

Psalm 18  
August 28<sup>th</sup>

Good morning! My name is Terry Meyer and I'm the Director of Family Life Ministries here at GCF.

So, I'd like to remind you that if you have a son or daughter in High School or Middle school, we'll have an information meeting after service today in the fellowship hall. We have lots of changes this coming year and the team is excited to get started serving your family!

Pray!

God rescues the helpless!

FCF: Each of us is in a helpless state before God and must be rescued.

PRAY!

INTRODUCTION: Ditching the Tractor

We are presently building a mother-in-law home for my mother-in-law. A few weeks ago, while digging a trench for the power lines, I realized a section right in the middle of the 100 foot section was not deep enough. So I thought I'd just straddle the trench with the backhoe to deepen that section. Even as I was doing it I thought to myself. "I wonder if this is a good idea?" "I wonder if the walls of the trench would hold the weight of the tractor above it." Well, the walls were not strong enough to hold up the weight of the tractor, and I found half of the tractor in the trench.

Now there's a special type of desperation that you feel when you do something foolish like this. Can anyone relate? 100 things shot through my mind:

- I've broken the tractor and have no money to fix for it!
- How am I going to get out of this?
- How am I going to get this job done without this tractor?

What was worse is that it was not even my tractor. It was Kendal Nollers! And what will Kendal say when he shows up and half his tractor is underground. I was stuck! I felt stuck!

In desperation I began to call out to God for help. Not a "normal" calling out, more like a "Lord I'm drowning here plea!"

For 3 hours I was frantically trying to get myself unstuck!  
I did finally make it out. Thank you Lord for wisdom and hydraulics!

There is a special joy and thankfulness of being on the other side of a desperate situation that is wonderful.

TRANSITION

Now the joy I felt in driving that tractor out of the trench was David's joy multiplied by 100! In his roughly 70 years, David found himself in many situations that were far beyond the trouble I faced.

In Psalm 18 David is looking back over his life and rejoicing over all the times God rescued him when he was helpless.

That's why he begins the Psalm as he does:

I love you, O Lord, My Strength. 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. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved From my enemies. Psalm 18: 1,2

### **A couple of things here:**

Verses 1 and 2 provide the context for the entire chapter.

This word for love here is very uncommon in the OT. It's a very strong word for how David felt about God. It expresses a deeply emotional and tender response to God. If someone were to say a similar phrase as this today, people would be surprised and maybe a little shocked.

And you can tell that as David describes God as his Rock, refuge, shield and stronghold, he is reliving all the escapes and victories God had rescued him from.

Sort of like after getting unstuck I prayed: God you are my hydraulics!

## TRANSITION

So this morning we are going to explore God rescuing David when he was helpless. And as we do so, I hope that we might grow in calling out to God whenever we are in any difficult situation.

We are going to explore the:

- (4-6) The need for rescue.
- (7- 19) The nature of rescue.
- (20-30) The People God Rescues.
- (31-50) The means of rescue.

### **I. The need for Rescue–**

#### **a. We need rescue because we live in a fallen world where death and destruction reign**

David writes verses 4-6, looking back over all the times he'd been in helpless circumstances:

The cords of death encompassed me;  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;  
<sup>5</sup> the cords of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.  
<sup>6</sup> In my distress I called upon the Lord;  
to my God I cried for help.

The potential for David's death and destruction was real! Through the 70 years of his life, David faced enemies both internally and externally:

- Two times Saul hurled a spear at David as he was playing the lyre to pin him against the wall with it. Talk about a hostile work environment.
- And for years Saul chased David all over Judea, where he was cornered, outnumbered, lonely, uncertain, frightened.
- But it was David's own personal sin (committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband Uriah) that resulted in the most death and destruction for David.

Our world is no less hostile to you and me:

- We have an adversary stronger than Saul: Satan is described as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).
  - Satan probably will not attack you personally, but his influence is everywhere in our culture. In social media, entertainment, many of our educational systems are all highly influenced by Satan himself.
- We live in a fallen world where bad stuff just happens. In this room alone we face:
  - Death of a family member, Cancer, fires, car accidents, falls, job loss. Canceled flights, taxes, etc.
- But what we must be rescued from more than anything else is what causes the most death and destruction for us – our own sin.

