

Finally!**Psalm 18: 1 - 19**

A few years ago, I heard that the fellow in the famous photo of the couple kissing in Time Square upon hearing the news that we had won World War 2 had passed on. I was saddened by that news. That photo is iconic not only because it celebrated a historical world event, but it is also the quintessential reminder to us all that great victories are worthy of our exuberant and spontaneous celebration.

It's downright fun to celebrate extraordinary accomplishments especially when the victor has endured such tremendous hardships to gain the victory. It's a terrific feeling to gather around family and friends and acknowledge the special achievements of others.

Graduating from high school or basic training
passing the driver's licensing exam
an undefeated football season
opening a new business
recovery of health after a surgery or serious illness.

Though not as monumental as winning a world war, each victory had its share of challenges to overcome and that's reason enough to celebrate.

Psalm 18 is David's victory lap. This is where he gets to stand on his car and chug a bottle of milk, get kissed on the cheek by pretty ladies, raise his arms in the victory pose, and generally whoop it up!

Truth be told however, I get a little annoyed by interviews that immediately follow a victory – especially sports victories.

Can you tell me how you feel right now?

What does this victory mean to you?

Can you take us back to that instant when you knew had it in the bag?

And the question that really drives me nuts ... What about next year, can you repeat?

What? Are you kidding me? The confetti hasn't even settled on the floor and you're asking me about next year?

Give me your media badge right now! I'm want to feed it to you!

Take time to celebrate!

Take time to bask in the glory of victory. That's what David did, and Psalm 18 is the result.

Psalm 18, apart from the introduction and the conclusion, can be divided into three major sections. We could title them as follows:

The Lord's deliverance of David from his mortal enemies: v. 4 – 19

The moral grounds for the Lord's saving help: v. 20 – 29

The Lord's help recounted: 30 -45

One other important fact about Psalm 18 is that the entire 22nd chapter of 2 Samuel is its twin with only a few minor variations. This duplication certainly suggests that these words of David were written after a highly significant event in his life and they deserve our special attention. In fact, verse 1 of 2 Samuel 22 reads, *"David 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."*

Interesting. I don't think David ever considered Saul his enemy even though Saul tried to kill him more than once! This thought alone should cause us to pause before we push the button to unfriend someone.

But it's no wonder David was inspired to pen these words. His enemies, both within and without, had been vanquished! But what can David's words teach us today as we face our enemies- enemies that are both internal and external?

One: Things will likely get worse before they get better. Look at verse 4 and 5, verses that describe David's dark situation. *"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."*

Granted, David's using lots of figurative language here, but can't we just feel the ominous dark cloud of disaster rolling in on David? Don't you get the sense that whatever's bearing down on David, whether it be foreign armies, Saul's armies, or a dark cloud of psychological depression, it's progressive; it's relentless, much like waves continually crashing and pounding the sides of ship?

Cords, torrents and snares; these are words that evoke ideas of being bound with no hope of freedom or release, and don't even get me started on the words death, destruction, and the grave.

Yes, things will most likely get worse for us before they get better, but as Jesus taught his disciples at the end of John 16, *"Take heart! I have overcome the world."*

I know for many, these words of Jesus ring hollow, especially those who have never embraced the Christian faith or have experienced heart-breaking personal tragedy.

They haven't seen God overcome anything. In fact, if they've witnessed anything at all, they've seen what appears to them as God epically failing.

In their eyes, every murder, every suicide, every starvation, every death by cancer, every injustice, every victim of abuse is an indictment against God that he has not overcome but has been soundly defeated.

How do we respond to these folks and show them that God is all-powerful, all – loving, and Lord of all?

A couple of thoughts:

One: We, as Christians are called to walk along side and comfort those who have personally experienced loss. We can do this because God promises to walk with us and is walking with us now. *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me."*

When people lose those whom they cherish or experience trauma that creates great and intolerable pain, they don't want to be alone, and quite frankly shouldn't be left alone. They need to be surrounded and supported by caring and loving people.

Not that we have to be there in order to explain the situation from God's perspective or come up with excuses to get God off the hook. We just have to make ourselves available and be the sounding board and listening ear they need.

In this effort, we are being Christ's body in a very real and practical way, as a shepherd is with his sheep, and in due time, as God gives them faith, they will recognize the Savior in us.

Second:

Love one another. In Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prays for all believers saying, *"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

Now I don't know exactly what this unity among believers looks like, probably because it has rarely ever been experienced on earth, but I know this, the foundation of this unity among believers is love, and this love is the same love that unifies the Father and the Son.

It's a sacrificial and life-giving love. And if we can love each other with the sort of love the Father loves the Son and vice versa, then the world, including those who see God as a failure, they'll see him in a completely new light.

They will see him with faith and in truth. They will see him as John saw him in the book of Revelation and as the angels proclaimed, *"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign."*

When God reigns in the hearts of mankind on earth, as he does in heaven, people who are in the dark will witness this, and if they have faith, will be transported into His wonderful, glorious and life-giving light.

