

God the Sovereign Savior

Psalm 18:1-2

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David The Servant of the Lord, Who Spoke to the Lord The Words of This Song on the Day that the Lord Delivered Him from the Hand of All His Enemies and from the Hand of Saul. And He Said:

¹ I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

*² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

This wonderful Psalm has several unique and memorable characteristics. The first that we notice is that this Psalm has one of the longest “introductions” present in any of the 150 Psalms in the Book. We see the phrase “To the chief Musician” in 56 different places in the OT; 55 of them in the introductions to various Psalms and one other place, and that is Habakkuk 3:19:

*¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer’s feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.*

To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

Another noticeable characteristic is that verse 1 of the Psalm is one of the “shortest” verse in the entire Psalms:

¹ I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

The concept of “...loving the Lord” is one of David’s favorite and most mentioned topics. The two words “love” and Lord are tied together in 18 different verses throughout the Book; either in the form of God loving us, or men (often David) loving God.

This last idea is what we see here in Psalm 18. David declares here in verse 1 - “I will love You, O Lord, my strength”. The verb “love” here is interesting to think through. The meaning is not that which we often think of as romantic love or affection. It is actually closer to the love for children or perhaps close friends. We should also see that it is a very active word, referring not merely to a thing “felt” but to the affection that causes action. We don’t just “feel” this kind of love, but we “do” this kind of loving. Now, we remember quickly, that there is a compassion or “kind affection” involved, but is not a mooning kind of affection, but a doing kind. With the “love” present we cannot “not” do what it demands to be done to demonstrate it.

One interesting added idea is that it is a love that can be done in “degrees”. David says that he will love God “with all of his heart”. The implication here is

there is the possibility of doing less than that, and that, perhaps, the “less” refers to what may indeed be the normal state of David’s love for God. This is not to say that David’s normal condition was some weaker degree of love. Rather it is to say that David recognized that he could work hard and even desperately to love God in a way that was appropriate and suitable to God, the One who was the object of that love.

There is nothing wrong with us recognizing that there is “more” possible to the “strength” with which we are actively “loving” our heavenly Father. David treats God in a very personal way. I will love “you” Lord, etc. You is a common personal pronoun in Hebrew (as it is common in most languages). Though the word is a masculine pronoun, there is no implication that it speaks of “males” and that thus it implies that God is male. We understand from many, many Scriptures that God is neither male nor female. This is not to imply that He is both by any means. It means that He is not limited to a single human type. He created us “male and female” both in the image of God. The implication is two-fold: We together (male and female) form a reasonable likeness of the fullness of God.

No man, and no woman personify God in his entirety. The OT (and the NT) refer to God using male terms in a relational fashion, to specifically him as male. God is utterly holy. The word holy is used to underscore this for. God is totally “other” (the basic meaning of the word “holy”). He is neither, but we as His creation were created in His image. This is a wonderful and deep, deep truth for us to ponder.

It is little wonder that David purposes here to “*love You, O LORD, my strength*”. It is interesting that the “loving” God seems to be tied to the action or quality of God as David’s “strength”. Lord (as we see because of the use of all caps in the instance here of His Name) is YAHWEH. This is what speaks of the proper name for God in the OT. It is used more than 6500 times throughout the entire OT and speaks as the Proper Name of the One True and Living God. In the life and walk of the OT peoples, the word went unspoken in order to pay it proper reverence. The word literally means “the Living One”.

The combination of the two ideas tells us that it is the Person of God as He is revealed as One True and Living God and that is what defines Him to David as “strength”. “O Lord” is in the form of what is called an Absolute in the Hebrew which ties the word to a specific object or person. The idea is that David is declaring his devotion, his dedication to YAHWEH, his God. It is He Whom David loves and it is He Whom David will seek to love even more and Whom he relies upon as the One to Whom he looks for strengthening. Actually, David uses the noun form of the stem here and so it means to BE strong, not necessarily to get strong or be strengthened. Yahweh IS David’s strength is what he is saying here.

