

He will win the Nations

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[0 : 00] Well, let me welcome you to this Lunchtime Bible Talk. It's good to see you. Now, over this month of June, apart from last week when we had the conference, we've been looking at Psalm 18, one of the great Psalms of David, and we've come to the final part of it today, verses 31 to 50.

But I want to read one or two of the beginning verses, so if you turn to page 454, please, in the Bibles. I want to read one or two verses at the beginning, just to remind us where we are.

Psalm 18, on page 454. And we'll read the first three verses, including the title, to the choir master, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

He said, 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. And down to verse 16. He sent from on high.

[1 : 28] He took me. He drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. He confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support.

He brought me out into a broad place. He rescued me because he delighted in me. And then down to verse 31 to 50, which is our passage for today. David, verse 31.

For who is God but the Lord? And who is a rock except our God? The God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless.

He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. You gave me a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.

[2 : 32] I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back, for they were consumed. I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise.

They fell under my feet. For you equipped me with strength for the battle. You made those who rise against me sink under me. You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated me I destroyed.

They cried for help, but there was none to save. They cried to the Lord, but he did not answer them. I beat them fine as dust before the wind. I cast them out like the mire of the streets.

You delivered me from strife with the people. You made me the head of the nations. People whom I had not known served me. As soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me. Foreigners came cringing to me.

Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses. The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation, the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, who delivered me from my enemies.

[3 : 40] Yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me. You rescued me from the man of violence. For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David, and his offspring forever.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Now let's have a moment of prayer. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name.

Father, we thank you that in the middle of today, from our various concerns, from our backgrounds, and our different homes, you have called us here for a few moments to listen to your voice.

and we pray that amid the many conflicting, many conflicting concerns that we are legitimately, we are legitimately occupied with, that we will be able to set these aside for a few moments.

Listen to what you are saying. Not just what you once said to David, but what you are saying to us now. And we pray that by doing this, you will strengthen us, you will cause our hearts to burn within us, and that you will lead us through the Lord Christ himself, in whose name we pray.

[5 : 04] Amen. I'm very fond of music, although I'm no musician.

That's rather like saying I don't know much about art, but I know what I like. Anyway, I love listening to music, and one of the things that music is able to do is to transport you to different places.

For example, it might, one tune might take you into a Swedish pine forest as you stand there with the snow falling around you. Another tune, you might hear the beat of waves on a Hebridean island. Another one, you're in a marketplace in Eastern Europe. Another one, you're on the River Danube. That's an easy one. I'm not going to ask, by the way, if you know what these various pieces of music are.

You can ask Ruth at the end, she'll be able to tell you. Or perhaps a mellow Elizabethan countryside, the countryside of Elgar. There's a clue. Now, the Psalms, in many ways, are like that.

[6 : 08] They evoke an enormous number of moods from the highest joy to the deepest sorrow, from the praise of God to the anger the psalmist feels against the enemies of God and of himself.

Now, some of the larger Psalms, like this Psalm we've been looking at in the last weeks, plays more than one tune, if you like. There are different moods. There is praise in this.

Heartfelt praise of the Lord who has rescued David. There is also the sense of sinfulness, the need for forgiveness, penitential, like many of the Psalms.

And there's also this sense as we come to the end. Indeed, the very last two verses, the sense of the wonder and greatness of this God whose rule extends over the whole world.

And one day that will be seen. It's vivid poetry and the prose account of these things you get in 2 Samuel 8 of how David conquered various nations.

[7 : 14] And this is the celebration now. Now, there's two particular things I want to point out here. First of all, in verses 31 to 45, what God has done and will do for David.

The language of rock, once again, verse 31, is a rock except our God picking up from the very beginning. Verse 2, the Lord is my rock and my fortress.

Now, in one sense, you could say this is just the exploit of an Iron Age chieftain, an Iron Age warlord who was very clever at battle. But that's not the way the sound presents it.

Sound presents it as a picture of God bringing in his kingdom. What David is really saying, had you been alive, if you were alive at that time, you would actually have seen a trailer, if you like, of what the coming kingdom was going to be like.

Now, the nation of Israel was called by God to be a light to the other nations. But Abraham was called at the very beginning, Abraham was called so that all the nations would be blessed.

[8 : 23] Now, Israel, like the church, has often failed to be a light. Indeed, in many, many times, very far from being light, we've shown people darkness and division and sinfulness.

Nevertheless, there have been moments, both in the history of Israel and the history of the church when the light has shone brightly and David's reign is one of these.

Now, you might well say, what on earth do we have in common with David, an ancient iron age chieftain and then a king?

