

For Those In Trouble Psalm 34:1-22

Well, we have some good news regarding our kitchen remodel. It should be finished this week. There have been some challenges with a house that is over 150 years old but the contractor has done a fantastic job. We couldn't be more pleased. Robyn was able to be home one day this week and was talking with the contractor who had completed a major renovation for a house last year. He showed us some of the work he had done. Now pictures don't tell the whole the whole story but from what we saw it was a real transformation with what he had to do.

He was recently invited by the couple to one of those reveal parties. You know, the ones where a bunch of family and friends are invited to reveal the gender of the baby. But instead of a reveal party to let everyone know the gender, everyone was given that blue painters tape and told to go around and put a piece of tape on every flaw they found. Talk about a giant stab in the back. You pour your heart and soul into work going above and beyond what you were asked to do, even having to extend the job by months and that's the kind of thanks you get.

David probably felt the same way or even worse, when Saul began to hotly pursue him in order to destroy him. If they had post offices back then, his picture would have been on every bulletin board. If there was an FBI, he would have been considered enemy #1. David wasn't safe anywhere as he was hunted by Saul like it was deer season.

David once lamented to his best buddy Johnathan "what have I done wrong that your father would seek to take my life?" It was shortly after the day David stepped out to fight the giant Goliath where he won the hearts of Israel that the real character of Saul began to show. If neighbors and friends had been interviewed, we would have heard the same thing we hear today when someone seems to go off the deep end: "They were always so kind" or something like being so surprised by this seeming Jekyll and Hyde character.

A spirit of resentment that had lain dormant in Saul's

soul began to well up within him. The comfort he once found from the musical skill of this shepherd who had saved Israel from the Philistines turned to hatred and vengeance as it became his sole ambition using all his military resources to destroy whom he now considered his enemy. Even as a youth, David was the one person who took to heart the promise of God to defend His people asking God to deliver the nation from their enemies as he stepped out in faith to fight Goliath. He was a person willing to stand in the gap for God. David had done so much for Saul and the nation and this was thanks he got, being pursued as an enemy.

Centuries later the prophet Ezekiel would write: **"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none"** (Ezekiel 22:30).

God is still looking for men and women who, like David, will stand in the gap and show the world what it looks like to take God seriously by trusting His promises. But even a man who trusted God and stood in the gap for Israel, a man who had a heart for God has times of doubt and fear and failings. Matthew Henry once wrote: **"The best saints may be tempted to do the worst of sins."**

The book of I Samuel records the early days of the nation as they sought to have a king like the other nations and what it looked like under the reign of Saul. It recounts for us the rise and fall of the first king. His best days were at the beginning of his reign and in just a short time we see how pride can overtake a man. It will reveal to the nation and to us what it looks like when we decide to take the place God should have. You have heard it said that **"power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."** That's what happened to Saul as he made his greatest asset in David become his greatest enemy. We read more about his pursuit of David in I Samuel than we do about any achievements he may have accomplished as king on behalf of the nation he was to lead.

I Samuel records the occasion for the reason David wrote **Psalm 34**. Your chapter heading may read something like **"Of David. When he pretended to**

be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.”

We find the account in **I Samuel 21**. In **chapter 20**, David had felt the threats of Saul and confided in his BFF, best friend forever, Johnathan, about his suspicions regarding Saul’s hostility toward him. When it was confirmed to Johnathan by his father’s attempt to take his life as well for befriending his enemy, David decided it was time to flee and went to the Ahimelech the priest for some provisions for his journey. Not only did he receive food, but he also retrieved the sword of Goliath whom he had defeated in a mono-a-mono battle to the death. Of all places, where should he go but to Gath, the hometown of the Philistine’s champion, Goliath. Not only did he show up on their doorsteps, he was also wielding their homeboys own sword. Tell me what kind of reception you think David received?

There’s a saying that I think is appropriate in this case which says that **“we are our own worst enemy,”** meaning that we do things to complicate our own success by sabotaging ourselves. That’s what David did. There’s another saying you’ve heard as well which says **“out of the frying pan and into the fire”** which means things go from bad to worse. We might be wondering what David was thinking. Maybe he thought that Saul would never venture into enemy territory to look for him. Or, as another saying goes, **“the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”** At least that may be what David was hoping.

