

Testimony. Psalm 34:1-7

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[0:00] Well, this is a wonderful opportunity. I'm so thankful to be here with all of you.

Raymond, did you bring your basket of rotten tomatoes? I counted it a tremendous honor when your pastor asked if I would come and speak to you.

And I'm thrilled to be here. I'm thankful for your hospitality and your feeding my family so I don't have to do it tonight. And I'm going to pay for that later.

Make me do the dishes today. That's what I hear. Right. Psalm 34. Psalm 34. Beautiful psalm. Just exquisite in its call to us. To savor who our God is.

[1:29] Tonight, the goal is to give you some background in the psalm. And to walk with you through the first seven verses. I'm going to read those seven verses with you tonight.

And if it's alright with you, I'm going to bow my head as well and ask God's grace to help me in my time of need right now. Verses 1-7.

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 of his troubles.

[2:34] The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. Father, I likewise ask for help for all of us.

That we would be hearers and doers of your word. I ask for grace for myself right now to give me clarity, strength and boldness.

And I pray that your Holy Spirit would be at work amongst us tonight. In Jesus' name, Amen. So to give you a little bit of background for Psalm 34. In your note sheet, you have that Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm.

An acrostic psalm, meaning that each verse of the psalm begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's not a perfect acrostic, but it basically follows that pattern.

So that the original Hebrew readers, as they read this or heard this, they would hear their alphabet woven into this psalm. It's kind of like the ABCs of praise, right?

[3:43] So this is an acrostic psalm. It's also a psalm of thanksgiving. And whenever you have a psalm of thanksgiving, what you find first of all, is you will find a statement of praise or thanks.

So he starts with, I will bless the Lord at all times. He is praising. He's giving thanks. But then what the psalm will do is it will follow on with the reason that he's giving thanks.

The reason that he's praising. So tonight in these first seven verses, we look first at his praise, and then we will start to look at why is he praising?

Why is he so excited about his God? Why is he lifting his voice and calling others to likewise lift their voices in praise? So we'll see that tonight.

Another feature of this psalm is that it carries along with it wisdom elements. What is the beginning of wisdom?

[4:46] Fear of the Lord. And so this psalm multiple times will talk about the fear of the Lord. This psalm, as it calls us to praise, it calls us to meditate on who our God is and what he has done for us.

It also calls us to fear him, to grow in wisdom in our understanding of who God is. So this psalm has a lot to offer, and I'm excited to be a part of this look at it with you.

I also want to share with you some of the historical background of this psalm. At the beginning, right above verse 1, it says, Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech so that he drove him out, that is, Abimelech drove David out, and he went away.

Are you guys familiar with that story? Do you know that story? It's in 1 Samuel, and I'd like to share that with you. Read it with you anyway. 1 Samuel 21. We'll take just a few minutes to grab this background information.

And I'll be honest with you. It's kind of a strange story. It really is a strange little story. You sometimes find yourself going, I'm not sure what to do with this particular episode in David's life. [6:08] When you think of David, what do you usually think of? You think of King David, right? You think of David the giant killer, right? Fearless in battle. And what we see in 1 Samuel 21, 10-15, you find David showing a little different face than we're accustomed to seeing David show.

Let me read these. Verse 10. 1 Samuel 21, verse 10. And David rose and fled that day from Saul. This is right after Jonathan. He and Jonathan had entered into a covenant with one another. And Jonathan says, yes, my father is determined to kill you. So David, please. So he arose, fled that day from Saul, went to Achish, the king of Gath. That's a Philistine city. And the servants of Achish said to him, Is this not David the king of the land? No, David's not king yet. He's not the king. Saul is still the king. David was Saul's best general, if you will. But David's reputation precedes him so that they look at David as the king.

[7:21] Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances? Saul has struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands.

So King Achish. And by the way, Abimelech referenced in Psalm 34 is probably like a title, like a kingly title. So Achish and Abimelech are really the same are the same man. But Achish, David comes to him. He's looking for refuge. He's looking for a place to hole up and hide from from Saul. And Achish's generals say this. Isn't this the king of Israel? The one who kills lots of Philistines like Saul, you know, a thousands. David, ten thousands.

And you can just feel the threat starting to loom over David. Like, what did I get myself into by coming here? Right now? Remember, David was the one who faced off against Goliath.

[8:23] And he said to the champion, I am going to feed you to the birds because you come at me with spear and sword and armor.

But I come at you in the name of Yahweh, God of Israel. Right. I mean, this is David who faced off against the giant. So what does David do against Achish and his generals? Right. David really steps up to the plates and he really gives Achish what for.

Right. Not exactly. Verse 12. And David took these words to heart. The report got back to him. David, they're talking about your reputation.

