

Psalm 34

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a wee while to the psalm that we read in the book of Psalms, Psalm 34. And I want us to, I won't read them all, but the first eight verses, just to run through them.

David says, 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. Verse 8, O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

As we know, this is a psalm that has brought an amazing amount of comfort to God's people down throughout the years. We all have, I suppose, favorite psalms or favorite verses from particular psalms, because we can so enter in to some of the experiences that are highlighted.

And this particular psalm comes out of David's brush with death. And it's always a good thing to hear and to listen to people, people of deep experiences.

[1 : 25] People who have gone through amazing experiences. And I think that's one of the things. For instance, I remember people used to talk about some of the ministers from the last recent times who had gone through the war.

I used to talk of them as the war ministers, because they had spent years either in the army or in the navy, constantly facing danger and difficulty and threats and death, brushes with death all the time.

And, of course, these things forged deep experiences. And when you marry that with God's word, then it produces a depth of character and a depth of experience.

And that's why it's always good to listen to experience. It's a very arrogant person who won't listen to the voice of deep experience.

And that's one of the things that the psalms bring before us, and one of the things that David brings before us, because his life was a life that was lived producing deep experiences.

[2 : 34] And so we find David in this psalm that he is praising God. Now, the occasion, we've looked at one or two of the verses from this psalm on previous occasions, but that's why I'm taking it as a big section.

It tells us at the beginning of the psalm, the heading there, of the background to it. And it was the time when David, as you remember, he had been promised the palace, but he lived his life as a fugitive, as an outlaw, living in the caves.

And he lived like that, excuse me, for years, as he was hounded by Saul. Saul, out of absolute jealousy and envy of David, because David was a more popular character than he was, was determined to have David put to death.

And David lived with that price on his head, and he was barely escaping with his life over the years. But it became so grim in the land of Israel that there was no place for David anymore to hide.

And so he went into the land of the Philistines. And, of course, that was going really from the fire into the frying pan, because the land of the Philistines was also enemy territory.

[3 : 53] And David, of course, was a man who killed their great champion, Goliath. David was the man that the women of Israel sang, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.

And, of course, it wasn't long before David was recognized by the Philistines. And they went straight to their king, and they said, Do you know who's living among us? David.

David. The man, and we read about that when we go through in Samuel and Kings, they come and they say to the king, The old great enemy is living amongst us.

And so they take David before the king. And David realizes that he is in mortal danger. And this psalm comes from that experience.

And we find that David does two things. One, he pretends to be mad. And he begins to act like a madman in the presence of the king.

[4 : 55] And he was pretending that he was somebody who was deranged in his mind. And his performance before the king was so good that the king said to the men, Whoever this is, this is not the great champion of Israel.

This is a madman. What did you bring him here for? Send him away. That's what we find when we read the historical account. David. But when we come to this psalm, we realize that while David was pulling all his resources together and acting in a way that he had never acted in life, and his acting skills were so superb that he convinced the king, but we realize that there was an even greater reason.

David convinced the king because David was praying furiously at the same time. And we read about that. This poor man cried. The Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles.

I saw the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. And the actual, when we see there that David, in fact, he was at another brush with death.

So while on the one hand David is relying upon his own resources, at the same time he realizes, Unless the Lord helps me, I'm a dead man.

[6 : 26] And I would imagine that David's prayer, while he was before the king, was as jumbled as ever a prayer was.

And you know, some people, the reason I'm saying that is, some people say, I don't really know how to pray. I hear people praying, and I can't pray like that. The thing is that what constitutes prayer is honesty, sincerity of heart, because the Lord knows and understands, is able to interpret what we're saying.

It's not great words that great eloquence. It's heart. Heart. That's what matters. Heart. David wasn't able, while he was being dragged before the king, to say to the people, Hold on a moment.

I'm going to have a wee word of prayer, if you'd just leave me. Of course not. He was being hurled before. He was being dragged before the king. He was acting like a madman, and at the same time he's saying to the Lord, Lord, save me.

Help me. So you see why it's so important to emphasize that. That prayer is heart. And there are many times that as we go through life, and we face all the different and often difficult situations, we are to cry to the Lord, wherever we are, whatever the situation.

[7 : 50] And that's what David is showing us here. Now, we find, of course, that David then is celebrating this occasion. And he says, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Literally, I will praise the Lord at every time. Whatever happens, David is saying, I'm going to praise God.

There's always an occasion. There is always a reason for being able to praise God, irrespective of what is happening, even in the bad times. And sometimes people will say, well, it's very difficult to praise God in the bad times.

