

Prayers

Opening prayer

Gracious Lord, bless we who are Your people with harmony and peace, so that we become an example of graciousness and sincerity throughout the world. We cannot achieve such goodness by our own efforts, but come amongst us in Your Holy Spirit, so that we may work towards goals that are Yours and be satisfied in this. May Your Kingdom come on earth we pray. AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas *(Alternatives that can broaden the experience of prayer)*

in your prayer time, stand firm against the works of the enemy, who seeks to attack both the good you do and also your good qualities, including your gifts of God by the Holy Spirit. Think about this carefully, and if you can identify you any particular point at which you feel under attack, submit this to God in prayer as a matter of urgency

On-going prayers

- **Pray this week for 'industry'**. Pray for entrepreneurs who are attempting to start new industrial processes and creates jobs for the future. Pray for God inspiration upon innovators, inventors, entrepreneurs, and all those who finance upstarts industries
- Give thanks today for your body, and offer to God in prayer all your illnesses, small as well as great
- Pray today for people who are travelling on long journeys. Pray for safety and pray for God's blessing

Meditation

Lord of Light, shine on our unlit world,
And shatter the cruel darkness of our sinful life!

Lord of Peace, come and dwell among us,
And make us uncomfortable 'till the hungry are fed!

Lord of Hope, open our eyes to Your future,
For it is wonderful, and beyond our wildest dreams!

Lord of Love, comfort all who have been rejected,
Reveal Your extravagant love for all who are lost!

Lord of Wisdom, make yourself heard,
May the logic of salvation defeat all human reckoning!

Lord of Grace, show Your favour to all
And may those who have faith be swept up into Glory!

Bible Study

Bible passage – Psalm 18: 46-50

- ⁴⁶ The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God my Saviour!
- ⁴⁷ He is the God who avenged me,
who made peoples subject to me,
- ⁴⁸ who saved me from my enemies.

You raised me above my foes,
and rescued me from violent men.

⁴⁹ Therefore I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations;
I will sing the praises of your name.

⁵⁰ He gives his king great victories;
he shows unfailing love to his anointed,
to David and his descendants for ever.

Review

It should not surprise us to find words such as this at the end of Psalm 18. The whole Psalm reflects on David's experience of finally defeating his enemy King Saul in battle, so it naturally concludes with a great shout of victory. David cries out to God in praise and thanks (18:46-48), but he ascribes his victory not to his own strength and perseverance, or to the justice of his cause, but to God (18:47f.). Finally, David makes a promise to Almighty God. He says he will continue to praise the God who has saved him, and celebrates His Almighty love and power (18:49,50).

Of all the things David could shout in victory, he cries out *'the Lord lives! Praise be to my rock! Exalted be God my Saviour!'* (18:46). This verse is a wonderful example of praise, and it offers a preacher three points upon which to preach! In this cry, David celebrates God as 'living', 'my rock', and 'my Saviour'. Each one of these attributes is important and can be traced throughout the Bible.

The earliest records of God's people Israel tell us that Moses knew of God as a 'living' God (Deut 5:26), and David himself called out to 'the living God' when shouting out to Goliath in the battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 17:26,36). In later generations, the prophet Jeremiah also speaks of a 'living God' (Jer 10:10, 23:56), as do the prophets Daniel and Hosea (Dan 6:20,26 and Hos 1:10). Most remarkably, when Jesus asks His disciples to say what they think of Him, Peter replies, *'You are the living God'* (Matthew 16:16). Throughout, the Bible testifies that there is only one true living God. All other deities are either made by people in the form of idols, or they are the product of human imagination and aspiration (e.g, the fertility God Ba'al).

