

Taste, Fear and Seek the Lord

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Date: 03 June 2018

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[0 : 00] you'll find our passage on page 464 of our Bibles, church Bibles. I want to read verses 8 to 15 again. Obviously these are the verses we'll be looking at, studying, and also for the benefit of the Bible class that have just come in, I think we need to look again or read again the passage we'll be looking at in a moment. So let's begin again at verse 8 and we'll read down to verse, we think now verse 14. O taste and see, verse 8, O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you 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. 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? The answer, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

I'm sure there are many of you at this moment who are taking some kind of medicine, maybe even some kind of regular medicine. And of course when you take medicine, you look at the prescription, you see there are instructions that are on the medicine bottle, you know, like something like take one tablet four times a day, something like that. There's the command that's given for your physical well-being to ensure that you are recuperating according to the instructions of the doctor, the GP who prescribed you that medicine. So you do as the instructions tell you because, well, because you have, or I suppose ought to have absolute trust in your GP, absolute trust in those who prepared the medicine, and absolute trust in the medicine itself. And here are the instructions in God's Word, instructions for, not so much for your physical well-being of course, but for your spiritual well-being. There are again instructions, we might even say the prescription for your physical well-being found in God's Word.

God is giving us, God gives you instructions to follow, instructions from His Word, instructions as to how you are to glorify God, how you are to enjoy Him forever, how you are to live for His glory, how you are to honour Him, to love Him, love your neighbour as yourself. And when you are a Christian, then it's for you to have that absolute trust in God who's given you these instructions, given you that prescription. And at the same time have that absolute trust in God who, as it were, has prepared the instructions, prepared the spiritual medicine for you. And of course, have that absolute trust in the medicine itself, in the healing balm of God's Word.

And here in this second section of Psalm 34, the Psalm that we've been looking at, or something we began looking at last week, in this second main section of the Psalm, well, what do we see? We see God's prescription for a life lived well, for a life lived to honour God. The prescription's here for us, for you to honour Him, to trust in Him, to obey Him, to do His will. Why? Because God is good, as we've just been saying to the children. God is the one who's to be listened to, God's the one who's to be obeyed.

And it's for you and for me to look at God's Word, to see the prescription for a life that honours God, and to take God at His Word. Because unless, unless it's your heart's desire to follow Him, to know Him, to trust in Him, unless that's your heart's desire, and to follow Him as He has given us instructions in His Word, then you're going to be outside of God's will, outside of God's will for your life.

[4 : 30] The most horrible place to be. Well, let's look at this prescription. It's a very important section of the psalm, a very important section of God's Word. As you remember, written by David, written, of course, under divine inspiration. Remember, as we said briefly at the beginning, the context is given at the start of the psalm. David, remember, had been fleeing from King Saul.

Saul had been intent on killing David because Saul was so jealous of David's popularity. David had decided the best place to flee to would actually be Philistine territory.

the very place where Goliath had been from, Gath. He reckoned that Saul certainly wouldn't go into that territory. David went in in disguise, certainly. He certainly didn't think he would be recognised. But of course, he was recognised. And in a means to try and get out of that very dangerous situation, David pretended he was mad. David acted as if he was insane. And as a result, the king wouldn't have anything to do with him. And David sought to serve him in the king's palace. And David was released. And David gave thanks to God for God overruling in that situation and God delivering David from that danger, from that peril, from that crisis. And as a result, David writes this psalm.

And these verses 8 to 14, I think we can divide them into three parts. You see in your notes there, the tasting and seeing that the Lord is good. And then the second part of this psalm, the fearing and seeking the Lord. And then applying the instructions to fear God, to taste and see and fear the Lord. [6 : 20] So let's look firstly at tasting and seeing the Lord. As we say, David has experienced the Lord's goodness to him when David was in, we might say, was at the lowest ebb of his life? Hounded by a king that he'd never wronged, fleeing to enemy territory to escape from King Saul. Then being discovered as truly the David who had killed Goliath and had brought about the result of the destruction or great destruction of the Philistine army.

