
For the Chief Musician. By 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. He said,

PSALM 18: 1 I love you, LORD, my strength.

David's address of thanks to Jehovah, Psa 18:1-3. A relation of sufferings undergone, and prayers made for assistance, Psa 18:4-6. A magnificent description of Divine interposition in behalf of the sufferer, Psa 18:7-15; and of the deliverance wrought for him, Psa 18:16-19. That this deliverance was in consideration of his righteousness, Psa 18:20-24; and according to the tenor of God's equitable proceedings, Psa 18:25-28. To Jehovah is ascribed the glory of the victory, Psa 18:29-36; which is represented as complete by the destruction of all his opponents, Psa 18:37-42. On these events the heathen submit, Psa 18:43-45. And for all these things God is glorified, Psa 18:46-50.

The title: "To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto 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."

Except the first clause, this title is taken from 2Sam 22:1. The reader is requested to turn to the notes on 2Sam 22:1, for some curious information on this Psalm, particularly what is extracted from Dr. Kennicott. This learned writer supposes the whole to be a song of the Messiah, and divides it into five parts, which he thus introduces: - "The Messiah's sublime thanksgivings, composed by David when his wars were at an end, towards the conclusion of his life. And in this sacred song the goodness of God is celebrated,

1. For Messiah's resurrection from the dead, with the wonders attending that awful event, and soon following it.
2. For the punishment inflicted on the Jews; particularly by the destruction of Jerusalem. And,
3. For the obedience of the Gentile nations. See Rom 15:9; Heb 2:13; and Mat 28:2-4; with Mat 24:7, Mat 24:29."

And that the title now prefixed to this hymn here and in 2Sam 22:1, describes only the time of its composition, seems evident; for who can ascribe to David himself as the subject, 2Sam 22:5, 2Sam 22:6, 2Sam 22:8-17, 2Sam 22:21-26, 2Sam 22:30, 2Sam 22:42, 2Sam 22:44, etc.?

In Dr. Kennicott's remarks there is a new translation of the whole Psalm, p. 178, etc.

The strong current of commentators and critics apply this Psalm to Christ; and to oppose a whole host of both ancients and moderns would argue great self-confidence. In the main I am of the same mind; and on this principle chiefly I shall proceed to its illustration; still however considering that there are many things in it which concern David, and him only. Drs. Chandler and Delaney have been very successful in their illustration of various passages in it; all the best critics have brought their strongest powers to bear on it; and most of the commentators have labored it with great success; and Bishop Horne has applied the whole of it to Christ. My old Psalter speaks highly in its praise: "This Psalme contenes the sacrement of al chosyn men, the qwilk doand the law of God thurgh the seven fald grace of the Haly Gast fra al temptaciouns, and the pouste of dede and of the devel lesid:

this sang thai syng til God; and thankes him and says, I sal luf the Lord, nocht a day or twa, bot ever mare: my strength, thurgh quam I am stalworth in thoght."

Verse 1

I will love thee - Love always subsists on motive and reason. The verb רחם racham signifies to love with all the tender feelinys of nature. "From my inmost bowels will I love thee, O Lord!" Why should he love Jehovah? Not merely because he was infinitely great and good, possessed of all possible perfections, but because he was good to him: and he here enumerates some of the many blessings he received from him.

My strength -

1. Thou who hast given me power over my adversaries, and hast enabled me to avoid evil and do good.

PSALM 18: 2 The 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 high tower.

Verse 2

The Lord is my rock -

2. I stand on him as my foundation, and derive every good from him who is the source of good. The word סלע sela signifies those craggy precipices which afford shelter to men and wild animals; where the bees often made their nests, and whence honey was collected in great abundance. "He made him to suck honey out of the rock," Deu 32:13.

3. He was his fortress; a place of strength and safety, fortified by nature and art, where he could be safe from his enemies. He refers to those inaccessible heights in the rocky, mountainous country of Judea, where he had often found refuge from the pursuit of Saul. What these have been to my body, such has the Lord been to my soul.

Deliverer -

4. מִפְּלִי מֵפַלְתִּי mephalleti, he who causes me to escape. This refers to his preservation in straits and difficulties. He was often almost surrounded and taken, but still the Lord made a way for his escape - made a way out as his enemies got in; so that, while they got in at one side of his strong hold, he got out of the other, and so escaped with his life. These escapes were so narrow and so unlikely that he plainly saw the hand of the Lord was in them.

5. My God, אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי, doG Eli, my strong God, not only the object of my adoration, but he who puts strength in my soul.

6. My strength, צוּרִי tsur. This is a different word from that in the first verse.

Rabbi Maimon has observed that צוּר tsur, when applied to God, signifies fountain, source, origin, etc. God is not only the source whence my being was derived, but he is the fountain whence I derive all my good; in whom, says David, I will trust. And why? Because he knew him to be an eternal and inexhaustible fountain of goodness. This fine idea is lost in our translation; for we render two Hebrew words of widely different meaning, by the same term in English, strength.

7. My buckler, מגני maginni, my shield, my defender, he who covers my head and my heart, so that I am neither slain nor wounded by the darts of my adversaries.

8. Horn of my salvation. Horn was the emblem of power, and power in exercise. This has been already explained; see on 1Sam 2:1 (note). The horn of salvation means a powerful, an efficient salvation.

9. My high tower; not only a place of defense, but one from which I can discern the country round about, and always be able to discover danger before it approaches me.

PSALM 18: 3 I call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies.

Verse 3

I will call upon the Lord - When he was conscious that the object of his worship was such as he has pointed out in the above nine particulars, it is no wonder that he resolves to call upon him; and no wonder that he expects, in consequence, to be saved from his enemies; for who can destroy him whom such a God undertakes to save?

PSALM 18: 4 The cords of death surrounded me. The floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

Verse 4

The sorrows of death compassed me - חבלי מות chebley maveth, the cables or cords of death. He was almost taken in those nets or stratagems by which, if he had been entangled, he would have lost his life. The stratagems to which he refers were those that were intended for his destruction; hence called the cables or cords of death.

The floods of ungodly men - Troops of wicked men were rushing upon him like an irresistible torrent; or like the waves of the sea, one impelling another forward in successive ranks; so that, thinking he must be overwhelmed by them, he was for the moment affrighted; but God turned the torrent aside, and he escaped.

PSALM 18: 5 The cords of Sheol were around me. The snares of death came on me.

Verse 5

The sorrows of hell - חבלי שאול chebley sheol, the cables or cords of the grave. Is not this a reference to the cords or ropes with which they lowered the corpse into the grave? or the bandages by which the dead were swathed? He was as good as dead.

The snares of death prevented me - I was just on the point of dropping into the pit which they had digged for me. In short, I was all but a dead man; and nothing less than the immediate interference of God could have saved my life.

PSALM 18: 6 In my distress I called on the LORD, and cried to my God.

He heard my voice out of his temple. My cry before him came into his ears.

Verse 6

In my distress I called - His enemies had no hope of his destruction unless God should abandon him. They hoped that this was the case, and that therefore they should prevail. But God heard his cry and came down to his help; and this interference is most majestically described in the Psa 18:7 and following verses. Dr. Dodd has collected some excellent observations on these verses from Chandler, Delaney, and others, which I shall transcribe, as I know not that any thing better can be offered on the subject.

PSALM 18: 7 Then the earth shook and trembled. The foundations also of the mountains quaked and were shaken, because he was angry.

Verse 7

Then the earth shook and trembled - "In this and the following verses David describes, by the sublimest expressions and grandest terms, the majesty of God, and the awful manner in which he came to his assistance. The representation of the storm in these verses must be allowed by all skillful and impartial judges to be truly sublime and noble, and in the genuine spirit of poetry. The majesty of God, and the manner in which he is represented as coming to the aid of his favourite king, surrounded with all the powers of nature as his attendants and ministers, and arming (as it were) heaven and earth to fight his battles, and execute his vengeance, is described in the loftiest and most striking terms. The shaking of the earth; the trembling of the mountains and pillars of heaven; the smoke that drove out of his nostrils; the flames of devouring fire that flashed from his mouth; the heavens bending down to convey him to the battle; his riding upon a cherub, and rapidly flying on the wings of a whirlwind; his concealing his majesty in the thick clouds of heaven; the bursting of the lightnings from the horrid darkness; the uttering of his voice in peals of thunder; the storm of fiery hail; the melting of the heavens, and their dissolving into floods of tempestuous rain; the cleaving of the earth, and disclosing of the bottom of the hills, and the subterraneous channels or torrents of water, by the very breath of the nostrils of the Almighty; are all of them circumstances which create admiration, excite a kind of horror, and exceed every thing of this nature that is to be found in any of the remains of heathen antiquity. See Longinus on the Sublime, sec. 9, and Hesiod's description of Jupiter fighting against the Titans, which is one of the grandest things in all pagan antiquity; though upon comparison it will be found infinitely short of this description of the psalmist's; throughout the whole of which God is represented as a mighty warrior going forth to fight the battles of David, and highly incensed at the opposition his enemies made to his power and authority. "When he descended to the engagement the very heavens bowed down to render his descent more awful, his military tent was substantial darkness; the voice of his thunder was the warlike alarm which sounded to the battle; the chariot in which he rode was the thick clouds of heaven, conducted by cherubs, and carried on by the irresistible force and rapid wings of an impetuous tempest; and the darts and weapons he employed were thunderbolts, lightnings, fiery

hail, deluging rains, and stormy winds! "No wonder that when God thus arose, all his enemies should be scattered, and those who hated him should flee before him. "It does not appear from any part of David's history that there was any such storm as is here described, which proved destructive to his enemies, and salutary to himself. There might, indeed, have been such a one, though there is no particular mention of it: unless it may be thought that something of this nature is intimated in the account given of David's second battle with the Philistines, 2Sam 5:23, 2Sam 5:24. It is undoubted, however, that the storm is represented as real; though David, in describing it, has heightened and embellished it with all the ornaments of poetry. See Chandler, Delaney, and Lowth's ninth Prelection.

PSALM 18: 8 Smoke went out of his nostrils. Consuming fire came out of his mouth. Coals were kindled by it.

Verse 8

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils - Or, 'There ascended into his nostrils a smoke,' as the words, literally rendered, signify. The ancients placed the seat of anger in the nose, or nostrils; because when the passions are warm and violent, it discovers itself by the heated vehement breath which proceeds from them. Hence the physiognomists considered open wide nostrils as a sign of an angry, fiery disposition. "This description of a smoke arising into and a fire breaking forth from the nostrils of God, denotes, by a poetical figure, the greatness of his anger and indignation. "Fire out of his mouth devoured - means that consuming fire issued out of his mouth. Coals were kind led by it, thus we render the next clause; but the words do not mean that fire proceeding from God kindled coals, but that burning coals issued from his mouth; and it should be rendered 'living coals from his mouth burned, and consumed around him.' - Chandler.

PSALM 18: 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down. Thick darkness was under his feet.

Verse 9

He bowed the heavens also, and came down - He made the heavens bend under him when he descended to take vengeance on his enemies. The psalmist seems here to express the appearance of the Divine majesty in a glorious cloud, descending from heaven, which underneath was substantially dark, but above, bright, and shining with exceeding lustre; and which, by its gradual approach to the earth, would appear as though the heavens themselves were bending down and approaching towards us.

PSALM 18: 10 He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, he soared on the wings of the wind.

Verse 10

He rode upon a cherub, and did fly - That is, as it is immediately explained, Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. God was in the storm, and by the ministry of angels guided the course of it, and drove it on with such an impetuous force as nothing could withstand. He 'rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.' Angels are in a peculiar sense the attendants and messengers of the Almighty, whom he employs as his ministers in effecting many of those great events which take place in the administration of his providence; and particularly such as manifest his immediate interposition in the extraordinary judgments which he inflicts for the punishment of sinful nations. See Psa 103:20; Psa 104:4. The cherub is particularly mentioned as an emblem of the Divine presence, and especially as employed in supporting and conveying the chariot of the Almighty, when he is represented as riding in his majesty through the firmament of heaven: - - Forth rush'd with whirlwind sound

The chariot of paternal Deity;

Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,

Itself instinct with spirit, but convey'd

By four cherubic shapes.

Par. Lost, lib. vi.

This seems to be the image intended to be conveyed in the place before us. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; he flew on the wings of the wind," i.e., the cherub supported and led on the tempest, in which the Almighty rode as in his chariot. This is agreeable to the office elsewhere ascribed to the cherubim. Thus they supported the mercy-seat, which was peculiarly the throne of God under the Jewish economy. God is expressly said to "make the clouds his chariot," Psa 104:3; and to "ride upon a swift cloud," Isa 19:1 : so that "riding upon a cherub," and "riding upon a swift cloud," is riding in the cloud as his chariot, supported and guided by the ministry of the cherubim. The next clause in the parallel place of Samuel is, "He was seen on the wings of the wind;" ירא yera, he was seen, being used for ידע yede, he flew, ד dalet being changed into ר resh. Either of them may be the true reading, for the MSS. are greatly divided on these places; but on the whole וירא vaiyera appears to be the better reading: "And he was seen on the wings of the wind."

As the original has been supposed by adequate judges to exhibit a fine specimen of that poetry which, in the choice of its terms, conveys both sense and sound, I will again lay it before the reader, as I have done in the parallel place, 2Sam 22:2. The words in italic to be read from right to left. ויעף רוח כנפי על וירכב vaiyaoph kerub al vayirkab And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly! רוח כנפי על וידא ruach canphey al waiyede Yea, he flew on the wings of the wind! The word רוח ruach, in the last line, should be pronounced, not ruak, which is no Hebrew word: but as a Scottish man would pronounce it, were it written ruagh. With this observation, how astonishingly is the rushing of the wind heard in the last word of each hemistich! Sternhold and Hopkins have succeeded in their version of this place, not only beyond all they ever did, but beyond every ancient and modern poet on a similar subject: - "On cherub and on cherubin Full royally he rode;

And on the wings of mighty winds Came flying all abroad."

Even the old Anglo-Scottish Psalter has not done amiss: -

And he steygh aboven cherubyn and he flow;

He flow aboven the fethers of wyndes.

PSALM 18: 11 He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion around him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

Verse 11

He made darkness his secret place - God is represented as dwelling in the thick darkness, Deu 4:11; Psa 97:2. This representation in the place before us is peculiarly proper; as thick heavy clouds deeply charged, and with lowering aspects, are always the forerunners and attendants of a tempest, and greatly heighten the horrors of the appearance: and the representation of them, spread about the Almighty as a tent, is truly grand and poetic.

Dark waters - The vapors strongly condensed into clouds; which, by the stroke of the lightning, are about to be precipitated in torrents of rain. See the next verse.

PSALM 18: 12 At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire.

Verse 12

At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed - The word נגה *nogah* signifies the lightning. This goes before him: the flash is seen before the thunder is heard, and before the rain descends; and then the thick cloud passes. Its contents are precipitated on the earth, and the cloud is entirely dissipated.

Hail-stones and coals of fire - This was the storm that followed the flash and the peal; for it is immediately added: -

PSALM 18: 13 The LORD also thundered in the sky. The Most High uttered his voice: hailstones and coals of fire.

Verse 13

The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice - And then followed the hail and coals of fire. The former verse mentioned the lightning, with its effects; this gives us the report of the thunder, and the increasing storm of hail and fire that attended it. Some think the words hailstones and coals of fire are entered here by some careless transcribers from the preceding verse; and it is true that they are wanting in the Septuagint and the Arabic, in the parallel place in 2 Samuel, and in five of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. I should rather, with Bishop Horsley, suppose them to be an interpolation in the preceding verse: or in that to have been borrowed from this; for this most certainly is their true place.

PSALM 18: 14 He sent out his arrows, and scattered them; Yes, great lightning bolts, and routed them.

Verse 14

Be sent out his arrows - he shot out lightning - I believe the latter clause to be an illustration of the former. He sent out his arrows - that is, he shot out lightning; for lightnings are the arrows of the Lord, and there is something very like the arrowhead apparent in the zigzag lightning. Sense and sound are wonderfully combined in the Hebrew of this last clause: וברקים רב ויהמם uberakim rab vaihummem, "and thunders he multiplied and confounded them." Who does not hear the bursting, brattling, and pounding of thunder in these words? See Delaney?

PSALM 18: 15 Then the channels of waters appeared. The foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

Verse 15

The channels of water were seen - This must refer to an earthquake; for in such cases, the ground being rent, water frequently gushes out at the fissures, and often rises to a tremendous height. Whole rivers were poured out of the chasms made by the earthquake in Jamaica, A. D. 1694; and new lakes of water were formed, covering a thousand acres of land!

PSALM 18: 16 He sent from on high. He took me. He drew me out of many waters.

Verse 16

He drew me out of many waters - Here the allusion is still carried on. The waters thus poured out were sweeping the people away; but God, by a miraculous interference, sent and drew David out. Sometimes waters are used to denote multitudes of people; and here the word may have that reference; multitudes were gathered together against David, but God delivered him from them all. This seems to be countenanced by the following verse.

PSALM 18: 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.

Verse 17

He delivered me from my strong enemy - Does not this refer to his conflict with Ishbi-benob? "And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant - thought to have slain David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel;" 2Sam 21:16, 2Sam 21:17. It appears that at this time he was in the most imminent danger of his life, and that he must have fallen by the hands of the giant, if God had not sent Abishai to his assistance. They were too strong for me. He was nearly overpowered by the Philistines; and his escape was such as evidently to show it to be supernatural.

PSALM 18: 18 They came on me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.

Verse 18

They prevented me in the day of my calamity - They took advantage of the time in which I was least able to make head against them, and their attack was sudden and powerful. I should have been overthrown, but the Lord was my stay. He had been nearly exhausted by the fatigue of the day, when the giant availed himself of this advantage.

PSALM 18: 19 He brought me out also into a large place. He delivered me, because he delighted in me.

Verse 19

He brought me forth also into a large place - He enabled me to clear the country of my foes, who had before cooped me up in holes and corners. This appears to be the allusion.

PSALM 18: 20 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands has he recompensed me.

Verse 20

The Lord rewarded me - David proceeds to give the reasons why God had so marvellously interposed in his behalf.

According to my righteousness - Instead of being an enemy to Saul, I was his friend. I dealt righteously with him while he dealt unrighteously with me.

PSALM 18: 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

Verse 21

I have kept the ways of the Lord - I was neither an infidel nor a profligate; I trusted in God, and carefully observed all the ordinances of his religion.

PSALM 18: 22 For all his ordinances were before me. I didn't put away his statutes from me.

Verse 22

All his judgments were before me - I kept his law before my eyes, that I might see my duty and know how to walk and please God.

PSALM 18: 23 I was also blameless with him. I kept myself from my iniquity.

Verse 23

I was also upright - The times in which David was most afflicted were the times of his greatest uprightness. Adversity was always to him a time of spiritual prosperity.

Mine iniquity - Probably meaning what is generally termed the easily-besetting sin; the sin of his constitution, or that to which the temperament of his body most powerfully disposed him. What this was, is a subject of useless conjecture.

PSALM 18: 24 Therefore the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

PSALM 18: 25 With the merciful you will show yourself merciful. With the perfect man, you will show yourself perfect.

Verse 25

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful - Thou wilt deal with men as they deal with each other. This is the general tenor of God's providential conduct towards mankind; well expressed by Mr. Pope in his universal prayer: - "Teach me to feel another's wo; To hide the fault I see:

The mercy I to others show, That mercy show to me."

It is in reference to this that our Lord teaches us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." If we act feelingly and mercifully towards our fellow creatures, God will act tenderly and compassionately towards us. The merciful, the upright, and the pure, will ever have the God of mercy, uprightness, and purity, to defend and support them.

PSALM 18: 26 With the pure, you will show yourself pure. With the crooked you will show yourself shrewd.

Verse 26

With the froward - עקש ikkesh, the perverse man; he that is crooked in his tempers and ways.

Thou wilt show thyself froward - תתפתל tithpattal, thou wilt set thyself to twist, twine, and wrestle. If he contend, thou wilt contend with him. Thou wilt follow him through all his windings; thou wilt trace him through all his crooked ways; untwist him in all his cunning wiles; and defeat all his schemes of stubbornness, fraud, overreaching, and deceit.

My old Psalter has, With the wiked thow sal be wike. Here the term wicked is taken in its true original sense, crooked, or perverse. With the wiked, the perverse, thou wilt show thyself wike, i.e., perverse; from to draw back, to slide. As he draws back from thee, thou wilt draw back from him. It may, as before intimated, come from to seek for enchantments; leaving God, and going to devils; to act like a witch: but here it must mean as above. The plain import is, "If thou perversely oppose thy Maker, he will oppose thee: no work or project shall prosper that is not begun in his name, and conducted in his fear."

PSALM 18: 27 For you will save the afflicted people, but the haughty eyes you will bring down.

Verse 27

For thou wilt save the afflicted - The afflicted are the humble; and those thou hast ever befriended.

PSALM 18: 28 For you will light my lamp, LORD. My God will light up my darkness.

Verse 28

For thou wilt light my candle - Thou wilt restore me to prosperity, and give me a happy issue out of all my afflictions. By the lamp of David the Messiah may be meant: thou wilt not suffer my family to become extinct, nor the kingdom which thou hast promised me utterly to fail.

PSALM 18: 29 For by you, I advance through a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall.

Verse 29

I have run through a troop - This may relate to some remarkable victory, and the taking of some fortified place, possibly Zion, from the Jebusites. See the account 2Sam 5:6-8 (note).

PSALM 18: 30 As for God, his way is perfect. the LORD's word is tried. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in him.

Verse 30

God, his way is perfect - His conduct is like his nature, absolutely pure.

The word of the Lord is tried - Literally tried in the fire. It has stood all tests; and has never failed those who pleaded it before its author.

He is a buckler - A sure protection to every simple believing soul. We cannot believe his word too implicitly; nor trust too confidently in him.

PSALM 18: 31 For who is God, except the LORD? Who is a rock, besides our God,

Verse 31

For who is God save the Lord? - "For who is Eloah, except Jehovah?" None is worthy of adoration but the self-existent, eternal, infinitely perfect, and all-merciful Being.

Or who is a rock - A fountain emitting continual supplies of grace and goodness.

PSALM 18: 32 the God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect?

Verse 32

God - girdeth me with strength - The girdle was a necessary part of the Eastern dress; it strengthened and supported the loins; served to confine the garments close to the body; and in it they tucked them up when journeying. The strength of God was to his soul what the girdle was to the body. I need not add, that the girdle was also an ornamental part of the dress, and from it the sword was suspended.

And maketh my way perfect - He directs me so that I do not go astray; he blesses me in my undertakings; and by him the issue of my labors is crowned with prosperity.

PSALM 18: 33 He makes my feet like deer's feet, and sets me on my high places.

Verse 33

My feet like hinds' feet - Swiftmess, or speed of foot, was a necessary qualification of an ancient hero. This was of great advantage in pursuing, combating, or escaping from a fallen foe. Ποδας ωκυς Αχιλλευς, "the swiftfooted Achilles," is frequently given by Homer as a most honorable qualification of his hero.

Upon my high places - In allusion to the hinds, antelopes, mountain goats, etc., which frequented such places, and in which they found both food and safety. God frequently preserved the life of David by means of these.

PSALM 18: 34 He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of bronze.

Verse 34

He teacheth my hands to war - The success which I have had in my military exercises I owe to the Divine help. How few of the conquerors of mankind can say so! And how few among those who call themselves Christian warriors dare to say so! War is as contrary to the spirit of Christianity as

murder. Nothing can justify Christian nations in shedding each other's blood! All men should live in peace; all men might live in peace; and the nation that is first to break it is under a heavy curse.

