

Taste and See

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[0:00] Of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech 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. 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. Saved him out of all of his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.

Oh 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.

[1:09] The young lions suffer want and hunger but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Come old children listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

What man is there who desires life and loves many good days that he may see good. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. 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 broken hearted.

He 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.

[2:11] 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. Amen. Well, our study actually begins in 1 Samuel chapter 21.

Do you want to just turn there quickly? 1 Samuel chapter 21. Which is where the context of this particular psalm is found.

And if I can just quickly fill in some gaps. Then we're going to read a portion of it together. David, at the end of 1 Samuel 20, was warned by his beloved friend Jonathan, who is also the son of the current king of Israel, Saul.

Jonathan has just warned David that Saul, his father, is intent to kill him. In fact, he's so intent to kill him that he's just tried to kill his own son, Jonathan, for trying to stand in the way and to persuade him away from that.

[3:24] So David's on the run. And the first place that he goes is to the tabernacle, which at this point was in a place called Nob. He was forced to leave Gibeah so quickly that he had no provisions with him.

He had no food. He had no weapons. He was all alone. He had no people. So he stops by the tabernacle of God. He speaks with the priest there. He persuades the priest to give him two things. The first thing is some food. He asks for some bread. The only bread that's there is the bread of presence. It's the holy bread. And David is able to persuade the priest to give him a few loaves of bread from the Lord's table.

The second thing that David asked for is a weapon. He says, is there any weapon at all here that I can take with me for I've had to leave quickly?

And there was but one weapon there. And it was no ordinary weapon. It was an extraordinary one. It was the sword of Goliath of Gath that was there in the tabernacle.

[4:29] And of course, David hears that and he says, oh, I'll take it. There's no sword like that one, he says. And that's where the story gets really interesting. Look with me at 1 Samuel 21 verses 10 to 12.

And David rose from there and fled that day from Saul. And he went to Achish, the king of Gath.

And the servants of Achish said to him, 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. And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

David does something very foolish here. He goes to the land of Philistia. He leaves Israel. He's on the run from Saul and he goes to the Philistines.

He goes to the city of Gath. And it seems as if he expects that he might be able to convince Achish or Abimelech, which would have been his title, to hire him as some kind of mercenary.

[5:48] Perhaps he's proven himself enough as an enemy of the Philistines that the Philistines there would want to hire David to fight on their behalf.

Perhaps that's the scheme that he has in his mind as he gets there. And immediately, as you would expect, the Philistines recognize who he is and they seize him and they take him before the king.

Is this not the one who's supposed to be the future king of Israel? Maybe they mean that mockingly. Is this the one he's come along and he's supposed to be the great one of Israel?

Is this not him? Is he not the one they've been singing songs about? Think about that. Those songs have gotten David into so much trouble. He didn't sing them.

The people sang them all throughout the land. Saul, our king, amazing. He's killed thousands.

David's killed more. They loved David.

[6:49] He was capable. Those songs got David in a world of trouble with Saul. And now it's getting them in a world of trouble with the Philistines. Because the Philistines were enemy number one.

He comes into the land and they say, even we have heard the songs about the 10,000s that David has killed. And who are the 10,000s David's been killing? Them.

The Philistines. And not only that, he chooses to go to the city or town of Gath.

The city of Goliath. The Philistine champion that David famously killed with a sling and a stone is just a young man.

And not only that, he walks into Goliath's own city with Goliath's sword that he stole from Goliath after he killed him and used to cut off his head.

[7:52] And somehow David has in his mind, this is all going to work out. This is all going to go great. And of course it doesn't go great. In his distress and fear, David made a series of foolish decisions.

And he got himself in a mess. He's on the brink of death. There was no more dangerous position for David to be in than the one that he just got himself in willingly.

Now there's a lesson in that. It's not the point of the sermon today. There's a lesson in that for us, isn't there? Don't we tend to make seriously foolish decisions at the moments when we're in the most distress and fear?

That rather than listening to the promises of God and trusting in the goodness of God, we attempt to take matters into our own hands. And does that ever work out for us?

Of course it doesn't. Well, that's what David has done. And immediately he realizes the foolishness of his decision. And he goes on from there and he makes a bizarre, desperate attempt to escape.

[9:01] Look at the next set of verses, beginning in verse 13. Here's what he does. It's unbelievable. So he changed his behavior before them. He's in the presence of the king of Gath.

And he just suddenly, schizophrenic, just changes his personality suddenly. He pretended to be insane in their hands. He made marks on the doors of the gate.