David, by God's grace, David had known the goodness of God in that land, that enemy territory. God had delivered David from death. It was God who'd freed David from an enemy king. And God would lead David to be king, to be king of Israel and to do God's will as king. And to express that joy, the joy in thanksgiving.

David actually calls on his fellow Israelites to do something active, to do something in response to the God who is good, to the covenant God of Israel. David's telling fellow Israelites, fellow those who are with him in covenant with God, he's telling them, taste, taste and see that the Lord is good. Be active, to trust in God and to be active in that trust, to be active in putting their faith in the one true God. Then you might say, well why taste? Why taste?

[7 : 58] Because when you actually see the biblical references to taste, the most occasions that we see the aspect of taste is in a literal sense. The physical tasting of food, for example.

You know, as we said to the children, you discern that something's edible and healthy and fresh even. When you actually taste the item, because you know that any food that's stale or inedible, well, the taste is the giveaway.

In a sense, you taste first before you eat. Now, if you bring that metaphor of taste, if you bring that to experience of David, then you'll see that he had discerned God's goodness.

You know, when he'd been allowed to escape from the Philistine enemy. He'd experienced God's goodness. And you might say this, that God's goodness tasted well.

It was a pleasant taste. Tasting God's goodness. Tasting that, tasting that led David to a fuller appreciation of God's love towards him. And as a result of David's tasting that God is good, David's faith is growing.

[9 : 07] We might say he digested the truth of God and his covenant love towards his people. So David, in tasting that the Lord is good, David was encouraged, had that quest for a deeper knowledge of God, and fulfillment of God.

He'd experienced God's deliverance. He tasted that God is good. And that tasting of God's goodness led David to a stronger and a fuller faith in God. What do we find?

We find that David had sought refuge in the God whom he trusted. He'd known the blessedness of being found safe in God, surrounded by God's love.

And that's why we read also in the New Testament. Because in the New Testament, the Apostle Peter likewise speaks of taste in relation to a deepening trust and a deepening knowledge of God. In another part of Peter's first letter, and we'll come to the part we read later, but in another part of Peter's letter, Peter wrote this, 1 Peter 2, 2-3, So there's Peter, many, many centuries later, there's Peter using these very words of Psalm 34.

[10 : 33] Peter telling the church, When you've tasted of the goodness of God, when you've known that the taste of God's grace is pleasant, you'll want to know more and more of that love.

Your desire will be strengthened and deepened to feed the more on the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll want the more and more, we might say, to drink in that sweet nectar of the grace of God and to do so by an act of walking with the Saviour.

Being constantly nourished by the Word of God. Seeking to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Well, David had grown in faith as a result of him having tasted that the Lord is good. But bring this to yourselves. Have you tasted of that same goodness? I mean, truly, is it your heart's desire to feed the more on the Lord Jesus Christ and do so by seeking Him?

By coming to the Father through Jesus in prayer? Through a daily and constant being nourished by the Word of God? Well, you can testify, yes, that the Lord is good.

[11:47] You can say, yes, I have tasted that the Lord is good. I've seen that the Lord is good. I know that He's good in His grace. Good in His mercy. Good in His faithfulness.

Why? Because of that medicine, that prescription for your spiritual well-being, you know is pleasant, and it gives you that freedom, gives you that knowledge, gives you that deepening trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know that what you've been given through the Word of God is health to your very soul. It's blessing. It's blessing for your life. Because, as with David, you will know that fullness of joy when you can say that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

But you'll notice in the psalm here, there's another aspect of that spiritual prescription that we have to take. And that's this most crucial aspect of the believers' walking with God, believers' relationship with God, and that's the fear of God.

As we read in verses 9 to 10, 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.

[13:13] I mean, one of the great challenges, surely, of the Christian today, the Christian church today, is the whole matter of fear. This constant battle that we wage in our hearts between fear of man and fear of God.

