

Worthy to Be Praised

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[0:00] We can turn back to our reading in the book of Psalms, Psalm 18. We're going to look at the beginning of this, Psalm 1-3. Psalm 18, verse 1-3.

I love you, O Lord, my strength. 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. As I said this morning, we were thinking about coming away from a communion weekend, and this morning we were reflecting on that sense of the Lord being worthy of all our thanksgiving.

In 2 Corinthians 9, verse 15, it's thanks be to God for that indescribable gift. There's just no way that we can almost think of a word to describe the gift that God has given us in the Lord Jesus Christ. So he is worthy of all thanksgiving. And this evening we're going to think about the Lord and how worthy he is to be praised. And that's what we read there in verse 3.

[1:18] I called upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. There's this sense of going on in worship of God. And you note at the beginning of the psalm, if you have a Bible, the ESV Bible in particular, it has a few words mentioning the context of the psalm before you come into verse 1.

So it says there to the choir master, it's a psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of the song to the Lord on the day when the Lord rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, he said, and then it goes into his song from verse 1, I love you, O Lord, my strength.

So the context is there given to us of a day when David was delivered from all of his enemies. And you can read about that in 2 Samuel 22, where you have this song mentioned as well.

And David has known victory over his enemies, a victory that maybe at one stage seemed impossible for him, as he saw his enemies all around him.

And yet God has given him this glorious victory as he was running from Saul, as he was running from his enemies. He was in constant danger of death.

[2:44] But now he has been delivered from that. And he has this praise being offered up to God. And as we see there in verse 3, he is worthy to be praised, the God who has given him this victory.

So this is David's song of victory. But in many ways we could say it is our song of victory as well, because God has given us this song for us to sing.

And we can sing these words ourselves, and we can sing them maybe with the same meaning behind them as what David had. When we know the Lord, when we love the Lord, we recognize just how he is our strength, how he is all of these things to us, and how he has given us victory in this world as well.

Because when God saves us, he gives us victory over our enemies. And we think of the greatest enemies that we have in this world as a people, the enemy of sin, the enemy of death, the enemy of a lost eternity.

We have all of these enemies. And yet as we look to the Lord Jesus and the victory that he has won for us, we realize what he has saved us from, and that we are saved by his grace.

[4:04] And so we, therefore, can sing this song ourselves with that sense of victory and see that worthy to be praised is God. Worthy to be praised is the Lord.

We read in the New Testament, 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, that all Scripture is breathed out by God. So God has given us his word through various writers, as you see throughout the Bible.

And so here we have David writing this song. As we read in Timothy, we're seeing that he is inspired, he is moved by the Lord to write these words.

And you can almost think, well, is this not then God praising himself? It's not this God giving words, boasting words to David to write about him.

But God is not that way. God isn't like some leaders we might see in the world who want all the praise for themselves. So they write their own way of praising and their qualities and all that they have done, speaking about it all the time in that sense of, look at me and what I have done.

[5:18] God inspired David. He was moved by the Spirit to write these words. But David inspired his writing from his own experience. He is writing these words, having known God with him.

God is the one who has brought him through and given him this victory. And so now he can see God as his Savior. And now he can express his thankfulness that he has brought him through all of this.

And with thankfulness, he sees, as is often David's case, he expresses it in song. In song, David writes these words.

And so verse 1 to 3, as we look at this psalm this evening, they show us David beginning his praise to God by expressing his love of God and what God has done for him.

Then he proceeds to describe how much the Lord means to him by using different expressions there, especially in verse 2, of who God is for him.

[6:24] And as someone wrote, you could say he sees this as the Lord, the source of his strength, stability, safety, and salvation. All of these things come across in the way that David describes the Lord in verse 2.

And then in verse 3, we see that God has proved himself reliable, that he can be depended upon, and so he is worthy to be praised. Worthy to be praised.

We have that same kind of song ourselves. This evening we're going to sing this psalm at the end of our service. Will we be singing these words with that sense of, this is my song too, this is the same song as David had as my song, that I can say, I love the Lord.

He is my strength. He is my rock. He is my deliverer. He is my refuge, my shield. All of these things. Can we sing that? Are we worshiping the Lord as we should, as he is worthy to be praised?

One person said this, one of the great tragedies of the human spirit is to become a prisoner of ingratitude. For ingratitude shuts the human spirit up and the world lightened only by the self, which is no light at all.

[7:42] A spirit of, a prisoner of ingratitude. We're not thankful for what we have. And so the opposite is true of that. Gratitude then gives us light.