He let his spit run down his beard. You've heard of criminals who, as soon as they're arrested, begin to try to make a case for an insanity defense.

That's what David's doing. Verse 14. That's unbelievable.

Like almost literally unbelievable. I've got this habit right now. I don't know why. This is not a good thing to do. I don't recommend that you do it. Pray for me. But it's like, you know, there's the people that they, when they go to bed, they get on Facebook and they watch all the reels and they're up for hours, right?

[10:20] Well, for me right now, it's true crime stuff for some reason. And like watching body cam footage from police officers and interrogation videos. And it's amazing how many times criminals do something stupid.

As soon as they're picked up, they begin to just pretend as if they were out of their minds at the time that this happened, that they're really crazy. They're building some kind of defense and it never works.

For David, it worked. They know he's capable. They know he's mighty. But in the providence of God, the king of Gath looks at his greatest enemy.

He has an opportunity in that moment to deal with his greatest enemy. And he doesn't take it. That's not because of David. That's the goodness of the Lord.

I can't help but suspect that in the providence of God, God knowing the foolishness of David's decisions and what he would go on to do, that perhaps just maybe in the days leading up to David showing up in Gath, maybe God just starts sending all kinds of crazy, legitimately crazy people, Achish's way.

[11:30] Isn't that what he says? Do I lack madmen? Do I need another one like this? So that the point that David shows up and acts this way, it's just the thing that finally sets him over the edge. There's no rational reason for him to let David go.

But that's exactly what he does. Now, that's the setting of Psalm 34. Two Psalms, actually, that David wrote out of that experience.

The other one is Psalm 56, and then we have Psalm 34. What we find is that David knew his deliverance wasn't ultimately due to his creativity.

He understood that his deliverance in that moment was due to the mercy and the kindness of God. And he uses this experience in Psalm 34 to call us then to trust the Lord, knowing that all who will trust God will experience an even greater deliverance, and even greater salvation that I believe he begins to foreshadow at the end of this Psalm.

It's a salvation of resurrection unto life that begins to come to the surface here. And it's a truth that David doesn't want his people to forget.

[12:47] So he writes this song in an acrostic pattern with only two exceptions. Each verse begins with the subsequent letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Why?

To aid our memory. He doesn't want us to forget this. He sets it to music so that we might sing it again and again and again as God's people. Christopher Ashe very helpfully says this in something of a summary of the Psalm.

He says, A final king out of death itself.

So that the believer to whom this Psalm ultimately points is the one who has been raised from the dead. Now I've told you, the Psalms are wonderfully theological, immensely practical, but they're also deeply Christological, especially when we get to the Psalms of David.

Who is the ultimate psalmist of Psalm 34? It is the Lord Jesus, our King, who invites us to take joy in his own experience of deliverance and instructs us in his wisdom.

[14:29] So I want you to hear, there's really two clear sections of the Psalm. I want you to hear both of them as a personal call from King Jesus. For the salvation of God's people is bound up in the salvation of their King.

First, I want you to see the King's invitation. The King's invitation. It's the first half of the song. The King invites us to enter with him into the joy of what he has experienced in the goodness of God. You've heard it said that misery loves company. So does joy. Whenever we're joyful about something, whenever we love something, we want to share it with others.

We want to invite others into the joy that we know and have experienced. And David wants his people to partake in the joy of God's salvation and of God's deliverance.

There's three parts to the invitation here. The first one is this. It's an invitation to join the King's praise. An invitation to join the King's praise.

[15:32] Look at the first three verses. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord.

Now let the humble hear it and be glad themselves. Oh, magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.

Father. David opens with this declaration of endless praise in every situation. As long as he lives, he's determined to bless the Lord with his mouth.

He's going to make his boast in God alone. Think about it.

Think about it. Most people would love to praise themselves in circumstances such as David writes out of here. Isn't that what we would do?

[16 : 35] We'd sit around the table with our friends and story time with Andy comes up. Andy says, let me tell you about what happened to me.

I went and I was in the presence of the King of Achish. And man, you would have thought my days were numbered, but let me tell you what I did. I just let the drool just run right down my face.

I had been working out real hard and I started scratching up those gates and doorposts. Everybody was afraid of me. I was so smart. You should have seen me, right? Isn't that what we do? Things go well for us and the Lord blesses us in some way or we experience something.

We just start to think about the means that God uses because God certainly uses means, right? We start to think about the means and stop thinking about the God that's behind the means, that empowers the means.