But here's the fascinating and marvelous thing about Christ's reign:

It begins with his humiliation. This is the second point we learn from psalm 18. Jesus Christ can take his rightful place as conqueror and ruler of the universe and in our lives because he humbled himself ...

and took on the form of a servant.

We see this alluded to in verses 9 and 16: *"He parted the heavens and came down. He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters."*

God is far from being a passive spectator when it comes to our rescue. In fact, without the Father and the Son, our pleas of help go unanswered. And if we are to learn anything from Psalm 18, it's that God was willing to move heaven and earth to rescue us: *"The earth trembled and quaked. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare."*

Again, lots of flowery and figurative language going on here, but God did in fact break into our world in the form of Jesus Christ and by his perfect and holy life expose the corruptness and sinful nature of our lives in order that we would acknowledge our need for a Savior and cry out to him!

And when he finally breathed his last on the cross, after offering himself as the perfect sacrifice to satisfy his Father's righteousness, the earth did shake right down to its foundation because God's great plan of redemption and restoration had been accomplished, and the world will never be the same again.

God made a way for mankind to return to Him, and he accomplished this through his son Jesus.

Third:

The best is yet to come. Wait pastor, back up a minute! Didn't you say earlier that the worst was yet to come, or that things were going to get worse before they get better?

That's right! You were listening! It will get worse before it gets better, but when it gets better, this new better will be the beginning of the best!

Look at verse 17 and 18. Here we see David's situation disintegrating before our very eyes! *"My foes were too strong for me. They confronted me on the day of my disaster."*

Here's the Good News:

The day you gave your heart to God, when you placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, this was the beginning of the best for you. Sure, there'll be peaks and valleys to navigate though out life, but the trajectory of the line that graphs our life continues onward and upward off the chart! *"He rescued me from my powerful enemy ...He brought me into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me."*

This is what God's work on the cross means to every single believer.

It will be 37 years ago this May that I took my first trip out west. And as my friend Matt and I road-tripped across the western states, I recall being alarmed by all the space! To drive miles and miles every day and witness the wide-open spaces of the west, what an eye-opening experience that was for me, and a reminder of God's great love for us.

“He brought me into a spacious place.” - a place where we have the freedom to be ourselves and to be completely secure in our identity and who we are in Christ because God loves us and has rescued us and delights in us.

We’re only two psalms removed from David’s wonderful verse where he declared, *“The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.”*

The best is yet to come.

What does Peter say in 1 Peter 1: 3 – 4? *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.”* Heaven, though countless believers will be there, will be a wondrously beautiful and spacious place.

There are other wonderful truths in this Psalm that can bring hope and strength to our lives, like verse 25 that says, *“To the faithful, you show yourself faithful.”*

I’ve served in this church for over 8 years now (we pulled into Almont on my daughter Sydney’s 13th birthday, January 27, 2018. She’ll be 21 on Tuesday) and I’ve witnessed the faithfulness of every one of you, and it brings me great joy, because I know you have already and will again experience God’s rewards in your life.

I know this to be true, because God is a promise keeper and he says in Revelations 22:12, *“I am coming soon. My reward is with me.”*

Exactly what form this reward will take, I don't know, but I'm sure of this, it will be exactly what each of us need at the exact moment we need it and it will bring tremendous glory to God. Of this I'm sure.

Perhaps it will be restored health

a restored relationship

a loved one coming to a saving knowledge of Christ

financial relief

or witnessing a miracle that surpasses all understanding.

Whatever it is, it will cause us to praise Him and bring us into a deeper love relationship with him.

Which brings me to my final point:

Finally!

And it is this: It took David 18 Psalms before he said it – before he said to God, "I Love you." Did you realize this?

Did David write all of the first 18 psalms? I don't know – most of them are attributed to him, but that's not the point. The point is that David didn't say, "God, I love you" until Psalm 18!

Perhaps David's love for God can be inferred, after all, David wrote wonderful and tremendous things about God, about how powerful he is, and how majestic he is and how holy he is, and how he desires to bless his people, and protect them and rescue them and even how God loves them, but David never wrote, "God, I love you" until Psalm 18. You can go back and look. I checked.

Have you ever told God that you love him? Maybe you have or maybe you haven't. Maybe you've thought that since God knows everything, you don't have to tell him such things. He knows your heart, and after all you pray to him, serve him, witness for him, live for him.

But the truth is that we can do all these things for God and never love him.

We can also say we love him, and that can be one big fat lie too.

But there is something about verbalizing our love to another.

Men ... just ask your wife. I've never met a woman who didn't want their husband to express with words his love for her.

There's something about saying the words "I love you" that helps deepen one's relational commitment, because none of us want to be a hypocrite in life. We desire that the words formed from our mouths be a true reflection of what's in our hearts.

So, when we say, I love you, it's like clicking the send button on our text message. We're committed now and there's no going it back. There's no taking it back. It's out there for the world to see, and to judge its validity.

God wants us to say it and mean it: I love you God. It is the kind of relationship he wants with us. He wants us to be fully committed to him, not just because this brings him great joy and delight but because he knows that when we're fully committed to him in a loving relationship, we will finally have and experience life abundantly with him and in him!

Hear Jesus' prayer to his Father for his disciples and us:

"I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."