

EMBRACING GOD

David: A Long Obedience in—Seeking God II Samuel 22

As we open to Psalm 18 this morning, I have been praying that maybe this Psalm will become the most meaningful and precious of all the Psalms we have studied. We walked through David's life for many months; from his childhood and all its struggles, through the triumphs of the battle field to the defeats of those unguarded moments—all through the inspired record God gave to us.

The reason I have loved this study of David's life is because of the way God's grace is brought so visibly forward in David's life--the grace that saves, the grace that forgives, the grace that gives new beginnings each day and every hour. Especially when we gather around the Table celebrating Christ's Cross these truths are closest and dearest.

Grace says God is committed to finishing what He started in my life; Christ says I am going to keep cleansing you as often as needed; I am going to love you no matter what you do and nothing can make me love you any more or any less. That means all of us must be...

SEEKING GOD WHEN IMPERFECT

David's life declares that it doesn't take perfection to please God.

One of the reasons that we need so long to go through David's life is that it takes us so long to realize that God does not demand nor expect perfection.

- You don't have to be **fearless** to please God—*David was often afraid and had to flee to the Lord*. Remember that next time you are afraid!
- You don't have to be **perfect** to please God—*David was smitten by guilt and confessed his sins to the Lord*. Remember that next time you are stained by sin!
- You don't have to have a **perfect marriage** to please God—*David had marriage problems he gave to the Lord*. Remember that next time you are weeping inside or outside over the stress and pain that you feel at your partner!

- You don't have to have **perfect children** to please God—*David has no recorded children who followed the Lord to the end of their life*. Remember that next time you feel the harsh blast of their disobedience, disrespect or ingratitude!
- You don't have to be **constantly serene** to please God—*David was often depressed and had to sometimes crawl back to the Lord*. Remember that next time you are too discouraged to even get out of bed, or go to work, or look another person in the eye!

But we do have to experience God's grace to please Him.

We gather as Christ's Body to praise God for grace—and David's life is covered with grace. God looks upon David not always as he was but always as he would be. God saw his heart, knew his deepest desire and forgave all the rest.

David was imperfect, sometimes failing, fearful, sad, and troubled—and through it all, in spite of it all, and in it all—David says from start to finish, all of his life--I love the Lord.

When we stopped at David's deathbed, we witnessed his hope and peace as he walked through that valley of death's shadow and feared no evil.

God's Word notes that Psalm 18 contains the last recorded words of David. I hope that Psalm 18 will become a part of your long term spiritual investment strategy—a pattern for how to love the Lord, trust the Lord and seek the Lord for a long time of your life.

So stop with me and look back over David's life and see the life long patterns that made him such a man that God used and loved.

This Psalm of praise to God is actually recorded twice in the Bible here and in II Samuel 22. It is repeated intentionally for emphasis. In II Samuel 22 it is set as the *historical record* of David's final words. In Psalm 18 it is captured as the *personal testimony* of this life long, God seeking servant of the Lord.

Look with me at just the first six words of Psalm 18.

I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

These final words of David are his personal testimony of the love that drew him into a life long habit of seeking God.

David begins, and his first words are where we also should always begin--a full hearted expression of love to Him who is more than life to us.

Hebrews 11 summarizes God's saints by saying that God loves to reward those that diligently seek Him. And that is what David did. He sought God while facing giant enemies like Goliath, through protracted battles with foreign armies, and even fleeing his own son.

During all his personal struggles and fears—One person never left him and that was the Lord. David always knew God's love and Presence. Seeking the Lord and loving Him was a life long pursuit for David.

Psalm 18 contains David's final words that distill his whole spiritual pilgrimage into one chapter. That first line of this Psalm sums up his life long habit. David explains that he had a life long habit of—

EMBRACING GOD

This word used by David for love is a rare verb form of a word group that expresses tender intimacy. David's choice of words intended to express very strong devotion, like Mary on Resurrection morning that just wanted to hug Jesus (John 20:17).

