

Psalm 34: Living the Good Life

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Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Let's just bow our heads in prayer as we stand, please. Father, you know what our hearts are really like. You know, Father, the things that we say to ourselves.

You know the inclination of our hearts. And, Father, you know how, especially for Christians, we often live in denial of this or pretend to be something different than we actually are.

But we give you thanks and praise, Father, that you know each of us perfectly and completely, and still you love us. And so, Father, we ask that your word would come into our hearts and that you would rule in our hearts through your word, that the gospel would become more deeply real to our heart and would form the inclinations of our heart and how we speak to ourselves so that we might live free and whole and beautiful lives to your glory.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I guess Jono mentioned the couple of people who are sort of trained on the slide.

Neither of them are here today, so we have somebody wonderfully stepping in. But you might not see some of the scripture text up on the screen when I refer to it.

[1 : 28] But it's all just a good reason, a good, not a good excuse, a good reason to have your own Bibles with you. And because we're going to be looking at the Bible. And if you're a guest here, of course, there's the screen available.

There's also always some free Bibles over here that you're welcome to come and take for the service or take home if you want. We've had a couple of weeks of very, very hot weather.

And after a couple of days of hot weather, I went into one of the coffee shops, which is that I'm a regular at. And I wondered why the doors were open on such a hot day.

But as soon as I stepped inside the coffee shop, I understood why the doors were open because the air conditioning wasn't working. And I saw the poor barista. And she had, like, literally sweat just running down her forehead and looking very sort of pale from the excessive heat.

And I said, how's it going? And her response was, well, I'm living the life. I'm living the life. And we're all really familiar with that phrase, I'm living the life. And usually we use it in situations like that when we're doing something which is the opposite of the good life.

[2 : 41] But behind that comment, of course, is that if we really could, what we really know that we should be doing, we're trying to do, or if we were more successful, we would do is that we would be living the good life.

And the Bible text that we're going to look at today, believe it or not, actually asks that question about what it means to live the good life.

And it's a little bit surprising. Even Christians often, when they want to understand how to live the good life, don't actually think that the Bible is going to give them the type of wisdom that they need.

But we should. Partially we're just affected by our culture. And for many people outside the walls, and maybe for some of you here, or maybe for some of you not that long ago, the last place you would have looked to get some advice about what the good life is like.

Well, actually, I think one of the things that's going to surprise us is that this psalm, it actually has many of the same aspects that our culture would have about what the good life is.

[3 : 44] But it's sort of subversive to how we think about the good life. And in fact, actually, it both subverts what we think of the good life, but it actually gives us what we really want at a deeper level.

So it both fulfills our desires and it subverts our desires so it can fulfill our desires. Even though many people in our world would never think of looking to the Bible for some insight about what to live as the good life.

Well, let's look. If you have your Bibles, we're looking at Psalm 34. We're in the summer of the Psalms. And right at the very heart, the center of the psalm, in verse 12, that's where we're going to begin, where this question is asked.

Look what it says, verse 12 of Psalm 34. What man or woman is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

Now, what this is, it's a bit of a poetic question, but it really is saying, don't we all want to live a good life? And what the good life is going to look like, of course, is that it's going to be, we desire more and more of life.

[4 : 56] We want to have many days and we want to have those many days of long life characterized by goodness, the good life. Very, very obvious. If a teenager was praying that they would live the good life and they died in three months, they would think that they hadn't lived the good life.

They don't want to just live the good life for a couple of months and then die. They'd like to have a long life, which is a good life. And that's the question. So who wants to figure out how to have more life, more life and longer days and see good?

Really, who wants to live the good life? Now, it's very curious that this question is being asked in this particular psalm, because the context within which the psalm was written would suggest that it couldn't possibly be a meditation upon the good life, or at least not without being sort of a complaint. In fact, you would expect the person who wrote the psalm to be like the barista in the coffee shop where the air conditioning wasn't working.

