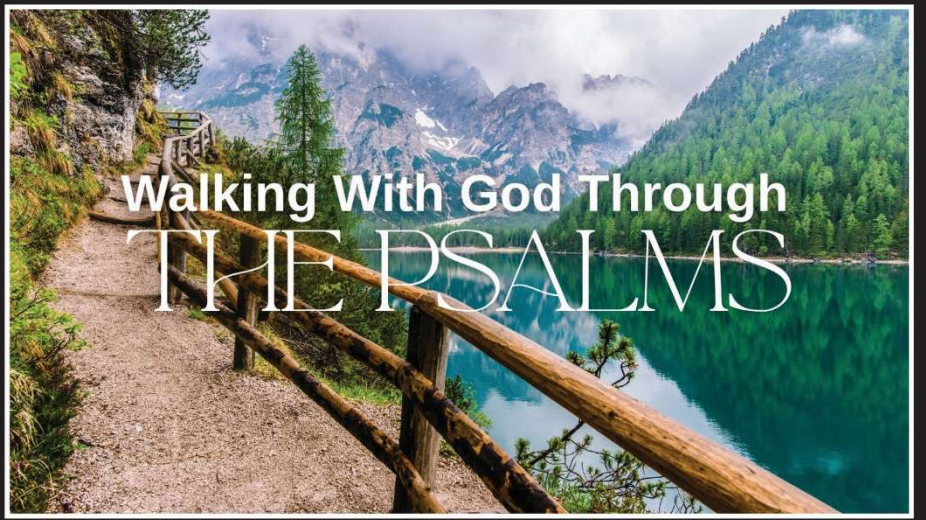


Midweek Study

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Experiencing God's Goodness

Psalm 34:1-22

Psalm 34 is written by King David during one of the lowest moments of his life. The superscription tells us it was composed "when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed." This is a reference to 1 Samuel 21:10-22:1, when David fled to Gath - the hometown of Goliath - and faked insanity to escape with his life.

"Abimelech" refers to Achish. The word "Abimelech," meaning "my father is king," functioned as a dynastic title for Philistine rulers, much the way "Pharaoh" was used for Egyptian kings.

James Montgomery Boice writes, "Most commentators believe that this was a sad episode in David's life, since he obviously had failed to trust God to protect him from Saul and was relying on his own cunning instead. Whether that is true or not, David nevertheless did cry out for help and was delivered, as Psalm 34 makes clear. In 1 Samuel we are told that he escaped from Gath and fled to the cave of Adullam, where the psalm may have been written. Psalm 34 is the third acrostic psalm in the Psalter, each of the verses (with the exception of the last) beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The only variation is the omission of a verse for waw, which is also true of the second of the acrostic psalms, Psalm 25."¹

In this chapter, I see **FOUR STAGES** in experiencing God's goodness.

1) The Psalmist's **Trial** (34:1-3)

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together."

- Warren Wiersbe writes, "David was delighted to be out of enemy territory (where he probably shouldn't have gone to begin with) and back in the wilderness with his men. Note the verbs: bless, boast, magnify, exalt. ... 'In prayer, we act like men [people];' wrote Puritan preacher Thomas Watson, 'in praise we act like angels.' David gave thanks to the Lord by magnifying Him and exalting His name. See what He did for David: He answered prayer (vv. 4, 15), provided his needs (vv. 9-10), delivered him from trouble (v. 17), and protected him from danger (v. 7)."²

2) The Psalmist's **Trust** (34:4-7)

"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them."

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 293.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 131.

- “this poor man” (v.6) is David describing himself. He had nothing, but God is so good - He still heard him.
- Commentators understand “the angel of the LORD” to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. He appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-13), to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), and to Joshua before conquering the Promised Land (Joshua 5:13-15).

3) The Psalmist's **Taste** (34:8-10)

"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing."

- David has told us what God did for him. Now he says: come find out for yourself. Wiersbe continues, “‘Taste’ doesn’t suggest a sip or a nibble; it implies feeding on the Lord through His Word and experiencing all He has for us (1 Peter 2:3; see Heb. 2:9 and 6:3). It means knowing Him better and enjoying Him more. It was a great blessing for David to be delivered from Gath, and it was a greater blessing for him to be protected by the Lord after he fled, but the greatest blessing was drawing nearer to God and enjoying His presence, not just His gifts.”³

4) The Psalmist's **Testimony** (34:11-22)

"Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." (Psalm 34:11)

- Verses 1-10 can be looked at as a **song**, while verses 11-22 can be read as a **sermon**.

A. Watch Your Words *"Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit." (v. 13)*

B. Watch Your Walk *"Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." (v. 14)*

C. Watch Your Works *"The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." (vv. 15-16)*

D. God Is Near to the Broken-Hearted *"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." (vv. 17-18)*

E. The Promise of Deliverance (Not Exemption) *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken." (vv. 19-20)*

F. God's Ultimate Redemption *"Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned." (vv. 21-22)*

APPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

1) Praise God in the Cave. When you find yourself in a cave (maybe because you put yourself in that situation or maybe because someone else has forced you there), lift up your praise to God. He is good, even in the cave.

2) Seek Him First, Not Last. God should not be our last resort. Before we seek help from all other sources, seek God. "I sought the LORD, and He heard me." Make it a habit in good times. It will become more natural, even when stressed.

3) Find Someone in a Cave and Point Them to This Psalm. David shared his testimony with others, which is why we have this psalm. Direct others to experience God's goodness as well. Tell others to "Taste and See" for themselves.

4) Rest in the Ultimate Redemption in Christ. Don't forget the eternal is more important than today's challenges. We will not escape every hard time or difficulty, but through Jesus Christ, we will be saved and delivered ultimately in eternity. Cry out to Him. He hears "this poor man" and delivers. Hallelujah!

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 132–133.