

Series: Christ in the OT

Text: Psalm 18

Message #15

THE LORD, OUR ROCK

Introduction

1. *In every soul-testing trial, the believer must find strength in a refuge greater than himself. He must be anchored to a rock greater than the trial in which he finds himself. The only sure fortress is that rock which is the highest of all – the Lord Himself (Lawson, Psalms 1-75, p. 94).*
2. Psalm 18 was written as an expression of thanksgiving to God for delivering David from all of his enemies. I presume that this at least included deliverance from Saul, who pursued David from the time David was anointed by Samuel to be king, until Saul's death at the hands of the Philistines. It surely must also have included deliverance and victory over those enemies that David battled, including the Philistines and the Amalekites and the Ammonites and the Moabites and the Edomites. He was also forced to put down a rebellion led by his own son, Absalom. David victoriously put down the uprising, but his son was killed in the process. We can understand why David needed a firm place to stand. He needed a rock to keep his balance. He needed a place to hide and heal, sheltered from life's storms. He found that rock in the Lord.
3. It is clear that David knew what it was like to have trials but he also had learned what it was like to be anchored to the rock and he wrote about his experiences. If you open your Bibles first to Psalm 18 and then turn to 2 Samuel 22, and compare that passage with Psalm 18, you will find an almost verbatim copy of our text. It is not possible to know which came first, but the psalm clearly originated from David and certainly does provide for us wonderful truth about a solid foundation in the midst of the shifting sand of today's world! The words he penned were also words that ministered to his heart. I think they will also minister to us.
4. Someone once described preaching as "first, tell them what you are going to tell them, then second, tell them, and then finally third, tell them what you told them." That might sound a little demeaning, and I certainly do not wish to do that. But I do think there is value in letting you know where we are planning to go and then hopefully we can go together on the journey and then looking back, have some pleasant memories as well as some new skills from having made the trip.

5. David used the image of a rock to describe God. Centuries later, Paul would make it known that the rock of which David spoke was none other than the Lord Jesus. **Jesus Christ is the rock and He can be our rock on which we are able to stand in confidence and safety regardless of circumstances.** We really do not have time to unpack the entire psalm, but we are able to look at a few verses that will describe for us this rock.

I. THE LORD IS MY ROCK (vv. 1-2)

A. The declaration

1. The rock pictured here is a fortress for protection – David had literally been protected in the rocks and caves around Palestine. On more than one occasion, those rocks shielded him from the enemies who sought his life. But David knew that ultimately it was the Lord who was his strength and protection. He could declare, “The Lord is my rock.”
2. The rock pictured here is a refuge for deliverance – Is it any wonder that the Psalmist would begin his psalm of thanks with, “I love you O LORD, my strength.” If 2 Samuel 22 was the initial penning of this psalm, it occurred near the end of David’s life. As he looked backwards, he could now see the hand of God in His life providing strength and deliverance all along the way. “The Lord is my rock.”

B. The imagery (Several years ago, E. M. Blaiklock wrote a series of articles for a Christian publication. The articles were called, “New Light on Bible Imagery.” One image he wrote about was “the rock.” Here is a paraphrased summary of his observations.

1. The rock is an image of protection and shade. In the hot, sandy elements of the Middle East the rock brought this important picture to mind. When the spring rains come to the desert, a light carpet of green grass would quickly appear on the desert’s edge. The green grass would not last long however. For it would be doomed to soon be scorched by the sun and covered with sand. If there was a large rock or boulder in the sand, a small oasis would form on the boulder’s leeward side. Desert life would thrive under the rock’s protective shadow. If a person were traveling through the desert, such a rock would provide shade against the scorching heat of the sun. It might well be the difference between life and death. David saw in the image of the rock a picture of the Lord, who sheltered him continually. “The Lord is my rock!” Is he yours? When you are overwhelmed by the stresses of life, do you find refreshment and relief in the Rock? Do you find in the

Lord an oasis in the barrenness of life?

