

INTRODUCTION

What do most people want? I think they want health, and a decent income, people who love them, and a sense of purpose. I think that people believe that these things produce peace, security, and an inner sense of wellness and happiness. What I want you to consider this morning is this; Can a person have inner peace, contentment and even a sense of wellness, even when life is difficult, and they lack health, money, or people who love them? Where do we truly find blessedness and happiness in this life?

This morning we are going to let the psalmist David teach us about this. I invite you to listen to a man who was described as a man after God's own heart; a person who passionately sought the presence and blessing of the Lord. As we consider his words, allow the Spirit of God to speak to your heart on what it means to truly be blessed. If you do that, I think you will understand how you can truly be a blessed person, by calling on the Lord when things are not going well, and then experiencing His deliverance from trouble and fear.

To begin, let's open our Bibles and read Psalm 34 together.

- ¹ I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

- ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.
- ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

- ⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
- ⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- ¹² What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
- ²⁰ He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
- ²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

The heading on this Psalm reads *“Of David, when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.”* This seems to allude to an incident recorded in I Samuel 21:10-15. We can’t be completely certain if that specific situation is what precipitated this Psalm, but what we do know is that David was in many dangerous circumstances throughout his life and knew first-hand what it was to be delivered from difficult situations. If you are someone who has some difficulty this morning, or if you know someone who is facing stressful circumstances right now, this message is for you. David certainly can teach all of us about calling on the Lord when we are in trouble and experiencing His deliverance.

I see five lessons from this Psalm. They are listed in your bulletin insert to guide you through this message.

LESSON I – David’s Declaration (verses 1-3) *“I will praise the Lord in every situation”*

LESSON II – David’s Testimony (verses 4-7) *“I cried out to God, and He rescued me”*

LESSON III – David’s Invitation (verses 8-10) *“You can experience the goodness of God”*

LESSON IV – David’s Instruction (verses 11-18) *“How to have a blessed life”*

LESSON V – David’s Conclusion (verses 19-22) – *God Saves His People from Condemnation*

We will consider each lesson, and then I have a few questions that will help us apply the lessons to our lives. There are some additional discussion questions listed in the bulletin that we will be discussing this afternoon and evening as we gather with our community groups.

LESSON 1 – David’s Declaration (verses 1-3) *“I will praise the Lord in every situation”*

¹ *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

² *My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.*

³ *Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!*

The Psalmist begins his song declaring that he will bless the Lord at all times, not just when things are going well, but even in times of trouble. It reminds us of the Apostle Paul’s admonition in Philippians 4:4 to “Rejoice in the Lord always”, and his instruction in I Thessalonians 5:18 which says to “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” David is proclaiming that regardless of his situation, he will choose to bless the Lord. He will boast in the Lord and talk of His greatness, even when he is facing danger.

How about you? I am sometimes timid and quiet when things get difficult. My tendency is to become self-focused and subdued in times of trial. David tell us that whether life is great and challenging, it’s always time to sing and proclaim that God is good. What we say out loud, especially in difficult times, reveals our heart. You don’t really know what’s inside until you squeeze it! When we are facing difficulty and problems, the natural reaction is to complain and shut down. We learn this first lesson from observing David that when he facing problems, it’s

time to praise the Lord. We can choose to rejoice and praise the Lord, and based on His promises and past faithfulness, declare His greatness in all circumstances.

If we follow David's example, and do this, look at what happens in verse 2. When we boast in the Lord's goodness and faithfulness when we are facing difficulty, others who are struggling are encouraged and their heart is lifted. Those who also worship this same God hear our words of praise, and their thoughts are directed away from their problem and to His greatness. Praise is contagious. In verse 3 David invites everyone that hears his praise and worship to join him in praising the greatness and faithfulness of God together.

I understand that when you are going through a hard time, you may not feel like coming to church. I also understand that sometimes that you may not be able to come. We certainly need to be mindful of those who can't get here and take the church to them. But here's what I want us to see this morning. When you are suffering, or just having a down time, if you will choose to come and gather for corporate worship with your brothers and sisters, there is a two-fold blessing. You will be encouraged by hearing the praise of others, and you will encourage others by praising the Lord in your trial. Perhaps you have wondered how to encourage someone who is discouraged, and fearful and struggling. One way to lift their spirit is to talk about the greatness, goodness, and faithfulness of our God. When we speak and sing of the greatness of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ, it speaks light into the darkness and dispels fear and discouragement. The dark clouds of depression and hopelessness are dissolved. I want to encourage you to look for opportunities to share personal testimonies and biblical accounts of God's care and deliverance with others. We need to be better at bragging! Not about ourselves but about our great God.

LESSON II – David's Testimony (verses 4-7) "*I cried out to God, and He rescued me*"

- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.
- 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.

