**The Lord lives and saves the humble** 12/2/23 dkm

Read: Psalm 18, 1Peter 5

Text: Psalm 18:20-50

Psalms: 144:9-16, 101:1-6, 1, 134a

In the history of Israel, Moses and David stand out as faithful servants of the Lord. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, and David was a man after God’s own heart. Both were pointers to Christ, what theologians call ‘types’ of Christ. David was the Lord’s anointed, the king of Israel. One of David’s descendants would sit on the throne until the coming of the Anointed One, the Son of God sent down from heaven. Being a ‘type’ of Christ did not mean David was sinless; he was only human. David committed adultery and he was also guilty of the sin of pride and haughtiness (2Sam 24:10). Let no one discount the seriousness of such sin. John includes ‘the pride of life’ with the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (1John 2:16). Satan tempted Jesus with the kingdoms of the world and their glory but he resisted saying, ‘Worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve’ (Mat 4:10).

David wrote this psalm, according to its title, when ‘the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul’. We find a copy of this psalm included in 2Samuel 22. We have looked at the first nineteen verses under the title, ‘Warrior king, warrior God’. With his warrior background, David came up with military metaphors when writing of how God protected him from his enemies when he asked for help. He describes the Lord as his rock, his fortress, and his shield. As David prayed, he remembered God delivering his people through Moses. The Lord had just delivered David, plucking him out of a flood of enemies. The Lord had brought him to a safe place because he delighted in him (18:9).

David continues to reflect on his covenant relationship with the Lord, a covenant of love, but also of justice. God’s love and justice would ultimately be seen in the cross of Jesus Christ. David speaks prophetically of this coming king of heaven, even as he himself lives and reigns as ‘type’ of Christ. Our first subheading, for verses 20-27 is, ‘Goodness of God’, our second, ‘Grace of God’, our third, ‘Gift of victory’ and our fourth, ‘Give thanks among the Gentiles’.

**1.Goodness of God**

Reflecting on God’s goodness towards him, David speaks of the Lord rewarding him according to his righteousness and ‘clean hands’ (18:20). David is not claiming to be without sin, something only his descendant Jesus Christ could claim; there is an element of prophecy in these verses. What David was claiming was obedience to the commands of the Lord, at least from an outward perspective. David had not joined with the wicked, not walked in the counsel of the ungodly or sat in the seat of sinners (Ps 1).

While the Lord looks on the heart, he does not ignore outward things like words and actions. David was a man who examined his life and his heart, as seen in the Psalm 17 and Psalm 139:23,24. He confessed his sin, knowing that his covenant God forgives sin. David was not the only man who claimed to be blameless. We have already mentioned Moses (Num 12:3), and Job is called ‘blameless and upright’ (Job 1:1). When the rich young ruler came to Jesus seeking eternal life, Jesus directed him to the commandments and he claimed to have kept these (Luke 18:20). We know that he went away sad, but the point is, the commandments cannot be ignored. Note that Jesus also taught this man that only God is good.

The Lord is first and foremost, the God of truth and justice; we focus on his grace, as David did, but grace is necessary because of justice. In his justice God condemns sinners; we have no hope of salvation, or of being justified, without grace. Just as David saw the Lord dealing with him according to his righteousness and clean hands, so he saw the Lord dealing with the merciful or faithful according to their faithfulness (18:25). It is the same with the blameless and with the pure; the just God will repay them according to their deeds. And it is the same with devious or crooked individuals; they will reap the rewards of their actions. It is amazing, or we might say concerning, how the Lord brings people down in the same way they try to bring others down; remember Haman in the Book of Esther. In NT terms, ‘You reap what you sow’ (Gal 6:7).

From Genesis to Revelation the Lord is seen as saving the poor and humble while bringing down the haughty or proud (Ps 101:5, Prov 3:34, 6:17, James 4:6, 1Peter 5:6). Most people understand and support such justice, except when it comes to themselves. Few admit to being proud because they compare themselves to other people. But when we stand before Jesus our pride is revealed, and it keeps us from coming under the shelter of his wings, as Jesus said. Humility is essential to salvation; ‘Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up’ (James 4:10). No one else can save you, and the Lord will not save you while you remain proud and haughty before him and before men. Jesus declared, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ and, ‘Blessed are the meek’ and, ‘Blessed are the merciful’. He has no blessing for proud and haughty people.