But, you know, there's always a reason. There's always something that we can praise God for.

Because, remember, when we are actually praising God, we're praising God for who he is. We're not praising God for who we are.

Although there is reason, when God has worked by his grace in our heart, to thank him and praise him for saving us and changing us. But our praise is in him.

[8 : 59] It is for who he is, for his glory, for his greatness, for his majesty, for his sovereignty, for his word. There is no end of the reasons and occasions for us to praise the Lord.

But we can praise the Lord even when things go against. I remember, I think I've used that illustration before about the man who bought a steak in the butcher, and he was on the way home to cook it, and his lace opened, so he put the steak down just on a bench beside him.

A dog came along and whipped the steak away. And the man was heard to say, Oh, there's my steak gone. Praise the Lord. Someone said to him, What do you mean, praise the Lord?

Oh, well, he said, Even although my steak is gone, my appetite is still good. And so this man, he was looking at it, this is the very thing David is talking about. Here was a man who could find something to praise the Lord for.

Didn't matter what the occasion was. And that's really what David is highlighting before us here.

And then David says, My soul makes its boast in the Lord.

[10 : 11] Let the humble hear and be glad. Where is boasting in the Christian faith? Boasting is always in the Lord. We don't boast about ourselves.

There's something, there's something about boasting that we don't like. You often find boasting in children. Children are often very, very self-centered.

But as we get older, we tend to move away from that. But if somebody is always talking about their achievements and what they've done and how great they are, people just say, Oh, I don't like that. But the Christian, their boasting is always in the Lord. We talk about what God has done. You look at the Apostle Paul.

He was constantly glowing in the cross of Christ. He's always telling us that. My boast is in the Lord. You want to hear me boast? Paul would say, Well, I'll boast.

[11 : 12] Not about myself, but I will boast about Jesus Christ. What he has done. What he has done for the salvation of sinners. What he has done for me personally.

And so, when Paul is talking here about the humble, he is obviously talking about people who just don't like boasting. So he says, 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. Now, at one level, you and I cannot make God greater than he is.

We cannot magnify God in the sense of making him greater than he is. But we can magnify him in the sense of making him more visible to people.

And that, of course, in a sense, is what the likes of what a magnifying glass does. If you have a magnifying glass, the object that you're looking at, it doesn't become any bigger.

[12 : 13] But the glass makes it look bigger. You haven't actually changed the object you're looking at, but you're able to see it more clearly. And you know, two things here.

First, praise magnifies God. Let me tell you, my friend, the more you praise God, the clearer you will see him.

You will see aspects of his being. You will see him in a way that maybe you never saw him before. And that's why it is so important to praise God.

When we go through the Bible and we see the occasions of people praising God, we see how God responds to praise. You make it a part of your life.

I've said it so often because I'm saying it to myself. When I preach to you, I preach to myself as well. Praise is vital. Praise is important. Remember, praise is the language of heaven. Throughout an endless eternity, we will be praising God.

[13 : 14] Be a very strange thing if God's people will spend their whole journey going through this world moaning and lamenting and groaning and then say, oh, I'm going to leave all the praise until I get to glory.

No. We should be speaking the language of where we're going and the language of our eternal destination is our language of praise. And that's really what the psalmist is saying.

I will bless the Lord at all times. Remember what it says, God's definition of David. A man after God's own heart. Not great.

There were aspects of David's life if we were to be critical of it and we'd say, oh, you know, David was a good man, but he was bloodthirsty. He could be cruel.

He could be harsh. He was a man who did things that were wrong. And, I mean, we're all aware of his murder and his adultery and all these things.

[14 : 14] And yet God's testimony of David, a man after God's own heart, isn't that amazing? And I often think that we, we are always making our judgments.

And you know, our judgments are nearly always wrong. And that's why the Lord Jesus says to us, judge not. That is what we are told in the Bible about judgment.

Don't you make your judgments. We make judgments about people and we don't know. We don't know their situation. We don't even know them.

The Lord, it's one of the things the Lord so often, remember when Samuel came to anoint the sons of Jesse, Samuel was making his assessments one after another.

Oh, that's a man. God said to him, don't look on the outward appearance. God doesn't look at people the way that we look at one another.

[15 : 15] God looks at the heart. He knows what you really like. He knows what I'm really like. As a man, or as a person, thinks in that heart, that's what they're really like.

That's what the Bible tells us. The real you, the real me, is hidden away. But God sees. And that's why God was able to make this assessment of David.