In the Bible this Hebrew word for love (*racham* # 7355 used 47x) is always used in a positive sense about God and by God for His love for His people. This word speaks of love that draws someone close and hugs them. It is a love that yearns for someone, and is seen when someone has been away for a period and those who love them are so glad to see them back they hug them.

Here in Psalm 18:1 is the sole time in the entire Bible that this term for a hugging, embracing love--is used by a person describing their love for God.

David is the only person in the entire Old Testament to take this word for God's love of His children and turn it around and use it for his own personal love for God. This is very much a part of the reason that God says that David had a heart for Him.

David says I love you so much Lord that I am drawn to you, I want to run and throw my arms around you and express that love for you. That is embracing love, seeking love—and that is David's heart after God.

Psalm 18 records David's last words, looking back over life. A recounting of the depth of love David confesses that he has felt for the Lord.

We have gathered this morning as a group of imperfect people, knit together by love for a perfect Savior, Jesus Christ.

Because we LOVE the Lord this morning, holding your Bible open to Psalm 18, would you **stand with me** and lift your heart, your face and your voice up to Him and sing that chorus "I Love You Lord" with me as a personal love gift of worship to Jesus?

With that preparation, follow along as we read this incredible chapter.

Read Psalm 18, Pray and then sing again "I Love You Lord"!

Psalm 18 is one long testimony to God's great faithfulness as a shelter, a stronghold, and a sure foundation to all who would trust in Him. And I call this final aspect of David's

life his long obedience. That is what is most evident about David—he sought the Lord for almost all of his life. And--

SEEKING GOD BUILDS A LIFE GOD REWARDS

A life that God rewards is a life that personally seeks the Lord.

A life that God greatly rewards is a life that has a long history of personal pursuing or seeking God.

The sheer volume of information God has given to us about David offers us an incredible opportunity to sift through these chapters and see what a long obedience looks like, and should be like. This is perhaps the greatest way that David's life can impact us—by calling us to walk in the power of the Spirit to also have a long obedience in seeking God.

Psalm 18 is an investment record, recorded by God, of the deposits in David's account. We know from life that a long term investment strategy with our money is the best way to go. Money like time is given to us not merely to spend—but also to invest.

Jesus spent much of His public ministry talking about money. Of His 30+ parables, more than half speak about money. Money is all around us; it drives the economy of our world, motivates most of the workers of this country and is the target that most people use to measure their success and happiness.

One of the secrets that those who obtain great wealth always talk about is the power of long term, compounded investments.

When we lived and served at a church in New England we saw the reality of that long term wealth growing power.

For six years we lived in a lovely New England parsonage. A house built in the early 1800's specifically for the pastor of the Quidnessett Church. The family that donated the money to build that house were part of the E.I. DuPont family.

After the house was built they gave one \$25 share of stock in the DuPont Company; they requested that the dividends be reinvested and that the house be maintained on an allocation made annually from that account's value. That was sometime around 1828.

When we moved into that home 160 years later in 1988, the house was lovely, the acre of grounds looked like a botanical garden--and the maintenance account was worth nearly \$1,000,000.00!

The unbroken compounding of the dividend yield, stock splits, and appreciation of each share through the ups and downs of the Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean and Viet Nam Wars and onward--turned \$25 into a million dollars, even after all the expenses were paid for that house.

What an amazing power there is in compounded investment in the long haul of American financial history. Financial planners tell us that the real wealth is long term. Even Proverbs said that 3,000 years ago when Solomon said that wealth “hastily gained” is elusive (Pr. 28:20)

So Psalm 18 is the investment record by God of the deposits in David's account.

It was written after a lifetime of facing enemies at every turn. First David had faced enemies in the form of the wolves and lions of those shepherding years. Then he had to face the Philistines of both the Valley of Elah (Goliath) and those that surrounded him when on King Saul's staff. So for all those years before his marriage enemies abounded.

