

My Champion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 June 2017

Preacher: David Reimer

[0 : 0 0] Thanks. Yes, let me add my word of welcome. My name is David Reimer. For those of you who don't know me, and it's my privilege to be sharing with you from God's Word tonight. As Gary mentioned, and as you'll see momentarily, we have a long psalm, not the longest psalm, but still a long psalm this evening. And this is the last sermon in our series of psalm studies over the past few weeks, nine in all. So we thought it would be an opportune evening just to have a little glimpse back and set up and read this long psalm together. Then we'll sing again before we tuck in and look at what God has to say to us this evening from His Word. So as I mentioned, last of our psalm studies. So there's, I can do the maths, 141 more psalms to look at. And we're working our way through them on the Wednesday evening Bible studies. We're up to 39, are we? 38? So lots more to go. So do come along Wednesday evenings if you just haven't had enough of the psalms yet. But as I say, ninth of nine sermons. And we began back in April with Psalm 19. Peter Irvine opened that out for us. And this evening we come up to Psalm 18. So it's almost like we've gone full circle. But as I say, only nine psalms, whether planned or not. See later, maybe this is planning and maybe I'm making this up. But it seems to me that they fall into three groups of three, in fact, as we look back over our sermons. Psalms 19, 33, and 24, our first three, really are about the praise of God in creation. We see God as creator really clearly in those first three psalms.

In the middle three psalms, Psalms 13, 10, and 73, in each of those we see a psalmist in distress for various reasons and a moment of deliverance. So if in our first three psalms we especially saw God as creator, in our middle three psalms we especially see God as redeemer. And when we come to these last three studies, Psalm 30, a couple weeks ago, 27, last week, and tonight Psalm 19, in each of these three psalms we see someone has been delivered. And the response to that and a sense of longing for more of God, a sense of yearning and a sense of being sustained in the life of faith. So it seems to me we have quite a nice Trinitarian shape to our set of studies with God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. In fact, those themes running through all our psalms in one way or another. And we've also had mentioned, I think, in almost every sermon of the nine, that taking account of neighboring psalms can really help us understand the particular psalm we're interested in. I think sometimes we get the sense that psalms are not quite a random lucky dip of psalms, but a fairly amorphous, unshaped collection.

But I think we have seen through this series that actually taking attention to the context of a psalm can help us to understand that individual psalm. And so too, this evening, Psalms 17, 18, and 19, as a trio, form quite a remarkable set. And we won't be taking time this evening to attend to that aspect to them, but perhaps in your own reading of the psalms, your own studies and meditations, that will be a help.

Well, I'll make three introductory comments to Psalm 18 in particular now, and then we'll read it, and as I say, then we'll sing again. So first of three introductory comments, Psalm 18 is quite special in many ways. One of the most striking things about this psalm, we don't see from looking at it, but by realizing that it actually occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament.

There are other psalms that get repeated within the psalms, but as I'm sure most of you will realize, Psalm 18 appears again at the end of 2 Samuel. So 2 Samuel chapter 22 is Psalm 18, with some very minor changes. In 2 Samuel 22, the psalm there comes very near the end of David's life.

[4 : 38] In fact, the next chapter is the last words of David. Well, he's not quite dead yet. And there's some small differences between them, one or two significant differences, and one of those will come back to as almost the last thing we consider later on this evening. But to notice this, that our psalm this evening comes at the end of David's career, really embeds this psalm in the life of David in a significant way, and in a special way, more so than most of the psalms, in fact. Which leads me to my second introductory comment. In the psalms, you'll often notice there's a little bit in small print at the heading of the psalm. Now, that's not, I don't mean the modern editor's title for the psalm, but often there's a little verse or instruction or comment that isn't numbered in our English versions. In fact, if we had our Hebrew Bibles open in front of us this evening, we see they're numbered in the Hebrew psalms. And there is a superscription, which is what they're called, to our psalm this evening. And in fact, it's one of the, it is the longest superscription of all the psalms. 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.

