

Psalm 18 – John Karmelich

1. Well, I wanted to tackle these psalms at a faster pace than one per week, or else I worry that we will be studying these psalms for years. However, this one has 50 verses, so I figure that is enough for one lesson. Besides I have enough to say here to fill up this one lesson.
2. With that scary thought in mind, let me tell you about Psalm 18. It is a "reflective" psalm. What I mean by that is David wrote it to reflect how God has been guiding him all of his life. The psalm is in effect, David reminding himself how God has seen him through all of his problems and now David is expressing his gratitude to God.
 - a) OK John, good for David. What about us? The answer is that there are times in our life where we should stop and contemplate everything God has done for us. It is to remember that "God has gotten me this far so therefore, I shouldn't worry about today's problems or tomorrow's problems." That last sentence is in effect, my title for this lesson.
 - b) What I found interesting is that even before I started to read Psalm 18, God got me in the mood (for the lack of a better word) to contemplate my life as a Christian so far.
 - i) I officially dedicated serving God seventeen years ago. For those of you reading this, your time frame could be "seventeen minutes" or many more years than I can contemplate following God. As I mentioned in the last lesson, all of us who are saved can look back at all of our lives and realize that God has had His "hands" on us all of our lives despite any and all years prior to dedicating our lives to Him.
 - ii) I have met Christians who have been following Him since childhood. I also know people who have dedicated their lives to Christ very late in the "game". Both types of people are saved and should live the remainder of our lives making a difference for God. The question is not "How long have you been saved?" The question is what are we doing with our life now to make a difference for Him?
 - iii) That is the point of this lesson: Not to recall David's life and learn how God has protected him all of his life. It is to remind ourselves how God has had his hand over our lives and know that He will see us through to the end.
3. This leads me to deal with the issue of weaknesses. I tend to worry about money and having enough to provide for my family. There are times when I feel guilty that I am not doing enough especially when business is slow. For you the reader, the issue may be the same or something entirely different. The point is: If God has gotten us "this far", why do we worry about today's problems or tomorrow's possible problems when God has successfully gotten us this far?
 - a) Let me put it this way: We are alive right? We are reading this right? Well, if God has gotten us this far, what makes you or I think God will abandon us today or tomorrow? If God has guided our life "this much" so far, why do we worry about today's problems? If God has gotten us through yesterday's problems, why do we worry about today's issues?
 - b) Let me try this one more way: Let's say we are not worried about anything particular at the moment. Why should I study or pray this psalm? How can I relate to it? The point of a "reflective" psalm to give us reasons to be grateful to God. It is a time to recall all of the good things God has done for you. It is in effect a time to count our blessings.
 - c) Let's say we can't for the moment think of anything to be grateful for. If that is the case, start with something simple. If you can't do that right now, just simply say, "Thank You" for the fact we are still alive and breathing. The point is to start at what level "we are at" and show gratitude to God for that.
 - d) The purpose of this psalm is to realize how much God has gotten us through so we can appreciate Him more and more through our life. What that does in effect is get our focus off of "us" and onto Him, and that is always a good thing.

4. Let me add one more thought before I begin the actual text.
 - a) As I read through this psalm, I kept thinking about it from three perspectives:
 - i) First, I see a lot of this as it fits David's life. Since David wrote it, it would be logical as he is recalling his own experiences.
 - ii) Second, I saw a lot of it fitting Jesus. I'll point those out as we go and it is important to remember that description of Jesus' life and purpose are woven all through the psalms and it is noticeable in this psalm.
 - iii) Finally, the tricky part is figuring out how it affects us. Since "how the bible affect us" is the primary purpose for these studies, that will be my main emphasis.
5. Psalm 50, introduction: For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He 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.
 - a) Smarter people than me state that David probably wrote this psalm sometime when he was king of Israel. At this point David is no longer on the run from King Saul, nor is he busy fighting one of the other "tribes" who live in that area. By this point in his life he has lead a lot of armies into battle and won. He realizes how grateful he is to be alive and is giving thanks to God.
 - i) In other words, David can write about God's protection because David is not busy fighting anyone at the moment.
 - b) Notice David calls himself "the servant of the LORD". Remember that in this English translation of the bible, when the word "LORD" is often all in capitals. It is a reminder that it is describing the most holy name of God, which usually is called "Jehovah". That word "Jehovah" literally means, "I am that I am".