And we start to take all the credit for ourselves. We start to praise ourselves around the table. We start to praise ourselves with our friends. It's in our nature to do. David is determined not to do that.

[17 : 40] He was well aware of the fact that his deliverance from danger was the work of God's faithfulness. The Lord had brought David to the precipice of death so that he might then remind him of his own covenant faithfulness to his chosen king.

Who is it that you praise in such times of this? Too many of us, we pridefully will boast in ourselves. And we need to realize that God is actually behind all of it. He alone is worthy of this praise. And so David directed all of his praise to God who saved him.

But David wasn't content to praise God alone. Notice what he does. He invites the humble, those others who are unwilling to pridefully boast in themselves, who understand their true condition before God, and cry out to God alone for help.

He says, now let all of you who are like that, let all the humble join me. Hear what God has done for me and be glad in it.

[19 : 01] He calls all the faithful to join him in making much of God and exalting the name of the Lord. Remember, the life of the people is bound up in the life of their king.

His blessing was their blessing. His deliverance meant their deliverance. And by seeing how God had delivered David, the people had hoped that the Lord would do the same for them.

So David's not calling them to rejoice in their own deliverance yet. He's calling them to look at what God has done for him and to exalt the name of the Lord for what he has done for their king.

They should praise the king's deliverer. And so it is that our king invites us today to join him in praise for his deliverance.

Is that not why we've gathered? Is that not why we're here today? It's Sunday. Is that not why we call this the Lord's Day? Because God has delivered him from death, we have hope that he will do the same for us.

[20 : 16] Hear and be glad for what God has done for King Jesus and join him, the true worship leader, as we exalt the name of the Lord together.

So it's an invitation to join in the king's praise. There's another part to the invitation. It's an invitation to consider God's faithfulness. Verses four to seven.

I sought the Lord and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant. Their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him.

He saved them out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. David begins to describe his experience now.

And he draws a particular conclusion. Here's his conclusion. God is faithful. Even when I am not, God is.

[21 : 18] He's faithful. In his distress, in his moment of trouble in Gath, David sought the Lord's help and the Lord answered him.

According to Psalm 2, it was the birthright of the king for God to hear and answer his prayers. And here, God's chosen king prays for the deliverance.

And God answers. He proves himself faithful. And David wants us to know it. David, poor in spirit, cries to the Lord and God saves him.

And that leads him to conclude that God's angel surrounds those who fear him. That when you trust in the Lord, you'll never be ashamed. That's what it means by those who fear the Lord, their faces

radiant.

We've seen this theme now in the last few Psalms. David has echoed this over and over. That when you trust in the Lord, you will not be ashamed. That is, he will not fail you so that you're embarrassed when the world looks at you and says, see, you put your trust in the wrong place.

[22:30] That's what David means. You won't be ashamed. No, your face is radiant because he really is your deliverer. He really will save you. But then there's a third part to the invitation.

It's an invitation to experience God's goodness by faith. Look at verse 8. Do you see what the king's doing now?

The king now becomes the evangelist. It isn't enough just to rejoice in his deliverance. It isn't enough just to consider how God proves himself faithful.

The king must call the people to experience the goodness of God for themselves. So the king says, the Lord is good. Now come and see it.

Come and see for yourself that he is good. Ashlyn is the baker in our house. And she makes a mean creme brulee.

[23:52] In fact, she made some yesterday for the 4th of July because nothing says happy birthday America like a French dessert. Now I can tell you how delicious it is.

I can enumerate all of the ingredients for you. I can talk scientifically about how they all come together to have this amazingly sweet custard and then how the sugar, once it's torched with the fire on the top, creates this satisfying texture.

I can show you videos of our family indulging themselves yesterday, excitedly rejoicing in the goodness of Ashlyn's creme brulee. And after all of that, I can convince you to believe that Ashlyn makes a killer creme brulee.

But you'll never really know and you'll never really experience the joy of Ashlyn's creme brulee until I bring you one.

I say, taste it. Just taste it and see. James Johnston says, many have a secondhand experience of God's goodness.

[25:07] They've heard sermons about God's goodness. Their parents have said that God is good. They truly believe that God is good, but they haven't trusted and seen for themselves that God is good.

They may have trusted with their minds, but they haven't trusted him with their lives. So what does the king do?

He's not content for you just to acknowledge intellectually that this God is good and that he's been good to his king and that he's faithful.

No, he says, come for yourself. Taste and see. He's not inviting you to affirm a point of doctrine.