I mean, you know, just think of David, just to get context. David the psalmist here at that one point in his life, in his certain endangered existence in Philistine territory, he feared man.

And he sought to protect himself by his own reasoning. You know, pretend to be mad and be released from the king's presence. Now, later, of course, David would acknowledge that God had actually overruled him in that ruse.

It was God who'd released him so that David could truly write in the psalm that he feared the Lord. And he's calling on others to fear the Lord.

And, you know, it's this whole conflict between fear of man and fear of God that really, you know, each one of us needs to grasp and to deal with if we're to grow as believers.

[14:21] But I think we need to get our definitions sorted first, don't we? I mean, here's David calling on God's covenant people to fear God. What's he saying? What's he meaning? Well, surely he's meaning, he's calling on God's people to have reverence for God, to trust in God, to be devoted to God, to respect and trust and worship and, yes, to submit to God in everything.

It's that attitude of heart, you know, that doesn't just appear in a vacuum, you know, all of a sudden, but it comes from recognizing God's glory. It comes, that fear of God comes from recognizing his holiness, his power, yes, and his wrath against sin.

The fear of God is that being absorbed in the one true God, knowing who he is, so that when you know who he is, as he's made himself known in his word, then you'll have that reverence before him, you'll have that humility before him, you'll have that trust in him who is God and you'll submit and worship to God in every area of your life.

And surely then it's for each one of us to take time to meditate on who God is, to develop that fear of God by knowing him, knowing him as God has made himself known in his word.

We have the privilege of knowing God through the gift of his word. So, what's holding us back then in developing that fear of God, that true fear of God?

[16:04] Well, there are many reasons, of course, certainly. And surely, two things maybe to bring to mind are sinful distractions and our fear of man.

You know, think of the distractions all around us, distractions that, you know, we might say are ever with us in our fast-moving technological age. Things that are forever demanding our attention, taking us away from our true and constant devotion to God.

I think I read yesterday someone saying that anything that takes you away from the word of God has to be dismissed. It has to be seen as a distraction that doesn't benefit your growth and grace and in your life as a Christian.

But then, of course, there's the fear of man. Isn't that the most constant reason for our failure to fear God?

To fear God as he ought to be feared? Because when we're fearing man, we're thinking more of man, thinking more how to please man rather than thinking the more how to please God and fear God.

[17 : 13] because you see, when you truly contemplate who God is, when you're absorbed in his holiness, when you've taken board the loving demands that God makes in your time and in your work and in your service, when you dwell in God, when you meditate on God, then fear of man will diminish as your fear of God grows because that fear of God finds true contentment in him as you're seeking the more to do what pleases him and not what pleases man.

If you find your true rest in him, then the more you'll fear God and less fear man. And let's bring this forward in that dominant fear of God.

You will trust God. You will trust him for his provision for you. You'll know as David declares here, you'll know that you lack no good thing. You'll know that you have all that you need in God. You'll know the sufficiency of his presence. You'll know the sufficiency of his provision. You'll know the sufficiency of his power. You know, you won't be somehow seeking to find your rest and your peace and your contentment in things that have no place in a believer's heart, no place in a believer's mind.

You won't be trying to fill in the gaps in what you perceive is a lack from God. Now, when you have that fear of God, you have that true contentment.

[18 : 44] You have that abiding trust in God that God gives you all that you need for life, for salvation. And the more you seek the Lord, the more you'll have that peace and contentment in Him and in Him alone.

As David tells us here in verse 10, those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. You see, those who fear the Lord are those who seek the Lord.

Those who thirst for God have tasted and seen that God is good. And when we think of seeking, seeking the Lord, that's active, that's action.

That's action again on meditating on God and taking time, taking time. Seeking God is a timely thing to do. Take time with God.

Take time with Him in prayer. We'll be looking at that more closely this evening. Take time with God as you read His Word. Again, hearing from the children, how do we know the Lord is good?

