

A KING'S GRATITUDE FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

Psalm 34:1-10

Intro: If most of us were to list our favorite Psalms, Psalm 34 would be on the list. For a long time it has been a favorite of mine. In fact, I am sure like many of you, I have memorized many of the verses of this Psalm just by reading it over and over. I like especially those verses which have to do with answered prayer. The very fact that King David of Israel wrote so many of the Psalms is evidence that he gave a great deal of his time as King to prayer. How blessed the people of Israel were to have a King like David. It was truly a special time in Jewish history.

But what was the occasion which led to the writing of this Psalm. Many believed that it was that time in David's life, described for us at the end of 1 Samuel 21, when Saul was after him, and David knew that if Saul caught him, he would be killed. And so he fled to Gath a man by the name of Achish was the King. Achish's servants reminded him that David was the one about whom the Jewish woman had sung, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 21:11). This made David afraid of what Achish might do to him, and so we read that David acted like he was insane "and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard" (1 Sam. 21:13). When Achish said that he had no use for a mad man, and didn't want him in his house, David "escaped to the cave of Adullam" (1 Sam. 22:1).

This definitely was not David's finest hour. He was afraid of Saul, and then he feared what Achish might do to him. This does not seem to me to be the setting for such a Psalm as 34. It seems completely foreign to the attitude expressed by David in Psalm 34. I realize that he could have behaved like he did, using the behavior that he did, and then regretting it all afterwards. But that event in his life, and the tone express by him in Psalm 34, do not seem to me to fit together. I would rather think that it might have been written after David was King in connection with one of the many times his enemies sought to kill him.

So I am inclined to say that David, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit has not told us about the time he feared for his life, and the Lord miraculously delivered him. And he may have had a specific reason for not telling us at what time in his life he wrote this Psalm. It was not that he was trying to hide anything, but he did not want his readers to think that they would have to be in some high position and in mortal danger

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before they could profit from his experience. Instead, he wanted those who read this Psalm, and even memorized it, could know that they could depend upon the Lord to deliver them whatever was making them afraid.

I mention memorization because this Psalm was one of several Psalms in the Bible which was written as an acrostic on the Hebrew alphabet, like Psalm 119, to encourage memorization. This is one of the Psalms which many of us have just memorized although we did not memorize all of it. And I am doing in our Sunday morning services now which I have repeatedly said during this series, teaching the Psalms, or portions of Psalms, which we have memorizing.

So I believe that King David was telling us here of a particular time of trial that he had had, when he was in utter despair, but the Lord had helped him. And he wanted us to know that what the Lord had done for him, He could and would do for us. And so we have verses like 8, 9, and 11.

Now I just intend, the Lord willing to go through the first ten verses of this Psalm today, and then take up the rest of the Psalm next Sunday. The only verses we have actually worked on to memorize are verses 1-3, and then 8-14. So because of the limitation we faced in trying to get as much in of all of the Psalms we memorized in full, or in part, we have not spent the time on verses 4-7 that we did on the rest of the first fourteen verses. What we will consider next Sunday was not in our memory assignments, but after we have considered them together, it is my hope that some of us, or possibly all of us, will go back to Psalm 34 and memorize verses 15 through 22.

One other point that I want to mention about this Psalm is that the Lord is mentioned by Name sixteen times in this Psalm. And out of the remaining six verses the Lord is referred to twice by pronouns – verses 5 and 50.

Now before we look at these verses more in detail, let me point out what King David was doing in the first ten verses.

In verses 1, 2, and 3 David is telling us how full of praise his heart was for the Lord, and in verse 3 he invites us to magnify the Lord with him.

In the verses which we have not memorized (although many of you may already have known them) King David tells us why his heart and his lips

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were so full of praise to the Lord. Look with me at verses 4 through 7. Verse 7 is a transition verse which leads to the last verses of our text for the morning.

