outlaws are on one side of this rock. This mountainous place. And Saul is on the other.

And Saul's just about to get him. When a messenger comes saying, Saul. The Philistines are attacking. And so Saul has to withdraw. Just in that moment. You can imagine David just shaking with relief.

The adrenaline still pumping. Just looking at this mountainous rock guy. I love you. Oh Lord, my rock. And not the literal rock.

He knew who saved him. Coincidence? Lucky escape? No. No. This is God keeping his word. That he would be king. He called the place Rock of Escape.

[17:37] So what happened when David, about to drown in death, being crushed in from every side, cried out?

An earthquake. Obviously this is poetry. But part of the power of poetry isn't exaggeration. Sometimes it's exaggeration.

But part of the power of poetry is that it pictures profound truth. So don't try and imagine what God looks like here because it's a bit offensive to the eyes.

It's burning coals and smoke and earthquake. It's not a literal picture. We should look at it through the lens of scripture, a biblical lens.

The earth trembling. Thick darkness with the smoke covering. The Lord coming down from heaven like on a chariot.

[18:38] The cherubim are always associated with God's holy of holies. It's his total otherness. But that otherness came down.

Certainly this is picturing Mount Sinai when God met his people on the mountain. Certainly it's picturing that. It might also be picturing the parting of the Red Sea and the plagues in Egypt. But what's crucial here is that it's the Lord himself who comes down. David sees his own deliverance as significant as the Exodus.

When David cried out, what happened? The Lord came down. And he's angry. He's angry.

God is angry, we're told. Because his chosen king is under threat. Now talking about God's anger might seem a bit unappealing in our day and age, but it is absolutely necessary for salvation, for safety.

[19:54] God's anger at evil is the other side of the same coin of salvation for the victim. God's anger at evil is the other side of the victim. God's anger at evil is the other side of the victim. God's anger at evil is the other side of the victim. God's anger at evil is the other side of the victim.

To have safety, we need all enemies defeated. No more threat. That's the picture in Revelation. The gates are open. There's no threat.

Zero threat. So all this cosmic drama would expect this kind of just, I don't know, a tsunami, something, some sweeping, huge display.

But verses 16 to 19, it's all for him. It's all for one person. It's for his king.

Look how many times the word me comes up in verses 16 to 19. He sent from on high. He took me.

[20:56] He drew me. Out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy, those who hated me. 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.

All this for me? God's dwelling place in heaven was beyond David's reach for safety.

But how wonderful that he came down. All for me, David is saying. I love you, O Lord, my rock.

You delivered me from death. So why did the Lord hear David's cry? I think we've got three sections that give us why the Lord heard David's cry.

[22:06] And they all show that this God, his way is perfect. The first time we see in verses 20 to 26, he delighted in me, making me righteous.

The second reason, verses 25 to 29, he saves the humble. And the third is because this rock, unlike other rocks, lives.

He's real. So let's go through these three. Why did the Lord hear David's cry? Well, this is the trickiest one, the first one, isn't it?

It's perhaps the most hard to understand. He delighted in me and he dealt with me according to my righteousness. Scripture is really clear.

The Lord saves the righteous. In verse 41, we see the Lord ignoring the cries of the wicked.

[23 : 08] They cry out to God at that point. But because they're at cross purposes with God, he ignores them. I think this is more than a plea of innocence like we saw in Psalm 17, saying in this situation I'm innocent.

Because he's looking back on his whole life and saying, you dealt with me according to my righteousness. How can David say that? It's not hard to understand for comprehension, but if you know your own heart and we know David's history as an adulterer and a murderer, how can he speak of being made blameless and you dealing with me according to my righteousness?

I'm going to lean totally on John Woodhouse here. So he's ex-principal of Moore College. He suggests there's two keys to what David is saying.

Firstly, David believed God's word through the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12, 13, when God said through Nathan, after Bathsheba and Uriah, the Lord has put away your sin.

He can describe his life without reference to his failures because he believed what God had said to him. I've put away your sin. The second key is that God forgave David, not because of David's commitment to God, but the other way around, God's commitment to David.

[24 : 46] The Lord, in his own gracious prerogative, chose to delight in David. He chose to set his delight on David.

