

AM Psalm 34 Let us exalt his name together

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 January 2023

Preacher: Rev Jonathan Watson

[0 : 00] Turn with me in the scriptures to Psalm 34, which can be found on page 556 of the Pew Bible. Psalm 34.

It's always good when we read the Psalms to read the superscription to the Psalm, which is part of the Hebrew Old Testament, so it's part of God's Word.

And in the superscription we read of David. When he changed his behavior before Abimelech, otherwise known as Achish, king of the Philistines, so that he drove him out and he went away.

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. O 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.

[1 : 17] 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 angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack.

The young lions suffer wanton hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. 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? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.

[2 : 19] Turn away from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears toward their cry.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 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. 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. 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.

[3 : 29] Amen. Let us pray. Please turn with me to Psalm 34. As you do so, let me say, it's a good thing to look back and to remember.

But it's especially good to reflect on how the Lord has been good to us in the land of the living. The Bible is full of occasions when people look back and reflect, and give thanks and praise to God.

You remember how the Jews who returned from captivity in Babylon, looked back to remember the great deliverance that God had wrought for them.

It was not merely Cyrus, the king of Persia, who had released them by royal command, but in their understanding, it was the Lord in whose hand the heart of this mighty king was.

And so they say in Psalm 126, When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

[4 : 42] Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us.

We are glad. The Lord has done great things for us. I want to turn your attention to the 34th Psalm, and to take as my text the words of verse 3, O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

These are the words of David, written in a psalm that commemorates a remarkable and great deliverance that God the Lord wrought for him when he was humbled by circumstances, when he was downtrodden, as we might say, and utterly friendless, and all alone in the world.

Full of fears, or perhaps more accurately, full of terrors, because that's what the word fears really signifies in our passage.

His life, we could say, humanly speaking, hung by a thread. He was, again as we say, colloquially, between a rock and a hard place.

[6 : 12] The rock was King Saul, who sought his life to kill him. And the hard place was Achish, or Abimelech, the king of the Philistine city of Gath, into whose territory David had fled to escape the persecutions of King Saul.

Achish's men recognized David, the thorn in the side of the Philistines. And they brought him to their king.

Now what would Achish do? Would he kill him there and then, and put an end once and for all to this troubler of Philistia?

Or would he extradite him to Israel, and into the hands of the power-crazed tyrant King Saul, so that he might put him to a grisly end?

Well, in a moment of blind panic, in terror of his life, David pretends madness.

[7 : 23] He pretends to be a lunatic, and he foams at the mouth and makes strange scratchings and marks on the doors of the king's court. The record is in 1 Samuel chapter 21, I think.

And the ruse proves successful. Achish is disgusted by David's behavior, and he says to his courtiers, Do I not have enough madmen of my own that you have to bring this madmen to me as well?

And so the king drives him out of his royal presence and sends him away, as we're informed in the superscription of Psalm 34.

Now on reflection, the escapee, David, realizes that God's sovereign hand was over these events.

And though David's behavior, this feigning of madness, was not something that he was proud of or that is to be condoned, it was sinful, it was unbelieving, it was faithless.

[8 : 39] Nevertheless, in the words of this psalm, the eyes of the Lord were towards this righteous man and his ears toward his cry.

When this righteous man cried for help, the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his troubles. Broken-hearted and crushed in spirit, though David was at this point in his life, he found, by experience, that the Lord was nevertheless near him.

And though many were the afflictions of this righteous man, the Lord delivered him out of them all. The Lord kept all of his bones. Not one of them was broken.

Yes, the Lord had redeemed the life of his servant and this servant of God who took refuge in the Lord was not condemned. And so, my friends, is it any wonder that this psalm begins with such marvelous words of heartfelt praise?

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

[10 : 01] 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.

Why? For what reason? Because I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

My friends, as we periodically look back over the years of our lives, do we not want to take up these words of thanksgiving and praise?

To say together to one another, Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together because God has been good to you.

God has been good to me. God has been good to us. And it is only natural for those who have tasted and seen this goodness in action to say to others, Taste and see that the Lord is good.