How many Philistines you kill. And was much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate.

He's clawing at the gates and let his spitzel run down his beard. That's a very polite way of saying what that what happens there. He's drooling. Then Achish said to his servants, behold, you see, the man is mad.

[9:32] Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack mad men that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house? And then the very next verse, chapter 22, David departed from there and escaped.

So David's brilliant plan here to get out of trouble. The goal is to put up a ruse and act in a way that's not characteristic of the David we tend to think of.

Maybe this isn't David's finest hour. Now, David's on the run and it's not his fault. David has enemies literally everywhere.

Everywhere he goes, he has someone either trying to kill him or willing to turn him in to someone who's trying to kill him. He has enemies everywhere. If anyone has reason to be afraid, could claim the excuse, I've got reason to be afraid, it would be David.

But right here in this moment, David does something that's maybe not quite what we would have expected David to do. So we can't be too afraid to question his actions.

[10:50] And sometimes David, I mean, he's not Jesus. But one thing we can be sure of is we can't question his faith. Because Psalm 34 is the other side.

You can go back to Psalm 34. It's the flip side. So David did something that maybe we wouldn't quite have pictured David doing. But at the same time, in spite of all of that, in the midst of all of

that, as he writes Psalm 34, David realizes it wasn't my ruse that saved my life.

That wasn't what saved my life. And so he expresses praise. Let's dig in here a little bit. Verses 1-3 is that statement of thanksgiving, or that statement of praise, that's in response to something.

Like I said, this is a psalm of thanksgiving. So he begins, as many psalms do, with a general statement of praise. I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Now, if you're looking at your Bibles, most likely you will see that the word or the name Lord is all in capitals.

[11:59] Right? Do you see that? Do you guys know what all capitals mean when you see that in your Bible? All right, that's the covenant name of God, right? That is Yahweh God. So David says he is remembering the covenant.

I will bless. I will speak well of. I will praise Yahweh God. And he says, I will do it all the time. It is going to be my habit.

My reputation is that I will be praising God all the time. And everything that comes out of my mouth, second line of verse one, the parallel line, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Now, let me ask you a question. I know the answer for myself, and I'm not proud of my answer.

How often do we find something else in our mouths other than praise and blessing of God?

Right? So automatically, from the get-go, we're challenged to think about, do we praise God?

[13:12] And maybe we don't praise God as often as we should, as He deserves, because we're not thinking as clearly about who our God is and what He has done for us.

And so this psalm is just, again, it's an excellent way to reorient our minds to who our God is and what He does.

So first, like I said, David says, I will praise God all the time. In verse two, and I love how the parallel lines work here in verse two.

And I just want to encourage you, whenever you read a psalm, maybe you already know this, whenever you read a psalm, just pay attention to the parallel lines, how they flesh each other out and build upon each other.

So verse two, continuing that theme of praise, my soul or my life, my everything, who I am, I make my boast in the Lord.

[14:12] Now when you hear the word boast, what do you usually think of? Bragging, right?

Bragging. And who usually brags? Braggarts.

Very profound. Braggarts. And proud people, right? Right? Proud people brag.

Do you enjoy listening to someone brag? No. No. You know why we don't enjoy listening to someone brag? Because we're proud ourselves.

Because if you're bragging, then I don't get to brag, right? But notice what he says. It's gorgeous. It is just beautiful.

I, my soul, me, everything, my soul makes its boast. And it is that idea. I am boasting. But I'm boasting in the Lord.

[15:20] David says, when I brag, I'm not bragging about my accomplishments. I'm not bragging about my ruse. When I brag, I brag about my God.

I look at my God as someone who is so worthy of praise. So unique. So special.

So holy. So perfect. So kind. So faithful. That when I brag, I brag about my God. You can hear David going to the Philistines and everyone else.

My God is bigger than your God. Isn't that exactly what he did when he dealt with Goliath? My God is bigger than you. Right? What do, what do little kids do?

What do, what do little boys do? My, that's right. My daddy can beat up your daddy. My daddy's bigger than your daddy. And I remember being in grade school and, and, and my friends would draw pictures of their dad.

[16:21] And, and I'm a kind of a literalist. So I would look at their picture and go, I've seen your dad. That's not what he looks like. Like, you know, their dad, you know, their picture, you know, massive, no superhero.

And any comic book is as big as they pictured their dad. But you have to say, that's kind of special, right? he was proud of his dad. I was proud of my dad too.

I just, I was kind of literal and I'm like, my dad doesn't look like that, but yours doesn't either. So we're good. Well, David is going, my God is bigger than everything else.

my God is more powerful and greater than everything else. And I will brag. And remember, who doesn't like bragging?