And I asked them how it was going and they said, I'm living the life. If you have your Bibles, I don't think it's up on the screen. The psalm begins with a little superscript. And this is a bit of a side thing.

[6 : 09] Some Christians don't know this. Like in my version of the Bible, there's a little thing by the editor that names the psalm, Taste and See That the Lord is Good. But that's just written by the editor.

That's just, you know, if a couple of us were putting together the Bible and we wanted to try to give the psalm a title, we'd do that because it helps modern readers. It's not the Bible. It's just the editors. But underneath it, there's this little thing.

And it says of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech so that he drove him out and he went to wait. Jono read it for us, wherever Jono is.

I thought he was sitting there. He's somewhere over, somewhere else. He's at the back. And that actually is part of the Bible. It's not just done by the editor. It's actually part of the Bible.

And in fact, if you're ever talking to a Jewish friend about a psalm, you're going to maybe get a bit confused with the verses because in the Jewish Bible, that bit that I just read of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech so that he drove him out and he went away, that's actually verse one for them.

[7 : 15] And so what we count as verse one would be for their verse two. It's why if you look, sometimes you'll see that in the Hebrew Bible, they almost always seem to have one verse more than us. That's just the reason.

They actually include that as a verse. But here's the point. Now, David is the person who wrote this psalm, and he's asking the question about who would like to live the good life. But he's asking this after he's had, in the midst of having what all of us would say is a completely and utterly terrible life. He'd risen from obscurity to being sort of in the pinnacle of the kingdom. And at the pinnacle of the kingdom, the king became massively jealous of him and decided that he was going to kill David.

And David had to flee. And while he was fleeing and being pursued by the king, he decided that he had to get out of the country where the king was going to capture him and kill him. So he went to a neighboring country thinking he would have some sanctuary there.

But when he gets to the neighboring country, the king of that country gets intimidated by him. And his advisors say, listen, isn't this the guy who's a massive military campaigner and he's just come here to take us over?

[8 : 29] And David was worried that he was going to die. So what David did is he pretended to be insane. He pretended that he was psychotic and having a psychotic episode.

And it describes that in another part of what we call the Old Testament, our Jewish friends called the Tanakh, that he let drool come down his beard and he started gnawing the door frames and stuff like that.

And as a result of that, Abimelech says, listen, don't I have enough crazy and insane people in my country? Why do I need another one? Like, kick him out of the country.

And so David is writing this after he's had to pretend he's psychotic. The king of Israel is trying to kill him. The king of Gath, if he realized that David wasn't insane, would kill him.

He's homeless, separated from his family, running for his life. And he asks the question, not ironically, he doesn't say, I'm living the life.

[9 : 26] He says, who wants to live the good life? Now, right off the bat, if we realize this, it should pique our interest. Because when Canadians talk about living the good life, one of the big problems we have when we Canadians talk about the good life is we can't conceive of how the good life can coexist with hard times.

Many of you have probably seen a woman who went by the name of Nightbird in America's Got Talent and a conversation she had with Simon Cowell when she was on America's Got Talent to sing. And if you haven't seen it, it's really worth Googling, not Dream Church, After Church, Google Nightbird, America's Got Talent. And it's her first time before them.

And no spoiler alert or anything like that. She's big, beaming smile. She looks very skinny. And they're asking her how she is.

And then she reveals that she has cancer throughout her body and has only a 2% chance of survival. And the whole audience is completely and utterly shocked.

[10 : 40] Now, by the way, Nightbird's a Christian, which isn't obvious in this. If you do some other searches, you discover that she's a Christian. And she says something to the effect of, after there's been this back and forward about her situation and everything, and she said, you know, we can't wait until we don't have any hard times.

Basically, she says something like this. We can't wait until we don't have any hard times before we decide to be happy. And she says it looking right at Simon Cowell. It actually moves. You see him having to fight tears when she says it.

