

Psalms 18-12-06b

Let's pick up our study now in Psalm 18. And what we see in the broad sweep of this psalm is that the man of God, the believer, the person here in a faithful and loving relationship with God is facing adversity and appealing to God as a fortress, as a rock, as strength. And then David pictures this overwhelming intervention by God where his personal presence with all of these earth-shaking manifestations comes in and forever resolves this conflict.

You don't see these enemies coming back. You don't see these foes getting back up off the ground for round two. And it reminds us that this is a view of the day of the Lord.

It looks forward to the ultimate resolution. We know that in this life there will be things that are not resolved. There are imperfections.

There are unknowns. There are puzzles and hardships that don't seem to make temporal sense. How do we cope with those? We recognize that God at the end resolves everything.

He vindicates all of those who place their trust in him. And what seems obscure, what seems unknowable, the foes that are too many for us and too much for us. David says, I had people who hated me.

They were too strong for me in verse 17. There will be lots of things that are too strong for us. You can have a dish that's too salty.

You can have coffee that's too old. You can have food that's too far past its sell-by date. It's too much for us.

But there's nothing that is too much for God. And if he allows it into our lives, if he brings those circumstances along for us, it has a purpose. There is a goal.

There is studious thought and planning that has gone into it on the part of God. There are no accidents for faithful believers. For those who love God and put their trust in him and look to him for their strength, nothing is accidental.

Nothing is just fortuitous or of a random slings and arrows nature. It is calculated. It is measured.

It is carefully weighed. It is administered. It is monitored.

It reminds me a little bit of, and those of you that have been through this will forgive me because I have not, but if you watch someone who undergoes treatment for cancer, you think sometimes, well, the treatment is worse than the malady. You see what happens when people go through chemotherapy and radiation and various courses of drugs and surgeries and whatnot to address this vicious attack on a healthy human body that renders it weak and headed for Sheol and headed for the shadows of death. And that's what David talks about here.

He says, these things were reaching out to me. They were trying to overwhelm me. The floodwaters were ready to wash me away.

How does God deal with that? The vindication, the justification, the adjudication, the judgment on all wickedness, all unrighteousness, all corruption happens when God appears. And that's why you have all of these verses in verses 7 through 15 and on through 19 talking about the coming of God into history in an overwhelming, visible, powerful, and judgmental way. Nothing raises its head after this.

God reconciles all of these things. We have to trust in that. We see it by faith.

We trust in it and it sustains us and comforts us and guides us, gives us supernatural peace. Well, we pick up here in verse 28. David says, you will light my lamp.

The Lord, my God will enlighten my darkness. Now, it's always instructive to watch the pronouns, isn't it? Go back up to verse 20 through 24. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, cleanness of my hands.

He recompensed me. I kept the ways of the Lord. His judgments are before me.

His statutes I did not put away. I was blameless before him. I kept myself from my iniquity.

Therefore, the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. Third person, right? What happens next? With the merciful, you will show yourself merciful. David turns and addresses the Lord.

With a blameless man, you will show yourself blameless. Now, why the change in persons? And in general, why would the person change? How is this helpful or instructive for us? I could give you one minute to write down a short answer, but I'll just answer it myself. I'll give you my thoughts on it.

Why do we speak to one another? Why do we talk about the Lord and his goodness to us and what he's done and what we expect him to do? We share that with one another, right? That is part of fellowship. It's part of upbuilding. It's part of speaking the truth to one another in love.

It is exhortation and encouragement amongst ourselves. This is believers conversing. Why would David shift to the second person? What mode are we in when we are talking to God in the second person? What do we call this? Starts with a P and ends with an R. It's got a Y in the middle.

Prayer, right? This is David talking to God. We call this prayer. There is a time to speak with one another and to be encouraged by one another.

We were having a discussion over the last few days about the notion of the importance of fellowship and how important it is to be related to one another, to give and receive in the area of spiritual gifts and in encouragement and forsaking not the assembling and so on. It is

critically important. There is also, remember the two great commands that the Lord Jesus reviewed? All the law and the prophets are summed up in what? Love your neighbor as yourself, but what else? Love the Lord your God first with all your heart, your soul and your strength, right? So what is happening right here? David is sharing in verses 20 through 24 an encouragement, his experience, what God has done for him and his experience with God.

