

“The Lord Favors those who Fear Him”

Psalm 34

Gratitude Sunday: November 24, 2019

I invite you to reflect on Psalm 34 with me as we prepare to turn our personal blessings into public praise on this Gratitude Sunday. We want to do this morning, what David is doing in Psalm 34. He is giving a personal testimony for the purpose of public praise and as an encouragement for God’s people to taste and see that the Lord is good by joining him in walking in the fear and favor of God.

The overarching life principle throughout Psalm 34 is that ***those who fear the Lord will walk in His righteous ways and praise Him for the blessing of His favor.*** We are going to see a connection between the fear of the Lord and a heart of thanksgiving.

Call to Praise [1-3]

- There is never a time in the future when it will be inappropriate for me to praise the Lord.
- The humble are those who look to the Lord, see Him for who He is in all His greatness and are glad for what they see.
- To the humble, to those who fear the Lord, to whose who hope in Him—to us, David says, “O magnify the Lord with me...”

Testimony [4-7]

- Background: God delivered David from Philistine king when David pretended to be insane (I Sam 21:10-15), yet the Psalm focuses not on the particulars of the circumstances but on the goodness and faithfulness of God to those who fear Him.
- Notice, God delivered David from his fears (vs. 4). It’s possible for us to still experience fear even when we are trusting in the Lord. But when our hearts are capsized by fear, it is because we have lost sight of God and our outlook is consumed by our circumstances alone. By in large, earthly fear is an anxious response to a perceived reality in which one is powerless against evil or danger. It’s said that

perception is reality. But that’s really not true. Reality is reality and if my perception of reality is off, then I am not living in reality. When I am overwhelmed with fear, I am not living in the reality that God exists reigns in and over this world. This is why *it is very difficult for a fearful heart to be a thankful heart*, because thanksgiving must be rooted in the reality of God. The way God delivers us from our fears, is by bringing us back to what is actually and ultimately true in light of God’s providence. This why it is so important that we respond to fear in the same way David did, by looking to the Lord.

- [vs. 6] David sees himself as a poor man, unable to meet his own need, and so he turns to trust in the Lord, and he discovers a new reality—[vs. 7]. God’s militant, protective care is on every side of those who fear Him. Thus, the fear of the Lord dispels earthly fear.

Exhortation [8-10]

- *“O taste and see [experience for yourselves] that the Lord is good; How blessed are those who take refuge in Him!”*
- The blessing of those who fear the Lord, who trust in the Lord, who take refuge in the Lord, is two-fold. We’ve already seen that those who fear the Lord experience the *protection* of the Lord (vs. 7), now we see that those who fear the Lord experience the *provision* of the Lord [9-10].
- Lions are at the top of the food chain, and even they may go hungry, but not those who fear the Lord. He is our provider.

Instruction [11-18]

- Summary: The way to live a full life in this world of evil, is to live a righteous life in the fear of the Lord, because God’s favors those who fear Him with a life of blessing. A blessed life is the result of God’s favor and God’s favor is reserved for those who fear and trust Him. The fear of the Lord changes how you live. You want to live a full life, a blessed life? You need the favor of God and the favor of God is for those who fear Him which means living your life by doing what’s right in His eyes. And those who live this life of blessing in

the fear and favor of the Lord, always have reason to praise the Lord with thanksgiving.

- In the realm of reality where God is sovereign over life, there are two possible directions: 1) *God's disfavor* [vs. 16] or 2) *God's favor* [vs. 15]. Cf. Ps 33:18 (The fear of God is not just doing right to avoid punishment. It is trusting God to be faithful to those who love, trust, and obey Him.
- So how are we to live in this world of evil? [vs. 17] David is saying, what God did for me, that poor man that cried to the Lord and was delivered from all this troubles (6), he will also do for you as you walk in the fear of the Lord.

Encouragement [19-22]

- The encouragement here is to choose the fear of the Lord in light of the final reality of earth and the eternal reality to follow.
- *The final earthly reality* is that though the righteous will endure countless afflictions, trials and tribulations, the Lord will deliver him out of them all (19). You say, "but don't some afflictions last a lifetime, like disease or poverty?" Yes, but in the end even death is the final deliverance from every affliction on this earth. But this is not true for the wicked who don't fear the Lord. When vs. 21 says, "Evil shall slay the wicked," the Hebrew word for *evil* is the same word used for *affliction* in vs. 19 (*raah*). We might say, "many are the calamities of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Yet calamities will slay the wicked." In other words, the wicked will not be delivered from their afflictions, but shall die in them.
- *The eternal reality* is that the wicked who do not fear the Lord will be condemned (21), while those who fear the Lord, those who take refuge in Him will not be condemned, but rather be redeemed (22).
- In light of the NT, we know that the way in which God redeems the soul of His servants is through Christ, who lived a perfectly righteous life in the fear of God and who died bearing the affliction of our sin. And David, writing better than he knew, pointed to Christ in [vs. 20]. In all the suffering and abuse Jesus suffered, his enemies could not harm Him beyond what His Father permitted. And through His

death and resurrection, He (and we!) are eternally delivered from all affliction. How blessed are those who take refuge in Him!

In a few moments, you will have an opportunity to share your own testimony of God's goodness to you (how He has filled your heart with gratitude). And these we share, not only as expressions of thanksgiving to God, but also as a means of saying to one another, "taste and see that the Lord is good!"