And not light of self, but light as we see revealed by God through his word. And so we want to be a people who worship God as we should, that he is worthy to be praised in all things.

And how then can we worship God? Well, that's what we see with David here. We see him worshiping, first of all, in verse 1, by delighting in God.

He is delighting in God. He makes two declarations here in verse 1. He starts by first declaring his love for the Lord.

I love you, O Lord. And then the second declaration is that absolute dependence upon the Lord as my strength. So from the outset of this psalm, he's indicating that as he lives his life here, these two great themes are what the manner in which he is living his life.

[9:00] They are constantly before him. And he's telling us this, that he finds his great delight in God. I love you, O Lord, my strength.

Isn't it an amazing thing to be able to say, I love you, the Lord. I love you, my Lord.

Psalm 116, which we sang together, has the expression of that in the psalm as well. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here. And you see it recurring again and again.

But what kind of love is it? And are you able to say with David tonight, I love you, O Lord. Well, when you look at the kind of love it is, it's a love that is full of worship towards God.

As we read in Matthew 28, in verse 9, when Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, met his disciples, what did they do with him?

[10:06] It says in verse 9, And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

They came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

There was this sense of just being in the presence of the risen Savior, that they could do nothing else but worship him, fall at his feet and worship him.

It's the same as you see with Mary Magdalene. We read of it in Matthew. It doesn't go into the same details as it does in the Gospel of John.

But when she encountered Jesus in the garden, John 20, verse 17, Jesus said to her, he called her by name, Mary. She didn't realize who it was that was in front of him at first.

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. And there was a sense of worship with her because Jesus goes on to say, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

[11:10] So she has obviously taken hold of Jesus. She is clinging on to him, just like the disciples took hold of his feet and worshipped him. There is that sense of when we love the Lord, we are giving our worship to him by just coming before him, clinging on to him, depending on him.

We recognize that if we love him, we only do so because he first loved us. And when our eyes are open to see this, what else can we do but just come and throw ourselves at his feet and just plead, I love you, O Lord.

Because there is nowhere else to go. There is no one else who can give us that relationship that satisfies, that gives us hope, that gives us an eternity to look forward to.

When we consider all the things that the Lord has done for us and his love towards us, our hearts should be filled with that sense of worship.

Saying, I love you, O Lord. Do you, this evening, have that love for the Lord? Where your worship is just one, where you see, you can do nothing but throw yourself at his feet, cling to him, because there's nowhere else to go.

[12:30] As the disciple of old said, to whom else shall we go? For you alone are the words of eternal life. There's nowhere else to go. And the second declaration seen there in verse one is, I love you, O Lord, my strength.

My strength. We're going on to see this in a moment in verse two as well, but nine times in these first two verses, David uses that personal word, my.

My strength, he says here in verse one. My is often a word that children learn at a very young age when they're able to express themselves by telling others what belongs to them.

My toy, my food, my room, my house. They learn these words so quickly. My, what belongs to me. And this is almost like just the childlike nature that we have where we're looking at what we think belongs to us. But here David has that childlike faith when he's expressing it in this way.

[13:46] The Lord is my strength. My strength. He's delighting in God. And we're going to just see this in a moment as we think of depending on God in verse two, the way we see him expressing it using this word, my.

But just as before we go into verse two, ask yourself this again. Is God my strength? Can I say, can you say tonight that he is my strength?

In other words, how are we living our lives? How are we going forward in this life? Are we living it depending on him as he is my strength because I love him? Or does he mean nothing?

That we just go forward in our own strength? So the first aspect of this worship that we see with David is delighting in God.

And we as a people are to be those who delight in God ourselves. Then we come into verse two and we see this dependence on God.

[14:50] Just read through this 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, my stronghold.

My, my, my. He's repeating it constantly and using different words to describe this relationship that he has with God and this dependence on God.

And when you pray with God, what kind of language do you use? Do you use these kinds of words as you come to him?

This is a song, it's a psalm, but it can also be a prayer. Very often you can say that about the psalms, you can use them as a prayer. And it's a good thing for us to use God's word as we come

to prayer, to read God's word before we pray and even to pray God's word as we do pray with God. And so is this the kind of language that you use as you come to God in prayer? Do you say, I love you, O Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my refuge, my shield, my horn, my stronghold.

[16:12] Do you use all of that language with God? Because it's a great way to come to him because it reminds us of just how dependent we are on him. And just to go through some of these words in verse 2 and just think, well, how can they apply to us and our dependence on him?