[19 : 46] We read His Word. It tells us of who He is. And seeking Him, seek His will. Seek to know. Find out what pleases God. I mean, seeking the Lord, it's no mere casual acquaintance.

You know, some kind of small talk that we can really fall into. No, seeking God is finding God where He is to be found.

Where do we find Him? We find Him in His Word. We find Him in His presence. We find Him through His Son as we communicate to God through the Lord Jesus in our times of prayer. So the seeker is the one who truly fears God.

The seeker is the one who truly bows before God bows before Him in obedience. It's for your desire. It's your desire to honour Him, to revere Him, to seek to do His will and not the will of another.

So, you know, in general terms, just look in general terms, there's that connection between fearing God and seeking God. But then you might ask, well, how do we do this in practice?

[20 : 55] I mean, how do we live as those who fear God? Well, David tells us here in verse 13. And you notice a little kind of change in these verses because David's now taking on the, as it were, the role of a father.

He's, as it were, giving instructions to, maybe a father to children, maybe even a teacher to students. But, he's giving this divinely inspired advice as to how those who fear the Lord should live. So, how do we apply then the instructions in fearing God? Well, let's read from verse 11 again. Come, oh children, listen to me. I'll teach you the fear of the Lord.

So, fear of the Lord can be taught. Then, the statement, what man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may say good? And then, instruction, the prescription, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. So, here's David speaking with God-given authority. And, of course, he's speaking through his own experience as well.

[22 : 09] What it means to fear God and to apply that fear in your life. In other words, what's the secret of victorious living? David wants to share that secret.

He wants others to know what he knows. About the blessings that the one who fears God knows in his life. So, here's David telling, telling those whom he's teaching.

He's telling, listen, listen, David says, listen to me. Because, what I'm going to tell you are timeless instructions about the fear of God. It's for those who listened to David at the time.

It's for all. For you to be strengthened in your faith. To be enriched in your life. So that with David you can say that I lack nothing.

Well, what gives a Christian believer true satisfaction? What answers the most basic questions about the meaning of life?

[23 : 11] About life itself? Well, it's the fear of God. The fear of God and that fear seen in practical ways. Ways that show that a person truly is fearing God, truly is respecting God, truly is submitting and revering, submitting God to God and revering God as holy.

So see how David answers these most basic of questions about life. Well, look at verse 13. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

the person who fears God, the person who seeks to please God in faith and practice will show the fear of God even the very way he speaks in words of goodness, words of grace and not words of evil and not words of deceit.

Now, where does this take us? It takes us straight to the Lord Jesus. Think of Psalm 45, the psalm that speaks, one of many psalms that speak prophetically of the Lord Jesus. That psalm that tells of the beauty of the Lord and in particular the beauty of the Lord seen in his speech.

Psalm 45, verse 2, grace is poured upon your lips. And then think of when Jesus, one of the times Jesus was about to be arrested, officers who were sent to arrest Jesus, what did they say?

[24 : 35] They said, no one ever spoke like this man. So if you're following the Lord Jesus, if you truly fear the Lord, if you're sincere in that following, well the evidence will be seen in the very words you speak.

What words? Words of grace, words of goodness, words that tell of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in your heart, words that uphold God's word, words that uphold God's law, God's truth.

And even in your rebuking, rebuking in love, which believers have to do from time to time one to another, they're still words of goodness, they're not words of evil. They're still words of sincerity, they're not words of deceit.

And surely then that's one aspect of a believer who fears God, that grace is poured out in his lips or in our lips.

And the one who truly fears God, the very speech of that person will reflect the honour and glory of God even in that very words you speak. So it follows then that the person who fears God, who truly fears the Lord, is drawn towards what's good and not evil.

[25 : 53] But she'll be a peacemaker not just in name, but in practice. Verse 14, turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. So the tongue that's kept from evil will belong to the one who turns away from evil, turns away from all that's contrary to the word and will of God.

