

Introduction

Welcome to Osaka International Church.

As you can see I am not here in person today. I am still in England, representing O.I.C.

I am taking meetings in my home town area in the South west of England.

This is also where my ninety- one year old Mother lives.

I will also be preparing for our retreat in October and I would value your prayers for this preparation work.

Psalm 18 – read the whole Psalm v. 1-50 in N.L.T.

¹ I love you, LORD;

you are my strength.

² The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;

my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.

He is my shield, the power that saves me,

and my place of safety.

³ I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,

and he saved me from my enemies.

⁴ The ropes of death entangled me;

floods of destruction swept over me.

⁵ The grave wrapped its ropes around me;

death laid a trap in my path.

⁶ But in my distress I cried out to the LORD;

yes, I prayed to my God for help.

He heard me from his sanctuary;

my cry to him reached his ears.

⁷ Then the earth quaked and trembled.

The foundations of the mountains shook;

they quaked because of his anger.

⁸ Smoke poured from his nostrils;

fierce flames leaped from his mouth.

Glowing coals blazed forth from him.

⁹ He opened the heavens and came down;

dark storm clouds were beneath his feet.

¹⁰ Mounted on a mighty angelic being, he flew,

soaring on the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He shrouded himself in darkness,

veiling his approach with dark rain clouds.

¹² Thick clouds shielded the brightness around him

and rained down hail and burning coals.

¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven;

the voice of the Most High resounded

amid the hail and burning coals.

¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies;

great bolts of lightning flashed, and they were confused.

¹⁵ Then at your command, O LORD,

at the blast of your breath,

the bottom of the sea could be seen,

and the foundations of the earth were laid bare.

¹⁶ He reached down from heaven and rescued me;

he drew me out of deep waters.

¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemies,

from those who hated me and were too strong for me.

¹⁸ They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress,

but the LORD supported me.
19 He led me to a place of safety;
he rescued me because he delights in me.
20 The LORD rewarded me for doing right;
he restored me because of my innocence.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
I have not turned from my God to follow evil.
22 I have followed all his regulations;
I have never abandoned his decrees.
23 I am blameless before God;
I have kept myself from sin.
24 The LORD rewarded me for doing right.
He has seen my innocence.
25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful;
to those with integrity you show integrity.
26 To the pure you show yourself pure,
but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.
27 You rescue the humble,
but you humiliate the proud.
28 You light a lamp for me.
The LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.
29 In your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.
30 God's way is perfect.
All the LORD's promises prove true.
He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.
31 For who is God except the LORD?
Who but our God is a solid rock?
32 God arms me with strength,
and he makes my way perfect.
33 He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
enabling me to stand on mountain heights.
34 He trains my hands for battle;
he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.
35 You have given me your shield of victory.
Your right hand supports me;
your help has made me great.
36 You have made a wide path for my feet
to keep them from slipping.
37 I chased my enemies and caught them;
I did not stop until they were conquered.
38 I struck them down so they could not get up;
they fell beneath my feet.
39 You have armed me with strength for the battle;
you have subdued my enemies under my feet.
40 You placed my foot on their necks.
I have destroyed all who hated me.
41 They called for help, but no one came to their rescue.
They even cried to the LORD, but he refused to answer.
42 I ground them as fine as dust in the wind.
I swept them into the gutter like dirt.
43 You gave me victory over my accusers.
You appointed me ruler over nations;
people I don't even know now serve me.

⁴⁴ As soon as they hear of me, they submit;
foreign nations cringe before me.
⁴⁵ They all lose their courage
and come trembling from their strongholds.
⁴⁶ The LORD lives! Praise to my Rock!
May the God of my salvation be exalted!
⁴⁷ He is the God who pays back those who harm me;
he subdues the nations under me
⁴⁸ and rescues me from my enemies.
You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies;
you save me from violent opponents.
⁴⁹ For this, O LORD, I will praise you among the nations;
I will sing praises to your name.
⁵⁰ You give great victories to your king;
you show unfailing love to your anointed,
to David and all his descendants forever.

Title: The path of Godliness.