A bow of steel is broken by mine arms - All the versions render this: "Thou hast made my arm like a brazen bow." A bow of steel is out of the question. In the days of David it is not likely that the method of making steel was known. The method of making brass out of copper was known at a very early period of the world; and the ancients had the art of hardening it, so as to work it into the most efficient swords. From his own account David was swift, courageous, and strong.

PSALM 18: 35 You have also given me the shield of your salvation. Your right hand sustains me. Your gentleness has made me great.

Verse 35

The shield of thy salvation - In all battles and dangers God defended him. He was constantly safe because he possessed the salvation of God. Everywhere God protected him. Thy gentleness, ענותך anvathecha, thy meekness or humility. Thou hast enabled me to bear and forbear; to behave with courage in adversity, and with humility in prosperity; and thus I am become great. By these means thou hast multiplied me. The Vulgate reads, Disciplina tua ipsa me docebit; "And thy discipline itself shall teach me." In this sense it was understood by most of the versions. The old Psalter paraphrases thus: Thi chastying suffers me noight to erre fra the end to com.

PSALM 18: 36 You have enlarged my steps under me, My feet have not slipped.

Verse 36

Enlarged my steps - See on Psa 18:19 (note). From the hand of God he had continual prosperity; and while he walked with God no enemy was able to prevail against him. He details his successes in the following verses.

PSALM 18: 37 I will pursue my enemies, and overtake them. Neither will I turn again until they are consumed.

PSALM 18: 38 I will strike them through, so that they will not be able to rise. They shall fall under my feet.

PSALM 18: 39 For you have armed me with strength to the battle. You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.

PSALM 18: 40 You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, that I might cut off those who hate me.

Verse 40

The necks of mine enemies - Thou hast made me a complete conqueror. Treading on the neck of an enemy was the triumph of the conqueror, and the utmost disgrace of the vanquished.

PSALM 18: 41 They cried, but there was no one to save; even to the LORD, but he didn't answer them.

Verse 41

They cited - The Philistines called upon their gods, but there was none to save them.

Even unto the Lord - Such as Saul, Ishbosheth, Absalom, etc., who, professing to worship the true God, called on him while in their opposition to David; but God no more heard them than their idols heard the Philistines.

PSALM 18: 42 Then I beat them small as the dust before the wind. I cast them out as the mire of the streets.

Verse 42

Then did I beat them - God was with him, and they had only an arm of flesh. No wonder then that his enemies were destroyed.

Small as the dust before the wind - This well expresses the manner in which he treated the Moabites, Ammonites, and the people of Rabbah: "He put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron; and made them pass through the brick-kiln," etc. See 2Sam 12:31 (note), and the notes there.

PSALM 18: 43 You have delivered me from the strivings of the people. You have made me the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known shall serve me.

Verse 43

The strivings of the people - Disaffections and insurrections among my own subjects, as in the revolt of Absalom, the civil war of Abner in favor of Ish-bosheth, etc.

The head of the heathen - רֹאשׁ גוֹיִם rosh goyim, "the chief," or "governor, of the nations;" all the circumjacent heathen people; all these were subdued by David, and brought under tribute.

A people whom I have not known - The people whom he knew were those of the twelve tribes; those whom he did not know were the Syrians, Philistines, Idumeans, etc. All these served him, that is, paid him tribute.

PSALM 18: 44 As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me. The foreigners shall submit themselves to me.

Verse 44

As soon as they hear of me - His victories were so rapid and splendid over powerful enemies, that they struck a general terror among the people, and several submitted without a contest.

Strangers shall submit themselves unto me - Some translate this: "The children of the foreign woman have lied unto me." This has been understood two ways: My own people, who have sworn fealty to me, have broken their obligation, and followed my rebellious son. Or, The heathens, who have been brought under my yoke, have promised the most cordial obedience, and flattered me with their tongues, while their hearts felt enmity against me and my government. Nevertheless, even in this unwilling subjection I was secure, my police being so efficient, and my kingdom so strong.

