

Psalm 18 – When Bad Things Happen

Psalm 18:1-6

PW Emerson – 08/11/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

We're doing a summer series on Psalms.

Today we're looking at Psalm 18 – When Bad Things Happen

Psalm 18:1-6

¹I love you, LORD, my strength.

²The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.

⁴The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

⁵The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.

⁶In 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.

Psalm 18 is about when bad things happen ... and how God responds.

David was a faithful soldier ...

- Faithful to his family
- Faithful to his country, Israel
- Faithful to the King, Saul

- Faithful to God

David had been so faithful in serving God that people were singing his praises!

That made the King, Saul, jealous.

As a result, King Saul was trying to kill David.

In this Psalm he is writing about his experiences, expressing his situation and God's interaction.

One of the biggest questions people today deal with is why do bad things happen to good people

Some of the "bad things" we can say were caused by other people ...

A drunk driver runs a red light and kills someone.

We didn't do anything wrong ... the "bad thing" happened because the other guy chose to drive drunk.

Why didn't God prevent that from happening?

It goes back to God giving people free will ... which also means people have the free will to make bad choices, even very bad choices, leading to very bad consequences.

But there are other "bad things" that happen for which we have no understanding ...

- Tornados which destroy houses and kill people
- Cancer ... in a variety of kinds ...

What does the bible say about these bad things that happen to

- People?
- Well-intentioned people?
- Christians?
- Good Christians?
- Strong Christians?
- People who don't seem to deserve such things

King Saul became jealous of David's success in battle.

King Saul was jealous of the peoples' admiration of David – the people loved David.

From I Samuel 18-23, we read that Saul tried to have David killed at least 9 times!

- By other peoples' hands
- By his own hands

Once, King Saul tried to kill David by throwing a spear at David (I Samuel 19:10)

In I Samuel 20:3, just after the attempted spearing, David escapes out of the palace with the help of his wife, Michal, and we see David meeting in secret with Saul's son Jonathan (David and Jonathan were best friends). David says, "But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death." But God delivered Him and saved him out of the hands of Saul, and David learned the most important lesson a child of God can learn. It's this:

IT'S NOT IMPORTANT WHAT **HAPPENS** TO A CHRISTIAN, WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS HOW WE **REACT** TO WHAT HAPPENS TO US

In the midst of all that is happening to him, the threats the King is making on his life, David stays true to being a servant of God, remaining faithful to God.

Psalm 18:1

¹I love you, LORD, my strength.

Most of the time we read the word “love” in the Bible, it refers to the Hebrew word *chesed*: love, grace, mercy, forgiveness – all to the fullest

In Psalm 18:1, the word used for love is different.

That word “love” in Psalm 18:1 is “*rä·kham'*,” and it means, “to love, love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate, have tender affection.”

John MacArthur’s commentary on this first verse and says, “Love. This is not the normal word for love that often bears covenant meaning...but it is a rare verb form of a word group that expresses tender intimacy.”

As someone who has worked with many abused boys over the years, I have had many times when I am hugging the other person while they cry out a deep hurt, an abuse that is difficult to express in words. That’s the “love” or “tender affection” I have as I hold them tight, reassure them, and remind them that God has a great love for them.

David uses this word “*rä·kham'*” to express the love he has for God.

Psalm 18:1

¹I love you, LORD, my strength.

David uses this same word for love in Psalm 116:1

I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.

This word for love expresses a deep-seated compassion. When David began to understand the work of God in his life as a deliverer and a rock, it added to his devotion to God.

David is expressing to God his deepest hurt, emotions, and distress. Listen to verses Psalm 18:4-6

⁴The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
⁵The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
⁶In 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.

My heart breaks when through the tears, I hear the question, “WHY WOULD THEY (mom, dad, whoever) DO THIS TO ME?” or “WHY ME?” or “WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THAT?”

That’s not a great time to discuss theology.

But the truth is that God never said life would be peachy, rosy, and happy.

God never said that once we turn to him, everything would be great.

WHAT GOD DOES TELL US IN THIS PSALM (and many other places in the Bible)
is that

- God will be with us through ... whatever
- God will help us through ... whatever
- God will not abandon us

David learned that God does not deliver us **OUT** of our difficulties, rather that he learned to trust the Lord to deliver us **IN** our difficulties.

In times when someone is crying out their soul, their greatest hurt to me, there are no words I can say to make it right. All I can say is

- You're safe now

I can't help but wonder if God put me in that time and place where they feel comfortable opening up about their pain.

Roadrunner v. Wiley Coyote – we've all seen the cartoons as children

Wiley Coyote had the best-laid plans. He invested in the most up to date gadgets in order that he might win the battle.

Yet the best-laid plans always backfired on poor ole coyote.

Now just for a moment lets parallel the life of coyote with our own.

The battle was not only a physical but a mental battle

Keep in mind Coyote dealt with defeat *everyday* and sometimes several times per day and that tends to play on one's mind, and that is where most of our battles rage.

Coyote tried to handle things on his own.

No matter how many times he failed he still depended on his wit and will to win the battle

But Coyote was far too proud (and stubborn) to seek help.

This was his battle and he would win it on his own.

I can relate

I am sure in the beginning ole Coyote thought this was no big battle

The "no big battle" theory does nothing but add confidence in our own strength.

The good news is that there is a way to turn your mourning into dancing and your sorrow into joy and there is a way to move from the victim to the victor!

David relied on God to go from victim to victor!

And so must we!

Psalm 42:1-2

¹As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

No matter the situation or circumstance, David pursued God.

We need to do the same

Psalm 18 is believed to have been written near the end of David's life.

He was reflecting on all he had been through, on all he had experienced.

In so doing, he wanted everyone to know where his strength came from.

2 Samuel records the time of David's rule as king. And 2 Samuel 22 has almost the same thing as Psalm 18

2 Samuel 22:2-7

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;

³ my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation.

He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—
from violent people you save me.

⁴"I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and have been saved from my enemies.

⁵The waves of death swirled about me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

⁶The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.

⁷"In my distress I called to the LORD;
I called out to my God.

From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came to his ears.

In both Psalm 18 & 2 Samuel 22, David characterizes God's care with 5 military symbols:

- ROCK – that can't be moved by any who would harm us
- FORTRESS – a place of safety where the enemy can't follow
- SHIELD – that comes between us and harm
- HORN of Salvation – a symbol of power and might
- STRONGHOLD – high above our enemies

If you need protection, look to God.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of Psalm 18, verses 4-5

⁴The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

⁵The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.

But by the end of Psalm 18, verses 47-48

⁴⁷He is the God who avenges me,
who subdues nations under me,
⁴⁸ who saves me from my enemies.

You exalted me above my foes;
from a violent man you rescued me.

David wants everyone to know where his salvation comes from: God and God alone.

One of the greatest hymns of the church is one written by August Toplady who was a pastor in England in 1763. Toplady was traveling in a deep gorge of Burrington Combe in Mendip Hills when a ferocious storm settled in on him.

He managed to find a spot that was just a shelf under a very large rock, but it provided him shelter for the evening as the storm raged about him. While there, he wrote the song, "Rock of Ages"