And when we look at the life of David, one of the characteristics, one of the things that so characterized his life, he was a man of praise. He was constantly praising God.

May we make it the habit of our life. And you know, that's the first thing I was going to say about magnifying the Lord. Lord, as the more we praise the Lord, the more we will see him.

But also, if we live as we ought, if we live this type of life, blessing the Lord, and praising the Lord, and boasting in the Lord, and seeking to magnify the Lord, others will be enabled to see.

[16:23] Surely this is what you and I want. If you today are a believer, surely what you want is that other people will see the Lord as well. You're wanting to hold up that glass, that magnifying glass, in order that other people will see.

Come and see. And you've got to remember this, that people are seeing, they're making, they're making their judgment of who the Lord is as they look at you and look at me.

And sometimes we say, that's an awful thing, but my friend, that's how it is. What does an outside world think of God?

They will often think of God in relation to what they think of you. Because you are somebody who has testified, has made this declaration, I belong to the Lord.

And you know, it's a solemn and a challenging thing. And it is something that we're all going to have to give answer for. And let me say that it is the humble person that will be enabled to magnify the Lord.

[17:30] Who can make the Lord great but one who feels that he himself or she herself is nothing? And so we find that here is David and he's magnifying the Lord.

And then he says, I saw the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Now I love this word where it's so clear. He delivered me from all my fears.

And this means actually the actual sense of fear. Not only did the Lord deliver David from what was causing the fear, but he removed the sense of fear out of his heart.

And these are two different things. Because sometimes we can have what we term irrational fears. Where something which has caused fear can go and yet fear remain.

And fear is an awful thing. It's an awful thing to live with a sense of fear. And sometimes people are afflicted with that. It must be an awful condition to live constantly with a sense of fear.

[18:38] And you know, it's one of the things that Jesus has come to do and to bring into this world is to remove fear by bringing love.

There is no fear in love. It's a wonderful thing. And that is part of what will make glory the great place it is where there will be no fear within or without ever, ever, ever.

because it's an environment of love. But so, we find here that this is what has happened. And the actual word fear here brings before us the very idea of terror.

And so we're told, I saw the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. And you know, the great thing is that it doesn't tell us what caused the fears.

And the wonderful thing is that the Lord is able to do that for you as well today. And you may be saying to me and I might be saying, ah, but if, you know, you don't know my situation.

[19:44] Do you know what's caused the fear in my heart? Do you know what's brought the fear in my life? It's my own stupidity. It's what I have done.

Well, when you look at the life of David, there were many things that David did that were stupid and there were things that David did that were wrong. And yet, it was still David's testimony and it was his testimony to the end of his day that the Lord delivered him from all his fears.

And then it says, those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. Now this word radiant we find it actually spoken about in Isaiah and it's in connection with in that verse where it says, your son shall come from afar and your daughters carried on their hips.

It's got the idea there of like a father or a mother discovering a son or a daughter that has been lost and has been disappeared, has disappeared for years and all of a sudden has returned.

and there's this absolute sense of joy and radiance about. And that's the picture that we have here. Those who look to him are radiant.

[21:07] And that's what the Lord does. The Lord transforms. The Lord, the more we focus upon the Lord and the more we see of him, there is a transforming change. You and I, my friend, cannot gaze upon the Lord without it impacting our life.

Let me tell you that. You and I cannot, we cannot fix our gaze upon the Lord without becoming a little more like him. And you keep your eye fixed upon Jesus by faith. You live with him. You focus upon him. You feed upon him. You drink upon him. And you'll become more and more like him. And that radiance will become obvious. And their faces shall never be ashamed. You know, I think there's a, there's a lovely play on the word here because you know, when, when you and I, when we become ashamed or embarrassed, we often, you would talk about getting a red face. Got a beamer. Just so embarrassed. You get really red. Well, this is, here's a radiance with a difference. There is no shame in Christ.

[22 : 16] You know, we look back over our lives and there are so many things that we have said and so many things that we have done. And we say, I'm ashamed of that.

Have you ever said, I'm ashamed of myself? Of course you have. Of course I have. But this is part of what Jesus bore on the cross. He bore our shame because sin brings shame. That's part of the curse of sin. It's part of the awfulness of sin is shame. Maybe today you have no sense of shame and everything in your life is absolutely great. Well, that's wonderful. But maybe some of you in here today, you know all about the reality of shame. Well, my friend, that's what Jesus has done in taking our sin upon himself. He has taken our shame as well. So this poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

[23 : 26] And I don't know what all was going on in, well, we know to a certain extent what was happening with David. But he terms himself here, this poor man cried and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles.