Worse than cancer, a house fire, a car accident, and job loss, a canceled flight, even worse than taxes, is standing before a perfect God stained with sin. Cars and homes and jobs can be replaced, but sin results in judgement before God:

What is SIN? It's probably important to define it.

Quote:

Typically, we think of sin as just breaking a rule (and there's a sense in which that is true). But we forget that sin is also breaking a relationship. Sin is when we take our deepest affections off the one who deserves them (God) and place them onto other things that do not.

Michael J. Kruger, *Surviving religion 101*

Think about those things in your life that have caused you the most regret, the most death and destruction. For most of us, our own sin, our placing our affections in something other than God is the greatest cause of our suffering.

---

**This leads to the second aspect of our need for rescue.**

**b. We need to be rescued because we are not capable of rescuing ourselves:**

The cords of death encompassed me;  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>the cords of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.  
<sup>6</sup>In my distress I called upon the Lord;  
to my God I cried for help.

look at the words David used: he was entangled, he was wrapped with ropes, he mentions a trap. Even the Hebrew word “distress” signifies a narrow place, hemmed in, can’t get out, he’s in dire strait.

Its really the same for us in facing the challenges of living in a world that is fallen: We can’t control:

- The weather, your genetics,
- You have no control over the family you’ve been born into, culture, government
- In regard to our own sin, we are likewise not capable of freeing ourselves from it.

Most people we encounter try to deal with the problem of sin themselves

- For Example: I teach Chemistry at a local High School. After a test, what question do you think my students always ask? “Will this be graded on a curve?” And typically I do. However, I almost always have students who will score 100%
- We treat our own sin that way. But God does not grade on a curve.
- Other strategies people attempt to rescue themselves from sin:
  - Redefine sin – Our world does an excellent job of redefining sin!
  - Cover it up, ignore it, hide it,

But Paul understood the gravity of our sin and our inability to deal with it:

- Rom 7:21- 24

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.<sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Now I know there is a question with this verse, as to whether it is describing Paul before he was saved or whether this struggle with sin is part of the “normal” Christian experience.

Regardless, the point is you and I are in a helpless state in regard to our own sin, and we desperately need to be rescued from it! The fact that Paul is asking the question: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” means that he is not able to remedy his sin himself.

---

So we looked at the need for our rescue, what about the nature of our rescue? How does God rescue us?

## II. The Nature of God's rescue

### a. First of all - God hears

6 From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry to him reached his ears.

What an encouragement that throughout the scriptures, God hears those in dire straits who call upon Him:

- He heard the nation of Israel when they called out to him in slavery.
- Psalm 34 says He is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in Spirit.
- God heard the prayers of:
  - Leah and Rachel and Hannah when they couldn't have children.
  - He heard Peter when he was sinking and said “Lord, save me!”
  - He heard the blind men when they cried out “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”

Do you notice anything similar in all these cries that God hears? They were cries of helplessness. They were cries that were specifically focused on God alone for rescue. Cries like, God I'm not going anywhere else for rescue. If you don't rescue me then I guess I won't be rescued. These were not half-hearted cries for rescue.

Its like the widow who kept coming to the wicked judge to ask for justice against her adversary. She kept knocking, and knocking, and knocking until he gave her justice.

Prayers like, I'm not going away until answer me!

So, how do you cry out to God? Do you cry out to Him? Are your prayers tinged with desperation? I think they should be. If you are going to ask God to work in a particular situation, you are going

to ask him to do something supernatural, that by its very nature you don't have control over the outcome.

