

Psalm 34.1-22 | The Lord is Tasty

Intro: Summer Songs

This will conclude our brief series called Summer Songs. The book of Psalms is a book of songs. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul encourages us to address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Not all songs are the same, but they are all designed for worship.

There are 150 different songs and 8 different types. There are royal songs, repentant songs, teaching songs, even lamenting songs. The beauty of the psalms is that they run the range of the emotions, revealing that we can worship God through the joy and sorrow of our lives. The songs are written by more than seven different authors including five individuals and two families. The Hebrew text usually indicates authorship, half of which are ascribed to King David, but there are over 50 anonymous. Every song is different, but every song has a story behind it—one's that we don't often take the time to learn.

The Story behind the Music

The historical context of Psalm 34 is recorded in **1 Samuel 21.1-15**. After David killed Goliath of Gath, a ten and a half foot monster of a man, he became a very successful warrior in Saul's army. Though David was a mere shepherd with a sling, by God's grace he had incredible success on the battlefield, so much so the people were enamored with him...as was Saul for a time. Saul even gave David one of his daughters to marry in exchange for fighting against the Philistines. Unfortunately, King Saul viewed him as a threat.

Eventually, the Lord rejects Saul as King and secretly anoints David as King while Saul is still on the throne. Because David reveres Saul, the man whom God chose as King, **he does not act to overthrow—he quietly serves and waits on the Lord.** A tormented Saul then speaks to his son about killing David but Saul's son Jonathan shares this with his best friend. David is then forced to flee his country because of Saul's rage. He first goes to see the Priest just south of the city. When questioned by the priest about why he is alone, David lies no less than four times about being on a 'secret mission' for the King; a lie that ends up in the death of all of the priests at Nob, their children, and even their animals. Then he travels into the one place that Saul will never find him—Gath, Goliath's home town in the land of their enemy the Philistines.

Eventually, David is found out and brought before a great Philistine King, Achish, also known by the formal title Abimelech. **David fakes insanity by scratching on the walls and drooling on himself.** Instead of a battle hardened warrior and spy thrown into prison, he is driven out of the land as a madman. By God's grace, David escapes the Philistines and goes to live in a cave because both his enemies and his own people are trying to kill him. It is assumed that David wrote this Psalm sometime after his escape from Gath.

Perhaps he was still hiding in a cave meditating on how God had delivered him from some scary men and some of his own stupid decisions. As he sat there, the Bible says that his family came to be with him. It also says: **Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul (discontent), gathered to him (1 Sam 22.2).** And it had to be tempting for this group to sit and wallow in their mutual discontent—to dwell on how God felt distant, how their circumstances were overwhelming, how life felt unfair. Imagine David sitting there in his cave-castle, **“king” over bitter, indebted, and otherwise marginalized men.**

THE COMMITMENT TO PRAISE | David takes these failures of society, and transforms them into warriors. I believe David taught the through song. This is a teach Psalm. **The first 10 verses of Psalm 34 are reflection and praise for what God has done**—it expresses David's attitude toward God, inviting His men to experience God's goodness in the midst of a chaotic, disappointing, and failed situation. **The last 12 verses are more instructive, teaching wisdom about HOW TO LIVE in light of what God has done: to fear the Lord at all times, to enjoy the Lord at all times, to trust the Lord at all times--that he might lead men who walk by faith and not by sight at all times.**

Praise at all times

David begins by teaching them what He is committed to do despite what he feels—He will praise the Lord at all times. Psalm 34:1-22 ¹I 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! We hear the term “praise” so much that it feels like it’s lost its meaning. **Essentially, the praise is an expression of gratitude. It is a volitional act of worship that we ascribes value to someone or some thing and communicates it in some way—the root word is connected with making noise.** Today, it is difficult to separate the idea of music from praise. As Christians it seems worshipping through song is the one place we can point to where we say—I praised Him there. Most of the time outside of Sunday mornings, we are not praising God with our mouths that way.