Let me use a phrase that any Cornhill people present will recognize. We are not David, but we have David's God. That applies to all the characters in Scripture, after all.

If we were simply looking at David, then this would just be ancient history. On the other hand, if we were simply looking at Scripture to find pictures of ourselves, we won't find them.

[9 : 25] None of the Scriptures isn't about us, except insofar as it's about humanity. So, you see, we have David's God, and what David says about God remains true.

And the important thing is, God is more important than David. Verses 31 to 36, this is all about God, isn't it?

God equipped me with strength. 33, you made my feet like the feet of a deer. He trains my hands for war, giving me the shield of salvation, giving a wide place.

It's about the character of God, his dependability. A very interesting phrase in verse 35, your gentleness, not your power, but your gentleness has made me great.

In other words, God's purposes are loving purposes. God's purposes are good purposes. God's purposes are never destruction, although destruction has to happen in order for good things to happen very often.

[10:26] The evil has got rid of, just as if you're clearing out some kind of site which has been cluttered up with rubbish for many years, or you can build anything on it, you've got to get rid of the clutter, haven't you?

Nevertheless, you get rid of the clutter, not for the sake of getting rid of it, but so that you can build. We need to remember that God is in charge, and that's still true today.

All the work we do for the Lord, whether it's in church settings, individual settings, our own personal lives, we've got to remember that God himself, it's God's work, not our work.

If we remember that, that will mean that when things are going well, we'll not become conceited.

We'll remember that it is the Lord's doing.

This is the Lord's doing. It's not our doing. And when things go badly, we won't get too depressed because we know that God is still in charge.

[11:28] God is more important than David. God is more important than you and me. It is his work. Let's thank him for it. Next time God gives some rich blessing, either to a church or to an individual, let's give the glory where it belongs to the Lord.

And the other thing about this section is God works repeatedly in different ways. Now, don't worry. I'm not going to give you a grammar lesson, but as a former English teacher, I can never quite avoid this.

The verbs here, God who made my feet trains my hands for war and I pursued my enemies and so on. Verse 38, I thrust them through.

You made my enemies turn their backs to me. Now, these are past tenses. In other words, David is talking about what God has done for him in the past and is still doing in the present.

But they could be translated as future tenses as David looks forward to what God will still do for him and indeed beyond that what God will do for all his people.

[12:35] Let me use an illustration. This is probably a useless illustration. I've always found that illustrations fall into two categories. One, the brilliant ones. People remember the illustrations but don't remember the point it illustrated.

Well, the useless ones where people forget both the illustration and the point. Anyway, this probably is the latter. Many of you will have seen reproductions of the Bagua tapestry or maybe even seen the original.

This wonderful tapestry of how William the Conqueror invaded England and defeated the Saxon Harold.

Now, all through that tapestry there are particularly striking pictures. One where Harold is one where Harold is struck in the eye of the narrow. Another one where the troops are making their way after they've defeated the sections and so on.

And little commentaries like Harold is killed and so on. Past tense. Harold was struck down. Just imagine. Now, that Bagua tapestry is talking about a past event in other words rather as David is here.

[13:46] Suppose the Bagua tapestry had been actually composed before the battle as a kind of propaganda if you like, as a kind of hope of what would happen.

And in other words, they've anticipated the victory before the battle happens. You've got comments like this, wouldn't you? You know, William the Conqueror will triumph.

Harold will be killed. Now, of course, the illustration is bad in some ways because this is the word of God and that's simply the word of the artist.

Nevertheless, you see the point I'm making. The Bagua tapestry looking back to victories records them in the past tense. That's what David does as well. But it's not just history for David.

This is what God is like. And just as at the beginning of the psalm, David had recalled how he had been rescued from his enemies and thought of an earlier rescue when God rescued Moses.

[14:48] Now he's recalling his own rescue from Saul and other enemies, but he's also pointing forward to greater victories than David ever knew. The victories of his greater son.

Victories of his greater son when he came here the first time, met the serpent dragon and gave him a mortal blow. But even more so, the events which have not yet happened when he comes again the next time to set up his kingdom.

That's what really this psalm is ultimately about. Because as I say, it's ultimately a revelation of who God is, not just what God does. Because what God does is a revelation of who he is.

God is totally consistent, isn't he? We often do things which are not a real revelation of our character. We often do kind things, but our motives are flawed and mixed.

We often lapse into sin and immediately realize how awful things are and so on. What God does is totally consistent with who he is.

