

Psalm 34 "Taste and See that the Lord is Good"

Intro – **Yelp review illust.** Point is, all the reviews and pictures are truly effective. They give you a concrete idea of what it's like and you're willing to actually go and try out the place. That's what Psalm 34 is. It's like a yelp review of God and what He has done. And David is saying, you got to come check him out. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He's for real. He has done all these amazing things for me. He deserves your praise.

This Psalm is an invitation to trust in the Lord. It is both a Psalm of praise and a call to follow Christ. And David says, I know what I'm talking about. I know of whom I speak. Look at what He has done in my life and what happens to those who try to do evil to me. Can you hear the excitement in the text? I want you to sense David's passion as he composes this Psalm for God. This is an authentic response to how God helped him through real life-threatening dangers.

And the question for all of us is, have we tasted God's goodness? Now you don't need to have an experience of God in order to follow Him. But once you become a believer, you will experience fully His grace. That's what I want to encourage you with this morning. God is good. And if you've never experienced it before, come! Follow Him. He is real, all-knowing and all powerful.

But I also want to ask and challenge you from this text. How has God been good to you? And do you tell people about it? Is there a passion and excitement in your life, in your voice as you share the good news of Jesus Christ? These are the questions we want to keep in our mind as we approach our text this morning. First we need to know the historical background.

Historical background – This is one of the few Psalms that actually tells us the historical context in its title. And it's found in 1 Sam 21. David had been chosen by God as king. But not yet. Saul was still king. And Saul was jealous, mad, determined to kill David. He was on the run from king Saul. He went to the city of Nob and picked up Goliath's sword from the chief priest Ahimilech's home. Now if you'd killed Goliath and are walking around with his sword, where is the last place in the world you would go? Well that's where David went. To Gath. Goliath's hometown. Why? Well it's hard to tell. Was it because that's the last place in the world Saul would look for him? Did he hope somehow not to be recognized, to be able to lie low in Gath? Doesn't seem so because he doesn't go in quietly. He didn't go secretly into Gath. He went to present himself to Achish, the king of Gath who is also known as Abimelech. Perhaps he thought that the king might be glad to have David on his side now that David was Saul's enemy.

Whatever his reasons were Gath did not turn out to be a safe place for David. You see in v11, "And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" And by the way king, those ten thousands were Philistines. But notice what the Philistines called him. The king of the land. They spoke more truly than they realized. But now David is in enemy territory. He's exposed, he's in very grave danger. In v12 we're told he was terrified. But he was also smart. He changed his appearance, allowed spit to drool down his beard, and acted like a mad man. And it worked. Achish basically said I've got enough idiots already, why would I need another one? And so David escaped from Gath. From that experience, David writes Psalms 34.

I find that incredible. That a man on the run for his life, and he's been doing this for years. A man who was anointed as next king finds himself having to pretend to be crazy in front of his former enemies. He runs away from his current enemy to his former enemy. That's a hard pill to swallow. Think about the humility that took. The shame David might have felt. And yet David is still able to write this beautiful Psalm about the goodness of God. What has He done for you? And how do you respond to God's goodness?

There are three biblical truths that I want to highlight from Psalm 34. **God delivers those who fear Him (vv4-19)**. Notice David's emotion. V4 "I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears." V6 "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Do you see the emotional turmoil and fear in David? V4 all my fears. V5 ashamed. V6 cried, troubles. V10 want and hunger. V18 brokenhearted, crushed in spirit. Does this sound like a confident optimist to you? No. David was desperate and filled with dread. And had every reason to be. He was first anointed as the king of Israel while he was a youth, but he doesn't become king until 30. And he's spent the majority of the 15-20 years in between those two events on the run, hiding for his life, afraid, feeling responsible for those who follow him, crushed, brokenhearted. This was a desperate, distressed man.

When was the last time you felt desperate and helpless? ***Kate threw out her back during pregnancy illust.*** Point is the sense of helplessness and cry out to God. Perhaps when you first discovered your child or your parent's. When you have been out of a job and you don't know what's next. When you're in financial troubles and wondering how to pay the mortgage. When your college fellowship is being mocked and persecuted for being faithful to God's word. When you feel betrayed and have your heart broken by a loved one. When you feel crushed. To be in fear, in troubles, desperate. To have no one else to turn to except the Lord.

The Bible says, come. Come taste and see that the Lord is good. See for yourself. You don't have to take my word for it. God surrounds those who fear him with his angels. He keeps watch over those who hide in him. Experience how God provides for every need for those who seek Him. Even the strongest of us, like young lions will get hungry and have needs, but not for those who trust in God. Our fears and troubles, delivered and gone. Our prayers, answered. Our shame, no more.

The key here is to fear the Lord (v11). You say, how do we come and taste God's goodness? You have to fear God. You have to trade in your fears, shame, desperation, broken heart. And in return, learn to fear God. V7 "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." V9 "Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!" vv17, 19 talks about God delivering the righteous from their troubles and afflictions. In other words, you want to experience God's deliverance? Then obey God. Live in a way that honors Him. Vv13-15 says to keep your tongue from evil. Do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

But that means to also trust in God's timing. Hudson Taylor said "While He seldom shows up early, God is never too late". Even though David was saved from King Achish and Saul for the moment, he was still on the run, and will remain so for years. Even though God was delivering David through every danger, the ultimate one remained. Saul was still alive and in power. What would you do? Would you try to take matters into your own hands and try to eliminate

Saul once and for all?