This leads us to the next point of the nature of God's rescue:

**b. Not only does God hear, but God also acts**

God heard David and acted! And moved both heaven and earth to rescue David. Look with me at verses 7 through 15:

Then the earth reeled and rocked;  
the foundations also of the mountains trembled  
and quaked, because he was angry.  
<sup>8</sup> Smoke went up from his nostrils,  
and devouring fire from his mouth;  
glowing coals flamed forth from him.  
<sup>9</sup> He bowed the heavens and came down;  
thick darkness was under his feet.  
<sup>10</sup> He rode on a cherub and flew;  
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.  
<sup>11</sup> He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him,  
thick clouds dark with water.  
<sup>12</sup> Out of the brightness before him  
hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.  
<sup>13</sup> The Lord also thundered in the heavens,  
and the Most High uttered his voice,  
hailstones and coals of fire.  
<sup>14</sup> And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;  
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.  
<sup>15</sup> Then the channels of the sea were seen,  
and the foundations of the world were laid bare  
at your rebuke, O Lord,  
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

In verses 7 through 15 David is likely using images from how God rescued Israel from Egypt. Specifically, when they were in a tight corner surrounded on one side by the Red Sea and the other side by the Egyptian Army. And that makes sense because often David found himself cornered as Saul chased after him.

From these verses, there is no part of creation that God didn't rattle in rescuing David:

- The earth reeled and rocked
- Bent heaven
- He controlled the weather.
- Emptied the seas

But David in the next few verses moves from the majestic power of God to shake heaven and Earth to save His people in verses, to a first-person account (in verses 16-19) of how God rescued Him personally. He's saying what God did for Israel back then, He also did for me!

**He sent from on high, he took me;**

he drew me out of many waters.  
17 He rescued me from my strong enemy  
and from those who hated me,  
for they were too mighty for me.  
18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,  
but the Lord was my support.  
19 He brought me out into a broad place;  
he rescued me, because he delighted in me. Psalm 18:16-19

Now the ESV says in verse 16 that “He sent from on high,”, most bible commentators would say that a better word here is “He Reached...”

What a picture! God reaching down and lifting David out of very difficult tight, hemmed in circumstances, completely helpless and placing him in a secure place that is broad where he could move around.

Illustration: When my oldest son was just a small child, I remember one time he had gotten sick in bed and ended up throwing up all over himself. I remember walking into the room and seeing Christian with his arms raised up needing to be rescued from the mess he had created. So what did I do? I picked him up. Why, because he's my son. I delight in him. Besides, he is helpless, he couldn't get out of the condition he is in.

God is like that! He is a rescuer of the helpless!

Now if I (though I am sinful) have enough compassion to rescue a child who desperately needs my help, don't you think God would do the same for us when we cry out to Him.

**Transition: Personally, I've struggled with this in life. I believe that God rescued those who called out to Him in the Scriptures. But what about me in my situation? I believe the scriptures, but would God care to rescue me as he did David? Can God delight in me like he delighted in David?**

**And the answer is a resounding YES! And leads us to our Next point:**

### III. The People God rescues

Personally, I want to be in a place with God that when I call out to Him, I have confidence that He will rescue me from whatever I'm going through.

But we know from verse 41 David's enemies also cried out to God but He didn't answer them.

They cried for help, but there was none to save;  
They cried to the LORD but he did not answer them.  
Psalm 18:41

I don't want to be in that situation.

So not everyone who cries out to God is delivered by God. And Jesus himself said: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” So, who then, will God rescue:

a. First - He rescues the blameless

Look with me at verses 20 to 24

<sup>20</sup> The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.

<sup>21</sup> For I have kept the ways of the Lord,  
and have not wickedly departed from my God.

<sup>22</sup> For all his rules<sup>[c]</sup> were before me,  
and his statutes I did not put away from me.

<sup>23</sup> I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from my guilt.

<sup>24</sup> So the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

And I know what some of you are thinking right now, “Well I guess I’m out then. I know that I am not blameless before God. Not only do I disobey Him in my actions, but also in my inaction, as well as my thought life.

There is absolutely no way for me to be blameless before God!

And David knew this himself! He was the one who wrote Psalm 14 that we looked at a couple of weeks ago:

The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,  
to see if there are any who understand,  
who seek after God.

<sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
there is none who does good,  
not even one.

Psalm 14: 2,3

So how do we reconcile the fact that David says he was blameless and deserving rescue (and we are presuming that he is accurately describing himself) and that fact that David was a sinner like you and me?

I believe that answer is David, by God’s grace, was humble before God.

b. He rescues the humble:

For you save a humble people,  
but the haughty eyes you bring down.  
Psalm 18:27

- David knew that he didn’t have the resources to be blameless before God. So he looked to God alone to help him.