He's inviting you to turn from sin and self and fear to trust in his faithfulness completely. The blessed man, he says, is the one who fears the Lord and he lacks no good thing.

[26:12] Even the capable young lions at times go without, but those who seek the Lord find all that they need in him. So then the question is begged here.

Will you accept the king's invitation? Will you finally just taste and see that the Lord indeed is good?

We've just finished studying 1 Peter together. At least two times, maybe three times, Peter quotes Psalm 34. When he quotes this verse, taste and see that the Lord is good, he refers to the Lord as Jesus himself.

We taste the goodness of God when we taste Christ by faith. He is the final king who fulfills this psalm and he invites you to come to him and to experience the goodness of God.

Literally, he invites you. Matthew 11, come, he says, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, he says, and learn of me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your soul.

[27:37] The king, the true king, invites you to come to him so that you may know that the Lord indeed is good. It's the king's invitation.

Well, then we get to the king's instruction. So think about how this is working together. David's experience of deliverance in Gath has led him to invite all of us to then experience God's faithfulness ourselves.

But flowing out of that same experience is also a series of instructions, wisdom that is crucial for us to hear and obey as God's people.

So in the second half of the psalm, the king assumes his place as a wise father and counselor. Three pieces of instruction then. First, we see instruction on the fear of God.

On the fear of God. Look at 11 to 14. Come, old children. Listen to me, David, as the father of the nation. Come.

[28:40] Hear what I have to say. Listen. Listen. And 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?

And of course, with that, we all raise our hand and say, me, I want to have a long life. I want to see many days and I want them to be good days. Okay. If that's what you want, hear this wisdom, the fear of the Lord.

Keep your tongue from evil. And your lips from speaking deceit. Do you know how much deceit went into David finding himself in Gath in that situation?

Just read the story later. He's basically lying to everybody. Some may look at that and say, well, he hadn't really no choice but to do that. But did he? Could he have trusted the Lord?

Now he turns and he says, keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it, he says.

[29:50] So in verse nine, David in his evangelism says that it is those who fear the Lord who lack no good thing, that we can come to God and we can taste and see by trusting in him.

And now he begins to tell us what it actually looks like to fear the Lord. And amazingly, fundamentally, fearing God in this context is not emotional. It's moral.

Proverbs says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of the wisdom. And this wisdom, according to David, is what brings the good life, the blessed life. To live in the fear of God then is to trust his word.

It's to continually turn away from evil and to do good. It is to live a life that is consistent with the nature and the will of God because you trust him, that he indeed is right and that he is good and that his way is perfect.

That you can say, like we read in Psalm 86 at the beginning of the service, teach me your way, oh Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name.

[31:00] It is an obedience that flows out of a heart of faith. This is the good life that God blesses. He calls his people to live it out at all times.

Peter quotes it, if you remember. 1 Peter chapter 3, except the context that he addresses there is suffering Christians who are now being tempted to respond to their persecutors in kind.

insult for insult, anger for anger. Peter quotes this to remind them that even your persecution is not a justification for evil.

That you ought to remember that the Lord sees and that he rewards the righteous and he judges the wicked. Which leads to the next part of the instruction. It's an instruction on the faithfulness of God.

So he instructs us on the fear of the Lord. Then he moves a little bit further and deeper in and he wants to teach us a little bit more about what it means that God is faithful. Look at verses 15 to 18.

[32:02] The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. Now can we not look at David's situation and say, well, David kind of got himself in a mess.

He certainly wasn't acting wisely. He was being foolish. There was certainly some sin and fleshly tendencies at work in what he was doing. So how could David then claim some kind of righteousness that the Lord would honor and would watch and deliver him in?

Well, if you've been listening for the last several Psalms, righteousness, of course, has a moral component to it. There is a literal righteousness in a doing of good. But we are positionally righteous, not by what we do, but by faith.

By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. David's playing on that here. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, those who trust him. His ears are toward their cry. But there's another piece to that.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil. To cut off the memory of them from the earth, utter destruction for them. And then David says, when the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears.

[33:13] He delivers them out of all their troubles. And what amazing comfort in verse 18, that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted.

He saves the crushed in spirit. Does this not make you think of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5? Blessed are who?

The strong and the capable. No. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, not after material wealth.

Blessed are you when others persecute you for my namesake. That's the blessed life. That's the righteous life. The Lord is near to those people.

