

PSALM 34

JUNE 5, 2022



INTRODUCTION

When are you most likely to act wild and crazy—when you have a substitute teacher, when you’re hanging out with your friends on the weekend, when you’re mad your parents won’t let you do what you want, or never because you always act completely normal?

In 1 Samuel 21:10-15, David literally acted crazy, but not for fun. His life was in danger, so he pretended to be insane. That way, the Philistine king who knew David was a great warrior wouldn’t feel threatened and kill him. Miraculously, David’s plan worked and he wrote Psalm 34 to recognize God’s hand in delivering him and to praise God for His goodness.

DISCUSSION

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 34:1-22.**

What was David’s point in the first three verses?

Why should we always praise God, even in hard and scary times?

In your own words, what does it mean to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (v. 8)?

Have you ever been tempted to doubt that God is good? Why?

What is the point of verses 16-17 and 21 for us today?

Read John 19:34-37. How did Jesus fulfill Psalm 34:20. Why is this important?

Reread verse 15. Someone might wonder, “If God’s eyes were really on David and if God was really listening to him, then why was David’s life in danger? Why did he have to humiliate himself by acting insane?” How can we answer that question?

Why is it important for us to understand that trusting in God doesn’t remove difficulty from our lives? What, then, does trusting in God do for us?

GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. What did Peter say brings great joy in verse 6 (see vv. 3-5)?

In 1 Peter 1:7, Peter indicated that God has a plan for the trials He lets believers face. What is that plan? What is God doing in the hearts and lives of believers as He lets them face trials?

APPLICATION

What is a difficult situation in which you need to see that the Lord is good? Even if your circumstance doesn't change, how can that happen?

How might studying God's Word help you better "taste" the Lord's goodness?

What step could you take this week to make God's Word a priority?

PRAYER

Thank God for letting us taste and see that He is good through the gift of His Son. Ask God to help us trust the goodness of God even if our circumstances don't seem good at all. Pray that by doing so, we might point others to Christ.

COMMENTARY

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The incident mentioned in the title of the Psalm is found in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. It relates David's deliverance from King Achish of Gath.

34:2 "Boast in the Lord" is best defined in Jeremiah 9:23-24 where it means to "understand and know" Yahweh, which is further explained as knowing that Yahweh shows "faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth." In other words, it is knowing who God is and what He does, having a personal knowledge and experience of Him through trusting in Him.

34:5 "Look to" is another way of expressing trust in time of need (145:15) and is equivalent to "seek" in some contexts (Isa. 31:1).

34:6 A person who is in need and prays to Yahweh often identifies himself with the oppressed. The term can also designate someone who is humble or, in the more negative sense, humiliated. The word for "afflicted" ('ani) is closely related and is often in parallel with the poor. There is not a strong distinction between these since it is assumed that the poor were the weakest and most helpless in society and were often the objects of oppression by stronger and more influential persons. Therefore, the term "oppressed" in the psalms should not be limited to economic hardship alone.

34:7 "The Lord's angel" can also be translated as "messenger of Yahweh." In most contexts there is a distinction between God and this angel. For example, in the story of Gideon, the angel of the Lord vanished (Judg. 6:21), but Gideon continued to speak to Yahweh (Judg. 6:22-24). This seems to indicate that they were different. However, in other contexts the angel of the Lord spoke as if he were God Himself (Gen. 22:11-12; Ex. 3:2). In this sense the angel could be a theophany (an appearance of Yahweh). Christian tradition has often identified such angels with the preincarnate appearances of Jesus Christ, but as noted above, this does not work in every instance. It is best to treat each context on its own merit and not impose the same meaning in every text. The connection between the "Lord's angel" and military imagery (note the word camps) appears elsewhere to show that Yahweh fights for His people (2 Kings 19:35). The "commander of the Lord's army" in Josh. 5:13-15 may also be related to this angel.

34:8 "Taste" can mean "judge" in the sense of determine for oneself (Prov. 31:18). "See" most likely carries the same sense in order to reinforce the concept.

34:9-10 God cares for His people more than the rest of His creation (8:5-8). Other texts use the argument that if God cares for His creation, He will care for mankind (104:14-15) and especially for His own people (Matt. 6:28-30). "Lack nothing" also appears in the context of Yahweh's role as a Shepherd in 23:1.

34:11 The identification of the psalmist's listeners as children recalls a common wisdom motif of parents instructing their children (Ex. 12:26; Deut. 6:6-9) and shows that Psalm 34:11-14 form a wisdom section in this psalm (similar to 32:8-9). To be taught to fear the Lord is preferable to learning it through experience. Fearing the Lord is where wisdom begins (Pr. 9:10).

34:16 "Wipes out all memory of them from the earth" is another way to describe annihilation.

34:18 "Brokenhearted" and "discouraged" further develop the image of oppression, although the emphasis in these terms is on internal suffering. Yahweh is near those who are broken and humble (51:17) as opposed to those who have "hearts of stone" (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26).

34:20 Broken bones are often symbols of physical affliction (51:8; Isa. 38:13) or oppression (Mic. 3:3). God protects His own from these dangers.

34:21-22 "Evil" (ra'ah) can mean disaster and calamity as well as the abstract concept of evil. Note how this contrasts with goodness and faithful love pursuing the person who trusts in Yahweh (23:6).