Other proud people, right? Well, look at second line. Let the humble. See that? Boast in the first line, humble in the second line.

[17 : 31] He's playing with words. To make a point, I'm boasting in the Lord. Well, who is it that can enjoy that kind of boasting?

The humble. Others who are likewise trusting in God. The humble. So David's talking about testimony now. The humble hear or let the humble hear and be glad.

Right? So people who genuinely trust in God love to hear the stories of other people who genuinely trust in God. If we find ourselves sometimes getting frustrated or not enjoying listening to testimony, that's a sign, that's a symptom of our own pride.

Well, he keeps going. So verses 1 and 2 is, I'm boasting. I'm boasting in my God. Verse 3, though, you often find this in Psalms of Thanksgiving.

Verse 3 then, turns to the whole congregation. Turns to everyone else. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name.

[18 : 45] We can do better than that. Let us exalt His name together. See, David says, I'm bragging. I'm praising God.

My God is bigger than everything else. And then he turns to the congregation and says, Amen? I'm Baptist, so it's what we do. Right?

You yell, Amen. And David says, okay, folks, let's go. Let's magnify God. Come along with me. We're going to lift up the name of the Lord together.

We're going to rejoice in our God together. And the idea is that he's sort of leading the congregation. Come on, let's praise. Come on, God's worthy. Come on, let's praise.

Everyone, praise God with me. Maybe you could think of it this way. verses 1 and 2, I'm worshiping. Verse 3, you worship too. I'm worshiping, you worship too.

[19 : 46] Now as we get into verses 4 through 7, we find out why. Why the praise? What's the reason for thanksgiving? And what we find in verses 4 through 7 is that he is remembering deliverance.

We might say it this way, he's remembering salvation. So now he starts reporting. 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. So first of all, he reports, I cried out to God and he answered me.

my God answered me and delivered me from that which created my fear and from my fear itself.

He delivered me from my fears. Do we ever find ourselves afraid? You laugh. You know, in Hebrews chapter 2 where it's talking about how the Lord Jesus Christ partook of flesh and blood like us so that by death he could defeat the one who had the power of death, that is the devil.

[21 : 10] That's Hebrews 2, 14 and 15. But it also talks about the fact and 1 John does as well about the fact that humanity is enslaved to the fear of death.

Ever since Eden, ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, ever since humanity told God we don't want your rule, we want to try it our own way and God said if you do that you lose connection with me, that's death.

Death has ruled ever since. Jesus came to defeat death and to remove from God's people that fear of death.

But humanity is, you can almost say it this way, is defined by its fears. Think about our society.

Think about the news. Everything in the news is about the next thing that's coming, the next prediction, whether it's the stock market, whether it's China, whether it's Russia, whether it's take your pick, it's fear, whether it's a Supreme Court decision for this, that, or the other thing, wherever anyone stands on any of those, there's always fear.

It's always about fear. David says, I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. And then he makes this general statement in verse 5, those who look to Him, those who look to God for deliverance are, I love the way he puts it, are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed.

[22 : 52] Do you know he's picturing there? He's picturing people who are beleaguered And troubled like He was!

who are facing things that they cannot face on their own, but who are looking toward God instead of at the problem. Who are recognizing God as their deliverer, their Savior, and he's picturing them as they look up, as they meditate upon who God is in spite of this going on around them.

As they meditate upon God, he's picturing the radiance of their countenance. Right? That blessed smile that reads their faces but has no earthly explanation.

1 Peter 3 verse 15 talks about, says, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks the reason for the hope that is in you.

David says, those who are trusting in God, they've got a different perspective on life. They have a different outlook to the point where you can see it in their faces.

[24 : 15] There's a radiance there. Their faces shall never be ashamed. What does an ashamed face look like? Right? Downcast.

Eyes down. Head hung in shame. What he's saying here in verse 5 is that those who look to God, another way of talking about trusting Him, those who trust God and His promise of deliverance will never be put to shame.

Will never find themselves saying, well, that was a mistake. I can't believe I trusted God. What in the world? Jesus is a failure. I can't believe.

I hope no one takes that out of context. No one who's genuinely trusted in Christ, no one who genuinely puts their hope in God Most High will ever, in the end, find themselves embarrassed. Because in the end, God wins. In the end, Christ returns. In the end, this world is remade and heaven comes down and God dwells with His people.

[25 : 31] And those who have no place there are those who rejected God and His authority and His promise and His hope of salvation in Jesus Christ. They're the ones who are ashamed. Those who trust in God, never ashamed.

So those who look to Him, they are radiant. Their faces, you can see it, there's something different in their outlook. Then He goes back in verse 6 and 7, or verse 6 I should say, and He kind of circles back around, wheels back around to His problems.