You see, because in our culture, we all want the good life, but we can't conceive of how the good life can exist in adversity and hard times. For Simon Cowell and all of the judges, it's impossible for them to get their mind around the fact that she has only a 2% chance of survival for cancer and yet had a sense of peace and a sense of joy.

And if you hear her song, she knocks it out of the park. She really does. Just knocks it out of the park. So, it's curious then that David, when he should be being ironic and saying that I'm far from the good life, he's going to describe the good life while he's homeless and being pursued by the authorities and separated from his family.

Now, it's even more shocking if we see just went before this question. So, if you have your Bibles, look at what he says. So, verse 12 is the question. What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

[12 : 26] But look what actually is just before it. And in the structure of the psalm, verses 1 to 10 is testimony and then 11 to 22 is teaching, but it's the very center of the psalm. And look at the question.

O come, O children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good?

Now, isn't that really weird? Like, in fact, before I studied this psalm, I think this is the first time I've ever preached on the psalm.

I had never really struck me the connection between the fear of the Lord and living the good life. In fact, actually, for many people, even for Christians, there's a large number of Christians who somehow think that once you know Jesus and have the Holy Spirit, that you'll no longer fear the Lord.

But that's actually not correct. The New Testament teaches us to fear the Lord. But for many others, this phrase is everything that's wrong about Christianity, that it shouldn't be the fear of the Lord, but the love of the Lord, or the peace of the Lord, or the joy of the Lord, and that the fear of the Lord somehow is a discordant note.

[13 : 41] It's something that goes against that. And yet before... But here he's connecting the fear of the Lord to giving the good life.

Now, I don't know where you all are with Jesus. I'm going to share with you something. If you wouldn't understand yourself as a follower of Jesus, or if you're watching this online and you

wouldn't think of yourself as a follower of Jesus, I want to share with you something that you might not know.

And that is this, that even for Christians, we struggle with a type of whispering that goes on inside of our head. And the whispering that goes on inside of our head first began in Genesis chapter 3, where the serpent, the devil, the dragon, the devil, the serpent, the worm, is speaking to Adam and Eve.

And what he starts to whisper in their ears, and that reverberates even today for those of us who would consider ourselves Christians, the whispering is, if you want to live the good life, you have to not be in the center of God's will.

You need to be outside of God's will. Just a tiny bit. You don't want to be really crazy. But just be careful. You'll get hurt if you're in the center of God's will.

[15:11] Because to live the good life, you've got to be a little bit outside of God's will. And that's the whisper in the heart of every Christian, which we have to fight.

And it's the whisper I would actually say for every human being on the planet. Be careful about the triune God and Jesus. Don't think that by being in the center of Jesus' will, you'll really experience the good life.

You know, don't think about sex and money. You've got to be a little bit outside. And that's part of the reason why you see for most of us, like before I became a Christian, I didn't want Christianity to be true.

But it's a constant whisper in the human heart. And this beginning challenges this. Look again at what it says in verse 11. Come, O children, listen to me.

I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Like really right in there with the Lord. I'm going to explain what it means more towards the end. But what, what, what, I'm going to teach you the fear of the Lord.

[16:21] Why should you be interested in the fear of the Lord? Well, what man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good? Like, don't you all want to live the good life? So you've got to know about the fear of the Lord if you want to live the good life.

Who talks like that? Well, the Bible talks like that. And I think it's wise. Look how wise it actually is. And it's wiser than how we think as Canadians.

Look at what he says first in verse 13. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.

So verse 13 again. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. And seek peace and pursue it. A couple of years ago, I've used this.

Some of you might have heard this illustration before. But a couple of years ago, I think it was in the National Post or the Citizen, something like that. They were interviewing a famous actress. And it was a very, you know, like a puff piece actress sort of showing her wisdom and her insight and stuff like that.

[17:26] And, you know, she had some wisdom and insight about stuff. But one of the questions they asked her is if there was one thing you could change that would make your life way better, what would it be? And the answer was there would be no guilt.