Now in verse 25, he's in prayer mode. He is expressing that love that he noted in verse 1, I love you, O Lord, my strength. Why? With the merciful, you will show yourself merciful.

With a blameless man, you will show yourself blameless. Isn't this a wonderful thing that God is consistent, that God is predictable and the predictability of it is not judgment. It's not sovereign disregard for our helplessness.

It is the love of God, the mercy and the compassion of God, the grace of God. He's omnipotent. He can do anything he wants.

He can be anything that he wants. He can make a promise today and break it tomorrow. What would you do about it? What if he promised you salvation today and said, nah, I changed my mind.

Imagination of your heart is only evil all the day. Poof, you're gone. We take it for granted that God's grace and God's love and God's mercy and God's promises are eternal and unchanging.

But what a wonderful thing to celebrate about the Lord. I appreciate that he is who he says he is and that he doesn't change. He's not capricious.

He's not fickle. He's not impulsive. When he says a thing, he does it.

We prize this in human beings, don't we? Someone with integrity. They say they're going to be there. They are there.

They say they're going to do a thing. You can cross that off the list. If they've said they're going to do it, it's as good as done.

And that's the way the Lord is. And we ought to appreciate him. And David is appreciating these qualities of God as he speaks to him in the second person and says, with the merciful, you show yourself merciful.

You have done and you will. With a blameless man, you will show yourself blameless. With the pure, you will show yourself pure.

We count on this with the Lord. But with the devious, with the clever, with the crafty, with the deceitful, with the underhanded, you will show yourself even more unpredictable than they are. You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks.

For you will light my lamp. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. Notice the change

there right in the middle of verse 28.

He's been in the second person all the way, 25, 26, 27. You will light my lamp. And right in the middle of it, David turns back and says, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

Now he's back to the second person. For by you, I can run against a troop. Third person, by my God, I can leap over a wall.

As for God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord is proven. He is a shield to all who trust in him.

And this interweaving of the second and third person here tells us something. You can't separate those two great commandments. Loving the our God and loving one another are interwoven.

They are inseparable. To do one is to do the other. To neglect one is to negate the other.

You cannot love God if you do not love your brother. If you're not looking out for fellow believers, if you're not putting yourself out, recognizing the opportunities that God puts in our path to be of service, to be a blessing, to be Christ-like, to be sacrificial and beneficial. If we're not disposed in that way, we need to go back and check our love for the Lord because they are linked.

They are woven. Look at these verses. He turns to the Lord and then he turns to his fellow believers.

And he turns to the Lord and he turns to his fellow believers. They are connected. It's not just it's the point of contact of the two beams of the cross.

You cannot separate them. You don't have the cross anymore. And you cannot separate love for fellow believers and love for God.

You destroy the work of Christ in so doing. And you see that intimate connection here. God lights the lamp and enlightens our darkness.

Sometimes we feel like we're in the dark, don't we? Well, what now? Thought I could see my way clear and all of a sudden I don't see anything. Well, if the Lord is going to be the lamp and there's currently no light shining, what do we do? Wait till he does. Be patient.

We don't start fumbling around for matches and start lighting articles of clothing and throwing them into the great void beyond trying to find out what's there. God is our lamp. You will light my lamp.

The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. David knows this. Now, in order for God to be the light there has to be some darkness, right? We've got to have times where it is dark so that we appreciate the light.

For by you I can run against a troop. By my God I can leap over a wall. Normally one person against a troop is a lost cause.

Normally a smooth wall to an individual unequipped is unscalable. But what happens? By my God, and right in the middle of verse 29 he shifts, by you I can run against a troop. By my God I can leap over a wall.

This reminds you of mounting up with wings as eagles, running and not being weary, walking and not faint. Supernatural strength, supernatural ability to cope with obstacles. This troop is an obstacle.

This wall is an obstacle. It stops one short. It stands in the way of needed progress.

