

Discover God's Goodness

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to Psalm 34. I'm not going to read but verses 1 to 8.! Just run through them.

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.

To verse 8, to taste and see that the Lord is good. As you know, this is a psalm that has brought a lot of comfort to God's people over the years. And it came out of a very dark and deep and dangerous experience that David had.

And there's nothing like the deep, dark experiences of life where we come to learn in God's hand some of the greatest teachings that we can ever get.

And it's always worth listening to Christians who have gone through deep and difficult experiences because God is a way of using these things to work in our heart, to teach us.

[1 : 08] And it's always worth spending time listening to people who have gone through experiences like that. Now, as we know, David lived on the edge for years. And it's strange that a man who had been promised the crown and the palace spent years living in caves and in the mountains.

For David, it wasn't a bed at night. He often slept just wherever he could find somewhere to sleep because there was a price in his head. He was the number one outlaw in the land.

A soul was trying everything to get him and to kill him. And things had become so difficult and so dangerous for David that he thought, there's nowhere left for me to hide in this land.

And he said, I'm just going to go into the land of the Philistines. And talk of jumping out of the pan into the fire because the land of the Philistines was real enemy territory.

And David, of course, was the one who had... And he went to Gath and he had killed the great legend, the great champion of Gath, Goliath. And as it said there that the women had sung afterwards because David had led that slaughter of the Philistines.

[2 : 23] Saul has slain as thousands and David as tens of thousands. So he was playing with fire going into Gath. And of course, it wasn't long until he was recognized and he was brought before the king.

And David realized that his life was in mortal danger. And we find that David began to act like he was mad. He pretended that he was a madman.

He was utterly insane. And he began to drool. He was letting his spits fall down and he was scratching at the door. And his performance was Oscar style.

It was so good that the king was utterly convinced that this man was insane, that he was a complete lunatic. And he said to his men, What on earth have you brought this madman in here?

Get him out of here. And of course, David manages to get out and then he goes, he departs. We're told that he escapes and goes to hide in the cave of Adullam.

[3 : 26] And of course, God was with David all the time. And David, of course, when there's so many parts of this psalm where we can understand exactly where David has come from, he was this poor man who cried and God heard and saved.

And David knew that even although he was playing his own part, that it was ultimately down to God. Because we're told in the scripture that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord and he'll turn it whichever way he will.

We've always got to remember that. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. And so David was aware of that. And so David, he's praying furiously. He's crying to the Lord.

And David, of course, manages to escape with God's help. And that's the background to this psalm. And David begins by saying, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Literally at every time, I will bless the Lord. And David is really saying, whatever happens in life, always remember there's something to praise God for.

[4 : 34] And so often, we can be slow to praise God, particularly going through the difficult times and the hard times. But there's always something to praise God for.

It's like we've heard the story before of the old man in America who had bought a stake. And he put the stake down on the ground for a second because his laces had opened. So he bent down to tie his shoe.

And as he put the stake on the ground, a dog came away and, the dog came along and away with the stake. And he says, Oh no, my stake is gone.

I'll praise the Lord. And a bystander said, What on earth are you saying praise the Lord for? Well, he said, I'm really sorry, my stake is gone, but I'm praising the Lord because I've still got an appetite.

And there's a lot of people in the world who would give anything to have an appetite. So there was a man who saw that even although his dinner had gone, that he still had a reason to praise God.

[5 : 38] And we should be like that as well because sometimes we're slow to do that. And that's one of the features of David's life because David was stretched to the very edge so often.

And yet virtually in every psalm, no matter how harrowing the experience, we find that David will still praise the Lord. No wonder he was termed a man after God's own heart.

So I hope that praise characterizes our life. And then David goes on to say, My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Now a lot of people boast in different ways.

Some people boast about what they've achieved and what they've done and they like to make it known. Some people boast in their wealth and they like to parade it.

Some people boast about their abilities and their talents. Some people boast about their family.

Some people even boast about their racial identity. You've got to ask the question, Should the Christian boast?

[6 : 41] Well, it's very obvious from what David is saying, yes. But our boasting is not about ourselves, not about what we are or what we've done. The boasting should be in the Lord.

You find that a feature of Paul's life. Paul was always saying that he boasted in Christ Jesus. He gloried in the cross of Christ. He never boasted about himself, but he boasted about what Jesus had done and Jesus is able to do.