And although other psalm superscriptions might be shorter or more specific, this one, again, just as we notice with the repetition of this psalm in 2 Samuel 22, really locates and embeds this psalm in David's career. There's a very clear resonance between the circumstance of David's life that the superscription sets out. David's been given peace from his enemies. That situation calls forth this song of praise that we see this evening. Now, in some ways, it looks as if the psalm that we're going to read comes when he's just enjoying that first period of rest from his enemies, whereas in 2 Samuel, it comes near the end of his career. But however it works out chronologically, it's very clear that God's working in David's life to grant him this peace calls for this song in response.

And my final introductory comment, I mentioned already it's a long psalm. It's precisely the third longest psalm. We're not reading Psalm 119 tonight. Psalm 78 is the other second longest psalm.

But given that it's a long psalm, it makes it a little bit difficult, I think, to take in. I mean, as we read it, we'll see that the chunks in the psalm are quite clear. But as we read through it, what kind of shape does it have? It's a challenge to take that in at first sight or even at first hearing.

And its language is a bit intense. So I'll give you a little sketch map of the psalm, and then we'll read it together. And then we'll take a break to sing again. So essentially, it divides up into three big chunks, topped and tailed, with a little frame around it. The first chunk and the third chunk really correspond to each other. So basically, verses 4 to 19 are about the Lord acting in response to David.

[8 : 18] Then we have a middle section in which we see David's life and the life of his Lord sort of woven together. And the third section is about David acting in response to the Lord. So if the first section is about the Lord acting for David, the third section is about David acting in response to the Lord, the middle section is a kind of mediating section in which we see their characters and in some sense their life intertwined. And then, as I say, the first verse and the last few verses stand out as a kind of response of praise to what's happening in between. So with that sketch map in mind, these three chunks, let's read the song together, and then we'll sing. So 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. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the Lord who is worthy of praise, and I am 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. The foundations of the mountains shook. They trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils. Consuming fire came from his mouth. Burning coals blazed out of it.

He parted the heavens and came down. Dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew. He soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him.

[10 : 53] 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 enemies. Great bolts of lightning and routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O 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. According to the cleanness of my hands, he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord. I have not done evil by turning from my God. All his laws are before me, and 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 crooked, you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble, but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning. My God turns my darkness into light. With your help, I can advance against a troop. With my God, I can scale a wall. As for God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is a God besides the Lord? And who is the rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.

[13 : 40] He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle. My arms can bend a bow of bronze. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me. You stoop down to make me great. You broaden the path beneath me so that my ankles do not turn over.

So 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 fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle. You made my adversaries bow at my feet. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes. They cried for help. But there was no one to be a one to save them. To the Lord. But he did not answer. I beat them fine as dust born on the wind. I poured them out like mud in the streets.

You have delivered me from the attacks of the people. You have made me the head of nations. People I did not know are subject to me.

As soon as they hear me, they obey me. Foreigners cringe before me. They all lose heart. They come trembling from their strongholds.

The Lord lives. Praise be to my rock. Exalted be God, my Savior. He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me, who saves me from my enemies.

[15 : 29] You exalted me above my foes. From violent men you rescued me. Therefore, I will praise you among the nations, O Lord. I will sing praises to your name.

Amen. He gives his king great victories. He shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever. Amen.

Well, as this psalm settles into our hearts and minds, let's sing again to the praise of this God. Let's just take a moment to pray before we study God's word.

Hosanna in the highest. Lord, these are ancient words of praise as well as a cry for help. So we ask for your help now. As we attend to your word, your spirit might take it, work it into our lives so that we might be a people who glorify you.

For your glory's sake we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, perhaps as we read this long psalm, you'll have noticed that it has many striking features, and we certainly can't deal with the whole psalm.

[16 : 56] And there's plenty, plenty that I know I'll be leaving unsaid this evening. And perhaps you found some of its language extreme or difficult to relate to.

So what I'm going to do this evening as we look at this psalm is just pick out a theme from each of those three sections. Who is the God who comes to save David?

What is the nature of this David who's in distress? And who are the enemies that David deals with? Those three questions, in some ways slightly uncomfortable questions, to see where they lead us in reflecting on this psalm as we observe God saving David and David's response to the God who saves.

So our three questions corresponding to the three sections then, who is the God who saves? Who is this God who saves? Who is this David who's in distress?

And who are those enemies who are defeated? So first of all then, who is the God who saves? Well, the psalm begins with very personal descriptions of this God who saves, and I think that's unmissable.