So verse 4, I sought the Lord. Verse 6, this poor man cried. He comes back around to his own issue. This is David who would become king someday, but He calls Himself in this moment, this poor man.

This wretched man. This man with no resources of my own. This man who had no hope of his own. This man who had nowhere else to go.

This poor man cried. And the next words of verse 6 are words that should give us such hope, such joy, and such peace.

[26 : 40] And the Lord heard him. God, most high creator of all, listens to the least, the lost, and the lowest.

What did Jesus say? He says, I am meek and lowly of heart. Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus, who is God the Son in the flesh, says to one and all and fellowshiped with the lowest and the dirtiest in society, and touch the lepers, and touch the lame, and healed them, and said, come to me.

Come here. Come here. When the blind beggars cried out from the roadside, Son of David, have mercy. What did Jesus do? He turned and said, what do you need?

The Lord hears. What did Jesus say in Matthew chapter 5? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

[27 : 54] Right? God's offer has always been to the lost. Just recognize your need and cry out to me and I will save you. I mean, who is it that actually listens to the wretched in the second line of verse 6?

Not just heard, but saved. saved him out of all his troubles. It's beautiful. Dave is reporting again. I cried out in my moment of panic, in my moment of trial, I cried out and God hurt me and delivered me.

Me. This poor man, me. God saved me, he says. Now verse 7 is just beautiful. And verse 7 points right to the very next verse, verse 8, which is next week.

But verse 8, remember that theme for this season, all taste and see that the Lord is good. Well, how is he good? What does he do? Well, verse 7 is the build up to it.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. The imagery there is beautiful. David is a military Man, right? David has a band of soldiers around him.

[29 : 15] He's a general. He's been leading soldiers for years now. And he has a band of soldiers that go with him and that keep coming to him. Hundreds of fighting men surround him.

David thinks in terms of military action. He thinks in terms of an encampment. Right? But sometimes encampments can be surrounded And David's experience as he's running from Saul is constantly surrounded.

He just can't seem to get away from the threats. But what he pictures in verse 7, the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.

It's almost like David is saying, yeah, we're in the camp, but we're beleaguered, we're besieged. Oh, but we turn to our God, and you know what God does? God, like all by himself, like a massive army bigger than me and bigger than my enemies, wraps himself around my encampment, and no one can get to me.

No one can breach The wall can breach the defenses of God. I want to point a couple things out here with verse 7.

[30 : 31] First of all, notice in relation to verse 4, he said in verse 4, I sought the Lord, and he heard and delivered. Verse 7, the angel of the Lord encamps.

So you've got the Lord in verse 4, angel of the Lord in verse 7. In the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord often shows up in a physical form.

The angel of the Lord visited Abraham, for instance. And sometimes the angel of the Lord speaks as though separate from God, and then other times the angel of the Lord speaks as though God. And then here we have I sought the Lord and he delivered me. The angel of the Lord surrounds those who fear him and delivers them. So we have the angel of the Lord doing the same thing the Lord does.

So sometimes there seems to be a little bit of a differentiation. Other times they function together. And then this angel of the Lord person is pretty much absent once you get to the Gospels.

[31 : 43] Why is that? It is because the angel of the Lord is the second person of the Godhead now taken flesh Jesus dwelling among us.

So when he says the angel of the Lord encamps he's we've got gospel here. We've got gospel here. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this.

Jesus Christ God the Son in human flesh dwelling amongst us and dying for us to shield us from wrath we justly deserve.

And then rising again proving that he fully bore the wrath and is truly Lord over sin and death and is completely paid for it.

It was no mistake when Jesus said on the cross it is finished. The Lord Jesus himself wraps himself around all who trust in him.

[32 : 52] There's gospel here and the reminder to trust him and him alone. But I want to point out something else in verse seven. We find the word in the second line around those who fear him and delivers them.

Okay? The word fear. Now up in verse four, we saw I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. They're the same words in the Hebrew.

They're the same word. So God answers and delivers from fears. And in verse seven, those people that call out to him are depicted or characterized as those who fear him.

Remember what I said before about the human life is pretty much defined by fear? It's true. The human life is defined by fear and you will fear one of two things.

You will fear death and everything that goes with it or you will fear God. Now which one is the one we're supposed to do? Fear God, not things in this world, not right?

[34 : 06] Not all of that. just like you can't serve God and wealth, it's one or the other, it's mutually exclusive, just like you can't walk the wide path and the narrow path at the same time, mutually exclusive, we fear those things that, those circumstances that want to draw us away from God, or we fear God Himself.

Now which is the wise position? To fear this world and the circumstances or to fear God? Fear God. Hence, this psalm is also teaching us wisdom about how to handle, about how to approach, about how to look at our trials.

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