My friends, there will come a day, and it is happening already around the world, when following Jesus means you'll pay with your life, or at great cost. But God's command is to not seek vengeance, but to continue to do good. David had several opportunities to kill Saul. In 1 Samuel 24 and 26, twice David had the chance to kill Saul. He could have saved himself, using the convenient way. His followers urged him, go ahead, get rid of your nemesis. You are the next king anointed by God, and the opportunity to kill Saul is there, it must be God's will. Take it. Take Saul's life. Save yourself. But David always resisted, it's not his place to kill God's anointed one. That's fear of the Lord. It's the willingness to let God deliver you His way. To not sin against the Lord. God in his time, will make all things right. He will not let sin and evil go unpunished forever. His patience is not ambivalence or weakness. Because He is good, He is patient. But because He is good, He is also just. And he will deliver those who fear Him and punish those who do evil.

We all have fears and trials, and will experience helplessness some point. But God will deliver us, because He loves to save those who fear Him. And those who fear God will not only do what is right, but learn to be patient to allow God to bring justice and salvation in His time. And what could be greater than work of justice and grace than the crucifixion? That brings us to next point.

God redeems the unrighteous (vv19-22). *Luke Skywalker enter dark side cave illust.*

Fought D Vader figure but face revealed to be his own. Point is he thought the greatest enemy was external, when it was really inside. And that's the kind of surprising twist we find in this Psalm.

As we first read this Psalm, we can easily identify with the suffering David. He's the one who's mistreated. He's the one who suffers from injustice. He's the one who fears the Lord. So naturally we root for him and we are meant to identify with him. We want to experience God's deliverance just as David did. So when we read about "those who do evil" in v16, "the wicked" and "those who hate the righteous" in v21, our first reading says, that's not us. Those were the godless Philistines, and later the evil king Saul.

But God turns around and switches our perspective. He reveals that we are actually the unrighteous, and that we need to be delivered from the greatest evil of all, our sin and rebellion against God. We are the evil ones. Except, we're not doing evil against David, but sinning against God Himself.

And the reason we know we can, indeed we must read the last section of this Psalm differently, is because we're told in John 19:36 'For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken.'" Psalm 34:20 is ultimately fulfilled when Jesus' crucified body did not suffer a single broken bone. Jesus was rescued from His enemies through the cross and resurrection. Now we see that Jesus is the ultimate righteous one. He suffered many afflictions, crucified, died on the cross. For you and me. Because we're the unrighteous evil ones. That's the good news.

Our sins, forgiven. Our debt, paid. Our penalty, born by Christ. David writes in v22 that He redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because he was condemned for

our sins. That is the kind of God we have. Do you know Him? Have you tasted the goodness of His salvation? Does it fill your heart with joy and gratitude? That leads us to the last point.

God is worthy of our praise (vv1-3). Now we go back to the first three verses. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!" When do people usually feel like singing and celebrating? Usually because something amazing has happened. When Osama Bin Laden was killed, people poured out into the streets and started to cheer. When Mexico beat Germany in 1st round of world cup, seismograph picked up a small earthquake in Mexico City the moment the game ended. When I found out my grandfather had accepted Christ, I was praising God with tears of gratitude.

David says in v1 "I WILL bless the Lord at all times. His praise SHALL continually be in my mouth." Most of us would say I will not bless the Lord in tough times. But for David, he's learned that regardless of his situation, he will speak well of the Lord. Because God saves. He saved David from Saul, from Abimelech, from Goliath, from lions and beasts. As scary and difficult things may seem, David reminds us that we need to still see the greatness of God. Not because David is strong in willpower or stubbornly optimistic. But because he has tasted the goodness of God. God saved him. Even when things are tough, God saves.

David was on the run. Afraid for his life. Living in foreign enemy land. And there's no promise he'll be safe there. He has to feign insanity to not be thought of as a threat. Would you be blessing God, singing praises to Him, exalting His name? I'm not sure I would. And that's the difference. I wouldn't, but David says we should. We should praise God at all times. You might not feel like it, but that's why you need to celebrate and remember every instance of how God rescued you, healed you, provided for you, comforted you, saved you. It is why people erected memorials and altars in OT. So that they will remember what God has done. Remind yourself regularly of what God has done in your life, so that when the tough times arrive, you are still able to bless and praise the Lord.

CS Lewis, in *Reflections on the Psalms*, writes "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment". Basically, joy isn't complete until you're able to talk about it, to tell others, praise what you enjoy. Like finding a great deal, or hearing an amazing news, or having experienced something so thrilling. Sharing that news is what completes the enjoyment. **Told everyone in oral surgery about engagement illust.** Point is I couldn't wait to tell everyone the great news. Praise completes our enjoyment.

That must be true for our delight in God. If God is indeed so good, and if you have tasted His goodness, you cannot, you will not keep silent. His praise will be in your mouth continuously. Remind yourself regularly of God's deliverance. Tell others boldly of what He has done. Praise God openly, and you'll find that when tough time strikes again, you'll have built in the godly habit of rejoicing in the Lord always.