

## PSALM 34:1-22

Thankfully, the LORD comes to our aid when our emotions overpower us and motivate us to act foolishly. When we fear Him and live righteously, He will deliver us from what is often our most dangerous enemy: ourselves. Far too often, we are controlled by our old nature rather than by the Holy Spirit. But God is faithful to us when we are in trouble, even trouble we create for ourselves. This is the message of Psalm 34. This is, *What to Do When God Delivers You from a Fearful Situation*, 34:1-22.

1. Praise the LORD (vv.1-2).
2. Invite the afflicted and helpless to exalt the LORD with you (vv.3-7).
3. Invite others to taste God's goodness (vv.8-10).
4. Teach your children to fear the LORD (vv.11-14).
5. Encourage the righteous (vv.15-22).

### **1** (34:1-2) **Praise the LORD.**

God had done great things for David; therefore he declared that He would extol the name of the LORD. *Extol* (barak) is derived from the Hebrew word for kneel, and it literally means to kneel. It usually describes reverential worship, as contrasted to exuberant praise. In extolling the LORD, David expressed His respect and gratitude to God.

#### **a. Praise Him at all times (v.1).**

Although David had just been delivered from Achish, he promised to extol the LORD in every circumstance of his life, the bad as well as the good. *At all times* (eth) is also translated as season and refers to the appointed times or periods of life (Ec.3:1-8). In every season of life—positive and negative, joyful and painful, happy and sad—David was determined to worship the LORD and praise His name.

#### **b. Boast in Him before the afflicted and helpless (v.2).**

David was confident that his praise would encourage the *afflicted* (anav): those whose spirits are brought low due to suffering or oppression. Specifically, he spoke of the men who had gathered in the cave with him, men who were depressed and discouraged because of adverse circumstances in their lives (1 S.22:2). David was determined to lift their spirits by boasting about the LORD's power and faithfulness.

**Thought 1.** We should follow David's example in every season of life. It is easy to bless the LORD when all is well or when He does something marvelous for us. But it is not so easy to bless Him when we suffer loss or affliction. Scripture commands us to give thanks in every circumstance, knowing that God's will is being accomplished in our lives (1 Th.5:18). Being filled with the Holy Spirit enables us to bless the LORD at all times and for all things (Ep.5:20).

We should also follow David's example of encouraging the down-hearted. Our communities, churches, neighborhoods, schools, and places of employment

are overflowing with people crushed by heavy burdens of life, burdens such as...

- family problems
- marriage problems
- financial setbacks
- erring children
- aging parents
- abuse
- addiction
- physical afflictions
- guilt
- shame
- fear
- worry

These and countless other circumstances cause many to feel hopeless. We can never over-estimate the power of an encouraging word. Like David, we should purpose to cheer the depressed by pointing them to the LORD, sharing testimonies of God's faithfulness and power in our own lives. A joyful believer is a powerful tool in the hand of God, one He can use to repair many wounded spirits. May we determine to be like Joses, whose friends nicknamed him *Barnabas*, which means *encourager* (Ac.4:36).

**About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them (Ac.16:25).**

**Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ep.5:20).**

**Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Th.5:18).**

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds (Js.1:2).**

### **2** (34:3-7) **Invite the afflicted and helpless to exalt the LORD with you.**

Overflowing with gratitude for God's deliverance from King Achish, David invited his distressed comrades to join Him in praising God (v.3). To *glorify* the LORD is to proclaim His greatness. To *exalt* Him is to lift or raise Him up.

Two desires moved David to initiate a worship service in the cave of Adullam: First, he longed to experience the power of lifting up the great name of the LORD, worshipping with others in addition to his private worship. He wanted to celebrate God with others. Second, he wanted his dejected friends to know that God could do for them what He had done for David. As they joined him in lifting up the LORD, David knew that the spirits of his companions would also be lifted.

#### **a. Because you sought the LORD and He delivered you from all your fears (v.4).**

David had already experienced a number of terrors in his young life: a lion, a bear, and a giant pagan warrior. Now, the jealous, unstable king of his own nation was pursuing him. Most recently, he had foolishly fled into enemy territory, where he found himself staring straight into the eyes of Gath's king and his guards.