 - i) My point is that David does not call himself "The King of Israel" nor does he call himself "The guy who won all of those battles over His enemies". Instead, David calls himself "The servant of the LORD".
 - ii) All right you may say, I have never lead an army into battle. I never had a king try to kill me. I have never been as "blessed as David". Why should I call myself the "servant of the LORD" since God has never done great things for me?
 - a) The answer that is to realize God has done great things for you and me. We may never had to fight for our lives, but we did have the privilege of being called by God and hopefully we have accepted that call. If we do believe that Jesus died for our sins and we are living for Christ, then we too have the privilege (not the requirement, but the privilege) of calling ourselves the "servant of the LORD".
 - b) In other words we don't have to do some great deed before we can call ourselves God's servant. We just have to be willing to think and live that way with our lives. It does not matter how much or how little we have done for God so far in our lives. What matters is we are willing to think of ourselves as God's servant and we make ourselves available to serve Him.
 - c) If we do that, we too are on equal status with David in heaven.
 - iii) It occurred to me the other day that I would actually get to meet David in heaven. Not because of any great deed that I did. It is because I too, have equal status with David as one of God's servants and all of His servants will spend eternity together.
 - iv) Ok, John, there are multitudes of people that are saved. What makes you or me so special that we get to meet David? How long is eternity? I would think it would take an eternity just to know all the people who are saved. I figure sooner or later in heaven, I will have the privilege of meeting all other servants of God.
 - c) OK, two pages down, and I haven't even gotten to Verse 1 yet. With 50 verses to go, I better pick up the pace.

6. Verse 1: I love you, O LORD, my strength.
- a) Remember that David said he was a servant of God in the introduction. To be a servant means that we always (yes always) do what our "master" wants us to do.
 - i) That does not just include times when we are doing "Christian things". It also includes when we are just "playing" or say, working. It does not mean we have to think about God every moment of the day. It means we care about pleasing God and that should affect every aspect of our lives.
 - b) That is what David means by loving God "his strength". It means that David is giving God the credit for being the source of his strength to win the battles David has won.
 - i) In other words, David won't even give himself the credit for his battle strength.
 - c) I suspect David wrote this before his famous affair with Bathsheba. If not, I'm sure David "sinned again" many times between the time he wrote this psalm and the time he died.
 - i) If that is true, how can David say he loves God, who is his strength? If David loves God that much, how can he sin? The answer is not about being perfect. The answer is to care about pleasing God and letting that affect every aspect of our lives. When we sin and we realize we sin, we confess it and bring it to God. That too, is loving Him who is our strength.
7. Verse 2: The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- a) I grew up in a suburb of a large city. I always had a difficult time relating to God as my rock. If one lived in Israel, like David did, I suspect "rock" is second nature. David spent years on the run from King Saul and that meant a lot of time hiding behind big rocks and in caves. One can see how David compares God to a big rock, in that those rocks were his protection from being killed.
 - b) When you read "rock" in the bible, one should not think of something one can put in one's hands. One should think of a really big rock that is immovable. Just as God is something big (as in much bigger than us), it is something "big" David could trust in.
 - c) The idea of comparing God to a "big rock" is an analogy that is commonly used in the Old Testament. If one studies the use of the word "rock" all through the bible, one can see the comparison to "something" that followed and protected the Israelites through their years.
 - i) Even Paul himself picked up on that analogy and said that the "rock" that followed the Israelites through the years they wandered in the desert speaks of Christ. (See 1st Corinthians 10:4 on that point.)
 - ii) My point here is simply to get us used to the idea of comparing God to a rock.
 - iii) It does not mean God is as "mindless" as a rock. It is just an analogy to say in effect God is always there, just as a huge rock cannot be moved. Just as David could hide in a cave of a rock, so we can run to God for protection.
 - d) This verse uses three other analogies to describe God: It says that God is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
 - i) Let's start with shield. We don't regularly think of God as a shield to protect us, the same way ancient armies carried shields in front of them. The idea is we want God to protect us from whatever comes our way. As usual, it does not mean we can pray for God's protection and then go injury free the rest of our lives.
 - a) It does mean that life would be a lot worse if we don't pray for God's protection. Sometimes we need to thank God from the things He has rescued us from and protected us from, even when we don't realize it.