[11 : 16] Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. What we have found out by personal experience, the richest blessings that we have come to know and personally enjoy, we want others.

We want you to taste and to experience and to enjoy along with us. And I want us to dwell for a few moments this morning on the words of verse 3.

And I want us to think about these words in the light of three very simple and straightforward questions. Question 1. Who is to be magnified and exalted?

It's a simple question with a very straightforward answer. It is the Lord. The Lord is to be magnified and his name is to be exalted.

Now when we remember the incident that forms the background to this psalm, we might be tempted to think, wow, what a great man David must have been.

[12 : 33] What a remarkable piece of quick thinking and cunning he displayed when he was in that tight spot in the land of Israel's implacable enemies, the Philistines.

And remember where he was exactly, he was in Gath. What was significant about Gath? It was the hometown of that famous great giant and warrior Goliath.

And who killed Goliath with a sling and a stone? It was this man standing now in our midst, helpless, friendless, powerless.

But David completely fooled old Achish pulling the wool so magnificently over his eyes.

He escaped from his clutches and he lived to fight another day. And in so doing, that piece of ingenuity acting like a madman in the presence of the king of Gath ensured, guaranteed the ultimate defeat of the Philistine armies and the avenging of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David's best friend.

[14 : 00] But friends, on reflection, true reflection, it wasn't David's quick thinking on his feet. It wasn't his courage, far from it, that was the cause of his deliverance from what was almost certain death.

No, it wasn't David's ingenuity. It was God's sovereign protection. It was the Lord's doing.

It was marvelous in David's eyes and he says, the Lord, not me, is to be magnified.

His name, not mine, is to be exalted. I sought the Lord, he says. And it was the Lord who delivered me from all my foes.

And surely you will notice how that theme runs through the whole of the psalm, both in the first half, which Spurgeon calls a sermon, sorry, a song, and in the second half, which he calls a sermon.

[15 : 13] A song followed by a sermon. But in one form of the psalm, or in the other form of the psalm, what is emphasized is the Lord's actions, what the Lord has done.

This message is so clearly portrayed throughout the psalm that no one can miss it. No one could miss it. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name be glory.

O magnify the Lord with me, he says, let us exalt his name together. Who is to be magnified? The Lord. Then question two, who is it who is exhorting us to magnify the Lord?

Again, a very simple question and a very straightforward answer. It is David. As we have seen, and I don't want to labour the point, but let me just show how David portrays himself in this psalm.

Because we often tend to put David on a pedestal and he is something of an heroic figure. He's larger than life as far as the Old Testament record goes.

[16 : 27] He's the greatest king that Israel ever had. He is a type and foreshadowing of his greater son, Jesus Christ. But that's not how he looked on himself.

in this psalm, David is every man. He's every man.

He's an ordinary man. He's mortal. He's frail. He's a frail, mortal human being just like you and me. In verse 6 he says, this poor man.

That's how he sees himself. And the word poor in verse 6 conveys the idea of a downtrodden man who in the words of Alec Mateer the Old Testament scholar was at the bottom of life's heap.

That's how he looks upon himself. The man who is at the very bottom of life's heap. He also says that he knew what it was to be broken hearted.

[17 : 37] These are his words. broken hearted and crushed in spirit. Feelings that I am sure some if not all of us have experienced at some stage in our lives if not even right at this moment.

Crushed. Broken hearted. And then what should we think of David when he talks about his fears in verse 4 which really mean terrors or his troubles which is the word he uses in verse 6 or his afflictions a word he uses in verse 19 or what do you think of David when he speaks about the experience of being hated by his enemies verse 21 these are the kind of things that Christians here and around the world in the past but also in the present have in common and they may be exacerbated precisely because we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ Christian people with a Christian worldview with Christian ethics and Christian beliefs and Christian standards Jesus said in the world you my disciples will have tribulations and those words remain true as true today as they were when they were spoken first 2000 years ago and yet it was this very man who knew all of these things who yet exhorts us to magnify the Lord with him and to exalt his name together as the opening lines of the psalm teach us there's really no experience no circumstance in life and David experienced all of these various experiences circumstances there's no circumstance in life he says in which we as believing people should not or cannot bless the