I'd have no guilt. And the interview went on and it obviously took that to being a very, very glowing and insightful type of thing. Like, what a wise thing to ask. But what they didn't realize is this.

She just asked to be a psychopath. She just asked to be a sociopath. People who don't feel guilt.

That's what we call them. Psychopaths or sociopaths. And it never struck her or the interviewer that her idea of what the good life would be is to be a psychopath.

Well, obviously, it's not going to be. That can't be the good life. Right? Like, that's the opposite of a good life. It's actually one of those things that doesn't matter if you're progressive or right wing or whatever.

[18:32] If you want to describe the opposite of a good life, you talk about psychopaths and sociopaths. And yet, you see, when the Bible here says, in verse 13, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit, it's talking about your inner life.

You know, I know most of us at times, some of us way too often, we speak, speak, speak, speak, then think. Right? And really, part of the good life is think, then speak.

And if we could do that more often, like think, think more deeply, then speak, like we'd have a lot less conflict in our lives and have a better life. So it's really not just so much talking about what we say. It's talking about our inner life, what's going on in our inner life.

And what it's saying is that one of the things that the fear of the Lord does is it helps us to have a proper inner life in regards to the good and in regards to truth.

Now, you see, that's actually probably what the actress wanted. You see how all of a sudden, remember I said how one of the things that this psalm does, it both, it subverts what we think is wise, but actually fulfills what we want to have.

[19 : 47] And what she's really trying to express is I'd really rather have a whole good relationship with the truth and a whole good relationship with what's true.

I mean, with truth and goodness. That's what she'd really like to have. But she doesn't understand that if she got rid of guilt, she'd become a psychopath and a sociopath, the opposite of a person who's going to live the good life.

And you see that the other next part of it is just as wise. Look what it says. If you want to have the good life, you have to understand the fear of the Lord. What will the fear of the Lord do? It's verse 14. Turn away from evil and do good.

Seek peace and pursue it. Now it's talking about what you do and what you pursue. So the first part's talking about your inner life. The next part's talking about what you do and also talking about what you're pursuing, where you're headed.

And it's very, very interesting because it says that we're going to turn away from evil and do good. And it's not just turning away from evil and it's not just doing good. It's doing both. And if we think about it, it's very, very wise.

[20 : 56] That it's not maybe like if you go, let's say that same barista, and I came in and she snapped at me and she was really grumpy at me. And I might just get on my hind legs and say, one moment, she can't snap at me like that.

I can snap way better back at her. And I do. And I give it to her. Right? And then I walk away and I get my coffee and she's even in a worse mood. And I'm in a worse mood. Or maybe I'm a little bit happy that I really got her with a zinger.

But afterwards, I'm really thinking to myself, you know what really would have been far, far better is to say a word of kindness to her and encouragement. See, it's not only that I shouldn't have just blasted her with my tongue, it's that I should have used my tongue in some way that was actually going to do good for her.

Isn't that more like what we want with the good life? That's exactly what we want with the good life. And this other thing about seeking peace and pursuing it, well, every time you see the word peace in the Old Testament, almost every time, we tend to misinterpret it by interpreting it in emotional terms.

And the Bible doesn't mean it in emotional terms. The Bible is referring to something structural about us in our life. So it would be as if my youngest son and my youngest daughter, let's say, one's an engineer, the other's an artist, and they decided they were going to do some type of a sculpture in a place like this.

[22 : 22] And they get some others to help them. And one of the things they decide to do in a place like this is they're going to make a very, very complicated mobile. You know, mobile, there's the sticks and the little, I know, usually you see them over cribs and, you know, little bunny rabbits or butterflies or angels or something that sort of moves around.

But let's say they're going to do actually a very, very complicated one so that on one end, they're going to get the right type of steel. They're going to do all the mathematical calculations to make sure that the rods are able to hold it and the chain that's holding it to the ceiling is at the right distance.

