

# PSALM 18

This psalm we met with before, in the history of David's life, 2 Samuel 22. That was the first edition of it; here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him; these he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry is very fine, the images are bold, the expressions lofty, and every word is proper and significant; but the piety far exceeds the poetry. Holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing.

**I.** He triumphs in God (v. 1-3).

**II.** He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him (v. 4-19).

**III.** He takes the comfort of his integrity, which God had thereby cleared up (v. 20-28).

**IV.** He gives to God the glory of all his achievements (v. 29-42).

**V.** He encourages himself with the expectation of what God would further do for him and his (v. 43-50).

## ~~OLD~~ PSALM 18:1-19

### DAVID TRIUMPHS IN GOD

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.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm; we had it before (~~1~~2 Samuel 22:1), only here we are told that the psalm was delivered *to the chief musician*, or precentor, in the temple-songs. Note, The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their

candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called *the servant of the Lord*, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because, with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it (<sup><4336></sup>Psalm 116:16): *O Lord! truly I am thy servant*. In these verses,

**I.** He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, *I will love thee, O Lord! my strength*, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved is the lover's delight; this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with much pleasure (v. 2): *"The Lord Jehovah is my God; and then he is my rock, my fortress, all that I need and can desire in my present distress."* For there is that in God which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. "He is my rock, and strength, and fortress;" that is,

1. "I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties."
2. "I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me." Those that truly love God may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, v. 3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better — *call upon him as long as we live*, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*, <sup><4427></sup>Acts 2:21.

**II.** He sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was out of which we were delivered the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now

remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls *the floods of Belial*, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers. They surrounded him, *compassed him about*; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him; their snares prevented him, and, when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, v. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a lost man; see ~~BBB~~ Psalm 116:3.

**2.** The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, v. 6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Though distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

**3.** The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance the greater it is: such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, v. 7, etc. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances.

**(1.)** He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the *foundations of the hills* (v. 7), as of old at Mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to *tremble*; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved.

**(2.)** He showed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people: *He was wroth*, v. 7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire (v. 8), and *coals were kindled by it*. Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals (that is, fuel) to this fire will be consumed by it. He that ordains his arrows against the persecutors sends them forth when he pleases, and they are sure to hit the mark and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, v. 14.

**(3.)** He showed his readiness to plead his people's cause and work deliverance for them; for he rode upon a cherub and did fly, for the maintaining of right and the relieving of his distressed servants, v. 10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him *who rides upon the wings*

*of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies.*

**(4.)** He showed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case: *He bowed the heavens and came down* (v. 9), did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people.

**(5.)** He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, <sup>23515</sup> Isaiah 45:15. He is a God that hideth himself; for he *made darkness his pavilion*, v. 11. his glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but, when his designs are secret, they are kind; for, though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And, *at his brightness, the thick clouds pass* (v. 12), comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

**4.** The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, v. 15. There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn (v. 16), as Moses, who had his name from being drawn out of the water literally, as David was figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they would have been too strong for him, v. 17. And they were too quick for him; for they *prevented him in the day of his calamity*, v. 18. But, in the midst of his troubles, the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles in the mean time.

**5.** That which especially magnified the deliverance was that his comfort was the fruit of it and God's favour was the root and fountain of it.

**(1.)** It was an introduction to his preferment, v. 19. "He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had room, not only to turn, but to thrive in."

**(2.)** It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet: "*He delivered me because he delighted in me*, not for my merit, but for his

own grace and good-will.” Compare this with <sup><156></sup>2 Samuel 15:26, *If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am*. We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this we must triumph in God, and trust in him: and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David. The sorrows of death surrounded him; in his distress he prayed (<sup><387></sup> Hebrews 5:7); God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

## <sup><482></sup>PSALM 18:20-28

### DEVOUT CONFIDENCE

Here,

**I.** David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoices in the testimony of his conscience that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity and not with fleshly wisdom, <sup><4012></sup>2 Corinthians 1:12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness.

**1.** His deliverances cleared his innocency before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls *rewarding him according to his righteousness* (v. 20, 24), that is, determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause and the cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocency; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal (as he always will) according to equity.

**2.** They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, v. 21-23. His own heart knows, and is ready to attest it,

**(1.)** That he had kept firmly to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed, from his God. Those that forsake the ways of the Lord do, in effect, depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed into a departure, for it is not a wicked departure, from our God.

**(2.)** That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands (v. 22): *“All his judgments were before me; and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard, but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways.”*

**(3.)** That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily besets us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be *justified in the Spirit*, <sup><BIB></sup>1 Timothy 3:16.

**II.** He takes occasion thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, v. 25, 26.

**1.** Those that show mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no, not of their works of mercy) shall find mercy with God, <sup><BIB></sup>Matthew 5:7.

**2.** Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God.

**3.** Those that serve God with a pure conscience shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on and very sweet to be delight in.

