

TRUSTING THE PROMISES OF GOD

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Scripture: Psalm 18:23-35 (NLT)

A preface to the Psalm: A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said, “¹I love You, O LORD, my strength.”

I thought what a beautiful way to start a Psalm to just acknowledge one’s love for the Lord in spite of all that one has gone through. Picking up from verse 29, he says,

²⁹In your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.

³⁰God’s way is perfect.

All the LORD’s promises prove true.

He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.

³¹For who is God except the LORD?

Who but our God is a solid rock?

³²God arms me with strength,
and he makes my way perfect.

³³He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
enabling me to stand on mountain heights.

³⁴He trains my hands for battle;
he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.

³⁵You have given me your shield of victory.

Your right hand supports me;
your help has made me great.”

The interesting sidelight to us coming to church on a Sunday, and we come for various reasons – from it being an obligation that we have to on a Sunday morning to a need that we may have like an affliction, or even where you are just saying, “Lord, I just need a touch from You. I just need to know that You are real, that You are present when I’m going through stuff in my life. I just need to know that. And maybe other reasons as well. But for whatever reason we may be here, the fact is that God always draws near. So wherever you are this morning, for whatever reason you’re here in church, whether you’re here kicking and screaming, or you’re here just saying Lord, touch me, His grace is present. The thing to do in a situation like this is to just press in, just move as much as you can into His presence and then allow Him to do what only He can do for us.

So as we look at this particular psalm, I invite you to just press in and keep the Word open. We’re going to look at multiple references, but just allow the Spirit of God to speak to you, to draw you, to give you encouragement and wisdom. God’s way is perfect; all the Lord’s promises prove true. That’s what David is saying: God’s way is perfect and all the Lord’s promises prove true. We read that this psalm was written at the end when he’d gone through all and he was not established as king. We may say ‘Hindsight is 20-20 vision.’ It’s okay when you reach the end of this road with all its struggles that you can say – God’s way is perfect. But we know that in every situation that David faced, the one thing that was true of him was that he trusted God. Whether it was turmoil or desperation, situations that were so dark and deadly, he trusted God.

2 Samuel chronicles for us an episode that he had with Shimei, who was from the house of Saul. David is surrounded by his men of valor, people who would do anything for him, and it says –

⁵When King David arrived at Bahurim, behold, just coming out from there was a man of the family of the house of Saul—his name was Shimei son of Gera. As he came out, he kept on cursing ⁶and flinging stones at David and at all King David’s servants, while all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and on his left. ⁷Thus Shimei said as he cursed, “Get out, get out! The man of bloodshed, the good-for-nothing! ⁸*ADONAI* has returned on you all the blood of Saul’s house, in whose place you’ve reigned. *ADONAI* has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom—so see, your own evil has overtaken you, because you are a man of bloodshed.” (2 Samuel 16:5-8)

He is the king, coming in the midst of all his mighty men, and having this man shout at him, calling him names, cursing him, throwing stones at him, and he could have taken him out.

⁹Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why let this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and take off his head!”

¹⁰But the king said, “What have I to do with you, sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, it’s because *ADONAI* has said to him, ‘Curse David!’ So who should say, ‘Why did you do so?’” ¹¹Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, “Look, my son who came from my own body is seeking my life—how much more this Benjamite? Leave him alone and let him curse, since *ADONAI* has told him. ¹²Perhaps *ADONAI* will look on my affliction and return good to me for his cursing this day.”

You may wonder with all the men at his disposal, how was David able to stay so calm, so detached, from what was being thrown at him. I think there are two things that we can see very clearly with David that helped him go through this situation.

Two things David had learned through life:

- **God’s will was more important than his ego.**
- **His honor, his worth, his security were all safe in God’s hands.**

All things that would matter to us, for David he was quite comfortable to say that ‘my honor, my worth, my security are safe in the hands in the hands of my God, and His will is more important to me than having to prove anything to any of the people who are with me, or to this man Shimei who is throwing such stuff at me’. David, in a way would say: This fellow was mistaken in his cursing. David was confident that God would settle the score and repay him with blessings. And if it turned out that Shimei was right, David does not want to find himself opposing the will of God. In short, he is fully persuaded that God is in control and he doesn’t have to worry about it. He knows that God has got his back.