Now again, this brings us to the Lord Jesus and his goodness. He was and is that man of peace in his reconciling the world to himself. And even when Jesus was reviled and hated, Jesus spoke peace to those who were his enemies.

and if we truly are to fear God and to do that in word and practice, then it's surely for us to take the medicine, to take this prescription that David gives here for a truly blessed life.

That you will want to live a life well and to the glory of God. So keep his commands. And even, particularly even when Christians are going through, well yes, going through much suffering, even persecution for your faith in the Lord Jesus, we still abide by the prescription that God gives us here in his word.

And that's why we read in 1 Peter 3. Because the apostle Peter, Peter was writing to a church that was enduring much suffering. A church that was going through much persecution.

[27 : 19] And Peter deliberately echoed the words that we read from Psalm 34. He was deliberately using these words to encourage the suffering and persecuted church. He told them don't repay evil or reviling for reviling but on the contrary bless.

For to this you are called that you may obtain a blessing. And then he quoted directly from Psalm 34 for whoever desires to love life and say good days let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips

from speaking deceit.

Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. Exactly from Psalm 34. And isn't that the measure of the one who fears the Lord? The one who truly fears the Lord will hear or have God's word in his heart.

As the Lord Jesus said love your enemies pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. This true fear of the Lord will be seen in your Christ like love for sinners.

True fear of God will be seen yes in doing as God does in mercy towards those who are at enmity with him and with yourselves. Because where there's absence of mercy where there's absence of grace and peace in your heart then the words that you utter will be a distancing from God.

[28 : 42] And surely we need so often to repent of those many many times when we've sinned against God and our deceit and our lack of love and our lack of peace towards others. you see David had learned the secret of contentment.

David rested in the Lord. David trusted in the Lord. David feared the Lord. He sought the Lord. Why? Because he'd tasted and seen that the Lord is good. David knew that blessing from God because he feared God.

And in that fear of God David could tell of a harmonious relationship with God. he could tell that he lacked nothing because he knew of God's fullness of grace and love and faithfulness.

David had been given a prescription for a blessed life. David had taken that medicine who'd known that healing balm of God.

But what about you? You tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Are you even now fearing the Lord? Are you seeking him? Are you showing a commitment to him that you truly do fear the Lord even by the very words that you speak?

[29 : 56] Yes, both to God and to one another? What about even the very conduct behaviour in turning away from evil, seeking God, pursuing peace? Is that integral to your practice as a Christian?

Are you ignoring the instructions and the prescription that God gives you as to how to honour him? Because God's word is that prescription for your eternal well-being.

Yes, now and for the glory to come. So keep taking that divine prescription, not just once four times a day, but constantly.

Constantly until your departure to glory itself. Because there you'll know that eternal peace with God. There you truly will know that you lack no good thing.

Truly you'll know that you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. You will know that the joy of his presence with you eternally. It's a joy to anticipate now, it's a joy to behold now.

[30 : 59] What a prospect for those who seek him now, for you who fear him now, you who desire life in all its fullness, you have that blessing now, and that prospect of eternal glory, you who have tasted and seen that God is good.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, truly you give us that which is a blessing to our soul, a blessing to our hearts.

You give us these instructions, that Lord, we know that we must apply them, that we must by faith exercise our obedience before you. Forgive us, Lord, when we have failed to obey your word.

Forgive us, Lord, when we have sought our own way and done our own thing instead of following you. So help us, Lord, strengthen us, strengthen, yes, our fear of you, and to delight to do your will.

Hear us then as we again wait upon you in praise. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, let's sing from the verses we were looking at, Psalm 34, verse 8 to 14, the tune of St. Stephen, page 40, St.

[32 : 23] Psalms. Come, taste and see, the Lord is good, who trusts in him is blessed. O fear the Lord, you saints, with need you will not be oppressed. 8 to 14, Psalm 34, to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.