

Psalm 34:1-22 Thankful for God's Goodness Falls Ch. PM 11/19/2023

What if I asked you to write a song of Thanks? Are you in a good frame of mind to write one? Maybe your heart is broken; maybe you are grieving a loss.

You and I find it easier to thank God in good times, when things seem to be going our way. We find it difficult to thank God when our dreams are crushed. We need help giving thanks to God, when life is hard.

I am not just asking you this to stir up your emotions. It is the context for the Psalm.

From the title to the Psalm we get a time stamp, so we know that this Psalm was written soon after David had to say good-bye to his best friend Jonathan. We also know that Jonathan's father Saul was trying to kill David. David was in a crisis. David was facing loneliness. David had no friend, no weapons, and not even any food. David even went to see his pastor – the chief priest – asking for a diaconal gift of food. The pastor gave him a loaf of bread and also gave him a surprise. The pastor gave David a sword. It was not just any sword. It was Goliath's old sword!

With that exact sword, David then went to the city of Gath, the hometown of the giant Goliath. There, David was in danger for his life. In fact, the title of the Psalm specifically tells us that it was during this time that David was forced to "change his behavior," which means David had to fake being insane in order to escape that dangerous moment. Subsequent to that event, next David needed to go into hiding in a dismal cave, where David still was when David wrote this Psalm. David was a man in crisis. David had nothing.

Yet during his crisis, having nothing, David put his mind to writing a Psalm of Thanks. This Psalm is a tremendous gift to us. It gives us the secret to becoming thankful when we don't feel thankful. That is our main point:

In Psalm 34, our good God gave us four steps to cope with a crisis.

Step 1. Decide to praise God throughout the crisis. (v.1-3)

Did you ever wonder whether a crisis will shipwreck your faith?

In verses 1-2, God encourages us to take the first step to preserving our faith by making a commitment to keep right on praising God no matter what. (v.1-2)

For our walk with God from today to the day we get to heaven, all starts with the decision reflected in the very first words of the Psalm, "I will bless the LORD at all times..." (v.1) "...His praise shall continually be in my mouth..." (v.1) "...my soul makes its boast in the LORD..." (v.2)

David had previously slain Goliath, back in 1 Samuel chapter 17, before this event. It was later, in 1 Samuel chapter 21, that David had been clever to fake insanity. But notice that David did not give himself credit for his own cleverness and creativity, just like he did not give himself credit for his own skill with the

sling or with music. David had decided to reserve his mouth for praising God, and not to use his mouth to speak praises of David's own abilities.

In verse 3, God next encourages us to go public to our network of people with our decision and our commitment to always praise God by calling on others to praise the Lord with us, instead of us calling on others to see how bad our situation is. (v.3)

David sang, v.3, “magnify the LORD with me...let us exalt His name together.” In other words, I have a commitment to praise God, and I have a reason to praise God; so do you, so would you please join me?

SI – Our family has a Christian friend, and her name is Diane. Diane experienced a devastating fire on her family hobby farm. When we called her to talk about it, all she could say was “praise God with me.” Here is basically what she said, “The LORD was so good. God sent people at every turn. Each time we would identify something we needed, someone was already bringing it to us.” Do you see how remarkable that is? Wouldn't most people use a devastating fire as the excuse to complain to friends who would understand? But instead of Diane inviting us to see how bad her situation was, she was inviting us to see how good her God is.

Somewhere along the way before the fire happened, Diane had made a decision to praise God no matter what. Then, when the fire happened, she followed through on her commitment to praise God.

Step 2. Learn about God early in the crisis. (v.4-7)

In verse 4, in a crisis, we learn from God about Himself. “*I sought the LORD and He answered me...*” The LORD's answer to us may come in the form of relief, or God's answer to us may come in the form of no relief, but the gift of endurance.

Look carefully at verse 4, it does not say God delivered me from all my problems. No. It says God “*delivered me from all my fears.*” Sometimes, that is the Lord's answer for us! We have to learn early in the crisis that we are called to keep on praising a God who CAN remove our problems, but sometimes decides NOT to remove our problems. and We don't know which way God will decide in our case in this crisis! In 2 Corinthians 12 – Paul famously prayed, “*Lord, take away my thorn!*” God's answer to Paul was no, the thorn stays. Yet God had something for Paul - God said My grace is sufficient for you (while you suffer with the thorn.)