It’s not as if we don’t praise things. The act of praise appears to arise quite naturally for us in many different contexts as an consummation of joy or regard. C.S. Lewis wrote that, “praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. ... (We see this as we watch athletes, see great movies, or even have good food.) CS LEWIS continues, In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him”. In saying I will bless the Lord, praise the Lord, worship the Lord at all times, is David saying I will enjoy Him at all times.

Praise continually

He also declares that He will praise the LORD continually. Ceaseless praise, ceaseless enjoyment, is almost impossible for us to imagine as we consider all the garbage that a life in this broken world brings us. In fact, actively praising God in those darkest moments is often the furthest thing from our minds. Instead of constantly speaking of what God has done, in the midst of disillusionment, we are more inclined speak of the times themselves and that which God has not done to get me out of them! Though we don’t “enjoy” our bad times, it seems like when I complain about my circumstances, I am in fact ascribe strength, value, and validity to the power of sin and brokenness in this world—I give them victory. When I dwell on my own circumstances, as opposed to God, I do the opposite of what David says here; **boast in my own abilities to save myself. Praising God is not ignoring the pain, it is directing it.**

Praise together

Finally, David invites his mean to praise God WITH HIM. David speaks to this group of broken people, each with their own story, telling them that HE will bless the Lord at all times. Despite the sins of others against him, despite his own sinfulness (stupid choices), he will praise him continually. Remember though David has done nothing wrong, he is hated. Though he has served faithfully, he is hunted ruthlessly. Though David continues to protect the kingdom, the king seeks to destroy him. As the leader then, David has to feel discouraged. **But instead of dwelling in the emotion of the difficulty, he charges the men that are with him to praise God—not individually—but together with one voice.** We come together in COMMUNITY not simply to experience encouragement, but to magnify the LORD together; to exalt his name together in a way that is personal BUT not private.

THE PROMISE OF PRAISE | Now, David the worship leader, mediates on the benefits of a commitment to praise. Reflecting on his run from Saul and his escape from Gath he declares: ⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵Those 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.

Delivered from Fear

David’s praise is rooted in what God had done in response to his cry for help—notice he didn’t pray until he was in REAL trouble. I wish all of us would live a princess leia mentality (most desperate hour). David further recalls his own situation, calling himself a POOR MAN—a man in want—who cried out of his NEED for God. **Fear of the world not only reveals to us our need for God, but the fact that we really don’t**

fear Him. What fears did he have? The same ones EVERYONE has who does not fear God. Fear of our enemy? Fear of failure? Fear of unknown? Fear of pain? Fear of impossible circumstances? Fear of dissatisfaction? Fear of men's approval? Fear of men's disapproval? **Through prayer, He was delivered from his fear BEFORE he was delivered from the situation.**

Become Radiant

As David sings this to these broken, unbelieving, dispirited men, he says those WHO DO THIS (seek the LORD in prayer); those who look to him are radiant—they glow. Bible Professor Gregory Beale wrote, "what people revere (fear or look to), they resemble, either ruin or restoration." In times of trouble, despair, and need, men cry out to something—either the Creator of creation, either the one true God or a false one. Those who cry out to the true God are slowly transformed into the image of his Son Jesus—they become more and more like Him. Those who cry out to the man-made false gods to alleviate their fears...come to look and act like those gods. According to **Psalm 115.4-8 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.**

Those who fear creation above God are not radiant and free. They are dark and paralyzed—they do not speak, do not see, do not hear, they do not feel, they do not walk, they cannot make a sound of praise.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PRAISE | David invites his men to do more than just go through the motions. He wants them to experience the love of the one true God and the joy His presence brings.