You can't just go running against the troop without the Lord. You can't bang yourself into the wall without God. But with Him we will know when, we will know how, because the light will be shining.

It's a matter of patience and it's a matter of faith. As for God, His way is perfect. The word of the Lord is proven.

Now, why does this follow hard on to the troop and the wall and the lamp and light in the darkness? Timing is everything, right? God's knowledge is perfect. His way, the plan that He has for our life is perfect. We've got to trust it.

We've got to believe it. The word of the Lord is proven. Look at history.

Look at the word of God, the record we have in the Old Testament and in the New. Name your heroes of the faith. How many times did things look insurmountable? How many times were there impossible obstacles? Look at Abraham and Sarah, 100 years old and 90, respectively, and yet God promised a son.

You want to talk about a troop standing in the way of progeny? You want to talk about a wall, the two old codgery people couldn't scale? But with God, the light shines in that darkness and the way of God is perfect and God glorifies Himself by providing Isaac, by providing that great set of descendants, culminating in King David and David's greater son. For who is God, verse 31, except the Lord? Well, we just saw it in verse 30. His way is perfect.

His word is proven and He is a shield to all who trust in Him. He is a shield. What kind of implement is a shield? Offensive or defensive? Okay, boys, get ready.

Throw those shields. We'll scissor off their heads as they fly like frisbees into the fray. Shield is defensive, right? Why would you need a shield if the Lord is on your side? Because God is going to allow attack and He's going to be the shield.

When attack comes, trust in the Lord as your defense, as your strength, as your protection, as your deliverance. It's a defense in the face of opposition, which will come. Why would He even

say these things if God's going to come in a great thundering, lightning, cherub-filled cloud of victory and shake the earth and vanquish all of the foes? Because that's the long view.

That's the ultimate goal. In the meantime, we still have battles. It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way complete.

Perfect isn't a real good translation here. He makes it have a point. It has a destination.

It has a purpose. It accomplishes a goal. He makes my way accomplish the goal.

Perfection is a great goal, but He makes my way make sense. My way arrives at a destination. He makes my feet like the feet of deer and sets me on high places.

Now, I don't know about you, but I do not like heights. Big heights are no problem. Put me in a helicopter, I can look down all day long.

Tall building, look out a window, no problem. It's heights where I have the sensation that it's 30, 40, 50 feet down and gravity is bending and pulling me over the edge. I have this vertigo sensation that I'm not going to be able to keep my balance.

If it's high enough, I don't care. It's those intermediate heights from rooftop up to maybe three or four stories. That's what really gets me.

Put me on a really tall building, I'm okay. It's where I can imagine the bone crunching impact in just a couple of seconds. That's what gets me.

So if God is going to set you on a high place, what if you've got a fear of heights? What do you need to be set on a height? Feet that are secure and that you've got great confidence in, right? This is why David puts the feet first. God gives me feet like a mountain goat. Feet that are confident and experienced in standing on tiny places.

God arms me with strength, makes my way, makes sense, makes it arrive at his destination. He makes my feet secure, confident, able. Then he sets me on my high places.

He teaches my hands to make war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze, teaches my hands to war. Pacifism is a I understand people's aversion to the taking of lives and anything would be better than that. I understand it.

It's just not biblical. In the same way that I understand people have any experience with alcoholism, not wanting to believe that Jesus turned water into wine or that he ever drank wine or that any alcohol ever passed his lips or the lips of the disciples and that all alcohol is terminally and permanently bad. I understand where people are coming from with that view.

I'm just here to tell you it's not in scripture. When Jesus turned water into wine, it was real wine. When he passed around the cup on the night that he was betrayed, that was wine.

It's Passover wine. Ask the Jews what they use before Passover at meals. It was the only safe thing to drink a lot of times because it had a natural disinfectant and it would not harbor bacteria that could make you seriously ill in the ancient day without refrigeration, without preservation.

The Bible is replete with these descriptions. Well, here he teaches my hands to make war. God directed Israel to slay enemies, down to the last man in some cases, even the rest of the population when they were immoral and corrupt.

