

Psalm 34

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 22 February 2012 12:54

This Psalm was written after David was driven away by Abimelech (also known as Achish: 'Abimelech' is more the title of a king or prince; thus 'king of Gath', a Philistine city). At one time David was so afraid of Saul that he tried to appeal to the Philistines, who were his enemies, to give him sanctuary. But, when he banged on the city gates, guards recognised him as the leader of the Hebrew band that killed their fellow Philistines.

Realising his error, David pretended to be crazy and drooled at the mouth. Quick thinking! Believing David really was mad, the king sent him away from the gates. It was memory of this incident that led David to write Psalm 34.

It is a reminder to us not to fall into the delusion that our enemies will give us help, or will become our friends. Many Christians befriend wicked people today, thinking they are doing the right thing. But, they are deluded.

The wicked do not care for believers, nor do they love them – rather, they hate Christians and will only tolerate them whilst they do the bidding of the wicked, or say nothing about their sin.

Eventually, the wicked will tire of this fawning and will destroy those who think they are safe by obeying their propaganda and ways. It is better to fight the battle with strength and honour than to hand yourself over to an enemy who hates you. Take it from one who knows!

Verses 1-3

1.

I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

2.

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

3.

O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

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David says he will “bless the LORD at all times”. Do you and I do this? David continually praises God. What about us? Or, do we allow our circumstances to deflect us from this holy response to God? In 2005, though I did not fully realise it, I let the foulness of my circumstances disrupt my spiritual life.

I repented of this, but it should not have happened. I **KNEW** at the time that God was with me, but still let the wicked around me win the day. Thank God this was temporary, and God led me out of it again. So, I know how we human beings can react to circumstances.

Even David was filled with misery at times, so none of us is different! Yet, almost too late, he realised how foolish he was to appeal to his enemies, who would have killed him and hanged his severed head from the city walls.

Even though I sank to the depths for a while, God graciously snatched me out of the mess and showed me His steady hand on my life. He has done the same for many saints! Even so, we **MUST** remember God is with us in even the worst of times. And as enemies surround us we must praise God and bless Him, for *He* holds the reins to our souls and lives, *not* our enemies or circumstances.

It is simple logic – when we sing God’s praises and bless Him we cannot, at the same time, sink under our many woes and trials. If we instead see the trials and woes as God’s test of our faith, we should begin to understand our position in Christ.

As believers we cannot boast about anything, because whatever we have and are is given by God. Our only boast is “in the LORD”. We can boast because God allows us to – it is praise for Him, and not us. To ‘boast’ in this context is to praise God because He is worthy of praise. And when we thus praise God even in the trials of life, observers who likewise need God will watch and be glad, because they see that God’s help for David would also be available to them.

It is common for modern Christians to read past accounts of God helping others, but rarely think

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God will similarly help them. They try to let God's greatness somehow affect them in print! What they should be doing is trusting God just as David did, and experiencing God's grace and mercy for themselves.

I suspect that many do not do this because they fear the consequences... if God came to them they would HAVE to have true faith and act wisely. Or, they prefer to pray to God and say "He did nothing" so that they do not have to obey and have trust! Why? Because both responses demand a personal trust in God and a personal life of holiness! This lack of faith is now widespread in the churches, along with an accompanying apostasy.

Knowing just how superficial people can be, David thus calls on everyone to praise God with him. He led the way by having the Psalm played and sung in the Temple. He urged the people to praise God for His greatness and power, and to exalt or raise His name "together". This is not done today, as individual Christians think they can worship and praise 'in their own way' – which usually means heretically or not at all. When everyone in a nation praises God, God is on their side and gives them victory over enemies and troubles.

Verses 4-8

1.

I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

2.

They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

3.

This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

4.

The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

5.

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

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David assures his listeners that when he searched for God, God came to him. He does not say God saves him from his enemies (though he usually did), but that God saved him from his inner fear. It is true that David managed to come away from the city gates unharmed, by pretending to be mad. But, the main fact is that God gave him a mind at peace, even amongst enemies. It is this that we should aim for, so that we will know how to be at peace when everything rages around us, and at any time.

Interestingly, David then uses the plural “they” and “their” to refer to *anyone* who looks to God for help. When they do so, their faces are lit up with assurance, and they were “not ashamed” or disappointed. Then, verse 6, David reverts back to reference to himself: “This poor man cried” and God heard and acted on his behalf, saving him from his own folly, which could easily have led to his violent death.

We then are given an unusual reference to the “angel of the LORD”. Do we have such a thing as a ‘guardian angel’? Yes, we do, and here David speaks of such an angelic defender. The angel, mal’ak, is sent by God as His representative or deputy, to help in times of dire need. In this case, the angel “encampeth round about them that fear (God), and delivereth them.”

This is a very clear promise that God sends angels to guard us and give us a happy conclusion. In other words, the angel surrounds us with the power of God, and makes sure harm does not befall us, or to give us great strength to endure. Angels are a part of God’s creation; they are sent by God on many errands of mercy to help the saved.

Yet, how many Christians believe this? I know of few. Very often God helps us in this way and we do not even realise it. Where else does that sudden relief from enemies come from? That instant help with fear, or trouble? David invites us to have the same experience, of help from God’s angelic host: “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

Our spiritual life is not just head-knowledge, vain prayers, or superficial belief... it is founded on real-time experiences of God – ‘tasting’ the things of God. We are not invited to look at photos of a feast in a book, but to taste the actual thing in reality! Too many have head knowledge; very

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few taste God in real life.