OH TASTE

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! David challenges his men to come and experience what he has experienced. Taste is an important figure of speech in the Bible. Many things can look, sound, and even feel bad...but taste reveals the truth. **Everywhere it's used figuratively taste suggests full participation in and/or experience of the thing enjoyed. Often, when you taste something, you are required to employ most if not ALL of the other senses.** Before or as you taste, see the food, you feel the texture, you smell the aroma, and you may even hear all kinds of noises as a result of tasting. But an invitation to taste of God is two fold. **First** it is a call to fully rely on him just as we eat in order to survive—it is necessary nourishment. But we eat for more than just health. It is also because of taste that eating is considered an experience of pleasure—one that we often repeat several times a day, not as a boring chore or duty, but out of desire because of what we've tasted before. **For me, the worst food in the world is cooked carrots.** I wonder how many of us view our faith in God, our relationship as feasting on prime rib, chocolate, or the like; or like a child forced to eat their carrots.

OH, FEAR

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 Not only does David invite his men by saying, "OH TASTE" but he also says, "OH FEAR." Those who do this have NO LACK—they lack no good thing. The phrase "fear the Lord" is not the same as "be scared of the Lord", rather, it is a reverent respect for WHO GOD IS. The question for all of us is this, **how do you know when someone fears the Lord? What does fearing the Lord look like?** From what David has said, it seems like it LOOKS like someone who lives in continual praise; someone who constantly feasts on the goodness of the Lord; someone who is genuinely content because they are full. I want that life.

OH, LISTEN

And David doesn't leave them in suspense: *You guys need to fear the Lord; thanks and don't forget to tip your waitress.* He says: **Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?** So David gives them **THREE** specifics:

LESSON #1 – Praise with others

¹³Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The first thing David addresses in teaching men to “fear the Lord” is to watch their mouths, particularly, to be careful to speak truth. When things do not go our way, when things are out of our control, when things go wrong we are tempted to speak lies about ourselves or God. About God, we begin to declare that He is not good, loving, or in control. About ourselves, we will naturally declare we are not wrong, we are not to blame, or we are entitled to more. What begins speaking an evil lie about your situation will result in doing an evil action to get out of it. David instructs the men to do good, to seek peace, to work at keeping the praise of God in our mouths at all time—for others to hear—instead of crying out about who hates us unjustly, why the situation is unfair, or refusing to admit our failures—all of which reveal that we really don’t trust God. **David helps others praise in the cave.**

LESSON #2 – Pray to God

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. ¹⁶The 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. The 2nd thing he tells these men is to CRY to God. In short he says, pray because God hears you. David says the Lord is listening for our cry. Like a Father who wants to bless His children, He hears AND He acts. I have been personally convicted because for most of my Christian life I have been less of a prayer warrior more of a prayer shadow boxer. It has been said that don’t pray because we don’t believe God hears us or that it actually does anything. Paul’s prayers in the Bible are less about getting out of Cave’s, and more of knowing the fullness of God’s love inside the cave you find yourself. **David reminds others to pray in the cave.**

LESSON #3 – Preach to Self

Not only does David instruct us on how to praise with men, and pray to God, but also how to preach to ourselves. By preaching to ourselves I mean approaching life with the write perspective. Refusing to be “romantic” about our faith and thus end up disillusioned because things didn’t go the way we expected. David is quite frank about the walk of a Christian. 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. If we are being conformed more and more to the image of Christ, even if we seek peace, pursue goodness, and live righteously, we will face affliction. We live in a sinful world, with a sinful nature, surrounded by sinful people. Though in Christ we are right with God, being right with God does not preclude us from suffering. But I do believe that, in Christ, the fear of God will help us endure suffering unlike any pill, book, or relationship will ever empower us to do. **David reminds others to preach in the cave.**

CLOSE/Summary

²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. We do not fear God because we’re scared of him—fearing that he will reject us. We fear God, we revere God, because we DID reject him, because we know how sinful we are, and yet he loved us. We don’t serve him so that he will redeem us, we serve him because he has redeemed us. We don’t praise him so that he will not condemn us, we praise him because we have tasted of the Lord, and he is good, and he has put a song into our mouth that we cannot hold back if we tried.