And then in verses 8 through 10 King David was exhorting his readers to do what he had done in turning to the Lord, so that they would find that what the Lord had done for him, the Lord would also do for them. You see, he knew that it would be a blessing for them to know how the Lord had helped him, but he wanted them to experience the blessing of seeing the Lord meet their needs.

Now let us go back to verse 1. Look at the thanksgiving that King David had pouring out of his heart and through his pen in the first three verses.

Trusting God is not just what we do when we are in trouble, but trusting God is the way we live. Perhaps instead of speaking of God here I should use Lord as King David did. Lord is Jehovah. It speaks of Him as the living God, and the unchanging God. He is the all-sufficient One. He is the incomparable One. There is no one who can begin to compare with our Lord – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We need to be continually praising Him because, as Psalm 68:19 says,
Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the
God of our salvation.

This is also a Psalm written by King David. And this verse is followed by “Selah.” Why not stop right here while all of us consider the blessings, physically, materially, and spiritually, that the Lord has given us since we got up this morning. And “loadeth” really means *loadeth*. He gives us blessing after blessing. He piles them on all of us. The Lord’s special help made King David realize that he daily was receiving the Lord’s constant help.

Now we don’t boast of ourselves for this, but “our souls,” deep down within us, is where our praise for the Lord comes from. And King David mentioned “the humble” because it is those people of God who are humbled before the Lord, not trusting in themselves, but in the Lord, who are glad when they see how other believers are blessed by trusting the Lord.

And then David says that he want us to praise the Lord with him for God’s blessing upon him. You see, we need look around at the lives of

our fellow believers, and praise the Lord for the way He is blessing them.

Now why all of this thanksgiving? Well, from verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 King David tells us from his own experience.

Trouble had come to him, trouble which made him fear, and the first thing that the Lord did for him was to deliver him from all his fears. Will a man or a woman, or a child, have fears? Of course we do! Sometimes our fears are foolish, but most of the time we have reason to fear.

In verse 5 David seems to be talking about others who looked to the Lord with their fears, and you could tell the affect that it had upon them because there was a radiance about them. They were not “ashamed,” or disappointed with the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah gave us this word from the Lord when he wrote in Jeremiah 29:13,

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

After all, hasn't the Lord promised us that He would never leave us, nor forsake us? See Hebrews 13:5; also to Jacob as he was leaving home, Gen. 28:1; and to Joshua in Joshua 1:5, “As I was with Moses. So I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. For these references to be quoted in Hebrews means that what was promised to Jacob and later to Joshua, is also a promise which we can claim.

Now look at verse 6. When King David spoke of “this poor man,” he was speaking of himself. He was very wealthy in a material sense, but spiritually he knew that in himself he did not have the resources to cope with the problems of life. In his poverty he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard him. Often the Lord does not hear us because we get ourselves in the way. But when David came to the Lord in his destitution, “the Lord heard,” and saved him out of all his troubles.” His troubles were those things in his life and circumstances which caused him distress of heart and mind.

“The angel of the Lord” can be a reference to Christ, the Messiah, or it can refer to an angel. I believe that it refers to the Lord. He is said to encamp around those who fear Him, and delivereth them. “Encampeth” gives us a picture of one who pitches His tent near us, and Who moves when we move. As we have already seen, He never leaves us, nor will He forsake us. As far as the Lord is concerned, we are never alone. And what a comfort that is! We have the Lord, Jehovah with us, and on our side, and we also have Christ. And we have what King David did not

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have: the Holy Spirit Who has come to indwell us forever! What more could we ask?

But now we come to the crucial part as far as we are concerned. Why are we told in our Bibles about Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Job, and Isaiah, and Naomi, and Ruth, and Esther, and Elizabeth, and the virgin Mary, and many, many others? One big reason is so we can see the faithfulness, and goodness, and unchangeableness of the Lord in His dealings with them. The Lord never did fail any one of them. But there is another reason. We are told about them so that we will understand that the Lord stands ready to help us just as He always has met the needs of His people. It is so easy to read and to enjoy about the people we meet in Scripture, and yet fail to apply what we learn from them to ourselves. They were all different. They lived in times different from ours. But the story of each of their lives contains lessons that can be, and need to be, of help to us.

