

# Psalms 34

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[ 0 : 00 ] Psalm 34, it's a testimony of God's faithfulness and it's a call to be faithful. And for some these words will be really familiar.

! I sought the Lord and He answered me. Delivered me from all my fears. O come, magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together.

We've learnt these words this week in Holiday Bible Club. It's why I've chosen to speak on this psalm. It's been such an encouraging time to hear people explain those verses. But for others, other verses will be really familiar. You might know, oh taste and see, that the Lord is good. Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

There are magnificent verses in this psalm. Spurgeon calls this psalm a hymn followed by a sermon. Verse 1-10, the hymn, verse 11-22, the sermon.

It's an acrostic poem in the Hebrew alphabet. Each kind of sentence starts with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And it's got some very, very important things to say to you and I this morning. And it's got very important things to say to us, particularly to those of us who are anxious.

[ 1 : 21 ] To those of us who are fearful. To those who are faint-hearted. Look at how it begins, verse 1. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise will 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. Let us exalt His name together. O magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together. Let us exalt His name together.

Of every Christian, every believer. And whatever expression we give to that joy doesn't really matter. But the principle of joy is here very clearly in this psalm.

I'm not sure how you find it. But there is some rejoicing. That's quite irritating, isn't it? Isn't it? Some people rejoice insensitively. They can be irksome. Get on your nerves in the way that they rejoice. And inappropriate. But the one thing that you could never accuse David of being is insensitive. He's a very sensitive man. If you notice verse 6, look what he says.

[ 2 : 55 ] He says, This poor man cried. I cried out. And the Lord cured him. And saved him out of all his troubles. Now either he's kidding.

Or he's really got something to say this morning. Now you can't wander into a hospital ward where people are seriously ill. Or go into a sad and grieving home where people are afflicted.

And talk like this. Unless you've really got something. That is real. Unless you've got something genuine to say. And notice with me that David is not naive. He is familiar with afflictions.

He's not in an ivory tower. King David didn't wander around as if he was on a spiritual cloud. Nine all the time. He speaks to the afflicted. And he says, listen to me. Here's some truthful, practical wisdom.

I know what it's like to be up against it. The background of the psalm is given in the title. Can you see it in the capital letters at the start of Psalm 34? It's helpful.

[ 3 : 56 ] The background was David had killed Goliath. And do you remember David became so very popular. The women sang, Saul has killed his thousands.

But David is tens of thousands. And every time Saul got in his car and he turned on the radio. That was the song playing. And it got on his nerves. It grated on him. Saul gets more and more upset at David's success and popularity.

And then David flees because he's very worried. He's anxious for his life. He goes to a foreign country. A foreign kingdom. And when he gets there, he's recognised. Isn't this the guy that killed ten thousand?

And do you remember we read it in the start of the series? He pretends to be mad. It's a desperation tactic. He went to scribble on walls. And he dribbled down his beard.

And you might think, well this is not entirely relevant to us. But the principle behind it is entirely relevant. Because he was literally fearing for his life. And whatever expression that you and I give to fear, it doesn't really matter.

[ 5 : 05 ] But behind it, there was genuine fear for David. He took matters into his own hands. He became afraid. He fled into another country.

He was disobedient. And he got more and more entangled. His life got more and more messy. And so you know what I'm talking about, Dr. You. You know in life that there can be pressure.

And you react in a certain way. And you take the issue into your own hands. And you try to get out of it with your own strategies. And your own methods.

And pretty much you've found that instead of making the situation better, you're in deep water. And you've got to somehow get out of it. And I want to suggest to you this morning that fear is a big part of our lives.

It's certainly a big part of mine. And yours. And it wouldn't surprise me this morning if all of us here are conscious of some real and genuine fear.

[ 6 : 08 ] Psychologists tell us that it is the deepest and most basic emotion of all. And we have fears like these, don't we? The fear of insecurity. The fear of being rejected.

The fear of disappointment. The fear of ridicule. The fear of failure. The fear of sickness. Or upset. Or even death. And I'm sure that a great number of us this morning, from that short list, well, it applies to most of us.

