

## The Book of Psalms

### Psalm 18 Lesson 1 – 18:1-15

#### Opening Prayer

***Read Psalm 18:1-15***

#### Overview

Psalm 18 is a royal psalm recounting David's political and military victories brought about by God's direction. It is one of the longer psalms that we have studied at some 50 verses. Since it is fairly long we will divide the psalm into 3 lessons. See below in the outline for the explanation of the division.

The title of the psalm provides us with a precise historical context. A *psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to 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. And he said.* The feud between David and Saul can be found in **2 Samuel 5-20**. Interestingly, the song that makes up Psalm 18 is virtually a duplicate of the song David sings in **2 Samuel 22**. It is likely that it is brought into the psalter because it also became a liturgical piece for the people of Israel as demonstrated by the closing doxology of verses 46-50.

A main idea in the psalm is David's righteousness, his piety. (*See especially 18:20-24*) Yet one shouldn't attribute the victories given to David as God rewarding his righteousness, after all in the Old Testament God had given even heathen nations victories when it served His eternal purposes. Still David is pictured as one who has God's favor. Recall that he was called "a man after God's own heart" in **1 Samuel 13:14**. While the victories of David are lauded in the psalm, those victories are all in the light of the might and power of God which dominates the psalm. Still David is called the "*servant of the Lord*" a title only shared by two other Old Testament figures, Moses and Joshua. That is pretty good company to keep!

## Outline/Structure

As mentioned in the overview, the psalm is 50 verses long and will be handled in three lessons as noted in the outline. The psalm is also divided into two parts as noted here.

- I. David takes refuge in God (18:1-30)
  - a. Introductory hymn of praise – (18:1-3, Lesson 1)
  - b. Account of the crisis – (18:4-6, Lesson 1)
  - c. The theophany – (18:7-15, Lesson 1)
  - d. The rescue – (18:16-19, Lesson 2)
  - e. The psalmist's righteousness – (18:20-24, Lesson 2)
  - f. The Lord's response – (18:25-30, Lesson 2)
- II. There is no god besides Yahweh
  - a. Confession of praise – (18:31-36, Lesson 3)
  - b. David's rehearsal of his exploits – (18:37-42, Lesson 3)
  - c. David's rehearsal of God's deliverance – (18:43-45, Lesson 3)
- III. Final Doxology – (18:46-50, Lesson 3)

## Introductory Hymn of Praise – 18:1-3

- :1 - David's declaration of his love for the Lord lies at the root of his piety and righteousness demonstrated in 18:20-24. Indeed love of the Lord lies at the heart of all obedience to the Lord. **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.**

*How does love lead to piety or righteousness?*

### **Read Matthew 22:34-40**

*What was the question of the Pharisees?*

*How does Jesus' answer tie love to obedience?*

### **Read 1 John 2:3-5**

*How does John tie love and obedience together?*

- So David's declaration of his love for the Lord at the beginning of the psalm is foundational for the rest of the psalm and for his righteousness. This particular Hebrew word for love was typically used for family relationships, most notably between mother and child. So the love that David expresses is deep and intimate.
- :2-3 - David now gives us a litany of metaphors for what God means to him. The metaphors were probably born from David's memory in his battles with Saul. All the metaphors have a military and mountainous background which would easily come out of David's encounters with his enemies and Saul.

- In the Hebrew “worthy” is actually the first word of the sentence and therefore should have a dominant force on the thought. It is because of God’s worthiness we praise Him!

*How is such an understanding of praise important for our worship life?*

### Account of the crisis – 18:4-6

- :4-5 - In four phrases David gives depth to the despair he was in. The implication of the four phrases is that David is being trapped. This becomes especially apparent in the use of the phrase “snares” in verse 5 which was a baited bird trap. **See Amos 3:5.**
- We also see language continued from Psalm 17 about David being “surrounded” or “encompassed”.
- :6 - David is heard! He cries out, a verb normally associated with prayer, and is heard by God who is in His temple. For the Old Testament believer God dwelt in the temple. It was the place of His presence.

*While since Christ’s sacrifice God is present with all of us, what is the value of having a dedicated worship space with a worship focal point?*

### The Theophany<sup>1</sup> – 18:7-15

- :7-8 - The earth is reacting to the presence of God. We see a similar event at Mt. Sinai in **Exodus 19:18-19.**
- The word translated as “angry” in English actually means “He was hot” in Hebrew. This ties nicely into verse 8 with its images of smoke and fire and coals.
  - The use of fire and coals suggest both judgment and refining. Here given the context of the rest of the psalm it is best to understand these images as images of judgment similar to what we read in **Revelation 19:11-12.**
- :9-11 - This entire picture is a frightening one of the Lord (Yahweh) descending to earth having parted the skies or bent them to the ground with dark clouds at his feet.
- We have done a terrible disservice to the biblical idea of “cherubs” and “cherubim” by turning them into ceramic porcelain babies with wings. We have made them cute, but the bible has them also in strong and even terrifying roles. **Read Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 10:1-5**

*How do these passages describe the cherubim and their roles?*

*What do we know about angels in general?*

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<sup>1</sup> Theophany – “appearance or revelation of God”

1. The name means “messenger”
2. They are spirit beings who were created holy.
3. Some angels rebelled against God.
4. The good angels are many and powerful. They serve God and help us.
5. The evil angels are also many and powerful. They hate God and seek to destroy everything good, especially faith in Christ. ***Read Ephesians 6:12***

- :12-14      - Although His presence is surrounded by thick darkness(v.11), His glory is such that the brightness cannot be contained.
- “hailstones and coals of fire” – These images again represent the judgment that God is bringing on the enemies of David. One is reminded of the judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah in ***Genesis 19:24***.
  - “Most High” – this became for David an important title for God since he lived in a place with regional deities. So that as one passed from one land to the next it was believed that a different god may have priority in the new area. By using the designation “Most High” David was confessing that the true God was above all local deities. As Christians, we are often confronted by the idea of universalism – that all people worship the same god, but only by different names and in different ways. The exclusivity of Christianity is challenged constantly by our culture. Yet the Scripture is clear: ***Read Acts 4:12; John 14:6***

*How do these verses state plainly that salvation is found only in Christ?*

- :15      - This verse seems to suggest that as God descends to the earth the water parts before Him, so that the channels of the water are seen. The riverbeds, ocean floors, and lakebeds become before Him dry ground and the earth is “laid bare”. The purpose is surely to demonstrate the awe and power of God, thus “at the breath of His nostrils”.

*How does this entire theophany put aside the idea of a gentle and “tame” God?*

### Summary

This first third of Psalm 18 really sets the stage for what God will do. It presents us with David’s reasons for approaching God and his assurance that God would hear and act. Then we are presented with the powerful Theophany of the God who will act.

### Closing Prayer