 - b) The simple fact that we are alive and able to read this study means that God has protected us long enough to be alive and reading at this moment.
 - c) If we have nothing else we can think of to be grateful for, we can and should stop to thank God for how He has protected us.

- ii) Next we have "horn". Living in the Middle East in David's day, an animal's horn represented their strength (as in ramming ability). To compare God to a horn is simply a reminder of God's strength can be used to protect us.
 - iii) Finally we have "stronghold". This comes back to the idea of God being a "place" we can run to mentally for safety. We know we can be safe in that place of prayer.
8. Verse 3: I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.
- a) David like us can call out to God and remember that He is in control of our lives. He is worthy to be praised no matter what our situation is. It's not just a matter of praising God when things are going well, but also praising God when things are "falling apart". It is trusting that God is in control and He will deliver us out of the situation we are in.
 - i) Think of it this way: Without God, what possible help can we draw upon? What can our own strength do or our own resources do without the help of God?
 - ii) OK John, but what about people who are successful without believing in God? Why are they being blessed? The answer is God cares about them and He wants people to realize that their success (whatever that is) comes from Him. If such people don't care about God, then this life is "all they have" so God may as well let them enjoy it while they can.
 - iii) This world is not fair, and never will be. If there was not a God to eventually "make it fair", this world would be a miserable place. That should not stop us from trying to fix the wrongs of our world or to seek God's guidance. My point is life without God is much worse than life depending upon Him.
 - b) The idea of being saved from my enemies does not mean we will physically win every fight we find ourselves involved in. It means that "over the long term", we are going to heaven if we do trust in Jesus' payment for our sins and believe He is God. The idea of "enemies" here not only refers to those who want to hurt us, but those spiritual forces who don't want us to make a difference for God.
9. Verse 4: The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. ⁵ The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. ⁶ In 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.
- a) Whatever David was going through when he wrote this psalm, he truly felt overwhelmed by the battles he was facing. I suspect David wrote this long after the battle he was thinking of, and recalling how God got David through the "impossible".
 - b) I read one commentator (Spurgeon) who said in effect, "Praying to God is about turning the situation around where we go from an "it's all over and we are about to die" situation to where we are dominating our enemies". God and us do make a majority over whatever forces we are facing. Keep that in mind the next time our situation is too overwhelming to consider the possibility of victory.
 - i) Most of us can probably recall situations where we thought, "OK, this is it, I'm going to die and I don't know how I am going to get out of this alive".
 - a) A similar thought might be, "I don't want to go on, my problems are too overwhelming and I don't want to have to face them anymore.
 - ii) That is usually when God reminds us that He is there and we can overcome whatever it is we are facing no matter how bad the situation is, simply by trusting in Him with the outcome of that situation.
 - iii) This is the type of thought David was recalling in these verses.

- c) The last sentence in Verse 9 says how God heard David from his temple and that David's cry for help came into God's ears.
- i) This does not mean God was unaware of David's situation until he prayed.
 - ii) It just means that once David prayed, he realized God did react as if God just became aware of the situation. Often God will not act in a situation until we invoke His help in prayer. It is God's way of getting us to focus upon Him.
 - iii) Are there exceptions to the rule that "God only works after we pray to Him"? Of course there is. We don't know how God is working in the background of our lives. We don't understand why God physically rescues some, but not all. In short, "He is God and we are not" so we are not privy to all knowledge.
 - iv) All David knows and all we know is that when we invoke God to get involved in a situation it often appears from our perspective as if God just reacted to the situation and that is what David is describing in these verses.
10. Verse 7: The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. ⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. ⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. ¹⁰ He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.
- a) Are these verses saying that when David prayed to God for help, all of these physical things described here happened such as an earthquake because God was angry? The text says smoke came from God's nostrils and fire came from his mouth. I can go on from here, but one can get the idea from reading the text.
 - i) Does this mean that David physically saw God and that is how He appeared to David? I doubt David ever saw God any more than you or I. If that is true, what is David describing in these verses? Did David just have a weird dream about God and this is what came out in the verses? ☹ I don't think so.
 - b) Of course we have to remember that we are reading poetry. Still, why would David use this vivid image of "anger" appearing and helping David?
