

Thurs., Dec. 1, 2011

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Scripture

Psalm 18:1-20

¹I love you, O LORD, my strength.

²The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
so I shall be saved from my enemies.

⁴The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
⁵the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.

⁶In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

⁷Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.

⁸Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.

⁹He bowed the heavens, and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.

¹⁰He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness his covering around him,
his canopy thick clouds dark with water.

¹²Out of the brightness before him
there broke through his clouds
hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice.

¹⁴And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;

he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.

¹⁵Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

¹⁶He reached down from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters.

¹⁷He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.

¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my calamity;
but the LORD was my support.

¹⁹He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

²⁰The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.

Devotional

Beset by adversaries, Psalm 18's author offers testimony. When God was called upon for help, God delivered. The psalmist's enemies were defeated and peace fills the land.

Because the psalmist knows, in his bones, that God pulled him out of the entangling cords of those who would kill him, the psalmist extravagantly sings praises to God. It's not enough to sing about God's healing the brokenhearted and binding their wounds; the psalmist wants us to fear God's hailstones, coals of fire, and well-shot arrows, all directed at the enemies of the psalmist. This God is a powerful God, angered by those who oppose him. This anger is made visible: God's nostrils are filled with smoke; his mouth contains a devouring fire.

All who experience such mighty acts join the psalmist in this hymn of praise to God.

Prayer

Creator God, you who calmed the storm and who stand with us even as we tremble, be with us when we are beaten down and desolate. Hear us when we call for help. In Jesus' name, Amen.