And they might have a very large thing, let's say, like a refrigerator at one end, but they have it so beautifully balanced that the other end of that same piece of stick are like three little delicate glass butterflies.

And they've been so balanced that the whole thing holds it. And they do a whole pile of things like that at different heights, of different weights and different lengths. And you'd come in and you'd go, wow. Wow.

Like that looks remarkable and beautiful. The balance and the harmony is really quite something. That is what the Bible means by peace. You see, it's the difference between...

[23 : 37] You know, in war movies, you see guys, they're getting shot and they're all in pain. And they're still in pain. Maybe they're even dying, but the medic gives them morphine.

Well, they have some peace, but they're bleeding out and dying. It hasn't actually dealt with the problem. It's just given them a feeling. And you see, in our culture, inadvertently, when we think of the good life, we think of those feelings.

But really what we're thinking of is we have a druggie, stoner image of the good life. You go, whoa, whoa, whoa. Well, actually, that's actually what you're longing for.

Like, ironically. Like, tragically. And the Bible is pointing to something better, that the fear of the Lord is going to deal with your relationship inside of yourself to goodness and also to the truth. And it's also going to deal with your outer life of not only helping you turn away from evil, but also doing good things. And it's also going to involve you in a pursuit of that type of harmony and balance in your life.

[24 : 45] There's going to be really, really huge, massive things like death and heartache and also other massive things like marriage. And there's going to be the small little daily pleasures, like just really how unbelievably delicious freshly made blueberry scones are with butter and a cup of coffee.

It's all the small things and the big things. And that's what we want. And that's what the Bible says. The fear of the Lord is going to help you and train you to pursue.

And we end up tending to think of things in terms of a stoner mentality or sociopathic mentality. And then the fear of the Lord talks about something even more astounding.

Something that if you're watching this and you don't know Christians, most Christians are terrified about talking in terms of things like heaven and hell. But the psalm, look what it says right next in verses 15 and 16.

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. And the face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

[26 : 07] Now, here's the thing. He's still talking about teaching of the fear of the Lord. And now he brings in the presence of the triune God. And he uses it in terms of the metaphor of the face.

And he said, you know, the fear of the Lord, as you start to walk on it and enter into the path, what you see as you walk on the path and at the end of the path is that the face of the Lord is toward you. is toward you. You know, is toward you. It's like we just had my son Jesse visiting us.

And he has a, you know, his youngest is Bronwyn. And, you know, she's at that age that she's, you know, chattering and wanting this and wanting that and wanting that. And Jesse's trying to have a conversation.

But there's the moment when the dad, right, his face is toward her. And he looks at her. His face is toward her.

[27 : 15] His ears are toward her. He's with her. He sees her. He's listening to her. And she knows it. The other option, those of you who have ever counseled somebody who've been terribly, terribly, terribly, terribly betrayed, terribly abused.

And maybe they've been terribly abused by their father or their mother. And you mention their father or their mother to them. And their face, their face is against them.

They don't want to look. You can see by the setting of the jaw, the setting of the mouth, the setting of the eyes. You can see the anger.

You can see that there there's not going to be any love towards them. And the image here, which is painted, I mean, we tend to think of things like heaven and hell and all of that, but it's actually painting of just a very, very stark image that any of us who know how faces work, that we can say that there's a way of life that is lived and ends with the Lord looking at you and seeing you and hearing you.

and there's affection and there's fatherly concern and desire where there's a face that's hardened and turned away.

[29 : 05] The fear of the Lord walking it is a walk with a father in heaven who looks at you like that. And it's a walk that ends with him looking at you like that.

And to walk outside of the fear of the Lord is to walk with the father looking at you in that other way and it ends with that. But if you think about it for a second, you see, if we're going to actually live the good life, often when we think of the good life in Canada, we just think of, well, we just think of endless repose.