 - i) The idea is not that literally God has smoke and fire coming out of Him. The idea is that God does care for our lives and God reacts to our prayer requests for help as if He is this "figure" that can physically demonstrate anger through smoke and fire and come down to earth on the wings of an angel.
 - ii) From David's perspective, I suspect that David prayed right before some battle occurred, and David and the Israelites won the battle as if an "Angry God" came out of the sky and wiped out the enemy. It is as if to say, "The enemies I faced never stood a chance as if God was angry, came out of the sky and won for me!"
 - c) OK John good for David. How does this affect me? I've never seen an angry God fly out of the sky to protect me when things were going terribly wrong.
 - i) For all we know, God did react to the ways we were attacked. The imagery David is portraying is trying to show us just how much God cares for our lives and cares for helping those who seek Him in prayer.
 - ii) OK, what about those who are Christians who have died horrible deaths? Where was this "fierce and angry God" in those situations? For all we know, the way God may have rescued them is through death. One has to remember that for the Christian, the next life does represent the ultimate victory.
 - a) For others, I have seen many situations where when things appear to be "impossible" in that there is no good way out of a situation, I have seen God react as if He was some "angry entity coming out of the sky" as described here in these verses.
 - d) To summarize the verses, think of them not so much as physically accurate, but think that God is capable of rescuing us out of any possible situation not because we deserve His help, but just because He cares about those who call upon His name.

11. Verse 11: He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him-- the dark rain clouds of the sky. ¹² Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning. ¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. ¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered the enemies, great bolts of lightning and routed them. ¹⁵ The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.
- a) Just when you think David could not be more vivid in his description of God, the verses get even stranger. ☺ These verses are not describing what David literally saw. They are describing how God worked in the background of David's life. David is trying to paint a vivid picture for us how it appeared God worked to defeat his enemies.
 - b) OK John, I am not involved in physical warfare at this time, and don't start up with all that "spiritual warfare" stuff again, ☺ as I already get that. Why is this important?
 - i) First one can read this as describing the ultimate judgment of those who refuse to turn to Him. God saying in effect, "You don't want Me to rule over your life, let Me describe to you how you will eternally suffer for that decision."
 - ii) OK John, I get that part too. How this affects my life? The important part is God rescued David in way that appears as if He was angry at David's enemies. God cares for us and is willing to help us get through whatever we are dealing with.
 - iii) What I am saying is no problem is too big that God cannot handle and no problem is too small that God is not willing to get involved and deal with. I am saying that just as David trusted God to get him through all of those physical battles, so we can trust God to get us through our own battles in life.
 - c) All of this sounds wonderful in theory. I've never experienced God working in any way comparable to how David is describing God in these verses. How do I know any of this is true for me? It is to realize that God is angry at injustice in the world. While we may never see God physically react like this, we have to accept the fact that just as God is a loving god, so is He also a god of justice of the "wrongs" of this world.
12. Verse 16: He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. ¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. ¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. ¹⁹ He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.
- a) I want you to think about the following scenario. Picture a physical battle say, between hundreds or thousands of men. Visualize David leading the charge in this battle. Do you think God physically moved David to a place of safety? Do you think God killed the enemies of Israel while the Israelite soldiers just stood there watching? Of course not.
 - i) Does that mean our side will automatically win battles just because we call on God for victory? No. Remember that it is God's business whether or not our side will win and it is up to Him and not us. It does mean that if we pray, we "cannot lose" no matter what happens in the actual battle.
 - ii) Speaking of warfare, what about when there are good Christians on both sides of the battle? In those situations, it is up to God to show us who is right and who is wrong in the issues through that battle.
 - b) OK, enough about warfare. ☺ Let's say my situation has nothing to do with warfare. Why should I think about this psalm?
 - i) The answer is although we may not be in actual warfare our life is "like" warfare in that we are battling both physical and spiritual enemies. We can trust in God to rescue us through those situations if we call upon Him to help us.
 - ii) The point is after our battles are over and we are at a place of rest, we can look back and realize how God got us through those difficult times in our lives. The other point is if we realize how God got us through the "past", why are we doubting in God's desire to get us through our present or future issues?

13. Verse 20: The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. ²¹ For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. ²² All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. ²³ I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. ²⁴ The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
- a) I stated back in the introduction that one can read these verses as being about Jesus, about David or about us. I bring that up here as one can see these verses as being about Jesus was "blameless" in that he was free of sin. (See Hebrews 4:15.)