It's rare, but there are occasions where God sent Israel and Israel alone in to wipe out all of the inhabitants of an area. Why would he do that? Is it a rule for faith and practice for everybody after that? No. Anytime people start bringing up to you quibbling about, well, look at the God of the Old Testament.

He's this awful, horrific God. Look at all the horrible, terrible things that he put into the law of Moses and all the horrible, terrible things that he did in and through Israel. Nonsense.

Israel is a special people. They have the supernatural presence of God in their midst. God talks to them directly and he uses them as a sign to the rest of the human race all through history.

They are a peculiar people. They are a unique people. Nobody else in history has had God dwelling in their midst.

Nobody else had the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. Nobody else had miraculous interventions on such a regular basis as did Israel. And if God puts extraordinary tests in the law for a woman being pure in her marriage or whether or not the daughter of a priest should be burned with fire and all the rest of it, you just remember God is in their midst.

God is supernaturally active. If he says, you know, mix dust with water and put it on her tongue and see what happens, God is supernaturally ensuring that these tests come out right because he's in their midst. God doesn't say, okay, everybody else go and do likewise.

All you Christians go do the Old Testament law. Don't eat the things that they didn't eat. Eat the things that they ate.

Use the tests and the practices. It was unique. It was a relatively short space of time where God dwelt among his people in the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant.

God was present and God ensured that the law with all of its unique and peculiar provisions worked in Israel and that there was justice and there was righteousness in those provisions. In the same way, when God told Israel, go in and wipe them out, men, women, children, animals, these are specific groups at a specific time with God in their midst. If you don't have God in your midst and you haven't got the tabernacle or the temple and you don't have the Ark of the Covenant, you're effectively communicating your national policy, don't wipe everybody out to the last man.

You need to go elsewhere to find your guidance for what takes place in warfare and what takes place when you take human life in capital punishment or in self-defense. You derive these principles in other ways, but you do not take Israel as normative. So when he says he teaches my hands to make war, when there is the necessity for war, believers ought to be the best warriors there are.

They ought to be the most diligent, the most faithful, the most skilled, the most humble, the most careful, with the greatest integrity that there is. So that my arms can be a bow of bronze. Now a lot has been said about the bow of bronze.

Bronze is a stiff metal, it would crack, it makes a lousy bow. This is metaphorical language all the way around. You don't teach your hands to make war.

You might kill with your hands, but you don't make war with your hands, you make war with your head. This is a thinking man's game. This is strategy and tactics.

This is planning and calculation. So this is clearly metaphorical language and what does it mean? If somebody could actually use a bow of bronze, this is supernatural strength because it's a supernatural bow. A natural bronze bow won't even bend.

If you tried to bend it, it would break. But by God's power and by God's grace, his arms can bend a bow of bronze. It's supposed to be hyperbolic.

It's supposed to be beyond the possible. People have said, oh, it was a wooden bow with bronze decorations. It doesn't say a wooden bow with bronze decorations.

It says a bow of bronze and that's what it is and that's what it means. This is supernatural strength. Why would you need a bow of bronze? Why would you need one? Why would you need that much power? Because you've got a foe that ordinary weapons don't work against.

This is spiritual warfare. It teaches my hands to make war. This is, for us especially, spiritual warfare.

And this bow of bronze, these are supernatural weapons. This is kind of like the armor of God with the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith and the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, waist girded about with truth and so on. Breastplate of righteousness.

Got a bow of bronze. You have also given me the shield of your salvation. We continue the metaphorical language here.

It's the shield of God's deliverance. Your right hand has held me up. Your gentleness has made me great.

Your gentleness has made me great. Remember when he said with the twisty he will show himself unpredictable? There are examples in history of strategy where the army on one side will launch an attack and then they will intentionally weaken and retreat in the center. And the

opposing force says, aha, we've got them on the run and they rush into the gap and they're going to pursue and they find themselves enveloped, flanked and destroyed because it is a strategic feint, F-E-I-N-T.

It is a tactic to draw the enemy off their guard to enable them to be surrounded and defeated. In the same way, the forces of darkness operate on pride and on self-interest, on self-centeredness, on self-promotion. And what did Jesus say? My yoke is easy.