We just think of endless consumer goods. We just think of one day after another with blue skies and sunny skies and there can't be affliction and there can't be hardship and we have to somehow or another, if we're to live the good life, be completely and utterly insulated and inoculated like that.

But if you think about it for a second, that type of a picture that we as Canadians desire when we sort of imagine the good life of just endless consumption and good clothes and good weather and no hardship and no adversity, in science fiction movies where there's a dystopia, they're the bad guys.

They're the cruel, heartless people up in the sky while the people down on earth are suffering with the pollution and no food.

[30 : 38] That's, you know, if it's in the train, it's the front of the train where they're all like that and the back of the train where people are suffering and at the heart of us what we actually desire is a good life where we're the bad guy and we go, oh no, but no, that's what you're desiring and what's it like, you know, and then, and then, and those other types of science fiction movies where there are people like that, what happens to them?

They start to despair because a day after, blue sky after blue sky and all your food being met and it doesn't actually feel your heart with meaning, it feels you with despair.

You know, there's a very telling phrase in the book of Revelation which describes so many things in science fiction movies where they, they describe, it describes a time where they long for death and cannot have it.

That's all the old vampire movies, the despair, not the new ones where they try to make them look cool. It's all part of trying to rehabilitate evil, rehabilitate the serpent.

You see, all of a sudden we realize that one moment, life, if it's going to be good, we're going to have the right relationship internally to goodness and truth and we're going to have the right relationship, we're going to turn away from evil, we're going to do good and we're going to speak, we're not going to just seek superficial stoner types of peace but actually get our life in some type of balance and harmony and have those big things and those small things and we're going to have some type of a direction to our life and you know, one of the things which is so wonderful about this description, it made me think of that great old hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness and this explains to those outside the Christian faith the emotional power and beauty of a person who's been captivated by the gospel.

[32 : 26] Listen how it goes, pardon for sin and a peace that endureth thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow blessings all mine with ten thousand beside.

Now, the psalm continues and you might wonder, George, you're just some type of special person that knows how to fear the Lord or you're saying that all these things happen, you see, and you still haven't, well, look how the psalm continues.

Now, one of the things which is really shocking about this psalm, we're going to continue reading it at verse 17, is that Jesus shows up in this psalm that was written a thousand years before Jesus. I'm not making it up, Jesus shows up in the psalm.

Look at verse 17 and see what happens. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Now, just as an aside, you see, we Canadians can't think of how the good life can be with hardship, but if we imagine a world of a good life without hardship, we've actually imagined ourselves in the bad guise of all science fiction movies, dystopias, and here we're saying that that great peace, that huge mobile that God is going to form in your life through the fear of the Lord, that has the room in there for the hard things and the good things.

[33 : 58] It's maybe not just a fridge, but a terrible burden on one end and it has the scones with blueberry and butter and coffee at the other end and it's all overseen by God and you don't, you have his own dear presence to cheer and to guide, but Jesus still hasn't shown up.

Look what happens next, verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones.

Not one of them is broken. If you don't know your Bible very well, in the Gospel of John, Jesus dies on the cross and because it's the Sabbath, the other two men haven't died and the religious authorities ask that the Roman authorities would break the bones of the two men so that they would die and they wouldn't have to be up on the Sabbath dying.

And so the soldiers go and break both bones and the men die, but they come to Jesus and Jesus is already dead. And the centurion takes a spear and pierces it into Jesus' side and out of the side comes blood and water and they don't break his bones.

And John says, this fulfills the prophecy that says, he keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken. Jesus shows up in the psalm in his crucifixion.

[35 : 30] He keeps all his crucifixion. See, my only hope to learn how to fear the Lord isn't because I'm specific, I'm very righteous or I'm specifically holy or religious or anything like that.

I mean, what the fear of the Lord text is here showing us too is, you know what? You need redemption by Jesus. You need redemption. David wrote of what he did not know.