[18 : 13] The God who is my God, my rock, my shield, my stronghold, and on it goes. And I think these are terms that we're used to seeing not only from other psalms that we read, but from other songs that we sing together as a congregation.

And what we might find less comfortable is the God who turns up in response to David's cry. So in verses 4 through 6, you'll have heard the desperation that David has.

Chords of death entangled me. Snares of death confronted me. In my distress, I called out to the Lord. And the Lord comes. Now, I hope you've got Bibles open in front of you as we work through this psalm.

And so then we have in verses 7 to 15 the description of this God who turns up to save. And these verses are frankly somewhat terrifying.

We hear the voice of the desperate, the distressed, the drowning David, weak and helpless. And the one who responds to his cry as the earth trembles and quakes is in every sense larger than life.

[19 : 36] He's not only powerful, but his very presence brings upheavals, even convulsions to the natural order.

If David is fragile and is in the face of the enemies, we think at least the earth has a kind of permanence. But then this God comes. And what does this permanent world look like?

The earth quakes. Mountains shake. The heavens tear. Lightning splits.

Oceans flee. And the hand of God reaches down and grasps a lost and limp David and brings him, in verse 19, to a spacious place.

Perhaps a green pasture beside still waters where his soul is restored and his spirit revived.

[20 : 44] We sometimes sing the hymn has this verse. Father-like. Father-like he tends and spares us. Well, our feeble frame he knows.

In his hand he gently bears us. Rescues us from all our foes. It's just what David's experienced here.

But the one who gently bears in his hand to this place of safety is also the ones whose very presence brings upheavals in the created order.

Now, this isn't new language to Psalm 18. This language harks back to other aspects of Israel's story with this God.

Most clearly to the language of the Exodus. In which God's presence in fire and cloud parted the waters to save and rescue God's people.

[21 : 44] Not for nothing does the song of Moses in Exodus 15 call this God a man of war. It echoes other Exodus language.

Especially the experience at the mountain of God when the law of God is given to the people of God. When God spoke from a mountain on fire through thunder and lightning and smoke on a mountain that trembled in Exodus 19.

And as Moses reflects on that in Deuteronomy 5, he says, speaking God's words to them, they were right to be afraid at the mountain and ask for Moses to intercede on their behalf.

And it resonates through the experience of God's people in the Old Testament. As other experiences of the divine warrior rescue the people.

One of the closest parallels to our Psalm this evening comes at the end of the little book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Chapter 3.

[22 : 56] And there the prophet prays a Psalm very much in these languages, using these words to come back to God and pray that this God would be the one who saves his imperiled people from the hand of the enemy.

Well, I rehearse these echoes of Psalm 18 in the Old Testament to point out that this language is maybe intense, but it's fundamental and important to the Old Testament people of God that this picture is a true picture of the God who saves.

For all that, we have a more complete picture of this saving God in the person of his Son in the New Testament. I want to suggest that even though that's a more full picture, a more complete picture, it's still one that's coherent with this picture in Psalm 18.

It remains fully coherent with it. Just think for a moment about Jesus' earthly life, his ministry as we've been thinking about it over weeks in our Luke series in the morning services.

We catch a glimpse of this God of Psalm 18 in Jesus' life on this earth. Jesus is the one who stills the storm.

[24 : 21] And who can still the storm except the one who brings it? Jesus is the one who cleanses the temple in his wrath. And we see as he conquers his enemies, laying down his life on the cross, disturbances in the natural world.

And as other parts of the New Testament go on to tell us, when Christ comes again, so it will be. There will be these disturbances in the natural world, just as we see in Psalm 18 here, as the saving God responded to David's cry.

So I think as we spend time in Psalm 18 and with it, we need to and are expected to, insofar as our feeble senses permit, to take in the very Godness of this God who comes to save.

This God is not like us, as I heard it put in a sermon recently. This God isn't like us.

This is the God that we have come to worship this evening, one who is wholly other. And I do wonder sometimes how our approaches to times of corporate worship or the lives that we live before this God might be different if it had really settled into our spirits and into our hearts and minds who this God is.

