

Psalm 34

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Preacher: None

[0:00] Please do grab your Bibles. Go back to Psalm 34. Page 463, 464. This psalm calls us and says, God is good, and his goodness is not just a theory.

It's not just an idea out there. No, God is good, and you can taste it. You can experience it. You can actually see it in your own life. Who God is, his character, is not just something for the textbooks. If someone asked you, what is God like? How would you answer? Well, often, we feel like we just have to describe him in bullet points, don't we? It feels like we have to say, well, God is Trinity. He's all-powerful. He's everywhere. He's just, and he's good. It's like when we come to God, we can only state that the Lord is good. But this psalm shows us the goodness of God can be known. It can be experienced in your life. You can feel that God is good in your very soul. Psalm 34 says, don't just state that the Lord is good.

[1:36] Taste that the Lord is good. Think of the best meal that you've ever had. Think of just the finest, most delicious meal you've ever had. I think mine was in Italy when I was 14.

It all went downhill after that. But just think of the best meal you've ever had. How do you know that that meal is so amazing? It's because you've tasted it right. If someone just slides the plate over to you and said to you, this is the best meal ever, and you say, oh, great, thanks, and then you walk away, that wouldn't be any use, would it?

It's no good just someone stating that it's good. No, you need to taste it. You haven't known that the food is good until you taste it.

You need to experience its goodness to know it. Well, that is like God's goodness. It's not just a concept. It can't only be stated.

It is a reality, and you need to taste it. You need to experience it in your life. If you're not a Christian here today, the idea of who God is, what God is like, you might think it just belongs to the world of philosophy.

[2:50] You might think the question of what is God like, you might think that's just a matter of debate and of logical arguments about the problem of evil. Well, today, I hope that we can see it is so much more than that.

You don't need to engage in arguments about whether God is good. You can taste and see that the Lord is good.

In this psalm, King David has experienced the goodness of God himself. He's tasted it, and how has he tasted it? Well, look at verse 4. I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

He tasted God's goodness. And now David calls us all to join in and know the Lord's goodness too. So look at verse 3.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. David is being the ultimate evangelist today. He's saying, I've tasted that the Lord is good.

[3:57] And he really is. Now come know it for yourself. Come and actually experience the goodness of God in your life. As we enter the new year tonight, we all want a better year ahead, don't we?

That's what resolutions are all about. Well, there is nothing better than knowing the goodness of God in your life this year. But how do we do that?

Well, the answer might be surprising. If you want to taste that the Lord is good, you need to fear God. That's my first point today, fear God. Did you see those two commandments in verse 8 and 9? In verse 8, These two verses work together.

Tasting and fearing go together. You want to experience God's goodness in your life? Fear him. You taste and see his goodness by fearing him.

[5:00] Now we need to understand what the word fear means here. Fear means utter respect and reverence and feeling small before the Lord.

I preached on Psalm 33 back in October here. I'm sure you'll remember it. And I said, when I was preaching, I said that the fear of the Lord, it's like the fear you get when you go caving.

And one of my New Year's resolutions is to recycle more. So I'm going to recycle that illustration today. I went caving about 10 years ago in the Lake District. And caving is when you go deep underground and you explore the tunnels of a cave.

And you go in with a helmet and a head torch. And essentially, you just go deeper and deeper inside a mountain. And when you're in the middle of that cave, you get a sense of fear that this psalm is talking about.

You go in and you realize that there are millions of tons of rock above my head. You realize that there is a gigantic weight and power above you.

[6:09] And you think, I am nothing compared to this mountain. If this collapsed, there's no escape. Nothing can stop this above me. You get a real sense of, I am tiny.

I am at the mercy of a power greater than me. And that is the fear David is telling us to join in with. So it's not like the fear when you watch a scary film.

It's living your life with a deep sense of, I am nothing and God is huge. He is an unstoppable power. Everything in my life is at the mercy and in the hands of the Lord. And when you live like this, but when you have this fear, that's when you taste the goodness of God.