 - i) The easy part is seeing Jesus that way. The trick is seeing David or us that way.
 - ii) In other words, how can David say he has never turned from God's laws and how can David say he has kept himself from sin? Isn't this the David who had an affair and had the husband killed of the woman he was sleeping with? Even if that affair came after this psalm, David still married multiple woman which in the law is forbidden for kings to do, and David knew from childhood he was to be a king.
 - b) My question is how can David consider himself "blameless" as in being perfect. Was David describing himself, or was David describing the coming Messiah?
 - i) I'm so glad you asked that question. ☺ The point for David and for us Christians is that David was blameless because He understood the concept of being perfectly forgiven by God. Just as you and I look back to the cross to make us perfectly forgiven, I think David looked forward to the cross for the same reason.
 - c) OK John, you claim that David understood the idea of being perfectly forgiven (or at least had some concept of the idea that He was perfectly forgiven through a future Messiah). If that is true, why does Verse 22 talk about David keeping all of God's laws?
 - i) This gets back to the idea that once God has forgiven our sins, we are not "free" to ignore God. The idea of Christianity is that we are rescued from being a slave to sin and then we should turn around and offer ourselves as slaves to God. That doesn't mean we walk around in chains looking to God's instructions. ☺ It means we give our best effort to please God, not because we have to, but because we want to. We want to obey God's laws not by "trying to", but by letting God work through us, to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) As I've stated, the key to obeying the law is not by trying harder, but by letting God work through us. The times we are most obedient is not when we are straining to obey God, but when we are just trusting that God is working in our lives and we let Him work through us to make a difference for Him.
 - iii) Confused? The idea is to focus on God through His word and prayer, and then "just watch" how God is working to make us better people. Does that mean we are perfect? No. It does mean God can and does work through our lives.
 - iv) It also means we can look back at our lives as Christians and see how God has rescued us through past situations just as David can in this psalm. We can see how God had a hand on our lives through all we have been through. More importantly, we can trust God to get us through the present "crisis of the moment" just as He has gotten us through our life so far.
 - v) On that happy note, I can move on to the next verse.
14. Verse 25: To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, ²⁶ to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd. ²⁷ You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
- a) These three verses read as if they were saying we have to be "as good as God". They say that because God is faithful to those of us who are faithful and He is blameless if we are blameless. It also says that to the crooked (i.e., thieves) God is "shrewd to them".
 - i) Verse 27 says in effect that God saves those who humble themselves before Him as opposed to those who choose to rebel against God with their lives.

- b) So are these verses saying one has to be perfect? Hardly. A better way of understanding them is to say in effect, "When we trust that God is there working, He does reveal himself in our lives. This verse has nothing to do with being perfect or even having doubts. It is about living a life of trusting in Him and God finds a way to "reveal" Himself to us.
 - i) OK, what does that mean practically? Does that mean if we keep trusting in God, we can count on Him to say, work in our life the way we want Him to? No. It means that God is faithful to keep His promises to those who are faithful to Him.
 - ii) It means we are saved if we believe in His plan of salvation. It means that we can trust in God to get us through whatever we are dealing with at this time.
 - iii) Let's back up for a minute and remember the purpose of this psalm. It is to remind us that God has been faithful to love us and care for us through the past, and we can continue to trust in Him to be faithful through the present and future.
 - c) This psalm also puts a curse on those who don't trust in God. The last part says to those who cheat and steal, God reveals himself in a way that is shrewd. What does that mean?
 - i) I describe this concept that one cannot "outwit" God to get away with things.
 - ii) Those who cheat their ways through life will get caught or eventually punished because you can't get away with anything with God. It means there is punishment for those who refuse to turn to God whether such people realize it or not.
 - iii) At the worst, such people only get rewarded in this lifetime.
 - d) John, if all of this is true, why don't I wait until I'm ready to die in order to serve God?
 - i) The first answer is we may not get that chance. We can die suddenly and not get a chance to repent of one's sins.
 - ii) The second answer is living for God "now" is the best way to live. Obedience to God has benefits in this life as well as the next. We all need to remind ourselves of constantly as our "human nature" desires to do things our way (versus God's way).