- [25 : 58] Yes, we are accompanied by his Son and brought into his presence by our Savior. It's no less this God. This is the one whose presence split the skies, shakes the earth, empties the sea, and rescues.

This is the God who saves, the one that we've come to worship this evening. So if that's a glimpse into the who is this God, the God who saves, our second who question is who is this one in distress?

Well, we can answer that question pretty quickly. It's David. Okay, let's move on to section three. Well, not quite so quickly. Mention that the first and third sections really correspond to each other as God acts on David's behalf, David acts in response to God.

And then there's this middle section which mediates between them. And here we see the characterization of the psalmist of his own standing before this God.

And it comes out strikingly in three statements. So I slightly paused over them as we read, and you won't have missed them, I don't think. Verse 19, He brought me out into a spacious place.

- [27 : 23] He rescued me because He delighted in me. And it carries on into verse 24. The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness.

According to the cleanness of my hands, He has rewarded me. And then there's some reflection on how that might be, and then it's repeated in verse 24, almost word for word.

The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight. This is, most definitely, not the way we're used to thinking of ourselves.

Christians commonly self-identify as sinners. It's a good reason for that. We are. But David's perception here seems quite different.

And we should pause then for a moment just to think about what's going on as David makes this claim. In fact, this isn't the first time in our series we've heard this kind of language.

- [28 : 25] But some weeks ago, when we looked at Psalm 24, we heard it there as well. We heard the question posed, Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place?

To which came the reply, The one with clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully, this one will receive a blessing from the Lord.

Nor is this the only place in the Psalms where we see this kind of language, where the psalmist really says, It's because I'm doing right that God has acted on my behalf.

Psalm 7, Psalm 17, Psalm 26, Psalm 44, Psalm 112, and there's a number of others. They all point in the same direction. So, our question then, what's with David's righteousness language here?

I think it's important to note that righteousness in Scripture isn't simply a mysterious religious word for something that's out of the grasp of human beings.

- [29 : 38] It simply means this. Righteousness is to be right. It's to act in accord with a given standard or to have a status in accord with that standard.

It's to have your actions or your being in accordance with a given standard. To be sure, when it is God's standard, then it's exacting and demanding.

But it's also a joy and a delight to do what is right, to be righteous in his eyes. Jesus said, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They shall be satisfied. And he instructed his followers to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. So, do we simply dismiss David's language here as being enlightened, or at least unchristian, somewhat self-righteous?

Well, no. I believe this would be a misreading of our psalm. Rather, we should think in terms of the well-known claim on the life of the people of God from Leviticus.

[30 : 51] Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy. So, when we look at David used these words, what we're seeing is the character of David being conformed to the character of God.

It isn't about David being absolutely perfect. Clearly, clearly, even in the Old Testament, the property of sinless perfection belongs only to the Creator.

But it's equally clear that it's the business of those who bear the image of God to be in a creaturely sense conformed to that holiness and that righteousness of the Creator.

So, it's important to see, again, that this isn't simply an Old Testament principle, but is at work in the New Testament. I've mentioned already Jesus' words encouraging his followers, his disciples, to be righteous, to seek righteousness.

And in Matthew 25, he describes this discrimination, the division of the sheep and the goats. And he identified the sheep as those righteous ones who had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner.

[32 : 13] That is what it means to be a sheep, to be among the righteous. Or as Paul says in Romans 8, God foreknew those he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Or in the letters to Timothy, twice giving the instruction to pursue righteousness. This is, in fact, the lasting picture of the Christian life right up to the end of the New Testament.

In all of the writings of John that conclude it, but perhaps most clearly in these verses from 1 John 3, verses 7 and 8. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.

He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor-theologian, executed just three weeks before his concentration camp was emancipated by American troops.

[33 : 33] But he wrote a little devotional book on the Psalms, and in that he wrote this, If, in other respects, we take God's action toward us at all seriously, then we not only may, but plainly must, in all humility and certainty, pray, I was blameless before God, and I kept myself from guilt.

Psalms 18, verse 23. If, in other respects, we take God's action towards us at all seriously, this is the God who saves, then we not only may, but plainly must, pray, in all humility and certainty, I was blameless before God, I kept myself free from guilt.

