

Rhema Christian Center
Tuesday and Wednesday Bible Teaching (September 3, 4, 2024)
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PSALM 144

Introduction

Psalm 144 gives us an opportunity to reflect on the humanity of the figures in the Bible. Sometimes we view them as superhumans, yet they were just like us, experiencing both high and low moments in life. David, the author of this psalm, was no different.

Highs:

1. **Anointing as King:** One of the most significant high points in David's life was his anointing as the future king of Israel by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). This moment marked God's favor and plan for David's life, setting him apart for a special purpose.
2. **Victory Over Goliath:** David's triumph over Goliath (1 Samuel 17) showcased David's faith in God's power. Armed only with a sling and a few stones, David's victory was a clear demonstration of how God can empower those who trust in Him. In this Psalm David praises God for teaching his hands to war.
3. **Establishing His Kingdom:** After years of struggle, David finally became the king of all Israel where he saw the fulfillment of God's promises. (2 Sam. 5),

Lows:

1. **Fleeing from Saul:** One of David's most challenging periods was when he was pursued by King Saul, who sought to kill him out of jealousy (1 Samuel 19-24). During this time, David experienced deep fear and uncertainty, living as a fugitive. This aligns with the plea in this Psalm for deliverance from enemies and distress.
2. **Sin with Bathsheba:** David's sin with Bathsheba and the subsequent consequences (2 Samuel 11-12) represent a profound low in his life. The guilt, the death of his child, and the turmoil in his household that followed were harsh reminders of the consequences of sin. This low point could resonate with the parts of this Psalm where David seeks God's mercy and protection from destructive forces.

3. **Rebellion of Absalom:** The rebellion led by his son Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18) was another painful low. David had to flee Jerusalem, and the conflict that took place was deeply personal and tragic.

As David reflected over his life, he could see the goodness of the Lord. He could see how God blessed him and was still blessing him.

David Praises God as a Protector and Trainer for Battle (Verses 1-2)

Blessed be the LORD my Rock who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle. My lovingkindness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and the One in whom I take refuge, who subdues my people under me.

The word "my" in these verses highlights that the attributes of God are not just abstract concepts or general truths; they are experienced realities for David. It shows his deep trust and confidence in God, whom he views not just as distant, but as a close and personal defender.

God was David's rock, his protection, his lovingkindness and his strength. And just as God was all that to David, He can and will be all that to you if you let him. David's sense was that he belonged to God and God belonged to him.

Let's look at what these attributes might have meant to David and others in the bible.

My Rock

- God is unchanging and very reliable. He provides a solid foundation in the midst of life's uncertainties. When life feels unstable, you can turn to God for consistency and support. (In Psa. 40, David was going through something. **It says, "I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit out of the mud and mire he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."** This verse encourages us to trust in God's ability to lift us out of our own "horrible pit" and to set our feet upon a solid foundation.

My Lovingkindness

- God's love is constant and unconditional, offering us comfort, acceptance, and forgiveness. No matter our circumstances or failures, God's love remains a source of peace and assurance. **Lam. 3:22-23 serves as a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness in our lives. It reassures us that His mercies are new every morning and his compassion is constant and inexhaustible.**

My Fortress and Stronghold

- David sees God as his fortress, a place of safety where he is protected from harm. This implies that David trusts in God's ability to shield him from the dangers he faces. God provides him with a secure and defensible position. (***Psa. 46:1 says, "For God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*** God is always present and all powerful.)

My Deliverer

- David acknowledges God as his deliverer, the one who has saved him from peril and continues to rescue him from his enemies and difficult situations. The enemy is always trying to bring us down one way or the other. I like the scripture that says, ***"When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."*** Isa. 59:19.

My Shield

- This shield illustrates the idea that God's presence is a source of safety and that He acts as a divine protector for those who rely on Him.