**2.Grace of God**

‘An offering of praise to the person of the Lord’ is one man’s summary of verses 28-36. David stops looking at his own righteousness to look at the grace of the Lord. It was only in God’s strength that he had victory in any battle. It was only by God’s protection that he escaped Saul and other enemies. The Lord was his shield as well as his strength when it came to bending bow of bronze, and running against a troop or leaping over a wall (18:29,30,34). What a vivid description of war as it was in David’s day. Remember Jonathan climbing the rock face to attack the Philistine outpost (1Sam 14:4). David might have recalled the night he captured Saul’s spear and water bottle (1Sam 26:7); did the Lord guide him by some unseen light. Darkness often has a spiritual meaning, but it is also an important tactic in warfare, still today.

In looking to the Lord, David comes up with many ‘For you’ references to God, many attributes of the Lord. We have already seen that God saves the humble, lights his lamp, and helps him run and jump. In verse 30 he says that God’s way is perfect. God is omniscient and omnipotent. David consulted the Lord before going into battle because God knows everything. Remember Saul’s dilemma when God would not answer his prayer. When the Lord tells us to do something we know we will succeed, so do not doubt God’s loving purpose for your life, or his power to fulfil his purposes in you. When the Lord speaks, he, in effect, acts.

There is no other god except the Lord. The Gentiles came to battle with their gods, but they might as well have gone home if the Lord had spoken to David. Again he calls the Lord his rock and describes the gifts of God’s grace: strength in his feet, with feet like a deer, and in his arms to bend a bow (18:31-34). The Lord kept his feet from slipping and held him up by his right hand (18:35,36) These last two verses point to David as king, ruling with wisdom from above. The warrior God was a wise and gentle God, exacting justice. The warrior king must be wise and gentle also as he led the people of God. ‘While it was the gentleness of God exercised that allowed David success, it was the gentleness God taught him that was his true greatness’ (Kidner).

**3.Gift of victory**
In these verses David moves to the first person saying, ‘I have pursued and overtaken my enemies’ (18:37). He has just made it clear that God gave him strength so this description of a battle must be seen in this light. David describes how he overran and destroyed the enemy (18:38), with another acknowledgment that God armed him with strength, and indeed made his enemies surrender in fear. In holy war, surrender did not necessarily mean escaping death. Standing on the neck of one’s enemy was a mark of victory in those days (18:40).

The Lord does not hear the cry of sinners unless and until they repent of their sin. The Lord cannot be manipulated like other gods, and he is not a good luck charm to be worn around the neck or painted on a house. That said, the Lord will hear Gentiles who repent and turn to him in faith, as this psalm goes on to declare: ‘I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the Gentiles’ (18:49).

David went on to subdue his enemies on every side. He expanded the borders of Israel from river to river, and brought peace to the land (Gen 15:18). Even so, to say, ‘You made me the head of the nations’ and, ‘Foreigners submit to me’ seems more than a reference to David. These words are prophetic; they refer to the ‘greater than David’ and to the reign of Messiah. ‘David’s empire was only a picture of the kingdom of God that will one day be governed by Davis’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus’. It will be consummated when he comes again in power and glory on the clouds of heaven.

**4.Give thanks among the Gentiles**
This psalm ends like many others on a note of praise and worship. Worship means giving glory to God, and this is what David does, even in the midst of the Gentiles. He declares, ‘The Lord lives!’ and ‘Blessed be my rock!’ (18:46). He gives thanks and praise to God for his victories and calls upon the people to join him in praise and worship. The battle is the Lord’s, and in His name David proclaims victory. God avenged David; David refused to take personal revenge. Similarly, David refused to take personal glory. All glory and praise went to the Lord. David was a king like no other, a man after God’s own heart, and a ‘type’ of Christ, who is the King even greater than David because he lives and reigns forever, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

David’s reference to giving thanks to the Lord among the Gentiles is taken by the apostle Paul as prophetic of Jesus and the gospel being proclaimed among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles bringing glory to God for his mercy (18:49, Rom 15:9). Paul preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. He proclaimed the kingdom of God as comprising both Jew and Gentile together as one, praising and magnifying the name of Jesus.

Words referring to Messiah, to Jesus Christ our Lord, continue in the closing verse or doxology of this psalm. David was the anointed king of Israel but was not the Messiah: Messiah means anointed one. God delivers his king and shows mercy to his anointed (18:50), to David in the first instance, but then we read, ‘to his descendants forevermore’. David did not live forever. Who of his descendants is referred to as ‘God’s anointed’? The voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be, ‘My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Mark 1:11), gives us a clue, and more than a clue. Our Lord Jesus Christ was ‘born of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’ (Rom 1:3,4).