And some of that fear, we can be brilliant, can't we, at hiding. You know how it is, isn't it? A hard, competent exterior. Covering up a very needy, desperate person.

Be a pressure. And David says, can you see it with me? Verse 4, I was afraid. Verse 5, I was ashamed.

Verse 6, I was troubled. He knows what it is to be broken hearted. Verse 18, I'm crushed in spirit. And he says, many are the afflictions of the righteous.

[ 7 : 20 ] I've known what it is. I've learned a lesson in my troubles. And I'm asking you to hear me.

And I'm asking that you listen to my testimony. And David, in his wandering away from God, he didn't find peace. And he didn't find happiness. He went to a foreign country. And he didn't find relief.

And when he pretended to be mad, it didn't bring him success. Or protection. It only brought him shame. There's two articles. Psalm, verses 1 to 10, his boasting about God.

And verses 11 to 22, his belonging to God. So, first of all, his boasting about God. The word comes from verse 2. My soul makes its boast in the Lord.

There is only one kind of boasting that belongs to Christians. And that is boasting about God. And David wants this boasting to be continuous.

[ 8 : 20 ] Look at verse 1, he says, I will bless the Lord at all times. And he wants it to be congregational, not just himself. So, he says, verse 3, magnify the Lord with me.

Let us exalt his name together. And if you look down at verse 4, you see the reason for his boasting. He says, doesn't he? I saw the Lord and he answered me. Verse 6, this poor man cried and he answered me.

And the Lord did more than just answer, didn't he? In verse 4, he delivered me. Verse 6, he saved me out of trouble. And so, if you think of David's situation, he is on the run from King Saul, the most powerful man in the world.

And he has two great needs. His first need was for protection. And his second need was for provision. In the wilderness.

And if you look at verse 7, he says, the Lord, the angel of the Lord, encamps around those who fear him.

[ 9 : 25 ] And he delivers them. And verse 9 and 10, oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack. There are young lions and they suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Do you notice those two things? Verse 7, I've got protection. Verses 9 and 10, I've got provision. That's his testimony. I was afraid.

I was ashamed. And I prayed to the Lord. And the Lord heard me. And the Lord didn't just hear me. He gave me protection and provision. And then he makes an appeal, doesn't he?

Verse 5, look to him. Look to him. And then in verse 8, he says, taste and see. And then in verse 10, he tells you to fear the Lord.

And every time he gives one of those commands, he also gives a promise. Verse 7, this is my testimony. I call on you to look to him and you will be radiant.

[10:31] I call on you to taste and see and you will find that the Lord is good. I call on you to fear the Lord. Verse 9, and you will have no luck. They are really basic actions, aren't they?

Very, very simple. Look, taste, fear. Look, taste, fear. And the strength is so simple, isn't it? The strength of them is so simple that we bypass them. The greatest problem that you and I have in our stress and in our failure is we put everything aside and we don't look and taste and fear the Lord.

We do what David did. We take it into our own hands and we panic. We redouble our effort. We think, I'm going to work harder. And we push off on our own path, on our own pattern. And we find that we've left behind the very radiance and the goodness and protection and provision that the Lord offers.

I don't know if you've heard the story. There's a story of a North American Indian after the Civil War in the United States. And he was huddled up in some kind of shelter in the streets.

[11:45] And he died of cold and starvation. And they found around this North American Indian, around his neck, a little leather strap. And attached to the leather strap was a tiny little locket.

And they opened the locket and inside was a piece of paper signed by the President, George Washington. And the piece of paper had on it a pardon and a provision.

Pardon and a pension. It was a life pension. And this North American Indian, he carried it round his neck, but he didn't know what it was. He didn't know that he had provision and protection.

He'd not understood it. He'd not grasped it. And what a parallel with so many of us as Christians, that we try everything, but what is closest in hand.

David says to you this week, look, taste, fear. I'm trying to preach a little bit shorter.

[12:50] And I find it very difficult to be simple. And we're complex people, aren't we? And we make things far more complicated than it needs to be.