2. The rock is the image of refuge. A crack or opening in the rock could be a secret hiding place from the enemy. David knew these crevices well and when in danger he fled to the rocks. More than once he fled to a cave and watched as the enemy passed by. And from the high vantage point, he could monitor the movement of the enemy and keep out of harm's way.
3. The rock is an image of a sure foundation beneath one's feet. Psalm 40 accents the point: **He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.** Jesus used this same image in the Sermon on the Mount, describing the one who built his house upon the rock! When the winds blew and the floods came, the house remained secure – quite unlike one who would build his house on the sand. David could testify, "The Lord is my rock."
Where do you find strength and deliverance?

II. MY GOD IS MY ROCK (vv. 2-3) It might not be too significant, but it appears that David moves from **the Lord** to **my God**. Granted, in both expressions, God is declared to be "**my rock**." However, there seems to be an increasingly intimate application as David remembers God's intervention.

- A. He is my rock in whom I take refuge. We have seen that already. Throughout the Bible God is declared to be a refuge for the believer. Such phrases as "ever-present help" and "strength" and "defense" and "portion" all qualify and clarify the picture.
- B. He is my shield – I think we know what a shield is. God Himself is pictured as my armor to deflect the arrows of the enemy. God does not just provide a shield – He is my shield! Is that not a great picture of comfort and confidence? He stands between me and the enemy, and nothing can get through Him to me, as long as I take refuge in Him!
- C. He is the "horn of my salvation" – He is the power in the battle that leads to victory. The horn was an ancient figure of victorious and defiant power. God is pictured as that great power that comes along side my feebleness, conquering my enemies and saving me from them.
- D. He is my stronghold – The KJV translates this "high tower." A stronghold or well-fortified tower provided a strategic advantage against an enemy. Our God is that source of protection and security for all who seek refuge in Him. Again, He does not just supply

the fortress – He is that stronghold! No wonder David declares with great confidence and with much thanksgiving, “My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge.” After looking back at the times of great distress and remembering the times of God’s awesome deliverance with words like, “He heard my voice...my cry to him reached his ears...He bowed the heavens and came down...He came swiftly on the wings of the wind...he sent out his arrows scattering them...he drew me out of many waters...he rescued me from my strong enemy...the Lord was my support...he rescued me...he delighted in me...the Lord my God lightens my darkness”, David now exclaims, “For who is God but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” (Let’s look ahead to verse 30).

III. WHO IS THE ROCK EXCEPT OUR GOD (vv. 30-33)

- A. None else can shield or provide refuge – This truth is accented by the fact that God’s way is perfect and His word is true and therefore for all who take refuge in Him, He is their shield! Once again, “who is the rock except our God?” People look for refuge in lots of things, but the only sure, safe place is found in Him.
- B. None else can strengthen or make blameless – We have been here before. He provides strength so that we can stand and strength so that we can endure. Further, He makes our way blameless. When we find our refuge in Him, we rest in His righteousness, which results in our blamelessness. Who is a rock except our God? In the words of a somewhat contemporary chorus, ***There is no rock, there is no God like our God. No other name worthy of all our praise. The Rock of Salvation that cannot be moved. He’s proven himself to be faithful and true. There is no rock, there is no God like ours.*** None else can shield or provide refuge. None else can strengthen or make blameless.
- C. None else can lift up or make secure – When the path is narrow and the way is treacherous and to slip would bring great injury or death, He is there to bring stability and security. Once again, “who is a rock except our God?” It is time now to move from declaration to exaltation. It is one thing to declare the power and strength and security found in the Lord, but to stop there is to stop short. The Psalmist did not stop short, but rather turned from declaring the work and wonder of God, to praising the God who does such wonders.