Lord I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth and it's not just in his mouth the praise is to be found I want you to notice this because it is possible to come to church on a Sunday and to sing these wonderful psalms through clenched teeth so technically God's praise is in our mouth but that's not the praise he's looking for you see David's heart was fully engaged in the worship of his redeemer because he says in the next verse my soul makes its boast in the Lord heart the writers of the metrical version not the Scottish metrical version but the another metrical version of Psalm 34 captured the spirit of

David ever so well when they penned these lines through all the changing scenes of life in trouble and in joy the praises of my God shall still my heart and tongue employ all the changing scenes of life yes we find it so easy to praise the Lord in times of joy but we're talking about magnifying the Lord to the children and the magnifying glass if you really want to magnify the Lord let his praise be heard in your troubles sung from your heart that is what makes the Lord look big in the eyes of those who see it

I actually find it rather funny peculiar that the men who wrote that version of Psalm 34 had the names of Nicholas Brady and wait for it Nahum Tate but Nahum was a very tuneful man and he wrote wonderful words that we should sing regularly so in his trials afflictions fears and troubles David experienced the Lord's deliverance and protection which to him was something so very wonderful that he wants to tell the whole world of God's goodness and grace so that others going through the same kind of circumstances might have hope as well as David do you want your face to be radiant and beaming then look to the

[23 : 17] Lord those who look to him are radiant the psalmist says do you want to know the indescribable blessing that only God can bestow then you've got to take refuge in him blessed are all those who take refuge in him do you want to experience that inner satisfaction that this world with all its riches can never supply then seek the Lord because those who seek him lack no good thing let us learn from what the Lord did for David in his extremity of need and respond to his exhortation to magnify the Lord and to exalt his name together with him and then that brings us to the third and final question to whom is the exhortation of verse three addressed again a very simple question with a straightforward answer and the answer is found really in the second half of the previous verse verse two where David says let the humble hear and be glad

David's heart in this psalm goes out to the people he describes as the humble because he stood in their shoes he knew what it is like to be at the bottom of life's heap he knows what it is to be friendless helpless all alone in circumstances beyond his control with one foot in the grave by the way did you know that that expression goes all the way back into the 16th century because I read it in the works of John Knox when we were preparing it for publication he sometimes signed his letters with one foot in the grave John Knox but here was David standing as it were with one foot in the grave but David has something that can lift up the humble that can cheer them that can make them glad truly and everlastingly glad what the

Lord has done for me this is David's sermon he can do for you as well and as we give thanks to the Lord for all his mercies goodness deliverances and salvation it is our hope that the humble will hear and be glad my friends there's joy real joy wonderful joy to be found in David's Lord Lord but my dear friend take most careful knowledge of this truth because life and death are at stake here it's so easy to make a mistake here to go wrong here it is only the humble underscore that the humble it's only the humble who will taste this joy who will personally experience this joy it's only the poor man underscore that the poor man the person who knows and feels his poverty of spirit who will lift up his voice in prayer and cry out to

God to save him out of all his troubles and terrors and to emphasize or underline that even further we're told in the psalm that God resists the proud to use the words of James because what terrible words are these that we find towards the end of the psalm do they not send a shiver down your spine the words of verse 16 the face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth and verse 21 affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned but again to use the words of James but God gives grace to the humble he opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble and the application of that truth is this humble yourselves unto the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time so what a message this is a message for ordinary mortals yes mortals we need to remind ourselves we had a reminder in the announcements we are mortal men and women it is appointed unto man to die once and after this the judgment we are dying men and dying women that's what we are with one foot in the grave to quote

John Knox but what a message this is for us oh magnify the covenant Lord with me and let us exalt his name together so you meet somebody today or next week or in the week that follows and they say so what did you do at the weekend and your answer will be I and my fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ spent the day magnifying the Lord and exalting his name together that's a much better answer than saying oh I went to church yeah but what did you really do oh magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together may God bless his word to us let us pray