David As Warrior

As a warrior king, David fought many military campaigns to establish and secure Israel's borders against various enemies, such as the Philistines, Ammonites, and others. In this Psalm, David thanks God for preparing him for those physical battles, saying, "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle". David fought physical wars with physical instruments--God was his personal trainer. It was a flesh and blood war.

In the New Testament, it is not a physical war but a spiritual war. Eph.6:12 says, ***"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."***

Therefore, it is God who teaches our hands to war and our fingers to battle *because "... the weapons of our warfare are not ^[a]carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. ..."* (2 Cor.10:4-5).

Ephesians 6:10-18 talks about the need for us to "put on the whole armor of God" to stand against spiritual enemies. The Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of a soldier's armor to describe the spiritual resources God provides to us for protection and victory in the spiritual battles we face. The pieces of armor are:

- **Belt of Truth** secures the soldier's armor and holds everything together. In a spiritual sense, truth is the foundation that holds everything in place. We are to be grounded in the truth of God's Word, enabling us to stand firm against the lies and deception of the devil.
- **Breastplate of Righteousness** protects vital organs like the heart. Living in a way that is pleasing to God, guards us against the attacks of sin and corruption. It symbolizes moral integrity and the righteousness given through faith in Christ.
- **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace** -- A soldier needs sturdy shoes to stand firm and move swiftly. The gospel of peace prepares us to stand firm in the peace of Christ, ready to spread the message of peace and reconciliation wherever we go. It symbolizes stability and readiness in spreading the gospel.
- **Shield of Faith** is used to extinguish the fiery arrows of the enemy. Faith acts as a shield by trusting in God's promises and protection. It deflects the doubts, temptations, and accusations that the enemy uses to try to weaken us.
- **Helmet of Salvation** -- The helmet protects the head, symbolizing the mind and thoughts. Salvation provides assurance and protects our mind from doubts about our identity and eternal destiny. It emphasizes the importance of being secure in the knowledge of one's salvation through Christ.
- **Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God** is the only offensive weapon in the armor. The Word of God is a powerful tool for defending against spiritual attacks and advancing the kingdom of God. It is used to combat lies, temptations, and to discern truth from falsehood.
- **Prayer** -- While not depicted as a physical piece of armor, prayer is essential in activating and empowering the armor of God. Through constant communication with God, we receive strength, guidance, and perseverance to stand firm in our spiritual battles.

Each piece of the armor symbolizes a key aspect of spiritual readiness and resilience, emphasizing that the battle we face is not physical but spiritual. Sometimes we lose the battle because we flesh out (resort to physical means).

NOTE that scripture says ***who trains our hands to war***. It is NEVER “who *trained our hands for war*,” but always in the present: We are constantly in training. We must make it a practice to sharpen our tools and keep them ready by praying, studying and meditating on God’s word.

We are like a Passing Shadow - The Frailty of Humanity (Verses 3-4)

LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? “Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow. (We are here today and gone today).

These two verses deal with the frailty of man. David had seen a lot of dying men, had killed a lot of men in war and was well familiar with death.

So here, he is expressing amazement that God, who is so great and powerful, would care about human beings who are small and insignificant compared to God. In **Psalm 8:3-5**, David expresses the greatness of God to man in another way.

The scripture says, ***“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.”***

We were created for a purpose. Rev. 4:11 says we were created for God’s glory which means our purpose is to glorify God and to showcase His greatness, His power and His goodness in the earth.

We are valuable to God. Life is fleeting, so it’s best we make the right decisions as it pertains to life.

Request for God’s Powerful Presence Verses 5-6

“Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down; Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Flash forth lightning and scatter them; Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them.

In these verses David shifts his focus from our human frailty to God's overwhelming power. Despite our smallness, David confidently calls upon God to act mightily on his behalf. He asks God to 'part the heavens' and 'come down,' to 'touch the mountains' so they smoke, and to 'send forth lightning' to scatter his enemies.

This transition shows us that while we may be small and our lives brief, we have access to the infinite power of God, who is more than capable of intervening in our lives in powerful ways. It's a reminder that no matter how insignificant we may feel, God's strength and presence are always available to us."