It is possible to do a similar Bible study on the idea of God as a 'rock'. This demonstrates God's qualities of steadfastness and strength (Gen 49:24, Deut 32:4,15, 1 Sam 2:2, 2 Sam 22:3,32, Is 17:10 etc.), and Paul writes enigmatically in his first letter to the Corinthians about the *'rock that is Christ'* from which God's people gain spiritual drink. The third quality of God celebrated by David is that he is *'my Saviour'*. Although David was celebrating salvation from the field of battle, he knew as well as we do today that the word 'Saviour' means much more. The entire story of the Old Testament and the New is about God's plan to save the world, and to save sinful people. David is one of the first in the Bible to speak personally of God as 'my Saviour', and in this, he prophesies the great work that God will eventually do through Christ for the whole world.

Verses 47 and 48 may not appear to be so rich in preaching material, but they are still important. For David, salvation is always specific, for God saved him from his enemies, principally King Saul, and in this sense, God avenged him. Of course, this is one example of salvation, and it describes in earthly terms the fact that God is moral, and is always seeking out truth and justice. He aims to save the world from evil, and men and women from the trap of that evil, which is sin. However, God does not just save us from peril, He saves us for a purpose. In the case of David, God has saved him so that he might become a leader of nations. David's power and authority as a leader did not come from his own abilities, they came from God who intended this to be so (18:47). For us who read this Psalm, this verse reminds us that God also saves us for a purpose; God has a plan for those he saves.

The last two verses of Psalm 18 continues the theme of praise, and they begin with David's great vision of praise extending throughout the world: *'therefore I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations ...'* (18:49). We might expect David to have a vision of praise in Israel, but it is remarkable that the vision is extended this far. Most of the Old Testament appears to us to be about the relationship between God and his people Israel alone, as if this was all that mattered, but in truth, it reveals far more. Just as David has a vision of God's praise throughout the nations, the great prophet Isaiah also prophesies that Israel is to be *'a light to the nations'* (Is 42:6, 49:6), and remember, Jonah was famously told to preach the Gospel not to God's people Israel, but to the Gentile nation of Assyria in their capital, Nineveh.

Verses 49 and 50 are an important text, for in the New Testament, Paul quotes it in his famous letter to the Romans. Right towards its end, Paul concludes his great message with these words:

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on the half of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written, 'therefore I will confess you among the nations, and sing praises to your name ...' (Rom 15:8,9)

The passage continues with three other quotes from throughout the Old Testament, all supporting Paul's theme, which is that God has been made known through Christ in order that 'the Gentiles' might come to know the glory of God. In other words, he says that God's love in Christ is available for all people of all time and in all places, who have faith in Him. Most significantly, the first quote in this passage is from Psalm 18, our reading for today, and in particular, verse 49.

Altogether, there is no doubt that these few verses at the end of Psalm 18 are some of the most powerful words of praise we find in the Psalms. Other Psalms may be better known, and many say things that are similar to what we find here. Nevertheless, these words summarise the heart of God's saving plan for the whole world. How wonderful that God, in his wisdom, gave David a vision of these things at the point of his triumph over his enemy King Saul.

Discipleship

Questions for groups

1. Write out a list of the different themes found in this part of Psalm 18. What do they tell us about true worship of God?
2. Does the church today hold a vision of extending the Gospel to the whole world? Indeed, is it possible that God be made known to all people?
3. What does this passage of Scripture teaches about the worship of God, and how can we put that into practice within our own churches?

Discipleship challenges

- *How do you like to worship God? Think back over your own recent life, and write down the different ways in which you have worshipped God, and what you worship God for. Using this passage of Scripture, work out whether there are any areas of worship that you have been missing, and make a plan to put that right.*
- *In the course of your own prayers, pray that God will make himself known to all the nations. As you pray this prayer, try to make sense of it. Think about what you are saying, and explain your feelings about this to God. When you pray in private, it does not matter of words you use, for God will understand what you mean from the heart, so take the opportunity to try to get to the root of what it means to pray that God will be made known to the whole world.*

Final Prayer

Jesus, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; out of your majesty and privilege, give me a taste of wonders of Your Kingdom. Send us Your Holy Spirit, touch us with Your healing hand, empower us to fight evil, renew our minds, restore our consciences, and fill us with Your awesome love. We ask this so that we might be more like You, Jesus Christ our Lord: AMEN