Now in case you are wondering when you read the heading of **Psalm 34** and see in **I Samuel 21** a difference in the names: Abimelech and Achish. Achish is the name and Abimelech is the title. Scholars describe this as a dynastic name, like Pharaoh in Egypt.

When David arrived in Gath, people recalled the saying about David’s military prowess and the chant that rang out in Israel that he had killed tens of thousands, referring to their own kinsmen. David “took this to heart” and began wondering if he had made a mistake in going to Gath. So he pretended to be insane by acting like a crazy man, letting his spittle run down his beard. It didn’t take much to

convince King Achish that the guy was out of his mind and that he had no shortage of people needing those white coats with the extra-long sleeves that help you hug yourself. So David was able to escape without losing his life.

So we come to **Psalm 34** where David has reason to praise God.

In **verses 1-3** David’s praise is inviting.

I. DAVID’S PRAISE IS INVITING – vv. 1-10

Notice in **verses 1-3** David’s resolution.

A. David’s Resolution – vv. 1-3

There is first determination in his praise.

1. The determination in his praise – “I will” – v. 1

It’s an emphatic statement of desire, emphasized by his intent for the present and every day following. This wasn’t something he hoped to do in the future. And neither is it a statement of regret thinking about something in the past that he failed to do, but now would begin doing from now on. David is making a vow, a commitment to always give praise. This isn’t something he’s going to do at a later date, but rather in the moment, right now and every day, without procrastination.

Another word is added in **verse 1** that joins with his determination and that’s the word **“always.”** Not just when he felt like it, not just when things were going well, not just once a week, and not just when he got out of a jam.

Always.

At all times.

In every situation.

Constantly.

Continuously.

Permanently.

Forever.

The New Testament has similar language of commitment and determination.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Be joyful always; pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.”

Let's determine to give praise in all circumstances. I know I have a lot of room for improvement in this area. Instead of being Mr. Grumpy sometimes, I need to become Mr. Gratitude.

Notice also in these opening verses the direction of his praise.

2. The direction of his praise – “the Lord” – vv. 1-3

We give lots of people thanks for things they have done for us and rightly so. We ought to be grateful people. We thank the server when we eat out. We thank the person who holds the door for us. We thank the checkout person at the grocery store. We thank the repairman who fixes our appliance.

I get the impression that David was a thankful person, but here he directs all his thanks to the one who is worthy of all praise, the one who was his provider and protector and deliverer – God Himself.

Praise my soul, the King of heaven;
To His feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore His praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King!

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...”

That's the idea in the word 'extol' or 'bless' that God is worthy of all our praise directed to Him.

Notice then the depth of his praise.

3. The depth of his praise – “praise was on my lips” and “my soul will boast” - vv. 1-2

Jesus said that whatever is in the heart will come out in what we say and do. In this case David's soul, his inner being, his thoughts, his heart attitude bubbled over in praise to God and it came out in a verbal expression of praise to God for all He had done in protecting him during this self-inflicted crisis. Now it's possible that God allowed David to go to Gath for the purpose of teaching David to trust the Lord instead of himself and to learn to give God praise in

all situations. I think we're seeing in **Psalm 34** the lessons David had learned from that experience and his response of gratitude to God for getting him out of a potential life-threatening mess. From the bottom of his heart, his soul was praising God.

Let's take a page from the life of David and let the expression of our praise come from deep down in our soul. We have a lot of things in which we can boast about the Lord. Not just words we say, but words we also feel.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
He has done great things,
He has done great things,
He has done great things,
Bless His holy name!

CCLI1292471

Let praise for God rise up within us and spill out our lips.

There is one more thing from these opening verses about David's invitation to praise and that is the deployment of his praise.

4. The deployment of his praise – v. 3

David extends an invitation for others to join him. Some scholars believe the invitation is to the men who, like him, were fugitives. They also had reason to praise God and David wanted them to join him in glorifying the God who had protected them.

Whether or not that is David's audience is unclear, but regardless, we all have our own reasons for joining in on giving the Lord praise. It is an invitation to join in singing what is in our hearts.

Why had David resolved to give God praise? It's because of what David remembered in **verses 4-6**.

B. David's Remembrance – vv. 4-6

Notice what David did and then God's response.