Bonhoeffer's point is that as we reflect on the life of the desperate David who cries out to the God who saves in Psalm 18, we feel that claim, too, to live a righteous life, quite simply, a life in accord with God's will and God's ways.

Now, perhaps you're here this evening, I don't know everyone in the room, perhaps you're here this evening as one who's begun to recognize in this God someone to be revered, someone to be worshipped, and you also recognize in yourself a life that is not lived, conformed to the character of this God.

Well, if that's you, let me encourage you. There was one man who brought together completely the holiness and righteousness of the Creator in the life of a creature.

[35 : 19] That one man was Jesus Christ. And in his life and death and resurrection, he triumphed over sin and death, living the life we should have lived.

He died the death we should have died. And now invites us to turn from sin and turn to the living God.

That's what we call repentance. And to place our trust in him, to live our life with and for him. And if this captures your sense right now, then I'd be happy to speak with you about it after the service or let the friend that you've come with this evening know and I'm sure they'd be happy to do the same.

So we've reflected on who is the God who saves. We've reflected on who is this David in distress. And finally, we reflect on who is, who are, these enemies who are defeated.

And again, I think we have a little discomfort level with each of these three sections that perhaps it is most acute in this third one. I characterize this third section as David defeats the Lord's enemies.

[36 : 40] The Lord defeats David's enemies in section one. In section three, David defeats the Lord's enemies. But you say to me, aha, aren't these actually David's enemies?

Well, yes, they are. But there are also the Lord's and it's important to see how this works in our psalm. In biblical psalms, there are often, very often, three characters in the psalm.

There's God, there's the psalmist, the one who prays, the poet, and there's the enemies. And these three come together again and again through the biblical psalms. And so here too, you'll have seen this right throughout Psalm 18.

This is the three characters, if you like, in the narrative that unfolds. God, the psalmist, the enemies. And just as David calls this God my God, so too he calls these enemies my enemies.

Verse 3, verse 17, verse 37, verse 40, 40, 40, 40. It's right through the psalm. And in fact, our superscription that we noted at the beginning sets it up this way too.

[37 : 46] The Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, presume that's David's, and from the hand of Saul, that's certainly David's enemy. So where do we find the clue to this fuller identity of who these enemies are?

God's enemies? David's enemies? Well, we find it in contrasting verses 6 and 41. Verse 6, we read, 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 and he comes to save. Now, with that precise language in mind, look at verse 41 as David's dealing with the enemies.

They cried for help. There was no one to save them. To the Lord, he didn't answer. Well, we might find this contrast between verses 6 and 41 uncomfortable for more than one reason.

Aren't we supposed to love our enemies? Can one cry to God and not be heard? And so we need to think about this. It's important then to note, well, three quick things.

[39 : 06] First of all, this isn't personal. This isn't about David's spat with neighboring monarchs or his being an imperialist or settling old scores with old enemies when he was on the run.

It's David as the Lord's king dealing with the Lord's enemies. Second thing, we're not David. You're not David.

Well, I'm not David in this sense. None of us are this. We had a lot. We had four Davids in one pew this morning. But we're not David.

You haven't been placed at the head of Israel's armies. And the third quick thing to note, we do have enemies. And I'll say a little bit more about that in just a moment.

So this is David's position in the psalm, however. His enemies are the enemies of God. And hating what God hates in the Old Testament is the counterpart of loving what God loves.

[40 : 11] Or as we sang in the song just before the sermon, what breaks God's heart breaks our hearts. And so we begin to see, I think, in reflecting on things this way, what Psalm 18 is telling us here.

That the Holy God is a God of justice. And it is right, we would want it to be right, that this God visits justice on oppression and injustice.

That this God should consume his enemies. It's a truth that Jesus teaches in his parables as we've seen from Luke. And this is the point at which I think it's helpful to think about our enemy.

Our enemy. Our enemy is, we become God's enemy when our sin separates us from him. And Isaiah spelt this out fairly clearly.

He affirmed a truth and then drew out an implication. So listen to his words. This is Isaiah 59. Surely the arm of the Lord isn't too short to save.

[41 : 19] Of course the arm of the Lord isn't too short to save. Nor is his ear too dull to hear. Verse 41. This God can hear. But Isaiah goes on.