We just want to think through the idea that Even though it is true that God is he who makes us strong in a progressive sense, this is not what David is saying and thus is NOT what we need to take from this first verse in the passage.

David wants us to know that Yahweh **IS** his strength. We can understand this in at least two senses:

1. First, He is David's strength is the present tense. Whatever difficulty David comes up against, It is God to Whom he turns and relies upon to uphold him through it.
2. Second, we can look at it in a sort of future tense. As God is his strength now (and historically) David can rely on on Him to be that same strength again and again.

We can really combine those two together can't we?!! In a very real and forward looking sense every believer must take and rely on the power and enablement of God to be for us and do for us that which is honoring and glorifying to our God and Master. As we submit to Him and live in HIS fashion, we both develop and learn the skills and abilities that God wishes us to have for the coming battles that await us.

David was one, at this point in his life at least, who knew how life as one of God's people progress and moved over time as life took its' course. As that time had moved along and good mixed with bad, David had developed the ability to be strong in the Lord as God enabled him to stand in HIS (God's) strength. Time and again in the Psalms we read of David calling out to God for help in the midst of trouble and of David thanking and praising God for His aid and enablement as his enemies beset him from all sides.

¹ I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

What we are reading here in verse 1 is a statement that can be understood and both a statement of purpose and an ordering of what it is that enables him to continue in that strength. David wanted his readers to be know and to be sure of what it was that enabled him to walk with surety before the Lord.

David's intent was for us to understand that it was the LORD who WAS his strength, not the One Who gave him strength. As we said, God surely did give him strength. But there is a subtle difference between strength given and strength relied upon. It seems as though it was important to David that all of us know the difference. We might conclude that this is the main reason that David included this statement here in Psalm 18. Of course, he wrote because God directed and inspired him to write it.

We note also the modifying words David used here to augment our understanding of just what it is he is saying. He speaks of God as "my rock and my fortress and my deliverer".

"Rock" speaks of a crag, a cliff, or of a large rock. In a general sense it can speak of a crag or a cliff. Obviously it points to a stronghold of Jehovah, and thus of the idea of security (in a figurative sense). Building on this "rock" idea is the word "fortress" which pointed attention to a mountain stronghold which would largely have been constructed in a cleft of a rocky outcropping and designed for maximum protection against any attacking force.

Just to take the idea of God and His provision a bit further David declares that God is also his “deliverer”. Building on the prior two words, a rock and a fortress and taking along with it the concept that these provide safety from attacking forces, David concludes that God is also the One Who, ultimately, will rescue or provide escape from whatever the attacking force is.

*² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalm 18:2)*

We can see that David then restates what he said earlier about his God. This time, where he had used the Name “YAHWEH” to refer to God, here he uses the term “Eli”, an abbreviated form of “Elohim” which refers to God in a very reverent but general sense, speaking of the fact that He is the Mighty or Powerful One. This seems appropriate given that David has just spoken of Him as his “Rock, Fortress and Deliverer” with all that those Names imply. Here he reviews the truth that God IS his strength by addressing God in a personal fashion... “*My God, my strength...*”. He intends the use of “my strength” to identify God in the same fashion as earlier. He is not saying that God will provide him with strength. Rather, he takes the idea that God, and all that He is, IS his strength and so, because this is true, He says there is a “natural result” and leads in to say he “will trust” in Him. “Trust” here speaks of resting in the ability of the object of the statement (here - the Lord) to actually do what the verb is claiming.

Also, once again we see what we can refer to as the “imperfect” voice which speaks of a current action that has its’ roots in a past decision or activity. David has, thus, known and has developed his knowledge of his Lord from a past time through until the present and now can rest on what he has come to know of God and “trust” in Him to be what David had come to know to be true of Him over time. What a fabulous testimony and encouragement for us to be pursuing our relationship with the Lord, our God, and developing our understanding and awareness of Who He is and what He is like and will do for His children. It is then that we will be able to say, along with King David, the it is He in Whom WE will trust as well! It is then that he will be, for us, “My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold”. Hallelujah!

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