Just as David asked God to demonstrate His might and overcome enemies, we can apply this to our own lives by asking God to:

- **Intervene in our struggles:** Whether we're facing personal challenges, injustice, or overwhelming situations, we can ask God to step in and bring His power to bear on our behalf.
- **Bring justice and peace:** We can pray for God to act in our world today, bringing justice where there is injustice, peace where there is conflict, and order where there is chaos.
- **Provide protection and deliverance:** Just as the psalmist sought protection from enemies, we can seek God's protection and deliverance from dangers, fears, or spiritual battles we face.

In essence, this passage reminds us that we can rely on God's strength when we feel powerless and trust Him to act in mighty ways in our lives and the world around us.

Deliverance from Deceitful Enemies (Verses 7-8)

Stretch out Your hand from above; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of foreigners, whose mouth speaks lying words, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

A plea for God to rescue him from great waters and the hands of foreigners who speak lies and whose right hands are false.

David is asking God for help and protection against powerful enemies who lie and deceive. An example was when he was running from Saul.

David went to Nob, where Ahimelech the priest lived. He asked Ahimelech for food and weapons, but he didn't reveal to Ahimelech that he was fleeing from Saul. Ahimelech, not knowing the full situation, helped David by giving him the consecrated bread and the sword of Goliath.

However, Doeg the Edomite, who was Saul's chief herdsman, happened to be there and saw what happened.

So he reports to Saul, ***“who was standing with Saul's officials that, ‘I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech . . . Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine.’”*** This was only partially true. He lied.

As a result, Saul became enraged by Doeg's report, ordered the execution of Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob. When Saul's other men refused to carry out the order, Doeg willingly killed 85 priests and then attacked the town of Nob, killing men, women, children, and animals (1 Samuel 22:18-19).

Jer. 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Doeg was a liar, deceiver and betrayer.

Commitment to Praise God (Verse 9 – 10)

In verses 9-10, David responds to his request for help with a commitment to praise God through song. He says, ***'I will sing a new song to You, O God; on a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You,'*** acknowledging that ***it is God who gives victory to kings and delivers him from his enemies.*** This shift from calling out for help to confidently praising God shows us that faith includes both asking for God's help and believing that He will answer, leading us to praise Him even in the midst of our struggles."

Prayer for Deliverance

Verse 11: “Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouth speaks lying words, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

David describes these people as liars ("mouths are full of lies") and as being untrustworthy ("right hands are deceitful"), meaning they act with bad intentions and cannot be trusted. He is asking God to protect him from their harmful actions and to keep him safe from their deceit. Basically, David is seeking God's protection from people who might harm him through lies and trickery.

Vision of Future Blessings

In verses 12-14, David turns his attention to what life could look like when God's protection and blessings are fully realized

Verses 12-14: *“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; That our daughters may be as pillars, sculptured in palace style; that our barns may be full, supplying all kinds of produce; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields; that our oxen may be well laden; that there be no breaking in or going out; that there be no outcry in our streets.*

David envisions a society blessed by God, with strong and healthy families, abundant crops, and well-protected livestock, symbolizing overall well-being and divine favor.

Today, these verses still ring true because we desire the same for our children.

- **Strong and healthy families** where children grow up secure, strong, and well-nurtured in the things of God.
- **Abundant provision** where everyone's needs are met, and there is prosperity in work and resources.
- **Peace and security** in society, with no conflicts, no oppression, and no distress or suffering in the community.

Blessing of a Happy People (Verse 15)

“Happy are the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!”

This verse expresses the idea that true happiness and blessedness come from having the Lord as your God. It's a reminder that while material prosperity and peace are good, the ultimate source of joy and contentment is in the relationship with God. David is affirming that those who trust in the Lord and live under His care are truly blessed.

Sources:

The Book of Psalms: The Smart Guide to the Bible Series by Douglas Connelly and Larry Richards, Ph.D.

Prayer, Praise and Promises by Warren Wiersbe