David says, I was on the run. I was afraid. I was in trouble. And then I actually got to prayer. And he says, now you look to him. He says, when I prayed, I proved his faithfulness.

Now you take this and you see. And then he says, I feared him. Very interestingly, this word fear means reverence and awe and respect.

And it says, when I revered the Lord, when I feared the Lord, I was delivered from a thousand other little fears. Terence. Literally, the word is terence.

And David is making a rediscovery, isn't it? We make rediscoveries in our Christian life all the time. We need to relearn lessons again and again and again.

[13:50] And this psalm is fresh light on an old truth. He says, I wandered away. I got into trouble. But I returned. And I found the Lord to be good and faithful. It's very, very simple.

It sounds foolishness, doesn't it? To fear the Lord that we may be delivered from faithfulness. But it's actually very, very wise.

And the most godly men and women in the history of the church who have feared the Lord and have put the Lord's will first have found themselves delivered from all other fears. The half-hearted believer finds that he's all the time dodging backwards and forwards in anxiety.

But the hymn says, fear him, you saints. And you will then have nothing else to fear. The proof of this testimony is in the lǝng.

He says, I've tasted that the Lord is good. I wonder how many people are here this morning and you know these truths. You know them backwards. And yet you're not rejoicing.

[15:03] And you know little today of the Lord's goodness. And you know little today of the Lord's protection and provision. And you've neglected the simple instructions of looking, tasting, fearing.

That is the boasting. David is boasting about the Lord and he calls on people to respond. And then he carefully applies this lesson.

And so we see boasting about God but then we see belonging to God. And so do you see what he says in verse 11? He says, come oh children. Come men and women and boys and girls and listen. We know he's speaking to believers when he uses a word like that. And he says, verse 15, the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. He's speaking to believers.

Look at verse 12. It's as if he's saying, which of you wants the good life this morning? Who wants the good life? And of course the readers and the listeners say, well of course we do.

[16:04] We all do deep down. We want the good life. And David says, this is where it begins. Verse 13. Keep your tongue from evil. And your lips from speaking the sea. Turn away from evil and do good.

Seek peace and pursue it. It's very, very obvious. We've got firstly responsibilities for our believers. And then we've got privileges. And the responsibilities is if we want to have a close fellowship. And friendship with God. With the Lord Jesus. We must depart from evil.

It's really foolishness to think that you can hold evil in this hand. And the Lord in that hand. And you will know if you've been a Christian for any time.

That if you try and do that. That compromise only brings frustration. David says, who wants to live the good life? And the good life as God intends it.

[17:07] Is always close fellowship and friendship with God. Who wants the good life? Well here's the step one of fearing the Lord. It means departing from what he hates. We cannot claim to love the Lord.

If we won't depart from evil. We can't claim to love the Lord. If we don't depart from evil. And then he goes on to say.

It's not just enough to depart from evil. Verse 14. There's a positive command. Isn't there? There is a doing good. And seeking peace. In other words.

Fellowship with God. Means service for God. It means that you're given a heart to love others. And that's our responsibility.

Because they are very profound. And one of our weaknesses is. Isn't it? Poor and flimsy repentance. That the inability to really break off. From what we know.

[18:06] Is wrong. The foolishness of trying to keep a foot in both camps. And then he goes on to speak about the privileges. In verse 15. And here they are.

Verse 15. We can speak about the fatherly. Attention and care. Here are privileges. Close fellowship. With the father. Verse 15. The eyes of the Lord.

Are towards the righteous. And his ears. Towards their cry. You and I. Have the Lord's ears.

And eyes. You will know. If you've got a child. But there's no. Better protection is there. Than when you've got your eye on them.

You say to your children. I'm keeping an eye on you. You notice the mother. It's an amazing thing. Isn't it? When there's a crowd of children. In another room. One of the children cry.

[19:05] And the mother can identify that cry. From. I don't know. 50, 60 yards away. The father's not so much. But it's an amazing thing. It's this. You hear their cry.

You're attentive to it. David says. The finest protection. The finest provision. The finest fellowship. Is the privilege of having the Lord's eyes.