Introduction

As many of you know I live half way up Ikoma mountain near the cable car station called “Hozanji”
If the weather is not too hot or not too cold, I like to walk around the mountain.
There are many trails that take you to interesting places.
There are cool mountain rivers, nice little cafés and restaurants and breath taking views across the Ikoma valley.
There is only one problem. There are wild animals and snakes at certain times of the year.
In the summer, and that is now, you have to be careful of snakes and in the winter the wild boar and wild dogs come down the mountain looking for food.
If you see any of these wild creatures in the distance, you can either turn around and go back or take a different path to avoid getting hurt.

Psalm 18 is a Psalm that challenges us to take the right path in life and that is the path of Godliness.

Like Ikoma mountain with its dangers, there are many dangers in life.

It is only as you chose the path of grace and follow Jesus in discipleship that you can avoid the snares and dangers of life.

This is a very big Psalm and we can't cover everything written in it.

However, we will cover the main points.

The historical context of the Psalm can be put somewhere around the day that God delivered David from his enemy, King Saul and all his enemies that fought against him.

I am going to split up the Psalm into three sections.

The first section is Psalm 18: v. 1-15, I will call this, **David's Crisis.**

The second section is v. 28-50, the title is **David's calling.**

Then we will go back and fill in the final section from v. 16-27.

I will call this section **David's secret.**

1. David's Crisis - v. 1-19.

In v. 1-3 David declares his love for God and his thankfulness to God.

When David expressed his love for the Lord in v. 1, he used a special Hebrew word that means to **love deeply, or to have compassion.**

It is related to the Hebrew word for “**womb**” and it describes the kind of love a mother has for her baby. (Is. 49:15)

David's love for God was very deep.

David expressed his love for God through **his faith and hope in God.**

He describes God as his **rock and fortress and his deliverer.**

He attributes his strength to God and praises Him for all of His help.

After this time of praise and thanks giving, David opens up his heart to God and lets Him know about the **crisis situation** that he has been through.

The situation David faced – v. 4-5.

In v. 4-5 David tells God that he was **confronted with death**.

In the N.K.J. version David says **“the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.”**

David was in a terrible crisis.

David had two choices in his crisis situation. He could either blame God for his situation and turn his back on God and run away from Him, **or he could run to God for help.**

Fortunately, David chose to run to God for help.

Whenever we are in a crisis situation in life, whether you are a Christian or not, it is always best to **run to God for help**, and not to run away from Him and seek help in other directions.

David’s prayer – v. 6.

We are told in v. 6 that in David’s stressful situation **he called upon the Lord.**

He cried out God, it was a desperate cry.

God heard David’s cry and David was assured in his heart that God would do something.

I am always encouraged in my heart when I hear a story about somebody who cried to God in desperation and God heard their cry and helped them.

However, I am even more encouraged when I hear that the person thanked God for their answer to prayer, and did something to say thank you to God, a bit like a return gift in Japanese culture.

When this DVD is screened, God willing I will be in my home area of Devon in the South west of England. This is where the story I will tell you took place.

Many years ago when sailing ships carried cargo around the world, the port of Plymouth in England was a busy port.

The seas around this area were often very rough and there were many shipwrecks.

On one occasion a ship was in big trouble at sea. It was heading towards Plymouth, but it was clear to the captain that they wouldn’t make it to the port.

In desperation the captain cried to God for help.

He said to God that if the ship made it to Plymouth and the crew were all alive then the first bit of land that he saw through his telescope, he would build a Church as a thank you to God for his help.

God saved the boat, the captain and the crew.

As the boat headed for Plymouth harbour the captain opened his telescope and spotted a large hill in the far distance.

The hill was situated on a high point in a national park about 40 K.M.’s from Plymouth.

There were no houses or people living in that area.

However, the captain honoured his word and built a Church on this spot.

You can go there today, visit the Church and inside there is a plaque on the wall that tells the story I have told you.

(Show photo of this Church now)

Our God is an amazing God, who responds to the desperate cries of people’s hearts, when they are directed towards Him.

After David prayed and God heard his prayers, God revealed his displeasure.

2. God’s response to David’s prayer – v. 7-15.

In v. 7-18 we have a very frightening description of God’s response to David’s prayer.