David gives the reason why he is so thankful and joyful. He testifies that when he was in distress and fearing for his life, he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord answered His cry and delivered him from all his trouble. The Lord opened David's eyes to see how the angel of the Lord was with him, encamped about him, protecting him and keeping him safe.

Beloved, we have One who has promised to always be with us, especially in our troubles. We have a friend who is in control of all things, the sovereign King of the universe, and He loves us deeply. How deep is this love of Jesus for His people? How much does He love us? So much that He left heaven, and humbled Himself, and lived among us, and was misunderstood, rejected, hated, despised; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He bore our pain and our sorrows and made them His very own. He took our grief upon Himself. He submitted His life to wicked men, who whipped Him, and beat Him, and spit on Him, and drove nails through His hands and

feet, and raised His body on a wooden cross to the sky. And this great loving Savior, as He hung there in shame, took upon Himself the wrath and punishment for our sins. How much does He love us? He gave His very life for us.

And my friend, if you have received this One, the Son of God, the One who died for sinners, realize that He is now risen, and has ascended to His father's right hand glory, and is now interceding for us as we face our trials and temptations. Why do we rejoice? Why do we sing? Even as we hurt, and are tempted and tried in this life? Because we have a friend in Jesus. An all-powerful friend. A friend that knows our pain and our challenge. A friend that encamps around us, and promises to protect us and keep us and take us home. Why do our faces shine and glow, even in times of sorrow and loss? It is because we have a friend. And He is a faithful friend that is always, forever there, through every trial and tribulation.

That is why, even when we don't feel like it, we can call out to God and ask Him for grace and help in time of need. We can persevere and keep on asking for help with thanksgiving and gratitude, depending on His promise to care for us. What a friend we have in Jesus!!

LESSON III – David's Invitation (verses 8-10) “*You can experience the goodness of God*”

- ⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!
¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

David now invites all who hear him to taste and see for themselves how mighty and good this God is. He tells us that not only has God protected him, but that he protects all that fear Him and call out to Him. If we cry to our Father, He will not withhold any good thing from us!!

Now look again at verse 10 *The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.* What an interesting verse. I believe David is using this picture of young, self-sufficient lions to illustrate those who naively believe that there is nothing that they can't handle. The young and the proud. They can handle it. Bring in on! We are strong, and mighty, and tough!! The warning is clear, that such pride and arrogance precedes falling, suffering, loss and judgment. He contrasts these pompous young lions with those who look to the Lord for what they need. God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble Jesus said that it is the poor in spirit that are the blessed, the mourning that are comforted, the and the hungry that are fed. He called to those who were weary, and heavy laden, to come to Him, and that He take their burden and give them a yoke that they could carry. The self-satisfied person refuses to admit his need, and as a result he remains polarized from God and under His judgment and disfavor. Proud people live their lives with no regard for the One who gave them life. In contrast, the humble hear of the deliverance of the Lord, and are glad, and accept the free offer to taste and experience the goodness of God.

Our gracious God freely offers His goodness to everyone. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. Whoever includes you. If you are poor in spirit, and see your need, and if you are hungry and

thirsty for righteousness, and see your need, Come and eat and drink and receive the blessing of the Lord. If you will forsake your pride and self-sufficiency, the Lord will save you and rescue you from the judgement that is to come.

How do you respond when you face problems, and difficulties, and need help. Do you humble yourself and call on the Lord, and cry out for mercy and help, or do you look to your own sufficiency, wisdom, and strength? Do you boast to others of the Lord's goodness and deliverance, or are you ashamed of the Lord?

Oh Lord, help all of us to see our arrogance, self-sufficiency, and pride, and then take it from us. Bring us low Lord, so that we might exalt you in our deliverance and salvation.

LESSON IV – David's Instruction (verses 11-18) "*How to have a blessed life*"

- 11 Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- 12 What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
- 14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

- 15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.
- 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- 17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Now the Psalmist invites us to be his students. The topic is how to have a blessed life. Oh, how we all need a teacher. We don't inherently know how to have a blessed and full life. People all around us are searching for answers. They read self-help books, and listen to politicians, and philosophers, and religious gurus. They are told to look within themselves for the wisdom and direction they need. This is a lie. We don't have the answers within us. We need a teacher. We need the counsel of God's Word, and we need to listen to those who know His Word. We need instruction from the One who made us to know how life works. You listen to the One you fear and respect. Oh Lord, we bow our head, and our pride, and we humbly ask you to teach us. We tremble at your word, and at your truth. Speak to us through your servant David in this hour and teach us your ways. Amen.