And ears upon us. And his eyes are able to see into the future. Aren't they? And God knows what is ahead of you this week. But his ears are attentive to your present prayer this morning.

And so we have the magnificence of God's sovereignty. He is listening to our prayers today.

Knowing what is happening tomorrow. And that is real fatherly magnificence.

His eyes are far ahead. His ears are on the present. And as David says. He doesn't just hear. He draws near. Look at verse 18. Isn't this a wonderful verse?

[20:09] The Lord is near to the broken hearted. He saves the crushed in spirit. Those are our present privileges. He hears.

He watches. He draws near. And then we have the privileges that are to do with the future. He looks forward.

Great promises for the Christian. Look at verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. But the Lord delivers them out of them all. One day there will be perfect deliverance.

And as the psalmist gives us this last section. Can you see who he is speaking about? The Lord delivers him out of them all.

Verse 20. He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken. But of course one day there will be no more broken bones for the Lord's people. But you see who he is speaking about. He is speaking about the Lord Jesus.

[21:16] Points to the truly righteous one. The one who always lived in the fear of the Lord. The one who always cries to God. The one who always sought the Lord. The one who spoke about

doing God's will as his food and drinks.

That when he died on the cross. Do you remember? His bones weren't broken. John's gospel tells us that when people were dying by crucifixion. To get the death over and done with. They break the legs of the people on the cross.

So they couldn't prop themselves up and breathe. And in John 19 we read that the thieves on both sides of Jesus. Had their legs broken. But when they came to Jesus they saw he was already dead. For they didn't break his legs. And then John says. These things took place so that the scripture might be fulfilled. What scripture? Psalm 34 verse 20.

That not one of his bones would be broken. You see we must read these last verses through the light of the New Testament. What transformation these verses give. He talks about redemption doesn't he?

[ 22 : 19 ] But we understand that much more fully. Because of the cross of Christ. We understand what it means to be redeemed. Look at the end of verse 22. None of those who take refuge in him.

Will be condemned. And we know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because of the death of the Lord Jesus. So we understand this psalm Christologically.

What's David saying? If I can sum up. David is saying. I was afraid. And my fear led me to take things into my own hands.

And I wandered off. And when I wandered off. I got more and more entangled. And then I learned another lesson. And I learned it again. And that is to return to the Lord.

And to look to the Lord. And to taste. And to fear. And when I did that. Do you know what joy flowed? And I say again.

[ 23 : 19 ] The proof of that is in the eating. And have you tasted that? Have you experienced? Have you tasted of the Lord?

Do you know what that's like? You might say. Well I know about him. I've learned things about him. But I'm not sure that I can say.

I've tasted of the Lord. Let me read you another illustration. There's an office block in the United States.

It was a skyscraper. That's very tall. And the top of the skyscraper. One wall was completely made up of glass. The girls who worked in the office.

On the top floor. I didn't like it. It was just a glass wall. On the other side. It was kind of a 27 story drop. And to their simplistic way of thinking. You just had to lean on this fragile plane of glass.

[ 24 : 21 ] And down you went. It was a long way down. And the girls kind of taught themselves up into a frenzy. And in the end they went on strike. And the management rather in despair.

Didn't know what to do. You can't change the shape of a building once it's been built. They called in an engineer. The engineer. He looked at the management. He looked at the window.

He looked at the girls sitting there defiant and unconvinced. With their arms folded. And then he had an idea. He walked back the length of the office. Ran full tilt at the window. And launched himself at that glass.

With a shoulder barge. Which would have looked good on any football field. And then of course he bounced back. Bruised. But with the window intact. He was an engineer you see.

He knew the specifications of the glass. He knew that you could drive a truck at that glass. And have a hard job breaking it. But though he knew that technically in his mind. It wasn't really an experimental knowledge.

[ 25 : 16 ] Not till his feet were off the ground. And his shoulder was against it. Was it experimental. Do you see the difference? We dare not be satisfied. With a theoretical knowledge of God.

It has to be experimental. Taste and see. That the Lord is good. Let's pray.