Because when you fear the Lord, all other fears are cast out. Look at verse 4. I sought the Lord and he answered me and he delivered me from all my fears.

[7:18] This world is full of fears. There may be many fears in your life. The fears of what the future holds. The fears of the year ahead.

The fears of those other kids at school. The fears of maybe I won't get married. The fears of those test results. The fears of where that next paycheck might come from.

The fears of what things might be like if you lose that person in your life. This world, our lives, they can be full of fears.

And why do we fear these things? Why can fears be so overwhelming in our lives? Why do we get that sense of hopeless dread? We get that.

Because we think those things are in control. We think those bullies are in control of this world. We think those things out there, they have the power and they're going to win.

[8:26] We think that there is absolutely no escape from this situation around me. We think I'm utterly at the mercy of whatever happens next and it's not going to end well. We fear things because we think they're in control.

It's like those fears, those dark possibilities out there, it's like that's the real mountain over your life. But when you fear the Lord, you realize he's the real mountain over your life.

When you come to God and you fear him, he doesn't leave you trembling in your boots. No, he cares for you as your heavenly father.

But when you fear the Lord, the person in control of your life, it's your loving heavenly father. And he cares for you and watches every aspect of your life.

When you submit your life to the Lord, it's liberating. It's a relief. Those fears of dread are replaced with the comforting fear of God.

[9:40] You realize God is in control of your life. God will win in your life. And what is so comforting is there's no escape from him.

He is always with those who fear him. Look at verse seven. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.

Do you see the picture here? The picture here, it's a vulnerable camp in the wilderness. So imagine you're camping in the middle of the wilderness and there could be wolves and bears and enemies out there, out there in the darkness.

And what are you like in that camp? You're on edge. You can't sleep through the night. But that is transformed when someone encamps around you, when someone protects and watches over you.

Well, in the wilderness of this life, the Lord has set a barrier around those who fear God. And he says, no one is getting near to my people.

[10:49] When dread and anxiety rule our lives, we think there's no escape, no protection. Like our lives can only end badly.

But what is the reality? The Lord is around you. There's no escape from him. He's always there for you. Your fears are not in control.

God is. And that, that is the goodness of God. When you fear the Lord, you taste that the Lord is good.

You experience that whatever comes your way in life, however big your troubles may feel in your life, God is bigger. He is the mountain that sits over your life.

He is good. And that mountain is your refuge. Look at verse eight. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

[11:49] Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. The mountain that towers over your life, he is your refuge. And for those who fear him, you will really feel that in your life.

You will really taste that goodness in your life. If you are facing a big decision in the year ahead, like where to live, where to go to uni, what job to take, and the unknown is terrifying, when you fear the Lord, you have the comfort of saying, it's in the Lord's hands.

If you're waiting for those results, yes, it's painful, but you have the comfort in knowing that it's all under the Lord's control. Your heavenly father is protecting you through all of it.

Whatever those fears are, the Lord protects you from them. Now, this doesn't mean your problems will disappear, but it does mean he's with you in it.

He won't let this break you. He won't let this destroy your salvation. He won't use this to ruin your soul. He will use it for your good and for his glory.

[13:10] That is the goodness of God over your life. God is good. If you're not a Christian here today, you might be feeling that overwhelming dread and chaos in your life, like there's no escape.

Well, let me tell you, there is an escape. There is a refuge. It is God and he is good. And then I invite you today, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Come and fear God. And when you do fear him, he delivers you from the worst fear that you can think of. In Christ, we are delivered from the fear of God's judgment.

Christian, look what the Lord has done for you. Look how God has treated you. The fear of future judgment for you, the fear of guilt before God, the fear of what lies ahead after death.

That fear is gone for you. Christ has taken it away. You want to taste goodness? Taste forgiveness. You want to taste that the Lord is good?

[14:31] Come to Christ and see it for yourself. This here, this is the goodness of God. Forgiven sinners, with no fear in death.

You're tasting that the Lord is good right now. You sit in grace and the goodness of God right now. Just look at your salvation.

