

## **Psalm 18**

**Read Psalm 18:1-4:** Are we *on target* or *off-target*? Do worrisome and disappointing circumstances mean that we are just lost in our ineptness? How do we know that we are not totally blowing it? What is the pathway to God's plan for our life? There is a discovery process required. We might have to be taken to places that we did not want to go to. God needs to deconstruct any platform that we have built for ourselves; and then build something new. We are being built into faithful servants. That is not satisfying to the heart of flesh. The *man of the world* is in a competition against his fellow man. God's plan is much different. David is discovering who he is in God. That is a journey which we do not get to control.

Clinging to what is right (regardless of the circumstances) will isolate you. Some of God's great leaders had lives that seemed to be essentially lost, or way off target. There are some biblical examples of lives that were considered to be lost...in order to become fully-prepared for service. Joseph was rejected by his cold-hearted brothers, falsely-accused by the ones he faithfully served, thrown in jail and forgotten. Moses had to be rejected by his entire country and become a fugitive from the Egyptians, and become a shepherd living in isolation for 40 years. David experienced the same formative process of rejection, betrayal, humiliation and to live under the fear of death. All of these leaders had an opportunity to conform to the world; and accept prevalent public opinion. They refused; and paid a price for it. You might live your entire life in anonymity and only have undetectable successes.

David is elevated to a place where God celebrates and advertises his life and service. That process seemed to require being taken into a dark place over and over. This psalm is about how David was saved from an envious king. David was obedient; and sought God's heart.

We are averse to conflict; and yet are forced into it. God had rejected Saul from being the anointed King over Israel. He told him that he would replace him with David. Saul was *the people's choice*; not God's. The children of Israel wanted to be like the surrounding nations, with a *trophy king* to show off...instead of a prophet (under God). Over time, God put the humble

servant David into the role of King over Israel...while removing the sitting king (Saul).

Saul refused to be compliant with God's directives. Saul fought against God's control. He saw David as the competition; instead of a tool in God's hand. The man of the world will lash out when his future is threatened. The man of God draws closer to God.

*But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 Then Samuel turned to go, but Saul grasped the edge of his robe, and it tore off. 28 So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. (1 Samuel 15:26-28)*

*Now the Lord said to Samuel, "How long are you going to mourn for [a]Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, because I have chosen a king for Myself among his sons." (1 Samuel 16:1)*

Going against God's plan is a terrifying experience; that ends in disaster. King Saul was a celebrity; but he was tormented by his own demons. Meanwhile, David was living the simple life, in fellowship with God. David had what Saul was lacking. David was originally brought in as a ministry musician.

*Now the Spirit of the Lord left Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrified him. 15 Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrifying you. 16 May our lord now command your servants who are before you. Have them search for a man who is a skillful musician on the harp; and it shall come about whenever the evil spirit from God is upon you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will become well." 17 So Saul said to his servants, "Now select for me a man who can play well, and bring him to me." 18 Then one of the young men responded and said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a valiant mighty man, a warrior, skillful in speech, and a handsome man; and the Lord is with him." 19 So Saul sent messengers to Jesse [h]to say, "Send me your son David, who is with the flock." (1 Samuel 16:14-19)*

David entered Saul's service as a low-level employee; and he came to Saul at a moment of national disgrace. Some pastors came from shameful pasts. They came in through the *service entry* to clean toilets, or teach young children. Our lives might be less stressful if we tried to master the fundamentals of service. Take the ministry that nobody else wants. Sometimes our opportunities are to do things that nobody wants to do.

Sometimes the opportunity exists because it is too simple and demeaning. Other opportunities seem too dangerous. There were no men who would take a chance against the giant. David offered to fight Goliath. King Saul reluctantly let David take a shot at Goliath. At this point David was still regarded as a *disposal tool*.

*When the words that David spoke were heard, they informed [u]Saul, and he [v]sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, "May no one's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine!" 33 But Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him; for you are only a youth, while he has been a warrior since his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a sheep from the flock, 35 I went out after it and [w]attacked it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I grabbed it by its mane and struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has [x]killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 And David said, "The Lord who saved me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you." (1 Samuel 17:31-37)*

**Read Psalm 18:5-6:** David wrote down words that were similar to what Jonah had originally recorded. He was taken to the darkest and most-hopeless place imaginable. David spoke as though he was already in the grave. Jonah similarly compared his predicament to being taken to the grave.

*"I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. 3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' (Jonah 2:2-4)*

There are times when we just don't see how we will get out of a situation. Our emotions can be like waves that bury us and smother us. They push us around like rag dolls. It is very uncomfortable to feel trapped and helpless. It can take away your energy and desire for anything. It's like being paralyzed. God wants us to live our life with joy.