 - e) I was thinking why God had Adam and Eve avoid eating from a specific fruit tree as a sole example for obedience. I was thinking that the underlying point is that if we can't be trusted in the "simple things", than how can we trust God through the more complicated things? If we are willing to rebel over a piece of fruit, we would rebel over anything.
 - i) To keep our focus on God requires us to constantly remind ourselves that He is there and He is faithful. The problem is not a perfect God, it is the "imperfect us" who are prone to rebel. The purpose of these two verses and this psalm is to remember that God is there, He has been faithful to us and He will continue to be faithful to us. Despite our imperfect (sinful) nature, all we have to do is regularly remind ourselves that God is there and wants to work in our lives.
15. Verse 28: You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. ²⁹ With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.
- a) Verse 28 says God "keeps my lamp burning". So does that mean God somehow keeps our lights going? No. ☺ It is talking about our inner "light" of trusting in Him.
 - b) Jesus described our relationship to God as being like a light. (See Matthew 5:14 as an example.) It refers to our ability to trust in God.
 - i) Think of it this way: Before we were born again, did we really care about pleasing God? It is as if a "light went on inside of us" that all of this God stuff is real.
 - ii) The same way one can use one candle to light another, so our "light" can spread from one person to another.
 - iii) Ok, so our relationship with God is like an interior light. What do we do with that bit of information? We trust in the source of that light to keep it lighted. That is what David is getting at in this verse. The way we keep that interior light "lit" is to keep on trusting in God and reminding ourselves of how God is continuing to work in our lives. (I would say that ties well to my theme for this psalm. ☺)

- c) This leads us to Verse 29. It says with God's help we can advance against a troop of soldiers who want to attack us or with God's help we can scale (climb over) a wall.
 - i) One has to remember that David led armies, so he likes to use examples that fit his life. In order to conquer cities, David had to climb over walls.
 - ii) So, does this mean if I am a soldier I will win every battle if I trust in God? The outcome of any battle is God's problem. What David is talking about is having the strength to "move forward" and do what we are commanded to do. In other words, it is not about trusting in our own strength, but God's strength in order for us to accomplish what we need to accomplish.
 - iii) What if I'm not a soldier. Then think of your own example of things we would like to accomplish. The point is God wants to give us the physical strength to make a difference for Him in however we are called to make a difference for Him.
 - a) It can apply to an athlete or a housewife. It can apply to someone in a hospital bed. The point is we still have to train for what we need to do, but at the time of the "action" we need to trust God to get us through what God wants to accomplish through us. That is the point of this verse.
16. Verse 30: As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. ³¹ For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God?
- a) These verses say in effect, "God is perfect and we are not". Verse 31 then says that there is no god other than the true God. OK, why remind ourselves of that fact here and now?
 - i) The problem is not God, the problem is us. It is so easy for us to get our focus on our problems and off of God. We need to constantly remind ourselves not only that God is there, but that He is perfect in His ways and He cares for us.
 - b) So how does reminding ourselves of God being perfect help with our situation?
 - i) The point is we may think, "I know God is there and I know that He is perfect. The problem is I can't trust Him to do things the way I want to do them."
 - ii) The problem is He may not choose to help me the way I want to be helped.
 - a) Think about that last point and realize how our ego's get in the way. The problem is we want to do things "our way on our timing". We see that army in front of us or that huge obstacle in front of us and we think in effect, "Why should I stop and consider God now, I have this real problem right in front of me that I have to tackle "head on"?"
 - b) In other words, how do I know God will come through if I pray to Him? The answer is to read these two verses again. He is perfect and flawless. He is a "rock" to those who trust in Him.
 - c) I don't know how God is going to get you or me through the situation of the moment. I just know that He does give us the strength to get through if we are willing to "let go" in the sense of trusting Him and not ourselves.
17. Verse 32: It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. ³³ He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. ³⁴ He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. ³⁵ You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great. ³⁶ You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn.
- a) Well, after my big "Just trust God and go forward speech before Verse 32", the next five verses give examples of how God can work in our lives.
 - b) To paraphrase these verses, it is God who gives me the strength to face what I have to face. It is God who gives me the victory before the action even begins. It is God who is going to get me through what I have to face as opposed to my own strength.