In verses 8, 9, and 10, as well as in other parts of this great Psalm, that was what King David was concerned about. And so he addressed verse 8 and 9 and 10 to every child of God who would ever read this Psalm. These verses were written to you and to me.

I worked at Central Bible Church for ten wonderful years with Dr. John G. Mitchell before I followed him as the Pastor for thirteen years. I learned a great deal from Dr. Mitchell through those years, both about the Word, and about prayer. But as I turned to these verses 8, 9, and 10, I thought of Dr. Mitchell because as he got to the point where I am this morning in dealing with these words of King David, Dr. Mitchell would stop, and look out over the congregation, and say, “And what about you, my friend?”

That is what King David was saying in so many words here. “And what about you, my friend? Are you really getting what I am trying to tell you? I am not just giving you my history, but I am telling you how I have found the Lord faithful to me, so that you will expect the same from the Lord for yourself.

Let me read verses 8, 9, and 10 for all of us – for myself, as well as for you. **(Read.)**

How do we taste and see that the Lord is good? We taste what we eat,

don't we? And what tastes good, we eat it again (providing it is good for us). To taste we have to eat. What a Christian eats is the Word.

Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 15:16:

16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

We read the Word in order to understand it. Understanding the Word is like digesting the food that you will eat today. And by eating we stay strong, and this helps our bodies to resist disease. It is a bad sign when a person quits eating.

But King David was not just talking about eating the Word. He said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." You see, it is not just in reading the Word that we taste and see, or understand. But it is in reading the Word to learn what it has to tell us about the Word.

Let me illustrate this from Scripture. Please turn with me to Luke 24.

I won't take the time to read the whole passage, but some time this afternoon take your Bible and read from Luke 24, verses 13 through 35. But let me summarize for you the gist of this passage. And then read beginning with verse 27 and reading down through verse 32.

To taste and see that the Lord is good is to read the Scriptures to learn of Christ. Heartburn physically is not what we would choose, but spiritual heartburn is what we all pray. It is when we read our Bibles, looking for our Lord, learning of Him, and then living in fellowship with Him. King David would say that we are not to read just to learn about David, but we are to read David's Words to find out what He tells us about the Lord. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

But there is more! "O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want (no lack) to them that fear Him." Fearing the Lord is to be fearful of displeasing the Lord. It is to love Him. It is to worship Him. It is to please Him. That is the way King David lived.

And then there is an illustration from the king of the beasts. (Read verse 10.)

Three times in verses 9 and 10 we have "want" and then "lack" and then "want" again. They are three different words in the Greek, but they all

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mean the same thing. They mean, and make it very emphatic by the repetition, that if you know the Lord, and are learning about the Lord, actually know Christ in a life of devoted fellowship, you will find complete and joyous and increasing satisfaction in Him.

I think I could teach these verses a thousand times, and there would still be more for me to learn and for you to learn. I remember a chorus that we used to sing, and these are the words. Perhaps you older ones will remember it too.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

This is what King David did in Psalm 34, he turned out eyes upon Christ. For to learn about Him, is to learn about the Father, and to learn about the Holy Spirit. King David would say, along with all of the other writers of Scripture, "Don't look at us, but let us tell you about our Lord, and yours! And let us be like the Apostle Paul whose whole purpose in life was summarized in five words, "That I may know Him."

I think it was Oswald Chambers who said something like this (and I am not quoting him verbatim, but it was close to this): "As we read our Bible, let us not be like wool gatherers, but let us be as people who are looking for their Lord."

And in the days to come may the Lord be pleased to give us the joy that King David experienced through having his prayers answered.