

"I Will Love Thee, O LORD"

Psalm 18:1-3

This psalm has one of the longest (if not the longest) introductions of any psalm. Although it is given as the introduction to this psalm and as such is not to be taken as inspired, it is given in 2 Samuel 22:1 as part of the inspired text, so as it stands at the beginning of Psalm 18, it can be considered as part of the psalm and its inspiration.

This psalm is a nearly identical to 2 Samuel 22 with several differences which do not change this song of victory in any real material way. That said, I believe that Psalm 18 has enough variations to indicate that it was altered by David after it was given in the historical account of 2 Samuel 22. Since that would appear to have been given later in his life (2 Samuel 23 - begins with the words, "Now these be the last words of David"), there may not have been much time between the two copies that are recorded in Scripture.

The differences are outlined briefly by Albert Barnes as following:

The introduction (as described above) is the first verse of 2 Samuel. The first verse of Ps. 18, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," is not found in the psalm as it is in the Book of Samuel. The second verse of the psalm is, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

In Samuel, the corresponding passage is, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God of my rock, in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence." In Psalm 18:4, the reading is, "The sorrows of death compassed me" etc.; in Samuel, "The waves of death compassed me."

Similar variations, affecting the words, without materially affecting the sense, occur in 18:2-4, 18:6-8, 18:11-16, 18:19-21, 18:23-27, also in 18:28-30, 18:32-45, and 18:47-51. In no instance is the sense very materially affected, though the variations are so numerous.

The title of this sermon is found in verse one - "I will love thee, O LORD." This is something David added after the event of 2 Samuel 22, and it stands as a great demonstration of what great emotion we should have for our God.

With strong, hearty affection will I cling to thee; as a child to its parent, or a spouse to her husband. The word is intensely forcible, the love is of the deepest kind. "I will love heartily, with my inmost bowels." Here is a fixed resolution to abide in the nearest and most intimate union with the Most High. Our triune God deserves the warmest love of all our hearts. Father, Son and Spirit have each a claim upon our love. The solemn purpose never to cease loving naturally springs from present fervour of affection. It is wrong to make rash resolutions, but this when made in the strength of God is most wise and fitting. (Spurgeon)

Here, in the first three verses of this psalm, which act as an introduction to the psalm, we find a list of the things our God has done for us, a list of things He is to us, and we find a reason for our love to be returned to Him because of His love being shown to us in these ways.

God loved us before we loved Him - that's true love. The only way we can return any of that love is by a realization, in part, to what is given here; to recognize what God is to us and praise Him for it. The greatest way we can do that is by doing our part to propagate God's love to the world.

These things listed here are what God does for us, and is

to us, because He loves us – but why do we love Him? It should be because He loves us enough to be these things.

The word "my" is used nine times in the first two verses, showing us that we find in God is something He wants us to know about personally – individually.

I. HE'S MY STRENGTH (POWER) – VS. 1

A. This is the only time this particular Hebrew word (קָוָה) is used in this form. It is more common in verb form and in that form, it speaks of the power one has over another or over an enemy. It speaks of being strong and capable of dealing with the task at hand.

B. We need the power of God to be able to stand against the enemies we face today.

[Philippians 4:13](#)

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

[Colossians 1:11](#)

¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

II. HE'S MY ROCK

A. This word for "rock" here (עָלָה) is pointing to the protection a rock or cliff can give. It is sometimes used for a cleft in a rock, also pointing to the protection it gives.

B. This word is translated by the proper name of a city called "Selah," a city of the Edomites considered by most to be the city of Petra in

ancient history. Selah was not a city in the rocks but was in the plains surrounded by rock formations and would have been a well-fortified stronghold.

2 Kings 14:7

⁷ He [Amaziah, king of Judah] slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

That's the picture this attribute of God gives to us: He's given Himself as a Rock for us to hide under or beside as a means of defense against the enemy.

Isaiah 32:1-2

¹ Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

² And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

III. HE'S MY FORTRESS

A. This is the word transliterated in the English for the historically significant fortress called "Masada" in Israel.

Masada (Hebrew for fortress) is a place of gaunt and majestic beauty that has become one of the Jewish people's greatest symbols as the place where the last Jewish stronghold against Roman invasion stood. Next to Jerusalem, it is the most popular destination of tourists visiting Israel.

More than two thousand years have passed since the fall of the Masada fortress, yet the regional climate and its remoteness have helped to

preserve the remains of its extraordinary story.

Masada is located atop an isolated rock cliff at the western end of the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea.