PSALM 18: 45 The foreigners shall fade away, and shall come trembling out of their close places.

Verse 45

The strangers shall fade away - בני נכר beney nechar, the same persons mentioned above. They shall not be able to effect any thing against me; יבולו yibbolu, "they shall fall as the leaves fall off the trees in winter."

And be afraid out of their close places - Those who have formed themselves into banditti, and have taken possession of rocks and fortified places, shall be so afraid when they hear of my successes, that they shall surrender at discretion, without standing a siege. Perhaps all these verbs should be understood in the perfect tense, for David is here evidently speaking of a kingdom at rest, all enemies having been subdued; or, as the title is, when the Lord Had delivered him from all his enemies.

PSALM 18: 46 The LORD lives; and blessed be my rock. Exalted be the God of my salvation,

Verse 46

The Lord liveth - By him alone I have gained all my victories; and he continueth, and will be my Rock, the Source whence I may at all times derive help and salvation. May his name be blessed! May his kingdom be exalted!

PSALM 18: 47 even the God who executes vengeance for me, and subdues peoples under me.

Verse 47

God that avengeth me - The way that I took was after his own heart; therefore he sustained me in it, and did me justice over my enemies.

Subdueth the people under me - He keeps down the spirits of the disaffected, and weakens their hands. They are subdued, and they continue under me; and this is the Lord's doing.

PSALM 18: 48 He rescues me from my enemies. Yes, you lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man.

Verse 48

He delivereth me - That is, he hath delivered me, and continues to deliver me, from all that rise up against me.

The violent man - Saul; this applies particularly to him.

PSALM 18: 49 Therefore I will give thanks to you, LORD, among the nations, and will sing praises to your name.

Verse 49

Will I give thanks unto thee - among the heathen - Quoted by St. Paul, Rom 15:9, to prove that the calling of the Gentiles was predicted, and that what then took place was the fulfillment of that prediction.

But there is a sense in which it applies particularly to David, well observed by Theodoret: "We see," says he, "evidently the fulfillment of this prophecy; for even to the present day David praises the Lord among the Gentiles by the mouth of true believers; seeing there is not a town, village, hamlet, country, nor even a desert, where Christians dwell, in which God is not praised by their singing the Psalms of David."

PSALM 18: 50 He gives great deliverance to his king, and shows loving kindness to his anointed, to David and to his seed, forever more.

Verse 50

Great deliverance giveth he to his king - David was a king of God's appointment, and was peculiarly favored by him. Literally, He is magnifying the salvations of his king. He not only delivers, but follows up those deliverances with innumerable blessings.

Showeth mercy - to David - I have no claim upon his bounty. I deserve nothing from him, but he continues to show mercy.

To his seed - His posterity. So the words זרע zera and σπέρμα, in the Old and New Testament, should be universally translated. The common translation is totally improper, and now more so than formerly, when anatomy was less understood.

For evermore - עַד עוֹלָם ad olam, for ever; through all duration of created worlds. And more - the eternity that is beyond time. This shows that another David is meant, with another kind of posterity, and another sort of kingdom. From the family of David came the man Christ Jesus; his posterity are the genuine Christians; his kingdom, in which they are subjects, is spiritual. This government shall last through all time, for Christianity will continue to prevail till the end of the world: and it will be extended through eternity; for that is the kingdom of glory in which Jesus reigns on the throne of his Father, and in which his followers shall reign with him for ever and ever.

It has already been remarked that this whole Psalm has been understood as relating to the passion and victories of Christ, and the success of the Gospel in the earth. In this way Bishop Horne has understood and paraphrased it; and in the same way it is considered by the ancient Psalter, so often mentioned. Many of the primitive fathers and modern interpreters have taken the same view of it. Those passages which I judged to have this meaning I have pointed out, and have only to add that, as David was a type of Christ, many things spoken of him primarily, refer to our Lord ultimately; but much judgment and caution are required in their application. To apply the whole Psalm in this way appears to me very injudicious, and often derogatory from the majesty of Christ. Let this be my excuse for not following the same track in which many of my predecessors have gone.