In each of these terrifying circumstances, David's life was on the line. Gripped by the gravity of the situation at hand, David *sought* the LORD, earnestly asking Him for His guidance and protection. In every case, God heard and *answered* by giving him strength and guidance. The LORD had *delivered* David from these dangers by empowering him to fight his enemy or by showing him how to escape. When he was trapped in Gath, the LORD planted the thought of pretending to be insane in David's mind, which led to his release.

**b. Because He gives a radiant joy—never shame—to all who look to Him for help (v.5).**

In proclaiming the glorious deliverance of God, David painted a vivid picture. Imagine the terror-stricken face of one suddenly cast into a life-threatening standoff with a vastly more powerful foe—a seemingly hopeless situation. Unexpectedly, his defeated countenance is lightened or made *radiant*. Eyes darkened with doom suddenly sparkle with courage, hope, and joy.

This transformation from impending death to un-daunted boldness had been David's experience against the lion, the bear, Goliath, Saul, and now King Achish. He had never known the shame of defeat. Instead, when he lifted his eyes above his dangerous situation and *looked to* the LORD, God guided young David to victory. On most occasions, he fought with his weapons; at other times, he used his wits. But in each perilous encounter, the LORD snatched him out of the hand of his enemy. He walked away with the glow of glory on his ruddy face (1 S.17:42).

**c. Because you prayed in your desperation, and He heard you: He saved you from all your troubles (v.6).**

David wanted to be sure that there was no mistaking who deserved the credit for his victories. He had not prevailed because of his abilities, but because of the faithfulness and power of God. In every encounter, David desperately cried out to the LORD and God intervened. God saved him from his adversaries.

By describing himself as poor, David identified with his dejected companions. *Poor* is a slightly different form of the word translated as *humble* (v.2). David had been where his friends were many times, sinking in the mire of miserable distress. But when he turned to the LORD, God lifted him out of the pit of despair and firmly established his feet on solid ground. He will do the same for all who sincerely trust Him.

**d. Because the angel of the LORD Himself is your guard: He protects and delivers all who fear Him (v.7).**

As David stood against his opponents, he was not alone. The angel of the LORD was with him. Throughout the Old Testament, *the angel of the LORD* sometimes refers to the Lord Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate

appearance, that is, a visible appearance of God's Son before He came to earth (Ge.16:7; 31:11; Jud.6:12; 1 Chr.21:16).

David testified that the *angel of the LORD* encamps (literally, pitches his tent) around those who fear Him, protecting and delivering them from adversity (Ex.23:20-23). English Hebrew professor and commentator Alexander Francis Kirkpatrick (1849-1940) offered this suggestion: "[The angel of the LORD] protects those who fear Jehovah like an army encamping round a city to defend it (Zech.9:8); or perhaps, since he is the captain of Jehovah's host (Josh.5:14), he is to be thought of as surrounding them with the angelic legions at his command."<sup>1</sup>

The omnipotent Son of God can immediately and single-handedly overcome all of our enemies, but it is even more encouraging to think of Him commanding a heavenly host on our behalf. The point is this: The LORD supernaturally protects those who fear Him, dispatching His powerful angelic messengers to surround them.

**Thought 1.** What should we do when we are stricken with fear because of adversity?

- We should earnestly seek the LORD, asking Him to show us what to do (v.4).
- We should boldly do as He directs, depending on His power and guidance (v.4).
- We should take our eyes off the magnitude of our problem and fix them on the LORD who is greater than our crisis (v.5).
- We should be encouraged, displaying confident joy, by knowing that God will deliver us (v.5).
- We should give God the sole glory for our victories and share the testimony of His deliverance with others (v.6).
- We should remember that we do not fight alone, but that God's angels are at our side to protect us (v.7).
- We should always be sure that we are walking in the fear of the LORD—submitting to Him in all things—that He might help us (v.7).

**Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (He.1:14).**

**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (He.12:2).**

**However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name (1 Pe.4:16).**

<sup>1</sup> A.F. Kirkpatrick. *The Book of Psalms*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), p.215.