And so should we. And as Christians, we love to hear other people speak well of the Lord. And then David says, Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

To magnify, we know, is to make something bigger, to make it clearer. So we say to ourselves, How can we make God bigger? Well, obviously we cannot make God bigger than he is.

But very simply, what it means is that when you use a magnifying glass, you're able, whatever you're looking at, you're able to see it more clearly.

[7 : 47] You're able to get a better understanding of what you're looking at. And that's the idea that David has here, where he's saying, Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

Let your life display the Lord. That's basically what he's saying. Let your life display the Lord so that people, as people look at your life, they will be able to see the Lord at work in you.

And it's a very challenging thing because that question we have to ask ourselves, is that the way that we live? Are people able, as they see how we conduct ourselves, how we, our lifestyle, what we say, what we do, how we act, is that glorifying God?

Is it magnifying God? Because remember, the Christian is the world's Bible. Many, many people in the world will never open the Word of God, never open a Bible. And they don't know the first thing about what the Bible is saying.

So the only way they can take any form or idea of what Christianity is, is by looking at the life of the Christian. And if the life of the Christian is displaying and magnifying the Lord, then that's a great thing.

[9 : 08] It will bring people to, to maybe go to the Bible and say, well, why is this passion, why does this passion do this? Why does this passion not react the way that others do?

Why? It is because they are magnifying the Lord. And then in verse four, David acknowledges what God has done.

I sought the Lord and he answered me and he delivered me from all my fears. Now, at this particular moment in David's experience where he said, I sought the Lord and he answered me and

delivered me from all my fears.

We know that David was praying furiously, fervently, to the Lord. But it wasn't a matter of David saying, well, I need, I'm going to pray.

I need to go down my knees. I need a wee bit of a quiet time. There was none of that. There was no opportunity for that. David was praying at the very same time as he was acting like a madman.

[10:08] He was crying to the Lord. He was praying to the Lord. I'm sure we've all been in situations like that. We're in a predicament.

We don't know what to do. We don't know where to turn. We're not sure what we should say. We're stuck. And we're in the situation where you can't sort of say, oh, hold, give me a moment till I have a wee bit of time and speak to the Lord.

No, we've often done it. We say, oh, Lord, help me here. I really don't know what to do. I mean, this is dire. Please, Lord, give me the words to speak or give me, show me what to do in this situation because this is, I'm in, for as far as I'm concerned, I'm in a real predicament.

Do you know, that's real prayer. That's a prayer of faith. It doesn't need to be a long prayer. But it's genuine. It's from the heart. It's an urgent prayer. Please, Lord, help me.

And the great thing we read here is, I sought the Lord and he answered me and he delivered me from all my fears. So you see, the deliverance was complete.

[11:17] He delivered so that if the sheer terror, because that's really what that word fear means, he delivered David from the situation, but he also delivered his mind from the terror that he was experiencing.

So you see, it's a complete deliverance. And that's the way that the Lord so often works in our life and in our heart. So it was a cry.

And then David says, You know, you can't focus on the Lord for long without it becoming evident in your life.

People will see it. If you spend time in prayer and with the word yourself or with a group of people and then you come away, there will be something of the lingering presence of God's peace, of God's love will be evident in who you are.

You can't hide it. It's part of what happens. It tells us of how they took note of the disciples that they had been with Jesus. You remember, Moses is a classic example.

[12:40] It's probably almost an extreme example. But when he was up on the mount with the Lord for 40 days, Moses couldn't see it.

But when he came down, his face was shining so brightly that the Israelites couldn't look on him. When Moses was going to speak to them, they said, you have to put a veil over your face because your face is shining so bright.

It's like the sun. We can't look on it. And that was because he had been in the intimate presence of the Lord for 40 days. Now, it won't be as evident or as extreme in a sense as that with us.

But something, something will show. You can't, often your work will display it. I remember going down for logs and coal one time to my caskals.

Bob Hepburn, you know, he's about six foot eight. I remember saying, how he did, I looked up and all I could see was the white of his eyes. His face was, everything was black because he'd been working in the coal.

[13:48] And I remember saying, do you know this, if you were transported this very second into the middle of Prince's Street, there's not one person passing but would know what you were working at because it was so evident, it was so clear.

And in a sense, it comes, you can apply that spiritually because there is something of the radiance of the Lord will begin to manifest itself in God's people as they are in fellowship, as they are in close proximity with the Lord.

2 Corinthians talks about the shining radiance of the Christian. Classic example of Stephen when he was being stoned. Remember what happened there?