In verses 5-7, God encourages us to learn something else about God - the difference the LORD makes as we enter a crisis. (v.5-7)

v.5, “*those who look to Him are radiant.*” In Exodus 34, Moses' face was “radiant” coming down the mountain after meeting with God. And this same radiant face of Moses was later referred to by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 where Paul wrote that the radiant face of Moses was a picture of something.

What was the shining face of Moses a picture of? It was a picture of Christians growing more like the Lord. Understanding the radiant face of Moses is important, because God gave us this picture through Moses in Exodus 34, through David in Psalm 34, and through Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18. What is it about this radiant face that we need to understand? It is this: the radiant face is a picture of the transformation of the mindset of the whole person. When we look at things differently, we seem to God like the face of Moses – we are radiant. God can see our radiant attitude! We are able to keep looking to the LORD, no matter what happens, and we are able to remain radiant, no matter what happens. That is the difference the LORD makes!

SI – 150 years ago this month, it was in November of 1873, a Chicago businessman sent his wife and three daughters to Europe by ship. The plan was for him to come later and join them. His family’s ship went down. His wife survived the shipwreck, and she wired a message to her husband saying, “All of our daughters have been lost. Only I have been saved.” The man got on the very next vessel to join his wife in grief in Europe. His name was Mr. Horatio Spafford, a believer who had learned about God in good times, and was suddenly learning more about God in his pain. As his boat came near the place where his daughters had been drown, the skipper of the ship pointed out for Mr. Spafford the place where the previous ship went down. It was right there and then, on the deck of that ship, that Mr. Spafford wrote down these words, “When peace like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’” Since that time - 150 years ago this month - our dear brother Mr. Spafford, through his writing and his faith, has been calling on us to praise God with Him in that classic hymn. This is the difference that the Lord makes in a crisis.

The angel of The LORD encamps around those who fear Him.

Those who look to him are radiant.

Step 3. Teach others in the middle of the crisis. (v.8-9)

In verse 8, David called on us to taste and see that the LORD is good. We can go farther. In verse 8, we are called on to call on others to taste and see that the LORD is good! (v.8). This tasting is more than a tiny sampling like a free sampling of the newest seaweed product they are rolling out at the grocery store. Both Hebrews 6:5 and 1 Peter 2:3 use this verse, Psalm 34:8 to describe tasting faith as a lifestyle! It is not a little sampling. It is an invitation to place your life under God’s care, and God’s care alone, and see for yourself how good God is to you. And this is an invitation you can extend to others.

In verses 9 through 11, God expects us to offer “how to” classes about trusting The LORD during trials. (v.9-11)

SI – When the chancellor at the University of Glasgow at the start of a chapel service, introduced a missionary named David Livingston, he stepped aside and motioned for Mr. Livingston to come forward. As he walked to the platform to speak, the students saw hair that had changed color because it had been so been beaten with tropical sun. The students saw a dedicated missionary’s body, still emaciated after his bout with jungle fever. The students observed his right arm hanging limp, because it had been destroyed by an attack from an African lion. As the students took notice of this man who had endured many trials, the students spontaneously stood up not in applause, but rather in awe and respectful silence before God’s missionary making his way to the podium. He had not spoken one word yet, and already the students were receiving the experienced missionary’s lesson, loud and clear. How he lived his life had taught the students how to trust the LORD in their own trials.

It is as if David Livingston’s scars, each received in the middle of a crisis, were illustrating to the students the words of King David, as we read from verse 9, “*Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints..(and from verse 11) listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*”

Step 4. Hide from the crisis in The LORD, follow His way, and wait it out. (v.10-22)

When we are hurting, we are tempted to start grumbling! So, we receive a timely word here in verse 13, “*Keep your tongue from evil.*” Grumbling is not just bad manners or bad form, it is evil speech!