To those who come, David will teach the fear of the Lord. Psalm 111:10 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom. The Psalmist begins with an interesting thought in verse 12. *What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?* Is there any man that doesn't want to see good in his life, to live many good days, and live life to the fullest? If we are honest, we all desire good days and a blessed life. This thought leads to this question. What must we do to have this blessed life?

David answers this question. He tells us that a fear of God will direct our hearts and desires toward righteousness and holiness. Specifically, we will learn to control our words. We will

learn to hate evil and love goodness, and we will seek and pursue peace. For a person be happy, fulfilled, and blessed, God must become his all-consuming fear, his everything. When God is our Lord and Master, we will put our hand over our mouth, and will be careful to only speak what is true, and lovely, and praiseworthy. We will delight in goodness and despise wickedness. We will pray for and pursue peace. We will be peacemakers. Are you at peace in your relationships? Have you confessed your sins and in step with the Spirit? Are you harboring any ill will, resentment, or vengeance toward anyone? Come to Christ and be set free. Come taste and see that the way of the Lord is good, and peaceful, and content.

The blessed life is a life of growth and change. We enter this world as sinners. God in His sovereign grace regenerates our hearts and opens our eyes to our sinful condition, and we cry to Him for forgiveness and cleansing from our sin. Through repentance and faith, we are justified and counted righteous based on the life and sacrifice of Christ. Then we begin a life long process of change, learning how to walk in this new life of holiness and righteousness.

As we fear the Lord, and love Him with all our heart, we will see our need, our poverty of spirit, and we will be brokenhearted and crushed. Like the prophet Isaiah, we will see our sin and want to call down judgment on our heads. We will be consumed with a hunger and a thirst for righteousness. David tells us in this Psalm that in our brokenness, and when our spirits are crushed, that the Lord is most near. He gives grace to the humble. He binds their wounds, and heals their spirit, and saves them from devastation. As they cry for help, He hears them and delivers them, and saves them. He saves them from their sins. He delivers us from ourselves. He sets us free from our self-centeredness, and that is how we experience the joy and blessing of a full life. It is the self-centered life that ends in tragedy and condemnation.

LESSON V – David’s Conclusion (verses 19-22) – *God Saves His People from Condemnation*

- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
²⁰ He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

This final lesson exposes a most prevalent toxic error of the health and wealth gospel. The false teacher of this error tell you that it would never be God’s will or plan for His children to suffer. They say that God wants us to have the very best of this life in terms of freedom from sickness and pain, suffering, sadness, struggle, and financial hardship. There are many passages throughout the Scripture that would expose this as sheer foolishness, and this Psalm gives us one. Verse 19: Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. The blessing of the child of God is not that he is shielded from trouble, but that he has a faithful deliverer in the midst of trouble. Jesus told his disciples that in this world they would have tribulation, but to be of good cheer, because He has overcome the world. God is sovereign over all evil and suffering, and allows and even at times sends us difficulty, trial, and trouble so that He can chasten and strengthen us and display His salvation and deliverance. He uses our pain, suffering, and adversity for our good and His glory. His salvation and deliverance shines the

brightest in dark places. Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me. He sometimes shields us from trial, and also protects us as we walk through trials. He is in control, and is always with us. And ultimately, when we see Him, we will be completely delivered from all pain, sickness, and problems. When we see Him, then He will dry all our tears, and usher us into eternal joy free of sin and sorrow. We long for that day and realize that what we suffer here is not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come.

These same afflictions and difficulties that purify and strengthen us destroy the wicked. David concludes this Psalm rejoicing in the redemption of the righteous from condemnation. Beloved, are currently free from all condemnation for our sin. We stand accepted by God in the righteousness of Christ. We are being set free day by day from the power of sin in our lives as God sanctifies and purges our lives, and when we see Him, we will be completely delivered from the very presence of sin and temptation. What a day that will be!!

So perhaps this morning you are a bit discouraged and weighed down with the burdens of this life. I want to encourage you and invite you to cry out to God for help. Seek out a brother or a sister before you leave this morning, and let them share the goodness of God with you, and then both of you can pray and bless the Lord together.

Perhaps you are not sure that you really know this amazing Lord that I've been talking about. I'm not talking about a sheer emotional experience when we pray and sing. I'm not talking about a decision that you have made in the past, or a prayer that you prayed once upon a time. I am talking about today being the day of salvation, that our God is the great I AM, and that the Lord Jesus is alive and is present to seek and save the lost. If you have doubts, and are not sure that you now this real and present saving God as your Father, and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I urge you to reach out to someone you know that has that relationship, and let them help you taste and see that the Lord is good.

FOUR SIMPLE QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you respond to problems and difficult times?
2. Have you tasted God's goodness and presently experiencing His blessing?
3. Do you know the fear of the Lord?
4. Have you been rescued from the condemnation for your sins?