My burden is light. Come to me. I am meek and lowly of heart.

That was his strength. He wasn't too proud to empty himself and take on the form of a servant and come in the likeness of men. He didn't think equality with God was a thing that he had to seize and hold on to.

He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. And the humility of the Lord Jesus was his strength. And it was something the opposition never saw coming.

They thought, look, let's catch him in his weakness. Let's destroy him in his humanity. I'm sure Satan thought on crucifixion day that he had prevailed, that he had defeated the Son of God.

And yet it was the humility and the obedience and the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus that achieved the greatest strategic victory ever, ever. And David sends a reminder forward a thousand years to his greater son, the Lord Jesus, when he says here, your gentleness has made me great. You enlarge my path under me so my feet do not slip.

He gives me feet to stand on the high places. And it is as though I'm standing in a wide place. He said that early in the Psalm, remember? In verse 19, he brought me out into a broad place.

He delivered me because he delights in me. Those that were mocking Jesus on the cross, let him deliver him if he delights in him. Remember that? Well, there was a deliverance they could not see in the short term.

It didn't look like the Lord was delivered. It looked like he was defeated. But what was he looking at? He was looking at the earthquake.

He was looking at the day of the Lord. He was looking at the ultimate victory that vindicates those dark days, those times of testing, those times of challenge. David illustrated this for him and for us here in Psalm 18.

Verse 37, I pursued my enemies and overtaken them, neither did I turn my back again until they were destroyed. Now remember, God came. God destroyed the enemies in the first part of this Psalm.

But what is the application that David makes of this? Because God is with me, I am the instrument by which he accomplishes these things. So in verse 17, he delivered me from my

strong enemy, from those who hated me. They were too strong for me.

They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place and delivered me because he delighted in me. Look at the sequence here.

The enemies come. There is an attack. What's the first thing that happens? God comes and draws him out and puts him in a place of security, a place of comfort, a place of encouragement.

Then what happens? Verse 37, I pursue my enemies and overtake them. Think about this sequence mentally, spiritually. When we come up against opposition, the first thing we need is stability.

We look to the hills from whence comes our strength. We look to the Lord God who has the ultimate victory in his hands, who is going to come and make everything right. That knowledge draws us out of the dark waters.

It sets us in a broad place. It stabilizes us, gives us a chance to take a deep breath and draw strength from God. Once we have done that, now you're in the last half of the Psalm.

Now you're at verse 37 and following. I pursue my enemies and overtake them. I don't turn my back until they're destroyed.

I've wounded them so they cannot rise. They've fallen under my feet for you have armed me with strength for the battle. The first thing God did was deliver him from overwhelming odds and from unconquerable strength, from a wall that he couldn't breach and a troop that he couldn't defeat.

God sets him in a place of safety, in a place of comfort, in a place of encouragement, imbues him with strength, teaches his hands to war, gives him arms that can bend a bow of bronze. Now what's he going to do? Do you see it? Do you see the flow? There is the encounter with the enemy. There is, first of all, a defensive deliverance.

God is my shield. He's my fortress. He puts me in a place of safety.

He equips me. He arms me. He comforts me.

He strengthens me. Now what am I going to do? I'm not just going to hide in the fort. Now that I have drawn that comfort and received that enablement from God with my hands and my arms, what am I going to do? Think about the first advent of the Lord Jesus, coming in humility, hitting the wall of the forces of darkness, bearing the sins of the world, being taken to the heart of the earth, being raised up by the power of God, sitting at the right hand of the Father.

What is he doing? He's arming for battle. And what's he going to do when he returns? You have it here. I overtake them.

I don't turn back until they're destroyed. I wound them. They cannot rise.

They fall under my feet. You have armed me with strength for the battle. You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.

You have given me the necks of my enemies. You have given me the necks so that I destroy those who hated me. They cry out, but there's none to save.

They even cry to the Lord, but he does not answer them. Why? Two kinds of people call out to the Lord, those who are blameless and those who aren't. Oh, that's your pocket ringing.