- c) To repeat a key point, we still have to prepare for whatever we have to face. A soldier still has to train to learn to fight. We still have to learn how to deal with whatever we have to deal with, but it is God who actually gets us through a situation.
 - d) Going back to the concept of those of us who have been a Christian awhile, most of us can now easily look back at the past and see how God has gotten us through a lot of things.
 - i) Don't take that fact lightly. You would be amazed how many people are out there who never give God the credit for getting them through life. The point again is that if God has gotten us through the past, why are we doubting in His ability to get us through some present or future situation? The answer is we are focusing on the very real issue of whatever is in front of us and not God.
 - e) Hey John, isn't this psalm getting repetitive at this point? Aren't we in effect covering the same ground more than once? Shouldn't this psalm be a little shorter? ☺
 - i) The problem isn't the length of this psalm. The problem is the length of our memory. We need to constantly remind ourselves that "God is there" or else we tend to get our focus on the wrong thing. This psalm is repetitive is that it is us, not God that need to constantly remind ourselves of God's truth.
 - ii) Think of it as repeating a desired goal over and over until we accomplish that goal.
18. Verse 37: I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed.
³⁸ I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet.
- a) Well, these verses sound promising. One gets the impression that David wrote them after some great battle victory where he literally destroyed his enemies completely.
 - b) Among my opening comments, I stated that one can read these psalms as being either about David, about Jesus or about our own lives. Let me focus for the moment on how these verses tie to Jesus. Remember that one cannot read the Psalms (or any book of the bible) without seeing Jesus "all over the place". These verses are no exception to that rule.
 - i) One can easily see these verses as describing Jesus' ultimate victory over the demonic forces that control our planet. Satan once tempted Jesus by saying he will give Jesus "this world". (See Matthew 4:8 or Luke 4:5). Well, Jesus would not have been truly tempted Santa did not own (control) this world.
 - ii) OK John, now you've lost me again. My point is this world (and all we can comprehend) is permanently corrupted by sin. The only way out of this problem is to accept Jesus payment for how sin has affected our life. Still, after Jesus has collected those who have accepted that payment. There has to come a day of reckoning for the rest of the world. My whole point here is one can read the last section of this psalm as describing Jesus ultimate and complete victory over sin and the damage done by sin.
 - iii) And this affects me how? ☺ It is important for us to realize that God will rule over the world, either by choice (what we choose) or by force. These verses are describing those who challenge God's authority, and what is their outcome.
 - c) OK John, in a strange sort of way, I sort of get all of this. I understand how these verses could be describing David's victory over his enemies and I can understand how they are describing Jesus' ultimate past, present and future victory over those who choose to rebel against Him. How does any of this affect my life and my problems today?
 - i) So glad you asked. The truth is if we trust that Jesus will have the ultimate victory over sin and we realize how trusting in Jesus has gotten us "this far" in life, stop and think why we all (me included) have doubts and worries about how we are going to get through our problems of the moment.
 - ii) Stopping to contemplate "big picture" ideas such as Jesus conquering all who rebel against Him help us to realize that if Jesus is capable and willing to do that, then He is also capable and willing to help us through our current situations.
 - iii) OK, eleven more verses to go. We are going to make it. ☺

19. Verse 39: You armed me with strength for battle; you made my adversaries bow at my feet. ⁴⁰You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes. ⁴¹ They cried for help, but there was no one to save them-- to the LORD, but he did not answer. ⁴² I beat them as fine as dust borne on the wind; I poured them out like mud in the streets.
- a) Verse 39 says God gave me strength for the battle and made my adversaries (enemies) bow at my feet. OK, John by now I sort of get the idea how David won his battles by trusting in God, but how does this help me? I'm not at war with anyone right now.
 - i) Well, I can go into a whole lecture here about how these verses tie to Jesus, but as I stated not too long ago, the purpose of these lessons is to teach how they apply to our live "today". With that said, let me go to that point:
 - ii) For example, Verse 40 says You (being God) made my enemies turn back so I (David could defeat them.). Yes I understand how David believed he won with God's strength. How does that apply to my present problems and struggles?
 - iii) Let's start with prayer. It's hard for us to visualize the fact that we can win over any battle we face by the power of prayer. It's hard for us to think that we can overcome any obstacle we face or the outcome of any situation we are in can be dramatically changed by prayer. The point is, prayer can do that and does.