Then as the King's sin-in-law the enemies grew greater as the King and the armies of Israel were hunting David to kill him. Later when David was crowned King, the enemies he faced were the Philistines plus the combined armies of all the pagan nations surrounded the Land of Israel.

Finally, when older and nearing the end of life all the pagan nations were joined by those of his own children who sought his throne and thus became his enemies and endangering his life. It seems that David never stopped facing enemies. At the end of his life he wrote this Psalm extolling the Faithful God who delivered him from murderous Saul, pagan armies and even wayward sons.

David is very possessive in his description of his life long walk with the Lord. He describes his relationship by saying—the Lord is my...

David's expressions, “My strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my shield, the horn of my salvation...” are a set of seven metaphors to describe God as He aided David in the military times as “Shield, Strength, and Horn”; and from David's days on the run God was to him “Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, and Stronghold”. God is not distant if in your relationship with Him you--

MAKE IT PERSONAL

David was very personal in his seeking of God. Nine times in this Psalm he expresses his life long seeking the Lord in those terms using “my”:

*1 I will love You, O Lord, **my strength.***

*2 The Lord is **my rock** and **my fortress** and **my deliverer**;*

My God, my strength**, in whom I will trust; **My shield** and the horn [means 'power'] of **my salvation, my stronghold.

When David described the Lord, as we have seen he was possessive.

God wasn't distant to David he is “my” God.

Then after David tells the Lord that he loves Him so much he wants to hug Him—he goes

on in the 50 verses to exhaust the Hebrew language in an attempt to explain all that God has been to David throughout his life.

But most of those expressions surround the way David related to God as his "Rock". Four times in this Psalm the Lord is My Rock, David declares.

- v. 2a **The Lord is my rock** and my fortress and my deliverer;
- v. 2b My God, **my strength** (Heb. Lit. 'rock'), in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- v. 31 For who is God, except the Lord? And **who is a rock, except our God?**
- v. 46 The Lord lives! **Blessed be my Rock!** Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

When David calls the Lord his Rock it was drawn from the life of the desert when the fragile life of desert plants and animals was often clustered in the areas of shade around the rocks. Travelers also knew that to survive the heat of the desert Sun there must be places of shade to rest and renew before going on.

David confessed that he had only made it through the dangerous deserts of his life by the shadow of God as his Rock of protection and shade. When fleeing from enemies like Saul and Absalom, God was the Rock that he found refuge and safety. And when everything around him was unstable, God was the Rock solid foundation he could always feel beneath him.

In England around the year 1763, while Ben Franklin was busily flying kites in thunderstorms over here in America, a young pastor by the name of Augustus Toplady was traveling home when a violent thunderstorm struck. Here is the popular recounting of the birth of the great hymn "Rock of Ages" [#204 in our books].

LIGHTNING briefly illuminated the primitive, rock-hewn landscape of Burrington Combe in Somerset. It was followed by a deep growl of thunder, and then rain lashed mercilessly down, pouring bubbling streamlets down the craggy sides of primeval cliffs which rise up some 250ft. to the Mendip Heights on one side, and into Cheddar Gorge on the other.

The curate of Blagdon, a nearby village, had been travelling along the road near the cliffs when the storm struck and dashed into a cave for shelter. He had been fortunate to find this hiding-place so quickly, and while waiting for the storm to pass he began to muse on the idea of the "*rock of faith*" being a shelter from the "*storms of life*".

The words for a hymn began to form in his mind but, according to the legend that still persists, he had no paper in his pocket to write down the words. Looking down he saw a playing card, considered a sinful thing by the young cleric. Nevertheless, he picked it up and began to write one of the world's best-loved hymns which was

first published in the Gospel Magazine in 1775, some 12 years after Toplady wrote it.¹

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See thee on thy judgement throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.

As you come to meet Jesus in prayer and the Word, make it personal. Never cease to tell Him thank you for being--my salvation, my cleansing, my redeemer, my Rock of Ages..

¹ <http://www.ensignmessage.com/archives/rockofages.html>