So I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind. I cast them out like dirt in the streets. This seems kind of cruel, doesn't it? They cried out.

Nobody could deliver them. Even to the Lord, but he did not answer them. Do you remember when Pharaoh and the Egyptians cried out because of the plagues? What happened as soon as the plague was lifted? Their heart reasserted itself because they don't love God.

They don't care. They aren't genuinely interested in God. They don't love him.

They're not interested in his righteousness or pursuing a life of faith. So what happens to them? He does not answer them. I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind.

I cast them out like dirt in the streets. Once again, notice the pronouns here. Verse 39, you have armed me with strength.

You have subdued under me. You have given me the necks. They cried out to the Lord, but he did not answer them.

You have delivered me, verse 43, from the strivings of the people. You have made me the head of the nations. A people I have not known shall serve me.

You think about the messianic implications of this, a people I have not known. Lord Jesus is a Jew. He comes from the stock of Israel and the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and David, but a people formerly unknown are going to serve him.

Who is that? That's you. That's me. That's us.

That's we. As soon as they hear of me, they obey me. The foreigners submit to me.

This is something Israel had a real difficult time doing, and God is going to make them jealous by calling those who are not a people, a people, by breaking off the faithless branches and grafting in the wild olive branches. That's us. That's you.

That's the church. Foreigners submit to me. The foreigners fade away and come frightened from their hideouts.

The Lord lives. Blessed be my rock. Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

It is God who avenges me and subdues the peoples under me. He delivers me from my enemies. Now he changes person again.

You also lift me up above those who rise against me. You have delivered me from the violent man, people who appeal to force instead of right. He turns back.

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name. Great deliverance he gives to his king and shows mercy to his Messiah, his Mashiach, his anointed. If there's any doubt in your mind that this anticipates and is prophetic of and for the Messiah, you have it explicitly here.

Great deliverance he gives to his king and shows mercy to his anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore. And we gain the benefit of this because we are in Christ. And the Lord Jesus made use of these principles and this attitude, this approach, this perspective in his earthly life.

And he endured what he endured and he was tested in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Why? So that we would not have a high priest who is unfamiliar with what we face. He represents us.

He has been where we are. He knows how we feel. He knows the pressure.

He knows the pain. He knows the sorrow. He knows the endurance that is required.

He knows what it is to be obedient under pressure, to be faithful under discouragement. And he appeals on our behalf. He intercedes to the Father for us.

And he encourages us to do what he did. Look ahead. Watch and wait.

The Lord is going to come. He is going to vindicate. He is going to justify those who have been patient and who have endured.

The one who endures to the end will be delivered. As for those who fall back, my soul has no pleasure in them, the Bible says. Well, this Psalm 18 should be a wonderful inspiration to us and an encouragement.

Think about the outline. You start with thinking ahead to the ultimate deliverance of God. This puts us in a place where we can think, where we can recover, where we can arm and strengthen ourselves, and then march back out and tackle our adversities and our adversaries and prevail and overcome in the Lord's name and for his glory.

Because this is the pattern. This is the sequence. David figured it out.

The Lord Jesus illustrated it in his earthly life. And it's our opportunity and our call to do the

same. So think about this Psalm.

Think about the flow. Think about the sequence. Think about that constant reference in the second person to God himself in prayer, in appeal, in confidence, and then sharing with fellow believers that same confidence, that same understanding, that same recognition of the promises and the certainty of God's deliverance.

Both of these things are essential for us to win the prize, to be ready when it is time to march forth with hands that are prepared, with arms that are strong, and with the light of God on our path to know when, where, and how to advance. Well, that's Psalm 18. We'll pick up our study of Psalms next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for these wonderful Old Testament truths that shine such a bright light on our path even in this age and in our unique relationship to you through the Lord Jesus. We thank you for him and for his example and his intercession and mediation on our behalf, living the life that we live and undergoing the trials and the tests that we do.

He is eminently qualified to represent us and to express your love and grace toward us as he represents us before your throne. We pray that as we reflect on these truths that your Holy Spirit will help us to see their pertinence and application in our lives and our circumstance. May they be a source of blessing and challenge for the days ahead.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.