Verse 4 “I sought the Lord...the Lord answered, the Lord delivered”

Verse 6 “I cried to the Lord...the Lord heard, the Lord saved”

Tony Evans writes that **“when you align yourself with God, you will be positioned to receive the goodness that He knows you need regardless of the trials that come your way.”**

Let’s not assume that David was out of God’s will in going to Gath. Especially when we read that David sought the Lord. In this sense, seeking is always used in the context of seeking something that is known. David had known and experienced firsthand the goodness of God in protecting him on many occasions. As Gerald Wilson writes **“When one seeks God, one does so knowing full well where He is, but is seeking either a restored relationship with Him or, most commonly, information, guidance, or direction from Him...Such seeking is serious, purposeful searching, not confused wondering or wandering.”**

This wasn’t the cry of someone who didn’t know where God was. This wasn’t the cry of someone who had lived life by doing his own thing, found himself in trouble, and hoping if he called out to God, that God would have some pity and get him out of a jam. David had walked with God and talked with God and knew God was his provider and protector and he sought God. The word seek here refers to looking in faith, remembering and believing what he knew to be true about God and His promises. He remembered his past and knew God to be an ever-present help in time of trouble. David knew that because he had sought the Lord, the Lord would not only answer, He would also deliver. He also knew that those who looked to God would never be ashamed.

Do we remember what God said and trust His promises as we seek Him? Do we seek Him earnestly, expectantly, and experientially? Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to **“trust the Lord with all our heart,”** which can just as easily be rendered **“seek the Lord with all your heart and don’t lean on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your steps.”** It’s the same principle found in **Matthew 6:33.**

David acknowledged that he needed God. David felt poor, not in the sense of lacking possessions, but someone who lacked the resources to bring his own

deliverance, recognizing it, and realizing his dependence on God. Paul would explain that God’s grace is sufficient for everything we are going through and concludes that when he was weak is when he really experienced the strength that came from God in all his trials. **(II Cor. 12:9-10)** Tony Evans explains that **“Weakness is not a liability when the Lord is your God.”** In it we find His grace.

In **verse 4** David knew he could trust God and in **verse 6** he knew he would be delivered by God. Here’s something he may have remembered. It comes from **Deuteronomy 31:6** **“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”** (see v. 8)

If you are finding yourself in a time of trouble, are you remembering God’s past help? David did and with it came his realization. We see it in **vv. 7-10.**

C. David’s Realization – vv. 7-10

David has come to realize two things about God. The first is the realization of God’s protection.

1. God’s protection – v. 7

What I believe David is referring to is not any one of the number of angels who serve God, but that this is a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ who surrounds His people providing them with security when in trouble, not necessarily delivering us from the trouble we may find ourselves in, but being there with us in that trouble as He was with Daniel in the lions’ den and with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. The fourth person in the furnace was the pre-incarnate Christ. The same pre-incarnate Christ who met Abraham on the way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. The same pre-incarnate Christ who stood with sword drawn talking with Joshua. David realized the protection of God.

His second realization is God’s provision.

2. God’s provision – vv. 8-10

I like going to Sam’s Club on Saturday morning. If I’m there at the right time, they have all these booths set up handing out free samples to taste hoping you’ll buy the product. A little piece of

pizza, a small chicken nugget, some pasta, a bite of cookie or granola, or part of a hamburger. Hang around long enough and you can get a whole meal. But they only give you a small sample to taste.

David encourages us to taste and see that the Lord is good. But taste here doesn't mean just a small nibble to whet your appetite. Instead, it implies feeding on the Lord. It means to know Him better and enjoy Him more. In other words, it means to prove by experience. Load your plate full of the Lord.

David makes a comparison between the animal kingdom and God's provision. A lion may go out on the prowl for something to eat and come away after a day's hunt still hungry because he found nothing to satisfy his hunger. On the other hand, God will provide for those who fear Him, those who seek Him. They will lack no good thing. We see that in the opening words of **Psalm 23** where we read **"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."** The Amplified says **"I shall not lack"** The Message reads **"I don't need a thing"**

From the pen of Warren Wiersbe, we read something worth remembering: **"If we don't receive what we think we need, it means it isn't good for us and we don't need it at this time."**

God knows what is good for us and it may not be something tangible or it may not be right now, or it may not be at all. **For several years my brother has been praying for a new truck. His 20+ year old truck was in sad shape. In desperate need of a reliable vehicle, the truck guy ended up buying a car. But wouldn't you know it, with Dad's move to the nursing home, he's going to get Dad's truck.** Now, whether he got that truck or not, God is still good and God still knows the good we need. Through God's protection and provision, David realized that God is good all the time and that's the invitation to praise Him.