He uses the word, my rock, twice. The Lord is my rock. He uses it in the third line there as well, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge.

And the word rock there just has behind it a security. It's to do with an immovable rock, something that is solid, something that is secure so that when everything else in the world is being thrown around, tossed around, when everything is in chaos, God remains the same and that he is stable. He is the place of security. So David here is reminding himself and reminding us that when it appears that the world is spinning out of control, that as a believer we can stand above it all and stand on the Lord, that he is my rock.

It reminds us of another couple of psalms, Psalm 40, that we sing so often when we set our feet upon a rock, when we have that security as we come to trust in the Lord Jesus, that he is the rock of our salvation.

[17:47] We have it in Psalm 46 as well, when God is a refuge and a strength. Verse 5 says, God is in the midst of us. She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns.

You have that security when the Lord is my rock. Someone put it like this, when we stand on him, we see our trials through his eyes.

And even though the difficulties of life might break our hearts, they still cause our hearts to bow in worship. So that no matter what we are going through, David here is writing in a time of victory, but as we know so well, David had times of despair as well, but yet he was able to still say, the Lord is my rock.

That is the hope that we can have ourselves. That as we love the Lord and see that he is my strength, he is my rock, the one who is immovable. Then he goes on to speak about God as his deliverer and his shield.

God is my fortress and my deliverer and then later on he says my shield. And so deliverer and shield we could almost take together and again see how they apply to us.

[19:13] When trouble comes into our lives, when David has experienced this trouble, the Lord has been a shield to him and he has been a deliverer to him.

And so David is able to see in the sense of deliverer, he is able to see what he has been brought through. He saw his enemies fall around him. He saw a victory won.

He was able to see the evidence of this. God is my deliverer. But God as my shield reminds us too that there are things that we do not see that the Lord keeps from us.

That as he is our shield, he protects us even at times when we are unaware of it. I'm sure we are not always aware of the way God has been with us day by day in our lives.

Maybe eternity will reveal it for us, what he has kept us from. But you know, you could think of just situations where but for the grace of God something different might have happened.

[20:22] That God has been a shield to us, protecting us in a circumstance, taking us through things even as we didn't see them. And David is aware of that, that God has been his shield and also his deliverer.

So there is a dependence on God. He is the one who rescues. He is the one who delivers from danger.

And isn't that a great assurance to us? That as we put our trust in him he gives us that promise as well. Through faith he delivers us from the consequences of sin.

We don't realize just now just what he is shielding us from. But we put our trust in him to protect us as our redeemer and our deliverer.

And then he goes on to say my strength and the horn of my salvation. The horn of my salvation.

[21:30] The horn as it mentioned here was something in David's day that was a particular symbol of strength and conquest. The horn could be used to make a noise, a cry, a shout of victory.

But it was also used in a way where the horn was a reminder of the abundance of God's goodness. Because at harvest time especially the horn would be filled to overflowing with the produce of the harvest.

And it would be a symbol of an overflowing abundance of God's goodness. And so it has these two sides to it and he is the horn of my salvation.

In other words we have this sense of rejoicing in God. That God gives us an abundance as we were thinking about this morning.

Abounding in grace for example. That God gives us that in a way that we are able to rejoice in him. He is my strength.

[22:36] He is the horn of my salvation. He gives us all of these things. And so we too can see that the Lord blesses us with an abundance of good things.

Then he goes on to say God is my fortress and my stronghold. A high tower is what this refers to. It's a place of security a place of safety for God's people.

The stronghold the high tower was a place where a city would be defended from so that those in the stronghold would be looking out over the enemies and able to defend the city from there.

It's a reminder to us that God sees all things. That he is over us in all things. That there's nothing out of his view, out of his vision. That God sees every situation that we are going through and that he is able to protect us from his stronghold.

When the battle rages we can go to him. He is the one who is able to keep us, to protect us, to help us. And so as David says all of these things here in verse 2, when he's using that word my, he is reminding us just of the greatness of God.

[23:59] Who he is in all of these ways. My rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, my shield, my horn, my stronghold. They are all ways of expressing that dependence on God.

But they are all ways that we can express our dependence on God as well. Because when we know God and we come to trust in the Lord Jesus, he is all of these things to us.

A deliverer, a rock, a shield, salvation, a stronghold. Every aspect of this can be our song through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

So then the final thing we see here is as we go into verse 3, worship leads us to a devotion to God. I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised and I am saved from my enemies.

So David here is making a pledge. He is devoting himself to God. I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised.

