

Psalm 18 - How to sing Psalm 18

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- [0 : 00] I'm going to read Psalm 18. It's the whole psalm. It's quite long. Please don't get sick of my voice. For the director of music of David, the servant of the Lord, he sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies.
- And from the hand of Saul, he said, I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer. My God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- I call to the Lord who is worthy of praise and I have been saved from my enemies. The cords of death entangled me. The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me. The snares of death confronted me.
- In my distress, I called to the Lord. I cried to my God for help. From his temple, he heard my voice. My cry came before him into his ears. The earth trembled and quaked and the foundations of the mountains shook.
- They trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils, consuming fire from his mouth. Burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down.
- [1 : 26] Dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew. He soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkensses covering his canopy around him.
- The dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence, clouds advanced with hailstones and bolts of lightning. The Lord thundered from heaven. The voice of the Most High resounded.
- He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy. With great bolts of lightning, he rooted them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, Lord.
- At the blast of breath from your nostrils. He reached down from on high and took hold of me. He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes who were too strong for me.
- They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place. He rescued me because he delighted in me. The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness.
- [2 : 28] According to the cleanliness of my hands, he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord. I am not guilty of turning from my God. All his laws are before me.
- I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
- To the faithful you show yourself faithful. To the blameless you show yourself blameless. To the pure you show yourself pure. But to the devious you show yourself true. You save the humble and bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
- You, Lord, keep my lamp burning. My God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against the truth. With my God I can scale a wall.

As for God, his way is perfect. The Lord's word is flawless. He shields all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the rock except our God?

[3 : 34] It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He causes me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle.

My arms can bend a bow of bronze. You make your saving help my shield. And your right hand sustains me. Your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet so that my ankles do not give way.

I pursued my enemies and overtook them. I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them so that they could not rise. They fall beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle.

You humbled my adversaries before me. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight. And I destroyed my foes. They cried for help but there was no one to save them.

To the Lord. But he did not answer. I beat them as fine as windblown dust. I trampled them like mud in the streets. You have delivered me from the attacks of the people.

[4 : 36] You have made me the head of nations. People I did not know now serve me. Foreigners cower before me. As soon as they hear of me, they obey me. They all lose heart.

They come trembling from their strongholds. The Lord lives. Praise be to my rock. Exalted be God my saviour. He is the God who avenges me.

Who subdues nations under me. Who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes. From a violent man you rescued me. Therefore I will praise you Lord.

Among the nations I will sing the praises of your name. He gives his king great victories. He shows unfailing love to his anointed. To David and to his descendants forever.

May the word of God speak to us. Thanks neither. What a marathon eh? Well done. I think if anyone deserves a bag of sweets it's you this morning.

[5 : 35] Let's come to God and ask him for his help shall we as we look at this psalm together. Father thank you for your word. Thank you for our Lord Jesus who is the perfect fulfilment of this psalm.

And Father we pray that as I speak and as we all listen. That you would speak to us. That your spirit would do his work. That you would show us what we need to see.

And that you would glorify Jesus in his name. Amen. Amen. Elton John wrote a song in 1973 called Candle in the Wind.

Telling the key points about Marilyn Monroe's life. Then he adapted it for Princess Diana in 1997. John Newton wrote an autobiographically about himself in the hymn Amazing Grace.

With the words Amazing Grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. The song we're looking at this morning.

[6 : 43] Psalm 18. Has been described as the narrative or the autobiography of David's life. So why was it written? What can we learn from it?

Well I'd like to help us to answer those questions. To look at three other questions. Oh great. Somebody's ahead of me. Is somebody clicking for me? Great.

Thank you Steve. Right. Good. So how did we're going to look at how did the Israelites sing Psalm 18? How did Jesus sing Psalm 18?

And then how can I, how can we sing Psalm 18? So first of all, how did the Israelites sing Psalm 18? Psalm 18 was recorded in Israel's songbook.

And it was for God's people to sing because as Steve explained to us earlier with that wonderful bag of sweets. Their well-being, Israel's well-being was tied to the king and his offspring.

[7 : 48] David's victory was their victory. David's victory was their blessing. So they sing because of David. They sing rejoicing in David's story.

Great. Thank you. We're going to move very quickly, you'll be glad to know, through the psalm. Not looking at every verse. But we're going to divide it up just so that we can get a flavour.

We're going to spend a little bit more on the first couple of verses. And then we're going to whip round through it quite quickly because there's 50 verses in it. So first of all, realise that David's predicament was that he was trapped.

We read in verses 4 and 5, and if you can keep your Bibles open, it's going to help you to follow the theme of it. We read, So here's David.

David's predicament is he's staring death in the face. He's completely overwhelmed and he feels completely trapped. He describes himself, if you look there in verse 16, as being in deep waters.

[9 : 13] In verse 17, he says he feels his foes are too strong for him. In verse 18, he describes it as a day of disaster.

This was his position. Now moving quickly now through the other verses. David called on God in verse 6, and he called on God from his distress.

Verses 7 to 15, the Lord hears him, and the Lord displays his awesome power and authority. I don't know what you thought as Neva was reading that list to you about how God is described.