IV. PRAISE BE TO MY ROCK! (vv. 46-50)

- A. We praise the rock because He is exalted and He exalts us! He is the exalted one who

has exalted us over our enemies and who delights in our praise to Him! O may we never forget to praise our God, the rock of our salvation! With the Psalmist in Psalm 95:1, we can declare together, **“O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”**

- B. We praise the rock because He subdues the enemies and gives us victory. There are many battles in life. Virtually everyone here is in the midst of a battle. (A friend of mine reminded me that, “David illustrates what my spiritual battle looks like in the physical realm. If what we battle with in our heart, mind, memory, imagination, conscience and will, were to present themselves physically, they would look a lot like the Philistines or Saul or Absalom. What was it that David did that delighted God and ultimately resulted in his deliverance from his enemies and his praise to God?” In the end, it was taking refuge in the rock! You are struggling to trust Him or you are struggling to obey Him or you are struggling to acknowledge Him in all things. When we run from the rock we are vulnerable and sure to fall, but when we run to the rock, we find strength and help and victory and joy! No wonder David, on another occasion, when his heart was faint, cried out, **“Lead me to a rock that is higher than I”** (Psalm 61:2). Praise be to our God. He is that rock!
- C. We praise the rock because He saves us from our enemies and brings us into His presence! David writes, “Great salvation he brings to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed.” The picture presented to us here is the Lord coming to David and delivering to him salvation as an act of His steadfast love. What a great picture of our salvation as well! Praise be to the rock of our salvation! (Now there is one more piece that has only been mentioned in passing, but has not yet been addressed, that really is necessary to consider in view of the present series. This series of studies is Christ in the OT, but nowhere in this psalm is it possible to declare with certainty that this rock was Christ. Certainly the rock is identified as God and as the Lord, but not specifically as Jesus Christ. It just so happens that the great Apostle Paul quotes Psalm 18:49 in his letter to the Romans. Here is what he says: ***For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”*** There it is. Jesus Christ is that rock that David speaks about in Psalm 18! The rock of our

salvation is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ! Let me close with a couple of stories.

CONCLUSION

1. The first story is about D. L. Moody. Moody preached a sermon from Deuteronomy 32:31, which from the version he used (King James), "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Moody was struck by the second part of the verse. He argued that in times of trouble the objects trusted by unbelievers fail them, and they concede that they do not find the help in their gods that we Christians find in our God. Moody claimed that atheists and pantheists and infidels in the hour of their death do not turn to these beliefs to rescue them, but rather call for a minister to pray for them. He said, "I have never heard of an infidel going down to his grave happily." He said, "Their rock is not our rock and they confess it." How different for us! There is no rock like our Rock. Praise be to the rock of our salvation!
2. Story number two is about preacher and songwriter Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778). Probably his best-known hymn is "Rock of Ages." It seems that he was traveling in the country when a terrible storm came upon him and the only place to take up shelter was in a cleft in a huge rock. While he was waiting for the storm to pass, he began to reflect on his situation spiritually and the words of a hymn began to form in his mind. He looked down at his feet and there was a playing card that someone who had found this spot earlier had dropped. He picked up the card and used it to record these words: "Rock of ages, cleft for me; Let me hide myself in Thee. Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side, which flowed, be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power. Rock of ages, cleft for me; Let me hide myself in Thee." The commentator who provided this account wrote, "We do not know how much of Christ's future work his lesser ancestor King David, foresaw. But we, who stand on this side of the cross, know what Jesus Christ did. We know that he was smitten for us, crucified, that we might be saved from sin and protected from all harm. Are you "in him?" Are you sheltered in the cleft of that Rock? If you are, you can sing David's song with full reference to the cross and the resurrection. You can sing with full understanding, "The Lord lives and blessed be my Rock and exalted be the God of my salvation!"
3. If you want a handle to hang this message on today, let it be this. David's testimony in this psalm calls every believer to take God as his refuge in every trial. The Lord is an

immovable rock who saves all who are hidden in Him! There is no enemy who can overcome God. He is an impenetrable fortress. With unwavering hope, we can rest in Him, fully assured of ultimate victory.

4. ***The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*** And, dear friends, that rock is Christ!