Your iniquities have separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. That's precisely the situation of Psalm 18.

41. The holy God is a God of justice. But it's important too then to realize that the holy God is a God of mercy.

mercy. And rightly received, his judgments can turn enemies into friends. C.S. Lewis reflected on his time as an unbeliever in his autobiography in these terms.

It's a slightly difficult sentence but it's worth hearing. So he's thinking back now to the time when he was an atheist and he was an enemy of God and the things that God sowed into his life.

[42 : 31] He writes, not that I might not have learned this sooner and more safely in ways I shall never now know without apostasy but that divine punishments are also mercies and particular good is worked out of particular evil and the penal blindness is made sanative.

A penitential blindness becomes a cure. So attending rightly to the judgments of God can realign our lives so that we are no longer God's enemies but his friends.

And for those of us conformed to God's character then we strive to have rightly ordered affections like David to hate those things that God hates to have our heart breaks for the things that break God's heart to love those things that God loves.

much as James put it in James chapter 4 and sums up in these words in James 4 don't you know friendship with the world is enmity with God?

And so we seek as we look at David's psalm and experience of God being conformed to the character of God also to have rightly ordered affections to sow beyond the Lord's side.

[43 : 56] well it's time to draw our thoughts together we've reflected on who is this God who saves who is this David in distress and who are these enemies we see through the psalm but we stand back to make two observations one a little bit longer and one very very short.

the first thing I hope you've seen and we've reflected on it directly in some sense is the way in which God and David form a partnership in this psalm.

Did you see how David's life is woven into the life of God and especially in that central section and the acts of God and David are woven together?

I think it comes out so well it comes out clearly in many ways but just set these two part verses together verse 30 as for God his way is perfect verse 32 it is God who makes my way perfect God and David God acts and David acts.

I think we have an understandable tendency to look at some of this kind of language that we see in Psalm 18 and say God calls us to do X we can't do X Jesus did X we don't have to do X it's the good news well there's a truth there but if that's all we say then the truth I'm afraid becomes a half truth and a less than a truth is on its way to becoming a snare I think a better way of putting it is this way with Jonathan Edwards now some of you will know of Jonathan Edwards he was the revival preacher during the New England revivals in the early 18th century in the early 1700s and he was writing about a particular theological controversy in his day and he's writing here about efficacious grace the effective grace that God works into the lives of those who turn to him and Edwards writes this

[46 : 13] I'll use his 18th century language in efficacious grace we are not merely passive nor yet does God do some and we do the rest that God does all and we do all God produces all we act all for that is what he produces in other words our own acts God is the only proper author and fountain we are the only proper actors we are in different respects wholly passive and wholly active we are in different respects wholly passive and wholly active in the metrics of the kingdom it's not 50-50 in the metrics of the kingdom it's this paradoxical 100%

God 100% you that's David in Psalm 18 and as we spend time with Psalm 18's David so we're called into this same kind of life it's the same paradox I think that Jesus invited us into when he reflected on the teaching of the true vine if you keep my commands doing all you will abide in my love resting all just as I have kept acting my father's commands and abide resting in his love or just one more example from the very end almost end of the New Testament the little letter of Jude addresses Christians in his day and he writes to those who are loved by God the father and kept for Jesus

Christ passive kept and finishes the letter by addressing those same people and instructing them keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life active so God does all Christ has one all and there is all for us to do first reflection as we stand back the second one much shorter where the psalm ends we end I will praise you among the nations oh Lord I will sing praises to your name and as our week begins let's begin it where the psalmist begins I love you oh Lord my strength let's pray and as we draw our thoughts together and reflect back over the psalms that it's been our privilege to see let's just take a moment of quiet let's consider first this

God who comes to save we know that saving God let's thank him and ask him to show us more of who he is and perhaps we come tonight as one of those who is desperate and needing help is there sin in the way this is the moment to say Lord I'm sorry I've been acting like an enemy please forgive me so I can be your friend Lord we know you are the one at work in our lives to accomplish your good pleasure so grant us as your people gathered here in this place in this part of Edinburgh in this neighborhood and in the neighborhoods where we live as your people distributed may we work out our salvation with fear and trembling and lift high your name in our lives for your glory sake and in

Jesus name we pray Amen