**4.** Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, ~~<RS>~~Leviticus 26:21, 24.

**III.** Hence he speaks comfort to the humble (“*Thou wilt save the afflicted people, that are wronged and bear it patiently*”), terror to the proud (“*Thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious*”), and encouragement to himself — “*Thou wilt light my candle, that is, thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee and the interests of thy kingdom among men.*”

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements in singing these verses, encourage themselves that God himself will be a light to them.

## ~~<RS>~~PSALM 18:29-50

### GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF PAST DELIVERANCES

In these verses,

**I.** David looks back, with thankfulness, upon the great things which God had done for him. He had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to triumph over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about, and followed, all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity.

**1.** God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to nor designed for, his genius leading him more to music, and poetry, and a contemplative life: *He teaches my hands to war*, v. 34.

- 2.** God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war: God *girded him with strength* (v. 32, 39), to such a degree that he could break even a bow of steel, v. 34. What service God designs men for he will be sure to fit them for.
- 3.** God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies but to fly upon them (v. 33): *He makes my feet like hinds' feet*, v. 36. “*Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; but*” (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) “*my feet did not slip.*” He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, v. 37.
- 4.** God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it (v. 29); if ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them, and by divine assistance set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, v. 33.
- 5.** God had protected him, and kept him safe, in the midst of the greatest perils. Many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved: “*Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation* (v. 35), and that has compassed me on every side. By that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people who aimed at my destruction (v. 43), particularly from the violent man” (v. 48), that is, Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him.
- 6.** God had prospered him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect (v. 32) and it was his right hand that held him up, v. 35.
- 7.** God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, who would have deposed him. He enlarges much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories, not to his own sword or bow, nor to the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God: *I pursued them* (v. 37), *I wounded them* (v. 38); *for thou hast girded me with strength* (v. 39), else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God: *Thou hast subdued them under me*, v. 39. *Thou hast given me their necks* (v. 40), not only to trample upon them (as ~~10:24~~ Joshua 10:24), but to cut them off. Even those who hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel



of God, in their distress cried unto the Lord: but in vain; he answered them not. How could they expect he should when it was he whom they fought against? And, when he disowned them (as he will all those that act against his people), no other succours could stand them in stead: *There was none to save them*, v. 41. Those whom God has abandoned are easily vanquished: *Then did I beat them small as the dust*, v. 42. But those whose cause is just he avenges (v. 47), and those whom he favours will certainly be *lifted up above those that rise up against them*, v. 48.

**8.** God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great (v. 35): *Thy gentleness has increased me* — thy discipline and instruction; so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to increase his greatness. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler: *Thou hast made me the head of the heathen* (v. 43); all the neighbouring nations were tributaries to him. See <sup><1886></sup>2 Samuel 8:6, 11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.

**II.** David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection. When God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises, to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, v. 46. He gives honour to him,

**1.** As a living God: *The Lord liveth*, v. 46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself and is therefore fitly called *the living God*. The gods of the heathen were dead gods. The best friends we have among men are dying friends. But God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their life.

**2.** As a finishing God: *As for God*, he is not only perfect himself, but *his way is perfect*, v. 30. He is known by his name *Jehovah* (<sup><1888></sup>Exodus 6:3), a God performing and perfecting what he begins in providence as well as creation, <sup><1889></sup>Genesis 2:1. If it was God that made David's way perfect (v. 32), much more is his own way so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he does, <sup><1894></sup>Ecclesiastes 3:14. And what he

undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way; what God begins to build he is able to finish.

**3.** As a faithful God: *The word of the Lord is tried*. “I have tried it” (says David), “and it has not failed me.” All the saints, in all ages, have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise.

**4.** As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him: “*He is the God of my salvation* (v. 46), by whose power and grace I am and hope to be saved; but not of mine only: he is *a buckler to all those that trust in him* (v. 30); he shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so.”

**5.** As a non-such in all this, v. 31. There is a God, and *who is God save Jehovah?* That God is a rock, for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers; and *who is a rock save our God?* Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note,

**(1.)** Whoever pretends to be deities, it is certain that there is no God, save the Lord; all others are counterfeits, <sup>244B</sup>Isaiah 44:8; <sup>244D</sup>Jeremiah 10:10.

**(2.)** Whoever pretends to be our felicities, there is no rock, save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

**III.** David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promises himself,

**1.** That his enemies should be completely subdued, and that those of them that yet remained should be made his footstool, — that his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him (v. 43), — that his conquests, and, consequently, his acquiescences, should be easy (*As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me*, v. 44), — and that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that had retired to their fastnesses should not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be quite put down.

2. That his seed should be forever continued in the Messiah, who, he foresaw, should come from his loins, v. 50. He *shows mercy to his anointed, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his seed, as of one, that is Christ,* ~~<KJB>~~ Galatians 3:16. It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Christ is called *David,* ~~<KJB>~~ Hosea 3:5. God has called him *his king,* ~~<KJB>~~ Psalm 2:6. Great deliverance God does give, and will give to him, and to his church and people, here called *his seed, for evermore.*

In singing these verses we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto and of all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel kingdom, and encourage ourselves and one another with an assurance that the church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.