Verse 13 goes further. Next God instructs us to keep our lips “*...from speaking deceit.*” We deceive ourselves with lies such as ‘it will always be like this.’ That is a lie. ‘It stinks to be me.’ That is a lie. ‘There is nothing good about this day.’ That is a lie. What is the truth instead? We can echo the truth of another Psalmist who wrote that, “*This is the day that the LORD has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.*” (Psalm 118:24)

So, verse 13 is a command what not to do – do not speak evil or deceit. So, what must we do instead? Verse 14, We must “*...turn away from evil and do good.*” We must “*...seek peace and pursue it.*”

We must only let our tongues say helpful words, such as from 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*” Not just giving thanks with our mouths. Our hearts need to support the words of our mouths. We need to hide in The LORD during a hardship. Actually, our hearts and our mouths are connected! Whatever our mouths say reveals the status of our hearts! We must turn our hearts to God! How? Like David here, in verse 15 and again in verse 17, we must cry out to God.

What about when the troubles have broken our hearts? God reminds about His nearness during the troubles that breaks our hearts. Listen to verse 18, “*The*

LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Our suffering may be extreme. Our God sees us. Our God hears us. (v.15, we are reminded that *“The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and His ears [are] toward their cry.”*) God does not take our suffering lightly. God never loses control of the situation. Everything about our predicament is designed to reveal God’s closeness, to convince us of God’s nearness. While we are waiting for God’s eventual deliverance of us from this scenario, we always have God nearby, waiting with us for the last day of our suffering. Verse 18 does not say that God will draw near as soon as He can, or that God will respond by coming near in short order. No, please be comforted that the Bible says God IS near. The only remaining thing that was needed was for God to reveal to us that He is near. We consider ourselves informed and reminded.

In verse 20, the protection of His bones picks up a Passover instruction from Exodus 12:46 that has its true fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ. Not one of the bones of Jesus was broken. (John 19:32-33, *“the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break his legs.* (v.36), *“...these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of His bones would be broken.’*) And 3 days later, Jesus rose again. It was through this crucifixion and resurrection, that God protected us. God grants us resurrection. All of that is confirmation of God’s nearness to us in our crisis.

The nearness of God leads ultimately to our rescue from the situation. Long before our rescue from the situation, we are rescued from our own heartache, our own misery, our own sin, and the condemnation that leads to death.

The Lord Jesus explained in Luke 21:16, *“You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you will they put to death.”* PARADOX verse 18, *“But not a hair of your head will perish.”* What?? These verses point us beyond death. Jesus went on to say in Luke 21:19, *“By your endurance you will gain your lives.”*

- 1) Crucified, but no bones broken. Points to resurrection!
- 2) Put to death, yet not hair lost. Points to resurrection!

The death was necessary, but it is being closely managed by the Most High God. Our crisis is necessary, but it is being closely managed by the Most High God!

Back to Psalm 34, here in verses 21 and 22, The LORD at the end of the Psalm, presented the end of all things. There are two outcomes.

- 1) The justice of God’s coming judgment in verse 21, *“Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.”*
- 2) The mercy of God in coming salvation in verse 22, *“The LORD redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.”*

God wants us to set these two truths side by side, and keep them together. Judgment and mercy. A broken heart, and a thankful heart.

But the cost of the Lord's redeeming was not imagined by David in his own writing of these words of verse 22, "*The LORD redeems the life of His servants...*".

David could not have known the truest fulfillment of those words would entail. How would the LORD redeem? How would the LORD redeem the life of His servants? Only later in the New Testament we receive the answer that The LORD would redeem us by the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, the son of David. The redemption the LORD offered came only by way of the † cross.

The scope of the last line of the Psalm is unbounded, unrestrained, unstoppable. Verse 22b says, "*none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.*" There is no limit to the blessing of this statement from God. Why not? Because Christ has been condemned in our place, and Christ rose again.

Conclusion:

Application 1: taste and see that the LORD is good. I know you believe it is true that God is Good, but have you tasted that truth? What is the fundamental difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Not that Christians know that God exists. Everyone knows that God exists. Rather, the fundamental difference between Christian and a non-Christian is that a Christian has tasted that the Lord is good, and lives out of the truth that God is good, and gives thanks to God.

Application 2: Remember whenever your heart is broken, that The LORD is near to the brokenhearted. (verse 18). God delights to draw near to people whose hopes have been crushed. God draws near, because of one thing: Jesus took our sins upon His shoulders and He became a brokenhearted person. Jesus came to meet us where we are, and pull us out of it. Christ died to remove our misery and sin, and He rose again to keep us near to Him forever. Remember whenever your heart is broken, that The LORD is near to the brokenhearted.