**Read Psalm 18:7-15:** The Bible is a compilation of many books, written by different authors in differing times and places and circumstances. Their descriptions of God corroborate each other. There were not many prophecies in existence at the time of David. He only had the writings of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) . There were few other biblical writings that may not have been as well known (Job and parts of Samuel).

David describes God's rescue to be similar to the account of when God saved Moses and the children of Israel in the desert and Red Sea near Egypt. The power of God impacted nature and man. David also describes how God is very bright; and conceals himself and his cherubim angels from men in dark clouds, in the same way that Ezekiel's visions depicted him.

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and [c]the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. (Exodus 19:16-19)*

*So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (Exodus 14:22)*

*Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5 Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. (Ezekiel 1:4-5)*

**Read Psalm 18:16-19:** Christians are destined to have conflicts and problems. All men on earth have struggles. Those setbacks and hardships can harden or soften us. Young men have what is called the *Superman Syndrome*. They think that they are invincible in many ways. Old men are reminded all day long that they are always

at the brink of a potential issue. God wants us to see the truth about how our enemies and this world can easily overcome us. We can swing our fists in the air, and curse the world, or we can bring it to God. It is better to be protected than to live under the illusion that we can do it. It takes a while to get to the point where you no longer try to walk alone; but are also not so jaded that you have lost your hope of goodness coming your way.

*In the world you [f]will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

**Read Psalm 18:20-24** :It is hard to keep our hearts and minds in *the good life*. David is obviously a man who loves to record his thoughts and ponder what is happening. We can sit and meditate on God’s word; and walk with him. We can feel the Holy Spirit guiding our every step. Then life happens; and we get too busy; or something that we are taking care of goes sideways. Our schedules seem to take us over and own us at times. It is hard to get back to that place of peace; and sit still while we wait on him. David’s usage of the comparisons of losing his momentum and direction to the overpowering ebbs and flows of waves is a good one. Every day we face a different set. Some days the waves are small, and easily managed. We almost feel guilty. Other days seem unending; and they pull us further out to sea. To start the day without prayer is to go to battle without a helmet and shield.

**Read Psalm 18:25-27:** God uses the right medicine; so that we know our impact that we are having on others. Part of being empathetic is visualizing the impact on others. To the rude person; he sends an insensitive offender...that they might not continue to be blind to their impact on others. This is called *poetic justice*. On the other hand, he is merciful to those who go out of their way to accommodate others. We might be able to *back-track* our repeating problems. Are we the victim of malicious intent? When was the last time that we stomped on someone’s reputation who offended you? We can solve our own problems by ceasing to be the offender/sinner elsewhere in our life.

*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the [a]earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:6-8)*

The problem is that we see ourselves as the victim a lot more than we see ourselves as the offender.

*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the hearts.  
(Proverbs 21:2)*

**Read Psalm 18:28-29:** When we get serious about prayer, and trust in its power, we change our strategy. David really knew that he could win any battle; if God set it up to do so. Every day has its set of challenges. Like waves to a surfer paddling out; we have to remain calm and pray our way through the waves of resistance. The worst thing that we can do is to lose our composure; and take drastic measures. Keep a cool head, and make strategic prayers...and focus.

**Read Psalm 18:30-50:** We are poster-children for the Kingdom. Sometimes we look like *naive purists* or *alligator bait*. At other times; we appear to be privileged and protected and unworthy recipients of all kinds of gifts and grace. We may inspire sympathy or envy or respect or hatred...just because of our affiliation with God.

We have seen times when Israel was able to make military feats that were beyond comprehension. There are other times when the Jews were a worldwide spectacle for taking beatings from many nations. I have noticed similar things in my own life. There have been times when the adverse conditions and events seemed to be unstoppable. There have been equally-supernatural boundaries to my tests. I have been pushed to the brink; and yet never completely fell off the wire.

*...as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. (2 Corinthians 6:4-10)*

It is interesting that my failures and setbacks produced a lot of spiritual fruit in other people. I am not aware that any of my small successes have not brought anyone closer to Christ.

For me; it is necessary to remind me that I am not that good. I am walking on a virtual cloud of supernatural alliances, unexpected information coming in from left field, odd circumstances that redeem flawed plans, angelic timing of information...all to make my life a praise to him. When my life goes according to plan, without a hitch, it seems to be happening without spiritual forces involved. The daily tug-of-war keeps me focused on what is really happening around me.

We need to be super-careful to not relapse into *survival mode*. The world is looking for a cause to discredit the notion of following God. We are being framed for being hypocrites and pretenders, to marginalize our cause. In a sense, we are hypocrites. We all see ourselves as better than we really are (underneath it all). The good news is that the old man inside of me is just a traveling buddy with the spiritual man within me.