He's near to the humble. He's near to those who acknowledge their own true condition. And He is faithful. He always delivers them out of all their trouble.

[34 : 20] What an amazing hope that is. Why should we live in the fear of God? Because God watches over the righteous and hears their cries. And then also because He will judge all who do evil.

He's faithful both in justice and in mercy. But there's a third piece of instruction here. It's an instruction on a future hope.

So we have instruction on the fear of the Lord. Then He moves a little deeper on the faithfulness of God. Now He's bringing it full circle back to the beginning. Have you noticed how so many of these psalms do that? They're just big circles.

Now He gives us some hope that we might rejoice in. Verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. The Lord delivers Him out of them all.

Notice there's a bit of a change here. There's some singular pronouns happening here. We can over interpret that. But I do think that there's something happening prophetically here. There's some foreshadowing here that's going to take us to the cross.

[35 : 25] John quotes the next verse almost verbatim when he's describing the crucifixion of Jesus. He keeps all of His bones. Not one of them is broken. Now I don't know that David intends for that but John's pulling from this clearly on the promises of the Passover lamb and the pictures that we see there.

This is important. There's something happening here. There's a gospel thing happening in this part of the psalm. And he goes on. Affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

This is a final kind of condemnation, right? So this isn't just the temporal circumstances. This is an ultimate kind of judgment. But the Lord redeems the life of His servants.

None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned. I want you to think about the future hope that's here. But I also want you to notice the tension that is here.

The psalm promises deliverance for those who fear the Lord. It also promises affliction. Many are the afflictions of the righteous.

[36 : 35] That just sounds so backward, doesn't it? Many struggle to believe in the God of the Bible for this very reason, because of this tension.

They love to think of a God who saves. Who wouldn't want that? So we emphasize God's love, God's mercy, or whatever it may be.

They loathe the thought of a God who would put us in a position of needing saving, which is His own kind of quandary.

The Bible doesn't actually ignore this tension. Bad theology ignores this tension. prosperity gospel ignores this tension. The Bible doesn't.

David doesn't. The truth is that all of the righteous will suffer. All of the righteous will die.

[37 : 38] There came a point in David's life where he suffered unto death. He died. So we ought not look at a passage like this and say, well, this, if you believe God, that just automatically means full deliverance in every circumstance and every situation of your life.

That's not what the Bible's teaching us here. That's not what this psalm is teaching us here. There's something much deeper, more profound at work here. We need not take from the psalm that if we just have enough faith, all of our problems will go away.

In fact, the more faith you have, probably the more problems you'll begin to notice. this. The king doesn't promise that all suffering will cease in this life, but he focuses instead here on the future hope that we have beyond it.

There is coming a day when the Lord will indeed deliver his people from all of their troubles, even death itself. There is some foreshadowing in verse 20 to the cross, but let's just take it for what it is in Psalm 34 for just a moment.

I think this is a subtle promise of resurrection. That the righteous, God, will deliver them out of all of his troubles. I think that's even beyond death, and in that deliverance, he keeps all of his bones.

[39 : 01] Not one of them is broken. No one's limping into the kingdom. This salvation, this deliverance, it's whole. It's complete.

It lacks nothing. There is no more trouble. It is only blessing, and what is the nature of this blessing? Verse 22, the last one.

It is life. Life everlasting. They will not be condemned in the judgment as the wicked will be. No, the Lord redeems the life of his people, which means they must necessarily go through death.

Amazing. How do we trust that God is good in the midst of affliction? We look to the future that he has promised us in glory, but how can we trust that future?

Because he saved our king. Because we look not only to David, but when we look to David in Psalm 34, we see David saying, okay, nice to see you.

[40 : 10] Now look there. Look at the cross. Look at the resurrection. God saves our king. How do we have hope?

We look to that, just as David encourages the people of Israel here. We have hope in his deliverance because that gives us hope in our deliverance. Because God has saved Jesus and raised Jesus, we have hope that he will raise us.

And what joy is that? It's amazing. David's deliverance from Gath made him certain of deliverance from death.

And Jesus, the greater David, proves it. He was afflicted not for his own foolishness, but for ours. He was afflicted for our transgressions. The chastisement of us was laid on him. And then God raised him for our deliverance.

[41 : 21] And because the Father was faithful to deliver him, we can be sure that he will also be faithful to deliver us. Therefore, we can come to Psalm 34 and legitimately, we can join the king in his praise.

And then we can follow his instruction and his wisdom. Knowing that all who will so taste the promise of God will see that he indeed is good.