Stephen was given a sight into heaven, he was given a vision into heaven where he saw the risen Lord standing. And he was given such a sight of the Lord Jesus, it tells us that they saw his face was shining even as they were raining stones on him to kill him.

His persecutor couldn't help but notice his face was shining. You see, so those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed.

[15:07] What a change. Shame and embarrassment is part and partial of life. It's part of the sin, it's part of what sin is.

And we all know what it is to end up with a red face of embarrassment. Where we're ashamed of what we've said, ashamed of what we've done.

If you're caught doing something that's wrong, there's always a look of guilt, isn't there? You'll even find it with a young person.

You catch him doing something that's wrong, there's that guilty look. It's natural, it's what happens. And so shame has been part and partial of our life.

But part of the wonder is that Jesus, part of what he took on the cross was our shame. So that he's transferring this embarrassment and shame which is part of sin and giving us this radiance in place, this shining radiance that talks of in 2 Corinthians.

[16:13] and then David says this, as we just mentioned that earlier, this poor man cried and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his distresses.

Well, David was the poor man. And you know, we often know what it is to be poor. So many different situations. We sometimes were poor in spirit, poor in prayer.

Have you sure you've often felt, oh man, I feel so poor in prayer. You look at your Christian service and you say, oh man, my Christian service is poor.

We feel poor spiritually. We feel often, oh man, I'm a poor witness. Sometimes we have poor health. Sometimes our finances are poor.

Sometimes we feel that we're maybe a poor husband or a poor wife or a poor father or a poor mother. We often in so many different situations in life, we feel, oh, I'm not very good at this.

[17:17] I feel poor at what I'm doing. But the beauty of it is that we can go to the Lord and cry to him and say, Lord, you've got to help me. This is not what I want to be. And we go to our Lord who is able to help us.

And David's cry wasn't a vague cry, the cry of a kind of despair. Is there anybody out there? It was a cry of faith. It was focused upon the Lord. He was crying there.

And do we appreciate, I don't think we do, the wonderful privilege that we have, that at any time of the day or night, in any situation, doesn't matter what, we can go to the Lord and say, Lord, you've got to help me just now.

Isn't that amazing? the Lord is never too busy. He's never away. He's never too involved with somebody else. He's always available.

It's one of the most wonderful privileges. And I don't think we take it, we appreciate sufficiently what we have. Irrespective of whatever we're going through, even if it's of our own making, we can still go to the Lord and say, Lord, you've got to help me just now.

[18:30] I'm stuck, I'm struggling. I'm not in a good place, Lord. Help, help, help. That's a cry of faith. It's real. That's the kind of prayer that the Lord hears.

And as the hymn writer said, what a friend we have in Jesus. If you're here tonight and you have to say, well, I have to confess, I know all about Jesus, or I know an awful lot about Jesus, but I haven't come to this place yet where what you're saying, some of it, yeah, I'm hearing, but I can't follow it.

Well, it's time you did. You have no idea what you're missing. You have no idea what you're losing out on, because it's a fragile life, a difficult life. Having the Lord makes all the difference in the world. So David's cry, it was a cry. it was literally a cry, this poor man cried. David didn't make a prayer which was full of great theological terms.

He didn't make a prayer that was so eloquent and a beautiful flow of words. It was just a cry. Lord, help me, I'm a dead man unless you help me.

[19:53] It was a desperate cry. And that's a prayer of faith that the Lord will answer. You see, the Pharisee, and remember the Pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee, he had a very eloquent prayer.

He was talking mostly about himself. Very eloquent. The publican, he had nothing really, he just felt a hopeless, poor sinner. All he could say was, Lord, have mercy on me.

Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. That's all he had. But it was more than enough because he was the one who went to his house justified. He was the one that the Lord had heard.

So the cry is an absolutely essential thing. A baby is never taught to cry. It's natural to a baby, isn't it?

A baby cries. Cries when it's hungry. A baby cries when she's thirsty. A baby cries when feeling dirty, needing change.

[20 : 58] A baby cries when babies sore. So many things. Nobody teaches. It's natural. So it is for the Christian.

Because the moment that God begins to work in your heart, the moment the journey of faith begins, you and I are spiritual babies. And it's natural for us to cry.

It's part and partial of your Christian life. You start crying the moment that God begins to work in your heart. And it's part, something that goes on all throughout our life.