God is clearly not pleased with the way that David had been treated.

David had been 10 years on the run with King Saul chasing him.

God was now moving in judgement and we have a very descriptive account of God’s judgement.

In v. 7 we are told that God is angry. In v. 8 God’s anger is manifested. Let us re-read these verses.

(v. 7 -8. in the N.K.J.)

⁷Then the earth shook and trembled;

The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,

Because He was angry.

⁸ Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.

Our God is a consuming fire and when He acts in judgement, He can do anything to accomplish His purposes.

On Monday the 18th of June, only two months ago, there was a big earthquake in Osaka. It came suddenly without warning, the earth shook, and we all felt it.

God created this world, and He controls the earthquakes.

One of the signs of the second coming of Jesus is that there will be earthquakes in various places.

God is able to bring judgement to this earth and to people at any time.

The Bible has many accounts of God bringing judgement in a powerful way against sins that were committed.

The first big act of judgement was when God decided to flood the whole of the earth because of man's wickedness.

Genesis 6: v. 5-8.

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

In the book of Numbers an incident is recorded where God's judgement happened instantly.

God opened up the earth and devoured people who were guilty of rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Then after that 250 men were burnt alive for offering incense.

They had appointed themselves as priest, but it was not God who had made those appointments.

(Numbers 16: v. 28-35)

In the Old Testament, Sometimes God's judgement is instant, and sometimes He waits a period of time before pronouncing His judgement.

Just in case we think God's instant judgement is confined to the Old Testament, let me read you a story from the New Testament.

Acts 5: v. 1-11.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ² And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

⁹ Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. ¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

3. David's Calling – v. 28-50.

In the middle of David's crisis, he knew that he had been called and chosen by God to rule over His people.

In order to fulfil his calling David faced many enemies.

It was not easy for David and it will never be easy for us as Christians to fulfil our calling to be disciples of Jesus.

Let us see what things David recognised that helped him in his calling.

These things should also help us in our Christian lives, as we face difficulties too.

a) God's Light will help our darkness – v. 28.

David declared that when he opened up his heart to God, then the light of God shone in like a lamp into his darkness.

John 8: v. 12. (N.K.J.)

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Following Jesus Christ and His will **always bring us "light" in all situations.**

If we follow satan and his will **it will always bring darkness.**

David goes on to say where he gets most of his light from.

Quote v. 30.

³⁰ *As for God, His way is perfect;*
The word of the LORD is proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.

It doesn't matter what the circumstances are in our lives, if we are following the advice of God's word, we will always get light, and protection from Him.

Psalm 119 v. 105. (N.K.J.)

¹⁰⁵ Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.

I have been in pastoral ministry now for 25 years, and before that I was a Missionary.

I can honestly say that the people who have sought my help in counselling, I have always directed them what God's word has to say on the matter.

If they have obeyed God's word, they have been enlightened and eventually their problems were resolved.

This was the case with people who were Christians, and people who were not Christians.

However, people who came with their own ideas, and were not willing to hear from the counsel of God's word, went away in spiritual darkness and their lives were subsequently not glorifying to God.

So whatever our problem is today, God's solution can be found in God's word the Bible.

God created us and He knows what is best for us.

b) God's strength will enable us to complete His work. – v. 32-34.

v. 32-34 in N.K.J.

³² *It is* God who arms me with strength,
And makes my way perfect.

³³ He makes my feet like the *feet of deer*,
And sets me on my high places.

³⁴ He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

David gave a testimony to the fact that his physical strength came from God Himself.

On Sunday 10th June we had a guest preacher. His name was Ted Rendell.

If you had closed your eyes, you wouldn't have realised that you were hearing preaching from an 87- year old man who had just recovered from open heart surgery.

Ted could only preach because God gave him strength.

However, we don't have to be old to realise that we need God's strength to do God's work.

Although I mentioned this point a few months ago I feel that it is worth repeating.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15: v. 58. (N.K.J.)

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

There is a difference between **working for God** and doing **the work of the Lord**.

Anybody can work for God, or at least they say that is what they are doing.

However, to do the work "**of**" the Lord, requires the **power of God to flow through us**.

If we cry to God for His help, He will give us His strength to do His work.

I will be 64 years old this October. I can honestly say that it has **only been possible to serve you here at O.I.C. because of God's power**.

God has given me His strength to enable me to serve you for the last three and a half years.

At present I am in the U.K. visiting Churches and prayer supporters who pray for Wendy and myself.

The prayers of God's people in the U.K. and the prayers of God's people in O.I.C. give us the strength to continue our ministry in Japan.

The two main things that helped David in his ministry were **the light of God, through His word**, and the strength of God through the **enabling of God's Holy Spirit**.

Therefore, for us today, we must focus upon God's word, and depend upon God's Holy Spirit for His help to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

Now we are going back to v. 16-27 to discover David's secret.

4. David's secret – v. 16-27.

In these verses David is telling us that the secret of living through trials and tribulations, whatever they might be is to be in a right relationship with God.

In v. 20 David says "**The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands, He has recompensed me.**"

This message from David was really important because he has repeated it again in v. 24.

David wasn't perfect, nor are we, but David was "**A man after God's own heart.**"

(1 Samuel 13: v. 14)

David was also a man with a "**Shepherd's heart.**" (2 Samuel 24:17)

Psalm 78: v. 70-72.

⁷⁰He also chose David His servant,

And took him from the sheepfolds;

⁷¹From following the ewes that had young He brought him,

To shepherd Jacob His people,

And Israel His inheritance.

⁷²So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,

And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

David knew what it was to have a clean heart and he knew what it was to have a dirty heart.

After David had committed adultery, he repented of his sin.

His prayer to God in that repentance is recorded in Psalm 51.

In v. 10 of that Psalm David prayed "**Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**"

More than anything else David knew that a clean heart before God was the secret of his steadfast life.

God rewarded David because of his clean heart, and because of his clean hands.

In v. 25-27 David reminds us that in life we reap what we sow.

David says in v. 25, if we show mercy to people, God will show mercy to us.

Therefore, we need to be very careful how we live our lives in connection with other people.

Now it is time to make personal application from Psalm 18.

There are three clear things that we need to take home today and apply to our personal lives.

1. Cultivate “Thankfulness in your life”.

David had gone through a 10-year experience of being persecuted and hunted down by King Saul. King Saul was God’s rejected King. Nevertheless, he maintained a thankfulness and respect for his creator God.

If David could do this, then we can too.

About 10 years ago I was taking a Bible study and prayer meeting in my Church in the U.K. It was a small group of about 10 people.

I asked everybody to share one thing that they would like to thank God for.

When we came round to the turn of a nearly blind lady, who was about 80 years old, she said these words.

“I know that I am nearly blind, but I thank God for my hearing.”

The room went very silent for a few minutes as people were challenged by the witness of this lady.

There is always something to thank God for each day, why not place thankfulness on your prayer list each day, and thank God for something.

2. Protect your heart against hardness towards God and God’s word.

It is easy when we go through difficult times as a Christian to harden your heart against God and His word.

However, it is through the difficult times that you are going to be helped by God’s word and strengthened by God’s Holy Spirit.

God expects us to be honest with Him in our difficult times, and to gain strength from Him, because He loves us.

3. It matters how you treat God’s people, whoever they are, wherever they are.

Even though King Saul treated David badly, David did not behave badly towards King Saul.

On one occasion David had an opportunity to kill King Saul, but he didn’t do it.

1 Samuel 26: v. 8-12.

⁸ Then Abishai said to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not *have to strike* him a second time!” ⁹ But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?” ¹⁰ David said furthermore, “As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. ¹¹ The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that *are* by his head, and let us go.” ¹² So David took the spear and the jug of water *by* Saul’s head, and they got away; and no man saw or knew *it* or awoke. For they *were* all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

As Christians our behaviour should be exemplary towards other Christians and also people who are not yet Christians.

It is easy to love people who are loveable but not so easy if they challenge us through their character or personality.

It takes the supernatural power of God to love the unlovely.

Remember that while we were still sinners Jesus Christ died for us.

Everybody is a work in progress, through God’s Holy Spirit, including us.!!!

May God bless you this week as you ponder and apply these truths into your personal lives.