[25:13] God is a God to worship. And when you think of David and all the situations that he has been through here, you would say that David would surely be able to say that there was a time when he thought the outcome would be different, when he thought the enemies would capture him, when he would be killed, when Saul would have him killed.

But God has taken him through and God has proved to him that he can be dependent on. So David knew that if God could help him in these past days, he could help him in his future days as well.

So that's what he is making clear here in verse 3, I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised and I am saved from my enemies. This is an ongoing salvation, that he has this trust in God.

He is worshipping God. And the word worship itself, what's behind that? Well, the word worship is with this word worthy, worthship, the one who is worthy to be praised.

And so he is showing himself to be on God's side, that he will trust in the Lord in all his days. So David knew the Lord was worthy to be praised because of the way he had brought him through.

[26:46] And in your life and my life, I'm sure there's been times as we looked ahead, as we looked forward in our lives, where all we could see was defeat. all we could see was there wasn't a way ahead for us.

Everything seemed to weigh heavy upon us. All we could see was our unworthiness, our sin, and no way forward for ourselves.

That is what David was seeing here at times in his own life. But yet he was brought through and so can we. That as we trust in the Lord, as we look to him, that there is that assurance that he is able to bring us through.

And what a lesson there is in that for us. That as David learned to trust in God, so can we. That as David was protected, so will he protect us.

As David was provided for, so he will provide for us. As he helped David, so he will help us. As he refreshed David, so he will refresh us.

[27:55] He can do all of these things because he is God who is able. And he is the one who is worthy to be praised. Jim Parker, in one of his books, he said this about worship.

This then is worship in its largest sense. And he goes on to describe it in this way. Petition as well as praise. Preaching as well as prayer. Hearing as well as speaking.

Actions as well as words. Obeying as well as offering. Loving people as well as loving God. So he has all these aspects of worship that we are to have ourselves.

But he goes on to say this, however, the primary acts of worship are those which focus on God directly. and we must not imagine that work for God in the world is a substitute for direct fellowship with him in praise and prayer and devotion.

So there are important things for us to be doing in this world. But there is nothing more important, there is no substitute, as Jim Packer says here, than direct fellowship with him in praise and prayer and devotion.

[29:17] And that is what David is showing here. In everything that he did for the Lord, he sees it is all about worship. There is no substitute, as David is saying here, for this fellowship, this praise, prayer, and devotion that this psalm shows to us.

Is that our worship today? Is that the way we are living our lives today? With that praise, prayer, and devotion to God, the one who is worthy to be praised.

A little boy had been to church, and at the end of the day, at night, as he knelt beside his bedside, to pray to God. This was his prayer.

Dear God, we had a good time in church today. But I wish you had been there. Coming to church is not about having a good time with each other.

It's not about coming to see the person sitting beside you or to catch up with others around you. It's about recognizing that God is here and that we meet with him, the one who is worthy of all our praise.

[30:41] We are so thankful to God for all that he does for us. He is worthy of our thanksgiving. And this evening we think of the fact that he is worthy of worship, worthy to be praised.

So may our hearts praise him tonight. Praise him with that sense of thanksgiving, praise him and recognizing our delight in him, our dependence on him and our ongoing devotion to him.

May we be a people who have that praise and prayer and devotion with him in that relationship where we can come and say I love you my Lord, my strength.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we do thank you for your word again that reminds us of our ongoing dependence of you.

And we thank you that you are worthy to be praised. And help us, Lord, to come and acknowledge you in that way, that you are one we are to worship and you alone, so that from the outset of our time and as we go from here this evening into all the week ahead, that whatever we do for you, that we recognize that there is no substitute for that fellowship with you in praise and prayer and devotion.

[32:13] Teach us to pray, teach us to walk with you, teach us to love you and to love one another, even as your word commands. We ask it all with the forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll conclude then by singing in this psalm, Psalm 18, these three verses we've been looking for, page 218 of the psalm book, the Scottish Psalter version.

Psalm 18, verse 1 to verse 3, The will I love, O Lord, my strength, my fortress is the Lord, my rock, and he that doth to me deliverance afford.

Verse 1 to 3, the tune is spot, we stand to sing to God's praise. Amen. The will I love, O Lord, my strength, my fortress is the Lord, my rock, and he acteth to me deliverance afford. My God, my strength, through my will trust. Abaklar unto thee heart of thy salvation and my night of redeemed.

[34:17] Upon the Lord who worthy is, all praises will I cry.

And then shall I preserve thee, save from my enemy.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.