Now in **verses 11-22** we see David's proclamation is instructive.

II. DAVID'S PROCLAMATION IS INSTRUCTIVE – vv. 11-22

Psalm 34 isn't just an invitation to praise God, it is also instruction about how we should live if we want to praise Him with a right heart and have Him answer us when we seek Him during our trials. In **verses 11-16**, David gives instructions about godly character.

A. His Instruction About Godly Character – vv. 11-16

He says we are to come and listen.
We are to fear the Lord.
We are to keep our tongue from evil.
We are to turn from evil and do good.
We are to seek peace.

David says that the ear of the Lord is toward the righteous who call out to Him, while His face is against those who are wicked. He says this life isn't about popularity or profit or possessions or even about performance. It is about character, integrity, faith in and desire to honor the Lord in what we say and in how we act.

James writes **"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." (James 3:13)**

A few verses earlier he describes how difficult it is to tame the tongue. It's like a spark that sets a forest on fire.

Artificial intelligence has ranked the strongest muscles in the body. Now, this can be subjective but it ranked the jaw muscle as the strongest putting up to 200 pounds of pressure on the molars when chewing. Connected to that are the muscles that help with the tongue. As you can expect, Scripture has some things to say about the tongue.

Proverbs 16:27 "A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire."

Proverbs 18:21 "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Proverbs 21:23 "Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity."

Proverbs 10:18-21

And of course, **Psalm 34:13** “**Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.**”

Not only are we to watch what we say, but we are to watch how we live. Paul has a lot to say in his letters about our conduct, things to avoid and things to practice. If we want God to hear us when we cry out to Him in times of trouble, we must pursue godly character. If you desire a godly character, a good rule of practice is to allow the Holy Spirit to develop His fruit in your life found in **Galatians 5:22-23**. That is a good summary of what godly character looks like.

In the closing verses David instructs us about the compassion we receive from God.

B. His Instruction About God’s Compassion – vv. 17-22

I think this is something we have all experienced from one time or another that God hears the righteous cry of those who are hurting. These verses give us the assurance that God hears the prayers of the righteous. They are another reminder from the psalmist to trust the Lord, and trust that the Lord has heard our prayers for His deliverance, that God has compassion for His people.

We feel His compassion and comfort when we experience a loss. He comforts the brokenhearted and those crushed in spirit. From the Message **Psalm 34:18** reads “**If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there; if you’re kicked in the gut, He’ll help you catch your breath.**”

When you feel like the wind has been knocked out of you by the world, let **verse 17** be your comfort today. God hears your cry and helps you through it. When life has knocked you to the ground, God is there to pick you up and dust you off. We have a compassionate God and **Lamentations 3:22-23** reminds us that God’s compassions never fail and are renewed every morning. Why? It’s because of His great faithfulness.

And here’s a hint if you want God to hear your cry. **Verse 17** tells us that it is the cry of the righteous that He hears. In other words, those who are right

with Him. If you wonder why God may not be hearing your cry, maybe the first prayer is to ask God to search your heart and reveal if there is anything there that is keeping you from being right with Him and then confess it. Being brokenhearted may also refer to being broken hearted over sin that we may have committed as David notes in **51:17** where he says that “**The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart.**”

David closes the psalm with another word of compassion that should be comforting. “**A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.**”

Evil will condemn the wicked, but the righteous will experience His redemption, His salvation. And he sums it up with the security we have in God – “**No one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him.**”

The words of Jesus to Nicodemus sum it up nicely – “**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him should be saved**” (**John 3:16-17**)

We have been given an invitation to praise the Lord. We have been given instruction on what we must do to praise the Lord and reasons why we should praise the Lord. The first step is to be right with God. That may be to confess sin and be restored in relationship with God or to confess your sin for the very first time from a heart broken by sin in need of salvation. When you do, you will receive His compassion and deliverance. If you don’t, you will receive His condemnation.