Look how you stand before God. Look at all that God has done for you in Christ. God is good. But what about when the troubles of this life do come along?

Did you see in verse 19? God deals with our fears but that doesn't mean we won't have troubles in this life. Look at verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Many are the afflictions in this life. Do you see what this psalm is saying? Your life will have troubles. God God is good. And so where is God's goodness when these troubles come?

[15:45] We wonder that don't we? In those dark times many Christians have cried out where is God's goodness in all of this? well this psalm shows us in those dark moments God is still good because he hears our cries.

It's my second point today. God hears our cries. God hears our cries. When we're in those dark moments of our lives it's often then that we feel like God has taken away his goodness doesn't it? But actually he shows us his goodness when we're in the depths of our troubles. Just look at verse 15. The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and his ears towards their cry.

And verse 17 when the righteous cry for help the Lord hears. When you are broken when you are most in need when you feel like there is nowhere to go and you're on your knees crying to God

what is God like?

He sees you and he hears you. When you cry to the Lord that the cries of your pain do not fall on deaf ears your prayers are not just pointless sound waves going into the sky.

[17:15] When you turn to the Lord it's not just wishful thinking. No, God is there for you. God cares about you. You have someone to cry to.

His goodness it's that he's there for you. Kids when you're upset when you're crying and there's something wrong what is the thing that helps the most?

It's going to mom or dad, isn't it? It's mom and dad seeing and hearing what's wrong and seeing your pain, hearing your cries and just caring about what you go through.

When mom and dad do that, when they're near to you, you can just feel that mom and dad are good, don't you? You can just feel their goodness. goodness. Well, that is like God.

God hears the cries of his church and that is his goodness. Look at verse 18. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

[18:27] A broken heart doesn't feel like God is good, does it? You may wonder how this is good for me. You may not understand God's plan in your suffering, but what we do know is that in those moments he's near, he's with you.

In the dark points of our lives, when grief overwhelms us, when anxiety is unbearable, when the world turns against us, it's in those moments that God makes his goodness known.

he's near to you through it all. He gives you the strength and grace to bring you through it. He hears your cries, he answers your prayers, he's provided a church to love you, he's provided a hope to see you through it, and above all, the Lord has given you his son.

The Lord doesn't only hear your cries, he's done something about it. He answers those cries by giving you his son, a saviour who will finally end your troubles.

Look at verse 22. The Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. The Lord has set a day in history when your life will be fully restored, when your fears and your troubles will end entirely, when the cry of agony of this life will be answered once and for all, and no cry will be heard again.

[20:15] And that day, it's when the Lord Jesus comes and redeems the life of his servants. the Lord has heard your cries and he's answered it in the Lord Jesus.

You taste the goodness of God when you see that there is an end in sight. An end to your suffering is coming and that day will come for you because it came for the Lord Jesus.

Did you see verse 20? He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken. Do you know where this is quoted in the New Testament?

It's John 19 when Jesus is crucified. Jesus is on the cross and the soldiers don't break Jesus' legs and they pierce his side instead.

And John writes this, that these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken. Jesus cried to the Lord.

[21:23] He felt the agony and grief of this life. Jesus tasted death. But he also tasted that the Lord is good.

Jesus experienced the redemption of this psalm. Jesus cried, his father heard him and on Easter Sunday God redeemed his life.

God as he emerged from the tomb Jesus was tasting the goodness of God. That day is God's goodness. And Christ calls his church come and taste that goodness too.

Come and experience that day of resurrection. salvation. And for all those who fear him, that day is coming for you. David isn't ultimately the one who calls us to join in this psalm.

It's Jesus. Jesus calls a world full of fear, a world that has nowhere to run to, a world that cries out in its afflictions.

[22:30] Jesus calls that world and says, come and find refuge in him. Come and find deliverance out of the troubles of this world. Come and join in with this salvation.

Jesus is the refuge for a desperate world. And in God's goodness, he's there for you. Jesus calls us all today taste and see that the Lord is good.

Amen. Let me pray.