

PSALM 18

A SONG OF GRATEFUL RETROSPECT

This Psalm ultimately speaks of One Who is far greater than David; but David's circumstances furnished an appropriate occasion for giving the Church such a song as this, concerning the Messiah and all the members of His spiritual Body. The Psalmist's circumstances made him suitable to be the vehicle of this Divine communication. "The Lord is my rock," he says (verse 2). Jehovah was like a precipitous cliff, which David's foes found to be inaccessible; and He was a "fortress" or stronghold upon such a rock. But even more, He was the Psalmist's "deliverer" – not leaving him simply to the defense of rocks, but interposing Himself with His own loving arm. Then David calls Him "my God" – for He was not merely his deliverance, but He was everything to him. He was also the essence of "strength" to the Psalmist; as well as his "buckler" and shield upon the battlefield. He was "the horn" of "salvation," by Whom the victory over the foes was won. And as he returned to his encampment on the heights, far above the reach of foes, he sings of Him as his "high tower," in which he could repose in security.

But this Psalm was especially meant to picture the Lord Jesus. It presents a singular history of some portions of our Lord's mighty undertakings. In Hebrews 2:13, Paul quotes verse 2 as our Lord's words – "I will put my trust in him" – to show that Christ, as our Elder Brother, leaned upon His Father; just as we ourselves lean our weakness upon Almighty strength. And again, in Romans 15:9, he quotes verse 49 – "I will confess to thee among the Gentiles" – to show Christ's deep interest in the world at large, both Jews and Gentiles. So by means of these two references – one from the beginning of the Psalm, and the other from the closing verses – the whole composition is marked out (being bracketed within these two quotations) as belonging to Christ in a special and

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

"To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." We have another form of this Psalm with significant variations (2 Sam. 22); and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all. This Psalm is the song of a grateful heart that is overwhelmed with a retrospect of the manifold and marvelous mercies of God.

The first three verses are the preface in which the Psalmist's resolution to bless God is declared. Delivering mercy is very poetically extolled from verses 4-19; and then the happy songster, from verses 20-28, protests that God had acted righteously in thus favoring him. Being filled with grateful joy, he again pictures his deliverance and anticipates future victories, from verses 29-45; and in closing, he speaks with evident prophetic foresight of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah – David's Greater Son and the Lord's Anointed One!

direct manner. Therefore, as we read this sacred poem, we must read it with the understanding that it is our own Elder Brother Who is singing here! He begins by telling His younger brothers and sisters what His Father (and ours) did for Him in the day of the sadness of His heart. He is relating some of the hidden things which are nowhere else recorded; but which fit into the time of Gethsemane's suffering, the three hours' of darkness during the crucifixion, the earthquake, and the rending of the Temple-veil – all things that took place in the view of other spectators besides mankind, when the “prince of the air” was overthrown; and when the Father, in all His heavenly glory and majesty, came forward to work deliverance.

Let us begin to examine the content of this Psalm. The true Sweet Singer of Israel – the “firstborn among many brethren” – stands on the shore of His Red Sea; and He sings, in verses 1 and 2, about the grace and glory of His Father. What a God He is – “my strength, my rock, my fortress,” etc. Then comes the description of the Savior's awful conflict. He traverses the field with us, and tells us of His cries that pierced the heavens and His Father's heart (verses 3-6) – a commentary on Hebrews 5:7. But from verses 7-15, what a scene of terrific incidents is opened to view! The cords of death were surrounding Him; and the torrents and floods, filled with all the mischief of hell and hellish men, were sweeping down upon Him. But just at that moment, His cry began to be noticed – and His Father rose up! Earth shook! Smoke and fire were seen by those same angels who were witnesses of the smoke and fire on Mount Sinai, attesting the majesty of the Law. The same heavens bowed themselves down, just as they bowed themselves when the Law was given. The same darkness attended this descent of the Lord, for now the Law-Fulfiller was about to present the Law fulfilled! He came with the cherub-symbol, for there was now to be redemption from the curse of the Law. But there was no abatement of His glory, and no obscuring of His splendor. It was Israel's God in all His majesty – yes, the same God Who laid bare the Red Sea's channel (verses 14-15) – Who then appeared in still greater displays of majesty, as the Redeemer died for sinful men. It was a scene that was not witnessed by mortal eyes; but without a doubt, it was one of those things of which the Apostle speaks, which were “seen of angels.”