We know that this was just one of the things that David went through. We read he managed to avoid a spear that was thrown at him by Saul. We also read that he had the opportunity to even kill Saul, but he didn’t. he said: How can I touch the Lord’s anointed? I can’t do that. And all the while he waited for the promise to be fulfilled. What was the promise? That he would be king. He waited thirteen years for this promise to come to pass. Thirteen years of just holding on to God’s word.

I realized that when we look at this, one salient point sticks out and that is: From the moment of the promise to the moment of its delivery is a tough training process. From the time of the promise to the time of its fulfillment, God is in the business of equipping, of training. And it took thirteen years to prepare David for this particular role.

Psalm 105:19 says, albeit talking about Joseph –
“Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the Lord tested him.

Beloved, I don't know where you are in this as you look at the promises of God in your life, whether you are holding on to a promise that God gave you. It hasn't yet seen the light of day. Or God has said He will do something through you, that a word has been placed very securely and you believe that it is from God concerning something – an elevation to something, more responsibility, a movement. And I wonder how you're doing with it. how are you holding on to that promise? Sometimes when the wait gets agonizingly long, we give up on it. we look at it and we say, maybe I misread the situation. Maybe that window has closed. Maybe God didn't really say that, and we throw in the towel.

David waited thirteen years. Joseph waited thirteen years. And David says that God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. Beloved, that goes for every promise that God has given to you. His promise is true for you. His way is perfect.

How did David stay the course for thirteen years? We'll look at it through this particular psalm. But before we get into it, I want to say this. There is always a gestation period between conception and birth. Always. In all God's creation, there is this period. Just for the heck of it, I looked up different gestation periods and found that camels have a period of 360 to 420 days, cats go 60 days, donkeys take 365 days, elephants take 617 to 645 days. Human beings take 266 days or thereabouts – 38 to 39 weeks. From the time that something is birthed by God to the time of its fulfilment, there is a period of waiting, of preparation. And most often, the moment of the promise to the moment of delivery is a tough training process. It's not easy.

I wonder whether God is speaking to some of you today. I wonder whether you held on to a promise for a long, long time. I wonder whether the words on your heart are: How long?

Psalm 13:1 expresses our deepest feelings. “How long O Lord, will you forget me, forever? How long will you hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart, how long?”

I wonder whether some of those promises, some of those dreams, visions that God has given for you, as you look at it, are stuck almost in limbo. And you're saying: Lord, I don't know. It's been a long time. I don't know what to do with it. I don't know how to traverse this path of faith, holding on to the promise and trusting and believing you will indeed fulfil it. Maybe that's you this morning. maybe you're at the point where you're ready to just give up. And yet, David reiterates God's way is perfect, and all of the Lord's promises prove true.

So let's look at this psalm, and I'm going to look at different aspects of it to see how David went through it, and the things that he talks about. I'd like to invite you to turn to the references or to make a note of it. Turning to references helps, muscle memory always is a good thing. But these are good handles to help us navigate this time. so let's start from the very beginning.

1. v. 29 In your strength I can crush an army, with my God I can scale any wall.

The key here is His strength. Rely on His strength. This is such a good word for the weary. If you are tired, if you are worn out, and you say, “I have no strength left,” look at the word: Isaiah 40:29 “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength.”

He gives power to the faint. You may grow faint, beloved, but God doesn't. God is an endless source of strength, and He gives it generously. And maybe, that's what you need today – the ever strong and never weary One to look down on you in your weakness and your weariness, and just say, "I've got you."

2. V. 30 God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true.

When we look at a statement like this, we have to believe that it will happen. Because there is something very finite about that statement. It's perfect, and it's true, and we are talking about God. So we believe it must happen. Paul puts it so beautifully in 2Corinthians 1:20 "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God."

Doesn't matter how many promises God has made; in Christ they are 'Yes' and 'Amen'.

3. He's a shield for all who look to Him for protection.

How often in situations like this we want protection – protection from people. We look at Nehemiah building a wall and the taunts that were thrown by Sanballat and the others. We need protection from words, we need protection from willful people who want evil to happen. We need protection from our own thoughts at a time like this, to begin to question all that God is doing in our lives.

Psalm 121:8 says: The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go.