Verses 9-11

1.

O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

2.

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

3.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Notice that tasting the goodness of God is linked to “O fear the LORD, ye his saints”. The two go together. We cannot know the blessings of God if we ignore or reject His word. And the very start of this proper relationship begins with fear. For those who fear Him “there is no want”.

Young lions are active, feisty and powerful, but lack the maturity to successfully live on their own. When they try to act like their parents they often fail; and so go hungry. David implies by this that we can have great zeal, but without true knowledge and a mature belief, we will be spiritually hungry, as we blunder from error to mistake. The remedy is to simply seek God and obey Him. When we do this, we “shall not want any good thing”.

David talks to his subjects and followers as his ‘children’, as does Paul. He gives them counsel because he loves them as his own. ‘Listen to me’, he urges, “I will teach you the fear of the LORD”. He does it by describing God and the way we ought to respond to Him. (It is this allusion to ‘children’ that suggests he was king when he wrote this psalm).

Verses 12-17

1.

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What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

2.

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

3.

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

4.

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

5.

The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

6.

The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

Does anyone desire life? David is not just asking if people wish to be alive. To desire “life”, chay, is to sincerely look for freshness, active life, one that reflects God’s glory. Do we do this? Do we want to see “many days” – long life – so that we will see God’s good being enacted in this world and in our own lives?

So many Christians falsely claim they want this life to be over with, so they can ‘join the Lord’. Do they not understand that when we die we will go to Paradise until Christ comes again? We will not somehow glean extra days in Heaven by dying young! It is blasphemous to wish to be dead when God has given us life for a purpose!

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As part of our response to God, we must keep our tongues from evil. Sadly, and with great consternation, I hear of 'Christians' who swear like troopers, using the most vile of bad language. How repulsive is this practice! How dishonouring to the Lord! If a person who claims to be 'Christian' can so easily curse, then we can only imagine the rest of their lives and beliefs, which are bound to be similarly foul.

We must also stop speaking guile. Guile is treachery and deceit. It is to feign goodness and practice what is false. David ties-in this sin with the previous one, making such a man untrustworthy and godless. If such a man is, by any stretch of the imagination, a genuine believer, then he MUST change immediately and repent. The man who makes the claim but does not change is to be regarded as an unbeliever.

God's mind and ears are open to the obedient, the saved. He listens to their pleas. Conversely, He is against those who do evil, who sin without any kind of grief or repentance. God is very clear about it – walk the path, or shut up! What is the point of deceiving others or pretending to be saved, when God does not hear you, and will not listen? And, of course, He already knows you are dead in your sins.

God says that if we are genuine, we must do good and seek peace. This DOES NOT mean every church (or so it seems) must open a soup-kitchen, or give Bibles to tramps so they can use the pages for cigarette paper! To do good, to be, is generic – it means to do what is pleasant and agreeable, to be excellent in everything, to be better than those who trust in their sin, to understand what God says, to be right. The word has a number of other meanings, too.

What of peace, shalom? This is to be sound, complete (in Christ), friendly towards our brethren and others (as far as is possible). There are times when we cannot be peaceable, of course. So, do we do good and live peaceably? It seems not. Most modern Christians do not live this way but adopt a mock form of it, by siding with wicked men and their sins, and refusing to understand God's word as it is written.

We can only live at peace with wicked men if they repent and/or stop their evils! It is a fact that almost every Christian thinks he or she 'knows it all' and will not listen to teachers given their office by the Lord. This is all part of the deception.

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Think I am being arrogant and unloving? Then you must not have read verse 16: “The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off remembrance of them from the earth.” They are not worthy to have their names remembered! Why, then, do modern societies allow evil men to rule, to parade their wares and to bring people into the bondage of sexual and violent ways of life?

On the other hand, the righteous cry to God and are heard, and He saves them from their troubles. The wicked, then, are so much dead bones for the furnace, useless and hated by God.

Verses 18-22

1.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

2.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

3.

He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

4.

Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

5.

The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

People often say God seems far away. Yet, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” A broken heart can be one shattered by grief, but it also can mean “bring to the birth” – that is, the elect. A ‘contrite spirit’ is one that is broken

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very small, to dust. It can also mean a broken spirit. This need not necessarily mean something damaging; it refers to the right spirit within a person, who thinks of himself as nothing in the sight of God. Humility.

The saved person will know many afflictions (which is why I question the lives of those who claim salvation but live a life of ease, without the buffeting of the devil). No matter how many afflictions and woes the saved have, "the LORD delivereth him out of them all". He "keepeth all his bones: not one of them will be broken". He is referring to inner strength rather than actual physical harm.

On the other hand, the wicked will be consumed by their own evils. Generally, we see this happening in everyday life; the wicked tend to have a short hayday, and then they go into terminal decline or sudden demise. Sometimes they even have the people turn against their evils. We should pray for this today. The same wicked people hate Christians, but in the end they will suffer death, hell and great suffering.

Conversely, God "redeemeth the soul of his servants". 'Redeemeth' in this text does not mean to be saved. The people it refers to are already saved by God (as "servants" implies). In context it means to rescue His chosen and deliver them from their troubles. Indeed, none who trust (have faith) in Him will be desolate... that is, be found guilty before God.

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