But at length, the Redeemer was delivered! “He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters” (verses 16-18). In vain do the scribes and elders triumph – sealing the sepulcher-stone, and setting a watch! In vain does Satan exult, as if he had crushed the Woman's Seed! “They prevented me” – that is, they got before me, as if between Me and My Refuge – “in the day of my calamity,” the Savior says. But Jehovah came! Resurrection followed His death, with all its glorious results. Then He stood in “a large place,” and He soon sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And in that hour, every member of His Body was virtually “raised with him, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places.” And was all this done in conformity with law and righteous-

ness? Yes indeed! The Law of God was honored then, and is still being honored and magnified forever, by all that the Redeemer has and is doing. Verses 20-26 declare it: "Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness... According to the cleanness of my hands has he recompensed me... Because I kept the ways of the Lord... All his judgments were before me... And I did not put away his statutes from me... Yea, I was upright before him." Henceforth, nothing hinders the application of His redemption-work on the part of God; and on man's part, there is nothing required except the humility of spirit that is willing to receive such a gift. It is only man's pride – which caused the Fall in the first place – which hinders the rising again of the fallen. We are here assured that the Lord "wilt save the people that are poor; but will bring down high looks" (verse 27).

Our Elder Brother, having brought us thus far in His history, tells us once again of His Father's love to Him and His people (verses 28-35). He shows us how fully the Father, Who equipped Him for the former struggle, has equipped Him for whatever remains for Him to do. The Father loves the Son, and He has given all things into His hands. He seems to suddenly remind the Father of this (verses 35-36), in preparation for what is coming – saying, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

Then follows the final assault upon the Redeemer's unyielding enemies (verses 37-42). Yes, this attack is long-deferred, but it is most assuredly coming! This is evidently a reference to the day of His Second Coming, for we hear the



cry (verse 41) when “there is none to save.” The Master has risen up and shut the heavenly gate forever. Rocks and mountains cannot shelter His foes, any more than could the cave of Makkedah provide safety for the five wicked kings that fled to it; our spiritual Joshua calls them out, and puts His own foot upon their necks (verse 40, compare with Joshua 10:24). And then the earth is subdued under Him (verses 43-45). Isaiah 52:15 is fulfilled; nations come to Him – just as the Queen of Sheba came to King Solomon – being attracted by the report of His amazing grace and glory.

On that glorious Day, the Lord alone shall be exalted. This Psalm prophetically speaks of the glory resounding to His name (verses 46-48); and the watchword, or congratulatory acclamation, of all the earth shall be these two words: “Jehovah liveth!” Jews and Gentiles shall finally be united in the same family; for we see the Deliverer (verses 49-50) declaring His celebration of Jehovah’s name among the Gentiles, while He also shows kindness “to David and his seed for ever.” Well may we join with all the members of our Resurrected Head – for we are “made more than conquerors” in Him, and we enjoy our share in all these triumphs along with Him! Well may we join in the exclamation of verse 50: “Great deliverance giveth he to his king!” The full salvation-work that is accomplished by our appointed King is all done in the way of might and majesty.

But now see how we may follow David’s example and sing these words our-selves, just as well as David’s Greater Son could sing them! We sing of our deliverances and remember all the while that the source of them was God’s rising up for us in all His power – which is sometimes invisible, but which is always amazingly great. And then, in verses 20-27, we – like David – may speak before the Lord of the righteousness which we have received, and of the purity which He Himself has bestowed. It is with our eye upon Christ’s righteousness imputed, and upon Christ’s Spirit imparted, that we so sing – humbly declaring what He has done for us. As for verses 37-45, they speak of the day when we shall share with our Head in the bruising of Satan under our feet. What are we, that we should be called upon to join in such a song? What are we, dear Lord, that Your Son should be our Elder Brother and work all this out for us? Enable us to love, serve, glorify, and fully follow that Savior forevermore! May we never sing this Psalm except with burning love to Him, as we think of the Righteous One Who was delivered and glorified by His Father and ours!

Lord Jesus, we pray for grace to direct our praises solely and heartily to You; for, like David, we owe everything to You! We beseech You for grace, in the day of our deliverance, to thank You for preserving us with Your own right hand. Amen.