So I'm going to quote Woodhouse here. He comes to this conclusion. What puzzles us about this section is that David sees his life as God sees his life.

That he really did make him righteous. Through his forgiveness, that he's put away his sin, that he's set his love on him. I love you, Lord, because you delighted in me.

You really made me righteous. Blameless like you. So he saves the righteous. That's why the Lord heard David's cry.

The second reason we see in verses 25 to 29 is because he saves the humble. Not false humility, but those who are in need and they know it.

[26 : 03] So what is verses? There's some complicated verses. Well, they seem to be complicated. Verses 25 to 29. What's that saying?

Someone I read this week seems to say, well, God is a rock. He is true to his word. And so if you tuck into his word, you'll find God is true to his word.

But the crooked, you cross purposes with God, he is a rock. That is not going to end well with you. He's going to seem tortuous because you're crossing purposes with a rock.

Good luck with that. So the humble person takes God at his word, that he's true to his word, that he is merciful, that he is a place of refuge.

Come to this rock, he'll be a place of refuge. That's the humble person who trusts that God is true to his word. The proud, the haughty is the person who doesn't trust in God's word.

[27 : 32] They put their trust somewhere else. They're self-confident. They assert themselves.

They seem to get ahead in life and so we think that they're okay. But no, God says in the end, the Lord's going to seem tortuous in the end.

He saves the humble. He saves the meek. He saves the poor, the afflicted, the weak, the needy. So I hope you feel needy because God wants to be a rock to you.

So he hears David's cry because he was poor in spirit. He tucked in to God his refuge. How did he tuck in? By taking God at his word, that he's going to be true to his word.

So the Lord heard David because he chose to delight in him, making him righteous, because David was humble and tucked in to God.

And he heard David because unlike other gods, this rock lives. Verses 30 to 34.

[28 : 49] Verse 31. For who is God but the Lord? And who is a rock except our God? He's quoting Moses' song here. Moses sings, For their rock is not as our rock.

Our enemies are by themselves. They're crying out to this rock to save them, but they're by themselves. That is a scary place to be in my mind.

You think you're in a safe place relying on this rock. Turns out you're by yourself. I don't want that to be true of me. Who is God but the Lord, Yahweh?

Whether they be other gods of other religions or just some earthly thing, who is a rock but our God? Cry as much as you want to your bank account.

It will not save you from that casket. It will give you the best healthcare in the world. It cannot save you from that casket.

[30 : 03] Our rock can. Who is a rock except our God? And verse 46.

This rock, the Lord lives. He's the only rock who can truly deliver you because he has life in himself. David's many victories are testimony to this. He's just tireless energy. David was weak but he gave David the victory wherever he went because he delighted in his servant.

This rock lives. That's why he heard David's cry. So there's why the Lord heard David's cry.

But then we go on and see that it wasn't just mere survival. You, verses 35 to 45, David is astonished. You've taken me out of the waters, out of this confined place.

[31 : 07] Death was going to take me. You've just brought me into this broad place. How broad? You've made me the head of the nations. Whoa! Verse 43, you have made me the head of the nations.

Now, we might think this section is a bit yuck. Like, I pursued my enemies and did not turn back until they were consumed. They fell under my feet.

It would be so wrong if you and I desire this for our personal enemies. But there's a really simple and good reason this is good news.

And we've touched on this before, that to have safety, all enemies must be destroyed. And it's the Lord's prerogative to have vengeance, not anyone else's.

But he uses his king to carry that out. Only his king. Vengeance belongs to the Lord and he's going to create that place of safety.

[32 : 15] And he uses his righteous king to carry that out. I think we see this in historical terms, but obviously much more when you come to Jesus. In 2 Samuel 8 and 9, there's two great descriptions of David's reign.

It must have been one of the best times in history and places to live when David was king. Now, 2 Samuel 8, verse 15, after, after, sorry, I got my head in order.

God had promised Abraham the promised land of safety, but only a small patch was really given to Israel. But then under David's reign, we see him conquering that land.

Now, remember, the reason it was taken from those people was because they were rejecting God. It was God's vengeance. It wasn't David's choice.

It was God's choice. So David is providing that place of safety and then 2 Samuel 8, 15, this is how good David's reign was. David administered justice and equity to all his people.

[33 : 28] You want a safe place? You need someone in power who gives justice and equity to all the people. It must have been a wonderful government to live under.

And then, more than that, I think chapter 9 of 2 Samuel gives us a picture of verse 35, your gentleness made me great. You might expect David to want vengeance on Saul and what we find in chapter 9 of 2 Samuel is that he searches for any surviving relatives of Saul but not to kill them.

He finds, I'm going to get this name wrong, Mephibosheth. Martin, you can correct me with Hebrew here but Mephibosheth, he finds, and he summons him and he must have been trembling coming to David thinking, oh, I am an absolute goner here.

No, this king, he gives him a place at his table like one of his sons. It was the gentleness the Lord taught him that made this king great.

He removes all the enemies, he administers justice with gentleness. to provide that true place of safety and peace.

[35 : 02] So David finishes his thanksgiving in the final few verses. The Lord lives. Blessed be my rock. For this, I will praise you, O Lord, 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. I was interested in that phrase, for this, I will praise you.

Like, is it self-centered of David to praise God just because God saved him? Shouldn't he just praise God because, I don't know, attributes of God and things? Is it self-centered?

No, it's not self-centered because it honors who God is. He is the only rock. To treat him as your refuge honors him.

He's worthy of praise. 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.

[36 : 17] For who is God but the Lord? Who is a rock except our God? So, how can you and I, this has been a song about David, how can you and I have David's God as our rock?

How can we sing with Moses, with Hannah, with David? Who is a rock like you, God?

How can we sing? How can we have this rock as our God? Well, first is to recognize that God is committed to give a safe place to dwell in blessing, not to individuals on their own but to his king.

That's what we see in those final verses. He is committed to his king. So, the way to have God come down from heaven using all his might to deliver you is to belong to God's king.

All others who reject God's anointed and put their hope in other rocks, whatever that is, you will find in the end you're by yourself. you will find in the end that the Lord is torturous.

[37 : 46] But if you want this God as your place of safety, you need to belong to his king. Now, the second thing we need to learn from these verses is to recognize the promise to David's offspring.

David was not good or great enough. He was part of the problem. He was part of the problem of sin and deserving death and he did die.

From Solomon onwards, David's children failed to love the Lord. You could imagine Israelites in exile singing this psalm.

They're being occupied by enemies. David's line is cut off. This psalm pushes us forward in hope of the son of David coming. The truths in this song, all the themes we've seen, they fit better with Christ, don't they, than David.

They're true of David but they're more true of the Lord Jesus. He could uniquely say the Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness.

[39 : 09] He was meek. humble. And yet the Lord didn't rescue him.

He didn't rescue him. The waves did overwhelm him. But our hope is that God heard his cry.

Hebrews 5 verse 7 says, In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.

And he was heard because of his reverence. David was heard, yes. He was prevented from dying up to a point.

He eventually went into the grave. Jesus was heard. He went into the grave and came back out, conquering it. And he has made this Jesus head of the nations.

[40 : 17] He will defeat all enemies. The last one is death. And his greatness is his gentleness, inviting sinners to come take refuge in me.

To have God as your rock, you need Jesus as your king. God will be to have him. And third and finally, I think these verses also help us recognize that King Jesus wants us to join him in singing.

This is a song of thanksgiving. Romans 15 verse 9 quotes verse 49. For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations.

That among, I don't think that's just in front of, that's in fellowship with. This king came for the world and he wants to sing with his people.

His rule doesn't just produce begrudging servitude. I just have to obey him so that he gives me blessing. His rule produces a choir of harmony, singing with him.

[41 : 34] So when we look back at the cross and the resurrection and we look forward in hope of that promised land where all enemies are gone, even death, seeing what God wondrously, he came down.

He came down, even for me. Even for me. This king wants to sing with his people, all the nations. We love you, O Lord, our rock.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Lord, thank you for coming down in the Lord Jesus Christ so that in him we might find ourselves under his rule in a broad and spacious place.

knowing that if you are our rock, we are safe in every sense of that word.

So Lord, teach us as your people to lean into you and treat you as our rock and to increasingly sing and be characterised by thanksgiving for all that you have wondrously done for us.

[42 : 54] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.