Why did he throw that line in unless he was inspired by the Holy Spirit? And God was going to show us this deep promise that God would do something for us in the person of his son where he does not weigh our merits but he pardons our offenses.

Where the justice and the judgment that I deserve falls on him and the grace that he deserves is given to me.

Like it even continues, affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

[36 : 43] If you take refuge in Jesus, the condemnation you deserve is on him. The grace you don't deserve is given to you.

Listen to how this theme is taken up and explained in Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 verse 1 declares, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that's remarkable and it goes on and talks more about it but listen to how Romans 8 ends in verse 31. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[37 : 42] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No! In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen! That is my hope in life and death. That is where the fear of the Lord begins and where it will end.

You see, the fear of the Lord at its heart is a deep knowledge of the difference between God and you and where you begin and where you end.

[38 : 46] And you can't know that knowledge unless you're also Christ has worked in your heart to create peace between you and God. And you see, brothers and sisters, that's why it is that we should pray that we will learn to fear the Lord.

It should be part of your daily prayer. Lord, help me today to grow in the fear of you. You know, when you pray that prayer, you're asking that he would start to heal your inner life in terms of goodness and truth.

You're asking them to heal how you treat people and turn away from evil and pursue that which is good. You're asking him to help you to allow him to make that balance in your life that you need.

You're asking that you might know that he is God and you're not so that you understand and experience his face looking towards you as you live your life, as you deal with hard things, as you deal with good things and know that at the end of the story that how the story ends is that you are redeemed and he looks at you with love and affection and welcomes you.

And you see, I haven't read the beginning of the psalm. It's only if you understand how the psalm ends that you can understand the outrageous promises of the first ten verses. Let's read them and we're going to stand and pray.

[40 : 04] Listen how, you see, it's only if you understand the end that you understand the beginning. Listen how it goes at the beginning. Psalm 34, verse 1. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me

from all my fears.

Those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angels of the Lord encamp around those who fear him and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

[41 : 03] come, oh children, listen to me. Come, oh children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. I invite you to stand.

For those of you who are in Christ, we're going to pray that the Lord will help us to grow into fear the Lord. Why wouldn't we want that? Why wouldn't we want that? And for those who maybe have been far from the Lord for a long time, this is your day to renew your commitment to him.

Every time we gather around the Lord's table, it's a time to renew our commitment to Christ, to maybe say to him, you know, I've had, Father, I've had a really terrible, in terms of my walk with you, I've been absolutely terrible for days, weeks, months, years.

I thank you that you never let me go. I recommit to you. And for those of you who are outside of the faith, all, you know, I don't have, there's no formula, just call out to him, say, Lord, I want the good life as is described in Psalm 34, and I give myself to you, and thank you that you'll take me.

I give myself to you. That's all you need to pray. Just say to him, Psalm 34, I want that. I surrender. I take refuge in you that that might be my life, that I might grow in that direction.

[42 : 30] Let's pray. Father, we give you thanks and praise that your word is wiser than the world, and we give you thanks and praise that even though there is a part of us at times, sometimes very loud, that whispers that if we really want to live the good life, we have to step outside of your will, we ask, Lord, that you, in your mercy, that you would help us to not only shut that out, but that rather than listen to that whisper, that we would listen to your word, that we would listen to Psalm 34, that we would listen to verses 11 and 12, that that might, Father, that your word might be that which speaks to us very, very deep within us, that we might learn to memorize your word and have that word preached to us that we might live out of it, and we give you thanks and praise that you want us to know you deeply and to know that you are God and that we are not and know where we begin and end and where you begin and end and to know that is good and we ask, Father, we ask,

Lord, that you would help us to grow in that, that you would help us to grow in the fear of the Lord, that we might know your presence and your promise and your comfort as we deal with the good times and the bad and that we might know that Christ is our hope of glory and that in you your face is towards us and that when we finally see you face to face, we will see you smile.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen.