

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
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A PSALM OF PERPETUAL PRAISE—PSALM 34

By: C. D. Cole

"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. 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. 11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth

them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

This is called a Psalm of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed. The historical background is in I Samuel 21:10-15: *"And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this*

fellow to play the mad man in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

Let us recall a few points in the lives of Saul and David. In rejecting the word of the Lord in sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, the Lord rejected Saul from being king of Israel. Samuel pronounced the doom of his kingdom, and anointed David to be king, whereupon, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, and departed from Saul, while an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. I Samuel 16:13, *"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward..."* Saul was evidently demon possessed. He had mad fits. His servants advised the services of a musician for his trouble and recommended David. Saul sent for David and seems to fall in love with him on sight, and made him his armor-bearer. The Philistines were the bitter foes of Israel in those days. David was thought to be too young and inexperienced to fight in the war, and was sent home while his three eldest brothers went with Saul to battle. David is sent to the front with food for his brothers. While there he witnesses the challenge of Goliath the champion of the Philistines and the cowardice of the men of Israel. After much parley-

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ing, David is allowed to go out to meet the giant. The results of this duel is well known. David slays the giant, and the army of Saul takes courage and put the Philistines to rout amid great slaughter. Saul's enmity toward David soon followed, and was caused by David's popularity with the women, who came out of the cities to welcome the conquering heroes, singing and saying, "*Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands,*" I Samuel 18:7. Saul immediately began his persistent plots against the life of David. In his flight from Saul, David goes to Abimelech, king of Gath, one of the five royal cities of the Philistines and home of the giant Goliath. David's identity is suspected by the servants of Abimelech and David is filled with fear that the king will take revenge for the slaying of Goliath. To escape danger, David plays crazy; he foamed at the mouth and let the spittle run down on his beard and scribbled on the doors of the gate. The king thinks he is a lunatic and tells his servants to take him away. David escapes to the cave of Adullam. This Psalm is a memorial of his deliverance on that occasion.

Let it be observed that David does not weave any of the incidents of that escape into the Psalm, but dwells only upon the goodness of the Lord and scribes his deliverance, not to his wisdom, but to God's grace. We should learn from this not to parade our sins before others as some are wont to do. They seem as proud of the sins of their unregenerate days as they are of present salvation. Another thing we may learn from David's example is to ascribe all our blessings to God. David did not talk about his cleverness in escaping the vengeance of Abimelech. He says his deliverance was from God in answer to prayer. Spurgeon calls this Psalm a hymn and a sermon, so following his suggestion we divide the Psalm into two parts:

1. **A Hymn of Praise to God,**
verses 1-10.

2. **A Sermon of Instruction to Others,** verses 11-22.

A HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD Verses 1-10

He resolves to praise the Lord at all times. His heart is fixed on perpetual praise. God has a monopoly on our praise. "*In everything give thanks,*" in bright days of joy and in dark nights of fear. He who praises God for mercies will never lack a mercy for which to praise Him.

He resolves to boast in the Lord. Boasting is a very natural propensity. It is as holy to boast in the Lord as it is wicked to glory in self. There is a wide scope for boasting in the Lord; His personal attributes, His manifestations of Himself, His relationship to us, His interest in us, and our expectations from Him.

He invites others to join him in magnifying the Lord. We should desire fellowship in holy exercises. Congregational worship is one of the natural instincts of the new life. "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...*" Hebrews 10:25.

In verses 4-7, David relates his experience in a difficult position. He attributes his deliverance in a time of fear to answered prayer. But he used means to escape the wrath of the king of Gath. Faith in God is not to discourage the use of means, but to prevent faith in the means apart from the blessings of God upon them. "*They looked unto him and were lightened...*" verse 5. The plural pronoun shows that the experiences of saints are common. David does not think of his case as peculiar to himself. There is life, light, liberty in Christ to all who will look to Him. He is rich unto all that call upon Him. "*This poor man cried.*" verse 6. David now re-

turns to his own case. He was poor and friendless, but he cried to Him that is a friend of the poor. "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,*" verse 7. This may refer to Jesus Christ, the uncreated Angel; the Angel of the Covenant. The angels take care of the saints. "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*" Hebrews 1:14.

In verses 8-10, David exhorts others to try and prove the goodness of the Lord. "*O taste and see that the LORD is good...*" You cannot see the goodness of the Lord except you taste for yourself. Faith is the sense of taste. The Lord is food for the soul. John 6:53-56, "*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*" But like material bread He must be appropriated by a living trust. It is not enough to look at Him and admire Him, and talk about Him; He must be eaten. "*O fear the Lord, ye his saints...*" Timely exhortation is this: "*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe,*" Proverbs 29:25. Matthew 10:28, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" Psalm 34:10, "*...but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*" They may not have dainties and luxuries, but they will have good things. And God Himself is to determine what good things are.

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A SERMON TO OTHERS

Verses 11-22

David's ministry was a teaching ministry. Pastors must be apt to teach. I Timothy 3:2, "A bishop then must be blameless...apt to teach." II Timothy 2:24-25, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." In the 51st Psalm, David promised to teach transgressors. Here he offers to teach children. Children are the easiest to teach. They do not have their heads so full of errors. They do not think they know it all. A teachable pupil is as essential as an apt teacher. This is as true in the realm of the spiritual. Old Christians are hard to teach, unless they have been learners all along.

Verse 11, "...I will teach you the fear of the LORD." A much needed lesson. Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge..." Psalm 89:7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Isaiah 66:2, The Lord speaking here: "...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." This would cut out all joking about holy things.

Verse 13. "Keep thy tongue from evil..." What a dangerous an unruly member the tongue is. Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." James 3:1-6, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able

also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

Verse 14, "Depart from evil..." Pursue holiness but run away from evil. II Timothy 2:15-16, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness." Shun the very appearance of evil. Don't live near the pest-house; change your hitching post. Don't see how much temptation you can stand.

Verse 15, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." God keeps his eyes and ears both open for good of His saints. Others may not see and appreciate his good works, but the Lord sees and will reward.

Verse 16, "The face of the LORD is against them that do evil..." God is never indifferent. The wicked man is forgotten in death.

Verse 18, "The LORD is nigh

unto them that are of a broken heart..." Consider some of the advantages of a broken heart: It is well pleasing to God. Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart..." It is an acceptable sacrifice. Psalm 51:17. It is a dwelling place for God. Isaiah 57:15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." It brings God near to men. Psalm 34:18, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart..." It meets with Christ's healing touch. Luke 4:18-19, Jesus speaking: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the LORD." Ezekiel 34:16, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick..." Jeremiah 30:17, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD..."

Verse 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous..." "Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure; yet God's mercies are more numerous, His wisdom more wondrous, His power more miraculous; He will deliver us out of all." Thomas Adams.

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