In your coming and going, the Lord watches. He watches over you both now and forever. What a wonderful promise! Forever, God's eye is upon you. Elsewhere in scripture it says: The eyes of the Lord look to and fro, looking to strongly support those whose hearts are committed to Him. Strongly support.

4. V. 31 For who is God except the Lord? who but our God is a solid rock?

To be and to stand on the solid rock. I love some of the hymns that we sing which are so profound in their lyrics. They carry such wonderful words that are strengthening and this is one of them.

The Lord's our rock, in Him we hide,
A shelter in the time of storm;
O Jesus is the Rock in a weary land,
A weary land, a weary land.
O Jesus is a Rock in a weary land –
A shelter in the time of storm.

He'll take care of you and me during this period.

5. V. 32 God arms me with strength and He makes my way perfect.

How does He do it when I myself don't have any strength. I'm weary, I'm worn, tired. How does He do it?

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians how God did it for him. He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee. For My strength," God says, "is made perfect in your weakness." My strength will flow into your weakness and will give you strength. What a beautiful promise. Because our strength is so often frail. Yet, God is saying: Don't worry about it. In those moments when you are at your weakest, He will give me enough room to get my strength flowing.

6. V. 33 He makes me as sure-footed as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights.

He helps me navigate the terrain that God has called me to walk. Wherever it is, I can be as sure-footed as a deer, going to every place that God requires of me. As David would say in Psalm 23: Even when I walk through the dark shadows of the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for You are close beside me. And even more, Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me.

7. V. 34 He trains my hands for battle. he strengthens my arms to draw a bronze bow.

He reminds us when opposition comes, that He will be there. God does the training. In Ephesians, Paul says: Listen, when you face a battle, when you're up against opposition, your battle is not against people, your battle is not against flesh and blood, though how we would rather prefer it to be. give me a face that I can hate. Give me a face that I can get back against. And Paul says, "No, that's not the battle. the battle is in the spiritual realm." Why is that so? We battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. When we recognize that people are being used, then we are able to see the one who is using them to cause harm. And God says: Those are the people I also want you to love. In terms of vengeance, vengeance is Mine. The people who can harm you, it's not them; it's the principalities and powers that are at work. True, they have allowed themselves to be used, for which God will deal with them. Not you and not me. Our call is to love. He trains my hands for battle and He strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.

8. V. 35 You have given me Your shield of victory, Your right hand supports me, and Your help has made me great.

Here's the thing, beloved. You have given me Your shield of victory. It's a done deal. God just hands it to us and says: I've accomplished it. he gives us the shield of victory, not for an engaging ongoing fight, but as a finished thing that has been done and accomplished.

So this morning, I wonder where you are beloved. Whether you are holding on to a promise but you've barely got your fingernails in there? Whether you've given up, whether it's one of the most difficult phases of your life or you don't know? But God knows why you are here, why He placed this message upon my heart. there's some of us here who need the message – the need to be strengthened and encouraged, who need a word of wisdom, who need to be lifted up, who need to be carried, who need to know that God's eyes are still on me. God, You haven't forgotten me although I feel like that every day. I need to know You haven't. that the promise You have given to me will be fulfilled. That's His word for you this morning. and His promise will be fulfilled in your life, whatever God has placed upon your heart.

We sang a beautiful hymn this morning. in closing it said, "All the way my Savior leads me." That's the abiding answer to us walking. When we think we're walking alone. we look at all these 8 points that come from the Psalmist, and we say, "Yes, but it's so difficult to do it alone." He says, "I'll never leave you; I'll never forsake you. Never!"

The King of kings, the Lord of Lords, holds His hand out and says: Take it. I won't let go. Maybe today you need to get that hand.

Fanny Crosby wrote this song: "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." In such a beautiful way she wrote the last verse.

This is my song through endless ages;
Jesus led me all the way.

Not Jesus will lead me all the way but Jesus led me all the way. That's what you need to believe in today, that one day you will sing the song in the past tense – Jesus led me...finished it. but for now,

we hold on to that and say, this will be my song. This is the song that I will continue to sing, that I will stand on the promises of God. I will hold on to them. I will never let go of His hand and Lord today, I just need a touch from you.

Amen.