[15:57] That's why David can look at his own victories. David can look in the past at Moses, look forward to the future and say, this God is still the same God. It's summed up of the phrase God is faithful.

That's consistent biblical emphasis. Notice, this is an absolute statement. Not God is sometimes faithful. Not even on the whole God is faithful, but at all times and in all places to all eternity without qualification full stop, God is faithful.

That's what David is saying in this part of the psalm. What God has done and what God will do will remain the same because God is consistent.

And the second thing, the verses 46 to 50, all the nations will praise him. This is not simply the God of David or the God of Israel, not even just the God of the church.

This is the God of heaven and earth. And notice what David says in verse 46. The Lord lives and blessed be my rock.

[17:11] Now the first thing about God is that he is living. He is, not just that he exists, but he is living. That's why we get certain pictures of God like wind, for example.

The wind blows where it wills, says Jesus to Nicodemus. You hear it sound but cannot tell where it comes or where it goes. The fire in the book of Daniel, the throne of God is surrounded by a river of fire and water, the living water, the flowing water which refreshes the thirsty soul.

God is living. He's dynamic. And yet he is also the rock. He is stable. Now, you see, that's so important, isn't it?

We need a living God, not a God who once existed, not a God who will be in the future, but a God who lives now, a God who gives life.

And also, we need a stable foundation. We don't want a foundation that keeps on shifting and gives way under our feet. That's why he is the rock. And once again, gratitude that both things are true of God.

[18:26] He is not stuck in the past. He's not stuck at any one time. He is always moving ahead. And yet, he is always there, solid, dependable.

We can build our lives on him. And because of that, particularly in verses 49 and 50, this is a gospel for all the nations.

For this, I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations and sing to your name. Now, this is foreshadowed in David's reign.

Long ago, God had promised to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land between the river Euphrates in the north and the river Nile in the south.

For a brief moment during the reigns of David and Solomon, that actually happened. David conquered these territories, handed them on to Solomon, and in the book of Kings, we read how in Solomon's reign, in the better part of Solomon's reign, people lived in peace and in security.

[19:33] It's a genuine picture. Nevertheless, that soon was whittled away until the ancient kingdom simply became a tiny province around the city of Jerusalem.

Now, clearly, there is more to come. And notice, David is going, as it were, to lead the singing among the nations.

Now, part of that means he's going to write those psalms, those great psalms associated with his name, those psalms which give us words with which to praise the Lord.

I think that's so important. And he is, and he is, what's he going to sing about? He's going to sing about great salvation, verse 50.

He's going to sing about steadfast love, the covenant love of the faithful God. And former enemies are going to be united in praise.

[20:30] David defeated these enemies, he overthrew the nations, he destroyed their power, but one day, these nations are all going to unite in praise to the Davidic king, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign forever.

And it's interesting how this is interpreted. When, when Jesus came into the world, there was no son of David on the throne.

In fact, there was little, there was no real kingdom, it was just a conquered province, Judea, the Roman province. In these circumstances, the angel Gabriel says to Mary, the child to be born will sit on the throne of his father David, he will rule over the house of Jacob, and of his kingdom. There will be no end. That's picked up in the, that's picked up in the letter to the Romans. Paul, at the end of that letter in chapter 15, as he talks about how will the Davidic king reign, in chapter 15, the king is reigning as more and more of the Gentiles come to crown him as their king in their hearts.

Read Romans 15, you see it there, it's so, it's so exciting, see how it's fulfilled. He's not reigning physically, invisibly in Jerusalem, he is reigning in the hearts and lives, and that is still true. [21 : 50] But one day, he will visibly, publicly reign over all the earth. And at that time, God will be God, and the world will know it.

This is a good psalm for life. Read it again later, read the whole of it and reflect on it. It's a psalm of praise, a psalm where we lift our hearts to the Lord.

It's a psalm of thankfulness, where we give thanks to the Lord. It's a psalm of forgiveness, where we bring our sins to the Lord. And it's a psalm of hope for the future.

Remember, biblical hope is not just, though I hope this might happen. Biblical hope is the certainty that the future will come. We are not David, but we have David's God.

Amen. Let's pray. God our Father, we thank you for your servant, David, who was faithful amid all his flaws and imperfections, who wrote these glorious words and other words which help us to praise you, words which bring forgiveness, words which bring healing, words which bring challenge, and words which point to the day when his greater Son will reign.

[23 : 07] Help us, Lord, as we continue our lives to trust in that Lord, that Lord who is faithful, that Lord of steadfast love, who will never let us go.

And give to us courage as we continue to serve you. In the name of Jesus, the reigning and coming King, we pray. Amen.