On the east side, the rock falls in a sheer drop of about 450 meters to the Dead Sea and on the western edge it stands about 100 meters above the surrounding terrain. The natural approaches to the cliff top are very difficult.

There probably is no better visual description for this word "fortress" than that of Masada. That's what the Jews consider God to be to them. Once there, in Bible times, they were almost invincible once within the protections of the fortress. That's what God is to us - an invincible fortress of protection.

Psalm 71:3

³ Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

Some fifty years ago, one bitter January night, the inhabitants of the old town of Sleswick were thrown into the greatest distress and terror. A hostile army was marching down upon them, and new and fearful reports of the conduct of the lawless soldiers were hourly reaching the place.

In one large, spacious cottage dwelt an aged grandmother with her widowed daughter and her grandson. While all hearts quaked with fear, this aged woman passed her time in crying out to God that he would "build a wall of defense round about" them, quoting the words of an ancient hymn.

Her grandson asked why she prayed for a thing so entirely

impossible as that God should build a wall about their house, that should hide it; but she explained that her meaning only was that God should protect them.

At midnight the dreaded tramp was heard, an enemy came pouring in at every avenue, filling the houses to overflowing. But, while most fearful sounds were heard on every side, not even a knock came to their door; at which they were greatly surprised. The morning light made the matter clear; for, just beyond the house, the drifted snow had reared such a massive wall that it was impossible to get over it to them.

"There!" said the good woman triumphantly: "do you not see, my son, that God could raise up a wall around us?"

IV. HE'S MY DELIVERER

- A. It wasn't enough to make it to the rocks, or to the fort, for the enemy could wait one out by starvation.**
- B. With God, He supplies our needs while in His safety and completely delivers us from the hand of the enemy.**

Psalm 40:17

¹⁷ But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Psalm 70:5

⁵ But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

Romans 11:26

²⁶ And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There

shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

V. HE'S MY GOD

This word for "God" means the Mighty One, or the Almighty One. When David says that He is my God he is saying that He is mighty enough to do whatever it takes to help us.

VI. HE'S MY STRENGTH (PROVISION)

- A. **2 Samuel 22:3 says of this word, He's "the God of my rock." Considering its placement here in comparison to 2 Samuel, the separate attributes here - "my God," and "my strength" - are combined there into the title, "The God of my rock" (or strength - same word).**
- B. **The word for "strength" here is a completely different word than in verse one. Although similar to the word for "rock" earlier in this verse, this one speaks of the stability and provision we have in our God.**

Psalm 19:14

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my **strength**, and my redeemer.

Psalm 73:26

²⁶ My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the **strength** of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psalm 144:1

¹ Blessed be the LORD my **strength**, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:

Isaiah 26:4

⁴ Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

- C. As that rock of strength, we have absolute confidence in Him that He will protect and provide for us - "in whom I will trust."**

VII. HE'S MY BUCKLER

- A. This is a small shield that would be held on one arm while fighting with the other.**
- B. God is my immediate protection, protection that I can have right there with me as the buckler was to a soldier.**

Proverbs 2:7

⁷ He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

A believer was fleeing from his enemies during a persecution in North Africa. Pursued over a hill and through a valley with no place to hide, he fell exhausted into a cave, expecting to be caught. Awaiting his death, he saw a spider weaving a web. Within minutes, the spider had woven a beautiful web across the mouth of the cave. The man's pursuers arrived, but on seeing the unbroken web assumed it impossible for him to have entered the cave. Later that believer exclaimed, "Where God is, a spider's web is like a wall. Where God is not, a wall is like a spider's web."

Few things offer security to believers more than an awareness that God will use His overcoming power to protect them.

VIII. HE'S MY SALVATION

- A. This one is more descriptive - "the horn of my salvation."**
- B. The horn in the Old Testament was often seen as one of mighty power, as the horns of a ram, or the tusks of wild beasts which were used for both protection and attack.**
- C. The word "salvation" here isn't speaking of soul salvation as much as it is that of deliverance from an enemy, which is the context of the psalm.**
- D. Our God has the power to not just defend us against the enemy, but is there to deliver us through the enemy, if need be. As God sees fit, He can drive the enemy away as a beast does with their horns.**

IX. HE'S MY HIGH TOWER

"High" is the key. Our God is on "High" - "far above principalities and powers." When we are with Him on high, we cannot be reached by our enemy and need not fret

Conclusion: Verse three is a fitting conclusion to these three verses and this introduction. With what we know about our God, we can call upon Him with absolute confidence He will hear us, and deliver us, one way or another, from our enemies. He is worthy to be praised in all that happens to us.