Here's God's power and authority described as verse 7, a mountain shaker. Verse 6, fire breathing. Verses 9 and 10, traveling on clouds and flying on angelic beings.

Verse 11, radiant. Verse 13, a thunder speaker. Verse 14, a lightning thrower. And verse 15, an expositor of the earth.

[10 : 20] This is, of course, picture language, but because it's a picture, it's no less true of the power of God. So there in verses 32 to 42, we see that the Lord gave David victory.

Verses 32 to 36, we see God enabled him for the battle. God equipped him. Verses 37 to 42, the battle itself, God gave him victory over those battles.

And the outcome, we're told in verses 46 to 49, is David is exalted above the nations. And more than that, God is praised because of that.

So why were they encouraged to sing this? Why were the Israelites encouraged to sing Psalm 18? Well, firstly, to realize that the king's victory means their blessing, means their security.

When God saves the king, he saves the nation. He saves the nation from their enemies. This one is a little bit harder to get, so stay with me on this one.

[11 : 31] Bear with me. They were also encouraged to sing this because they were being reminded of their covenant relationship with God. Verses 20 to 27, again, I don't know what you thought when Neva read that to you, but to my ears, they are quite strange with what David is saying there.

But bear in mind, what he is doing is not bigging himself up. He is actually expressing his covenant relationship with his God. What's a covenant?

Well, simply put, it's an agreement between two or more parties. Have different covenants in life. Marriage is a covenant relationship. And the couple there promise to give themselves to each other.

They express to making promises to each other in a lifelong agreement. God required this of the Israelites in his covenant, that they obey him and follow his rules.

And this is the sense of what David is saying in verses 20 to 24. David, in verse 20, is not claiming perfection. It's very important to realise this.

[12 : 45] He's not claiming sinlessness. In fact, how could he? His sins are clear to us from the pages of scripture. The sense of what David is saying in verses 20 to 24, is that he has tried to walk honestly and humbly with his God.

He also says in verse 20 and 23, that he's kept the Lord's laws and decrees. Now, part of this, you may know if you know your Old Testament, was the sacrificial system of when a person sinned, they bought a sacrifice to the priest.

The priest would offer this sacrifice. The person was forgiven. Not by the priest, but by God. So, those laws taught that sins could be forgiven with repentance, first of all, and then with an appropriate sacrifice.

Therefore, his confidence was not in how well he had done, but in that God forgives those who come to him by the prescribed means he has set out.

Blamelessness here does not mean sinlessness, but rather a cleansed conscience after repentance and the sacrifice. So, the third reason they were encouraged to sing this was this.

[14 : 16] To see that the correct response to God's salvation is this. Gratitude, trust, praise, and love. Gratitude to God for the salvation for the nation.

Gratitude to God for the salvation. Trust, because the language of verses 2 and 3 talks about trusting in the Lord. It's one of security. It says, God is a rock, a fortress, a deliverer, a refuge, a shield, a stronghold.

Therefore, we can trust him. And, of course, it was to teach him that the correct response was praise. He deserves praise for who he is and for the great rescue that he did for them through David.

And notice there in verse 49, if you skip to the end there, this praise was not just to be sung in the temple. This wasn't just for God's people to hear.

It was to be sung and declared among the nations in verse 49. A bit more of that maybe later on. The other thing that they were told to, a correct response to God's salvation, is to love God.

[15 : 26] David says there in verse 1, which is very unusual in the Psalms, actually. It only happens in Psalm 116, that the Psalm opens in this way. He says, I love you, Lord.

To reflect on God's goodness, the goodness of God in rescuing his people when they deserved none of it. It was not just to inform their minds, this song.

It was also to fill their hearts and to move their hearts to overflow in love to God. Now, I'm hoping that we're seeing some of the things that God has done for us and our correct response for him.

But we're not the Israelites and we will sing the song in a slightly different way to how they do. But how did Jesus sing this Psalm? He sung it to his father, knowing that he was the fulfilment of the song.

He sung it to his father, knowing he was the fulfilment of the song. Now, Jesus would have heard, read, and sung this Psalm in the temple as part of corporate worship.

[16 : 41] It was part, after all, of the Israelites' songbook. He would have memorised part, or perhaps all of it. He was very, very familiar with it.

But there are two things about this song which Jesus could not sing. Or rather, when he sang it, it was a bitter irony for him.

And that's, David could call on God for rescue from his enemies, but Jesus could not call on God for rescue from his greatest trial of the cross.

It's described there in verse four, the cords of death and the torrents of destruction that David experienced.

They were necessary, too, for Jesus to endure. But he endured it to the end, not calling on God for rescue, as he could have done. He stayed on the cross to win your salvation, my salvation.

[17 : 50] The other irony that Jesus sang here is that the Lord did not deal with him according to his righteousness, as David had asked in verse 20.

Rather, God dealt with him on the cross according to our sinfulness. He was, in fact, the only completely righteous person, but was punished for our sin so that we could have his righteousness.