 - b) Let me pause here and appeal to the "veteran Christian". Stop and consider all of the predicaments we have been in, where we were positive there was no way out of that situation "alive" or, say costing us everything we have. Stop and think how we have survived through all of our "stuff" and think how any of it was possible without our prayers to God or else someone else who was praying for us.
 - c) Sometimes I worry that I am wasting my time praying for a lot of unsaved people by name and I'm not making a difference for the "saved" people I pray for. What they or we may not realize is just how much of a difference those prayers are making "behind the scenes" of what could have happened without those prayers.
 - d) OK John, how do I know my prayers are making this kind of difference? How do I know it was not just "random luck" or my skill that got me through a situation?
 - i) The answer is we give ourselves too much credit. We all know how "bad" we really are inside of us. Stop and think, is it really possible that you or I got through all of "that" by random luck or my strength? Once we realize how ridiculous that thought is, the only other solution is giving God the credit.
 - ii) OK John, so God did it. Why do I have to go "on and on" thanking Him? We don't. We just need to give God the credit and then realize that going forward is not possible without His help in our lives.
 - e) I just went back to reread these verses to make sure I didn't miss anything important. I could share with you commentaries that explain what David literally did to His enemies. What is important for us is to know that we can trust God and just as He has given us victories in the past, we can trust Him to give us victories in the present and the future.
20. Verse 43: You have delivered me from the attacks of the people; you have made me the head of nations; people I did not know are subject to me. ⁴⁴ As soon as they hear me, they obey me; foreigners cringe before me. ⁴⁵ They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds.
- a) Once again, we can read these verses about David's literal victories over his enemies. There have been historical times where those enemies who have survived their battles with David's armies (or their families) had to become subject to David due to his victories. One can read these verses about David giving God the credit for such victories.
 - i) Well that is interesting ancient history, but it is just that.
 - ii) Next let's try putting Jesus name instead of David. We know of people who just in effect, "hear of Jesus" and in a "quick sense" become subject to Him. We also understand that God will have the ultimate victory in life and those who refuse to bow down to Him will lose whether they realize it or not.

- b) Again John, I believe all of this. How does this help with my "battles of the moment?"
 - i) It is to realize (hopefully this is sinking in by now) that God does not think of you and me as being any more special than David. If God is willing to see David through all of his battles, He is willing to see us through ours. The point is God gives us the "victories" He intends to give us.
 - ii) There will be times when we feel defeated and God allows those times to teach us things. What we have to remember is we do have the "ultimate" victory when we trust in Him. In the meantime, God will see us through whatever we are dealing with at this time.
21. Verse 46: The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! ⁴⁷ He 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 violent men you rescued me. ⁴⁹ Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O LORD; I will sing praises to your name. ⁵⁰ He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.
- a) There should be times in our live when we stop and realize all we have done for us and we cry out in effect, "God lives, praise be His name forever!". There is a false view that all we do in heaven is sit around all day saying lines like this. While that is not true, at the same time we do spend a lot of time praising Him? Why, isn't saying it once enough? From God's perspective yes. From our perspective, we forget easily.
 - b) Here's the perfect way to end this lesson: If you or I believe God did all of this stuff for David, why do we doubt He can and does the same for us? I don't mean He will lead all of us in a physical battle over other nations. I mean that God will give us victories in our life if we just trust in Him the same way we have trusted Him in the past.
 - c) If we can get through our "life to date", what makes us think God is going to "stop now" and say in effect, "OK kid, you are now on your own, start worrying!" Of course that is not true, but we still worry. Instead we should be praising God the same way David did at the end of this psalm. David realizes how God got him through "life to date" and it got David to praise God for how He will continue to work through Israel and the world.
 - d) David understood that it was not just "all about him" and the purpose of this prayer is not to lift up God because of David's life, but because of what He can do in the life of anyone and everyone who is willing to trust in Him with their life.
22. On that happy note, let's give some thanks to God in a closing prayer: Father, thank You for how You have lead us through life to date. We don't know all that is happening "behind the curtains" but we do know that we are still alive at this moment and have the opportunity to worship You as God. Help us to appreciate all the victories You have given us in our lives and realize that You will be there in the future through all the victories "in the future". Help us to not only praise You for what You have done, but praise You "now" for what You will do in our life simply because we do trust in You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.