CJ Mahaney Describes humility in this way:



Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.

CJ Mahaney, *Humility*

What is it about humility that makes it critical?

If we are humble, we will not rely on our limited resources to be blameless, but we will rely on God alone, which ultimately leads to His glory! Instead of our own.

In fact God is seriously interested in His own glory!

Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.  
11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,  
for how should my name be profaned?  
My glory I will not give to another.

Isaiah 48:11

God had refined David through decades of affliction. This was really the source of his humility. He understood his own sin and God's holiness. And relied completely on God

This brings us to our final point. We've looked at the need for rescue, the nature of rescue, the people God rescues and finally, how does God do it? How does he rescue us?

#### IV. What are The Means of Rescue

##### a. The means of David's rescue

God rescues us when we are helpless exactly the same way he has always rescued His people throughout history. We are rescued by God's grace, through faith. Through trusting in Him.

God himself is the sole source of David's blameless life. It was purely a gift from God.

Lets explore this in verses 30 to 32, in these verses, David took his eyes off himself and his circumstances and considered who God is:

For it is you who light my lamp;  
the Lord my God lightens my darkness.

<sup>29</sup> For by you I can run against a troop,  
and by my God I can leap over a wall.

<sup>30</sup> This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

- <sup>31</sup> For who is God, but the Lord?  
And who is a rock, except our God?—  
<sup>32</sup> the God who equipped me with strength  
and made my way blameless.

David's blameless life was completely empowered by God. David knew the perfection and holiness of God: He said in verse 30 "This God – His way is perfect;" and in verse 30 he takes refuge in "This God" as the only one who is able to equip him with strength and make his way blameless.

b. The means of our rescue:

Now David did not rely on God perfectly. He was not 100% blameless.

But his great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, ..... grandson (so to speak) Jesus perfectly relied on God's power through the Holy Spirit to live a sinless life.

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Acts 10:38

What God did in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Christ, provided us the only means to be truly blameless before God.

What David did is take refuge in the perfection of God:

<sup>30</sup> This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord proves true;

he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

So in the middle of a helpless situation, you also can take refuge behind the perfect God, the Son of God, Fully God, Fully man, Jesus Christ.

As it was with David, so it is with you and me: we put our faith in God alone for rescue.

Now what I'm going to say next is true if you have been a Christian for 20 years, or this is the first time you've heard about Jesus. In dealing with our greatest trial, our struggle with sin...

By what means does God rescue you?:

- We accept that we are by nature sinful, in both word and deed. And we reorientate our deepest affections back to the one who really deserves them – God Himself. For me, I know this is a daily activity.
- We believe that by trusting in Jesus alone, God supernaturally takes our sin and applied them to Jesus,
- Now if God is powerful enough to credit our sin to Christ, then he is powerful enough to credit Christ's blameless life to you and me.
- What's more, God fills you with His Spirit to empower you to daily walk blamelessly before God!

That is the source of your blamelessness. Not that you are perfectly blameless, but your blamelessness was won for you by the merits of Jesus. Jesus lived the perfectly blameless life for you that you couldn't live on your own.

<sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Cor 5

If you have trusted in Christ for salvation, God sees you through the lens of His own Son.

### **Application:**

Through the grace of God, your ultimate problem has been taken care of!

But what about all the helpless issues I'm facing today? I know something comes to mind for each person listening to me.

- Maybe you have a relationship that your struggling with and you don't see a way forward.
- I feel trapped at work and feel like I'm always on the hotseat.
- Perhaps you have a child that has wandered away from Christ or is really challenging to parent.

Regardless of what it is, God has put you in that helpless situation so that you might turn to Him and experience His rescue... He working to coax you, to woo you into trusting in Him enough to call out to him so you might experience the joy watching Him rescue you in helpless times.

As Christians we live for the end, For that time when we will stand face to face with God. My hope for myself and you is that at the end of our lives we'll be able to look back over our lives and say:

I love you, O Lord, my strength.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.

God has already acted on your behalf, and has shaken Heaven and Earth in sending his Son Jesus Christ to make a way for that happen. Trust in Him today.

Let us close in prayer.