Let me read to you 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

But in other ways, this psalm is true of Jesus in an even more amazing way than it was true of David. And to help us with this, we're going to be dipping into some New Testament verses to help us to understand this.

It was more marvellous for Jesus because death could not hold him. Though he gave himself up to death on the cross and he definitely died and he was definitely in the grave for three days, God raised him from death.

[19 : 23] In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter said this, but God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

David experienced this for a short time, not in resurrection, but in being rescued from death. But he eventually died. Jesus lives forever, never to die.

He is the true victor over death. David also describes God in verse 2 of chapter 8 of Psalm 18 as the horn of salvation.

The exact same words that Zachariah says about Jesus in Luke chapter 1 verse 69. Zachariah says that Jesus is the horn of salvation for us.

But it's a little strange language this is, isn't it? But to what is a horn? Well, let me give you it. Let me give you a little bit of an inkling if I can here.

[20 : 32] It's a symbol of strength, power and authority. Whenever we see the word horn in the Bible, it's generally to do with strength, power and authority.

To help us understand this, picture a bull, right? Big horns, a big bull, standing in a field, charging at you.

Head down. What are you worried about? The horns, yeah? The horns are his power and strength and can do you much damage.

But the salvation that Jesus brings is his strength and his power and authority. The horn of salvation is Jesus.

Lastly in this section, we see here that Jesus can sing this psalm because he is the one who truly wins the nations. In Romans 15, verse 8 and 9, Paul quotes verse 49 of Psalm 18 directly and he tells us that Jesus is the direct fulfillment of this verse in this way.

[21 : 47] Paul says, so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. So Christ's death and resurrection mean life for all who believe.

Romans is telling us whether they are Jew or whether they are Gentile. It's not to do with nationhood anymore. It's to do with whether we believe. Believe in Jesus.

So how did Jesus sing this psalm? With love, with obedience and with praise. With love for us, seeing our need and giving himself for us.

With obedience to his father. Obedient to death, even though he was the innocent one. And with praise and love for his father.

I don't know if you thought about this, but the beautiful relationship that Christ had with the father from the beginning of time, from eternity, Jesus had when he walked with his father here on earth.

[22 : 58] So when Jesus was singing this song in the temple, he was expressing this beautiful relationship that he had with the father. But for those three dark hours on the cross, that had to change.

His father had to turn his back on him as he bore our sin. So finally, how can I sing? How can you sing Psalm 18?

Well, we sing it not because of David, but because of Jesus. We sing it rejoicing in Jesus' story. So in this psalm, we see not David as the king, but Christ as the king, David's greater son.

And our well-being, your well-being, is tied to him. Let me tell you three things quickly that you have because, if you're a Christian, because your well-being is tied to him.

Because he refused to be rescued from death on the cross, but he endured to the end bearing my sin, I can rejoice that I am rescued.

[24 : 10] I am rescued because of him. Rescued from sin, rescued from myself, rescued from death, rescued from hell. Sin because I need forgiveness, self because I need him to change me, death because there's a resurrection, and hell because that's what I deserve for living without him.

The other thing Christ gives me and is in this song is his righteousness becomes mine. It's been described as the great swap that when Jesus was on the cross, God put on him my sin and transferred to me his righteousness.

The greatest swap in history. so that when God looks at me, he doesn't see my vileness, but he sees perfect purity. His righteousness became mine.

And lastly, his resurrection becomes mine. When God raised Jesus, it was proof that his sacrifice was accepted, but not only that, it's a guarantee of my acceptance and therefore one day my resurrection, your resurrection if you believe in Jesus.

So, let me close by just saying how should I, how should you sing this psalm? But firstly, there's a question and it's are you singing?

[25 : 47] And if you're singing, what are you singing? Are you singing as the Israelites sang when you're relying on your best, relying on living your best and when you slip up, well, you make a few sacrifices here and there and you hope God is pleased with that?

Or are you singing the song about Jesus? Jesus? What I mean by that is, do you believe Jesus died in your place?

Do you know his forgiveness? And has this great swap that we just looked at, has that happened for you? If not, then stop there because you need to experience this, you need to experience his forgiveness before you can truly sing this song, experience this song.

But if you are singing this song about Jesus, then let me tell you three things. How should you sing? You should sing in amazement.

You should sing in worship because of what he has done for you. You should sing it with your life, with Jesus as your first love.

[27 : 06] Psalm opened with, I love you Lord. Jesus should be our first love for who he is and for what he's done for us.

And you should praise him. In other words, you should make his name great. As we read at the end of the psalm there, make his name great among the nations and start with those around you, with your neighbours.

So if you're singing, if I'm singing, this is how we should sing. Let me pray and I'll hand back.

Thank you. Father, thank you for the great salvation that Jesus brought for us at such a cost.

Thank you that now we do not need to trust in our good works and in our sacrifices. hope that you will be pleased with them. But we can trust in what Jesus has finished, has accomplished.

[28 : 19] And as he stands at your side now, Father, pleading for us, pleading his blood for us, we thank you that we are accepted because of him.

Father, until that day of resurrection when we raised with Jesus to meet you, we pray that you would help us to love him, to live our lives for him and for tell others of his great victory.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.