Well, today you might be poor, poor with regard to your situation. You might be going through some particular situation in life and you're saying to yourself, you know, this is really getting me down. There's nothing I can do about it. Well, you know, there's only one thing you can do and that's to cry to the Lord. And the Lord will always hear the cry that comes to him because it's a cry of faith. You've directed the cry to him. You're not trying to analyze and say, now, I wonder, I wonder if I'm actually directing this to the Lord or not. Does the Lord know that this is me? Of course he does. You call to the Lord and cry, Lord, help me. My friend, the Lord is hearing you. That is a cry of faith.

[24 : 32] You don't need to try and analyze is that a sincere cry? You don't need to analyze is that a genuine cry? It is a real cry that is coming from a heart of need.

And so he's saved out of all his troubles. And then it says the angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him and delivers them. Now, that could mean two things. On the one hand, it could mean angels in a sense of the angels that are ministering spirits sent by God to minister to his people. That is absolutely true. The angels are round God's people. But it can also mean the Lord Jesus Christ who is the angel of the covenant. So, in its two-fold declaration is correct. And today, my dear friend, as a believer, both things are true, Jesus Christ, the angel of the covenant, has encamped round about you.

[25 : 37] And also, ministering spirits are ministering to you today, whether you realize it or not. And so, what a privilege belongs to the people.

Now, David, as he writes this, he's thinking about his own situation. And he's saying, you know, I was delivered because God protected me. I cried, I had, but the angel of the Lord encamped round about me. That very word, encamped, it speaks about, first of all, it speaks about nearness. If you encamp round, it means that you're very close to. To encamp means permanence. It means continuing there. If you set up camp, it means that you're planning to stop there. And that's what happens. That's the wonderful thing of being a believer. Jesus has come to stay. He's not, he's not a passing visitor. He has come to take up residence. John's favorite word is abiding.

[26 : 45] He has come to abide, to stay forever. And you know, as David reflects on his situation, grim and all though it was, he realizes that of all people, he is the most privileged because he has a Lord in the most wonderful way.

Jesus is there not as a spectator, but as a friend. Isn't that wonderful? And that's how he is for you today. And then David in his song of deliverance speaks to us of God's goodness.

And David puts it in a beautiful way and he says, taste and see that the Lord is good. And really what David is saying is this, I know that God is good.

I want you to know that God is good. And in fact, David is saying, I want you to go further than just listen to my words. I want you, yourself, to taste for yourself.

don't just take my word for it. You, yourself, go and experience what I have experienced. And you know, that is always the way that the Bible says to us.

[28 : 01] That's the way it is. And that's what we want for everybody. Once we ourselves have tasted, you want others to taste as well. If you discovered, supposing you were ill, really ill, and you discovered some great medicine that not only was going to cure you, but was also going to produce a sense of well-being within you and going to give you such a sense of purpose in life, you would say to yourself, I have got to share this with everybody.

And you know, that's what we have in Jesus. Because He is the great Savior, that's what He has come to do. He is the Savior of sinners, which that includes all of us.

That's why His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. So Jesus has come into this world as the Savior to save.

and not only does He save us from our sins, but He fills us with Himself so that He gives us of His joy, His love, His peace, things that so many people today crave.

So many people are looking for peace. Well, Jesus says, I'll give you peace. My peace I give you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. And so David is saying, look, I have discovered this myself.

[29 : 35] You come and discover it for yourself. It's the ultimate blessing of life. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Maybe some of you are saying, well, you know, if I, if I could see, if I could see that the Lord was good, then I would certainly go and taste.

But that's put in the cart before the horse. we are first to taste and then we will see. In other words, you come to the Lord and you say to him, Lord, I, maybe you're here today and there's so much you don't know, you don't understand and you're saying, Lord, please, please, make it clear to me.

Please, come into my heart. I hear so much about the Christian faith, but so far it's a blur to me. I want to know the reality of it.

I want to experience the reality of it. I want, Lord, to know you as my Lord and my Savior and my friend. You know, if you really pray that prayer and you really are seeking to know the Lord, you will find him.

[30 : 52] That's what his word tells you. And when you do that, you are tasting of him and you will see that he is good. And then you'll be like David and you'll begin to boast in the Lord and you'll begin to magnify the Lord.

And you will want then to tell others and say, you know, it's true. All these things I used to hear and I didn't understand and I couldn't see.

You know something? I've come to see and it's all true. And like the woman of Samaria who will say, comes, see a man who told me all things that ever I did.

Is not this the Christ? Let us pray.