And then it tells us that the angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him and delivers them. Now, when it says here the angel of the Lord, in a sense it could talk of two things.

We know that the heirs of salvation, that the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. So that if you're a believer, you have the angels ministering to you.

[21 : 59] And how little we understand that and how little we know. And I'm sure many a time we have been protected and kept and delivered because of these ministering spirits.

But the angel of the Lord, as it says here, the angel of the Lord is sometimes spoken of as the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it could actually mean both because both are true.

That David is talking here and he's saying the angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear the Lord. So you have the protection of the Lord, his presence in camping, which talks of nearness, and you have the ministering spirits, round, front, back, side.

You couldn't be more protected. There isn't anybody in the world who might have the best trained SAS bodyguards giving a protection, anything near the protection that the Christian has.

Protection of soul and protection of body by the Lord. And the very idea that he encamps means that it's permanent. When you camp down and camp round, it means this is talking about we're here for the long term.

[23 : 25] It's not just a fleeting presence. It's a permanent presence. What a privilege we have. See, so often we don't think about these things that this is what we have.

The presence of the Lord encamp round us. it's a wonderful thing. And then finally in verse 8, David says, taste and see that the Lord is good.

And I love the way that David says this. Now David has experienced all throughout his life that the Lord is good. He's proved it continually. And he wants everybody else to discover just how wonderful that the Lord is.

and when you become a Christian, you don't become a secret Christian. You might be a secret Christian for a little while, but it's very hard to remain a secret Christian.

Because part of what a Christian wants to do is to tell others. You want to share. You want others to know, others to experience what you've experienced.

[24 : 37] You want that other people will come to faith in the way that you've come to faith. It's like if you, supposing you were to discover some amazing cure for a fatal illness.

And this cure not only cured you of the illness, but brought a sense of well-being into life. You wouldn't keep that hidden away. You would want everybody to know.

And so it is when we become Christians that we want to share, we want to tell people there is this Jesus. And if you've never discovered how good the Lord is, I would ask you tonight to taste.

Taste, taste for yourself. You see, it's the ultimate blessing. To reject Jesus is to deprive yourself of the greatest good. You know, this is part of the absolute madness of our nation, temptation is this determination to try to silence the voice of the Christian.

The only voice that is bringing hope, that is bringing meaning, that could bring well-being, that could bring hope. And yet they say we don't want to hear that voice, God silence that voice.

[25 : 53] You know, nothing shows clearer that hell is an overdrive in its attempt to destroy us as a nation. And we need to pray that the Lord will indeed have mercy upon us.

But it's the ultimate blessing. It's not only a blessing for life, it's a blessing for eternity. And also taste and see is a command, it's not an option. The Lord is saying to you tonight, through his word, oh taste and see that the Lord is good.

Some people say, well, if I could see that the Lord is good, then I would taste. Well, let's put in the cart before the horse. In order to see how good the Lord is, you have to taste him first.

You have to receive him. You have to accept him. You have to come, fall down before him. You've got to say, Lord, open my heart.

Help me to discover. Help me to believe. believe. Because, you know, as we said, it's a greatest blessing and it brings a guarantee.

[27 : 08] There's a lot of guarantees in life. Sometimes you'll get a year guarantee, a five-year guarantee, a ten-year guarantee. Sometimes you'll even get a lifetime guarantee. Well, the guarantee here, when you come to taste and to see that the Lord is good, good, it's not only lifetime, it's an eternal guarantee.

The only eternal guarantee that you can be given in this world. So I pray tonight that you will all, if you haven't already, come to taste and to see that the Lord is good.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks that you are gracious, you are merciful, you are the God who has given us this wonderful word you have revealed so much of yourself in your truth.

And we pray that we may have an appetite for your truth. And we pray that your word may have a greater place in our life, year by year. We pray that our lives may display your glory and your grace.

We pray that we might be living witnesses! before all people. Help us in and take us all to our homes and safety. Grant us your grace in all that we do. Forgive us our every sin we pray in Jesus' name.

[28 : 28] Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 63. Psalm 63 in the Scottish Psalter.

The tune is Bass of Harris. We're going to sing verses 1 to 5. Psalm 63 verses 1 to 5. Psalm 63. 2-9-5 Psalm 63 verses 1 to 5 to the tune bass of Harris Lord thee my God. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[31 : 28] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. May the grace, mercy, and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.

I will go to the door on my left. Thank you. Thank you. I will continue this through this through this through this through this through this Thank you.