

The Broken Acrostic

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[0 : 0 0] so we're going to look at psalm 34 today so if you have a bible it'd be great if you could open up your bible in front of you um and turn to it perhaps there are folk today that may be uh tuning in and you don't know where the psalms are if you go to the front of the bible there's an index just like a book and there are sections there that show where each book in the bible is if you look at the book of psalms there'll be a number across from it that shows the page please turn to the page and um it's number 34 the psalm 34 chapter 34 of the book of psalms and we are going to be looking at this psalm today psalm written by david the heading tells us when he pretended to be insane before abimelech who drove him away and he left it's very helpful when some of the psalms have an introduction to tell us what the context is very important and this does it here i've headed today's sermon a broken acrostic and the reason for that is because this psalm is written in the form of an acrostic now you'll understand what an acrostic is it's a way of writing that the first line of each verse begins with a letter of a subsequent letter of the alphabet the hebrew alphabet a b c d with the equivalent in hebrews if you know hebrew you know what i mean um so the psalm all the verses there's 22 verses here goes through the first letter of each verse begins with the first the subsequent letter of the hebrew alphabet it's an acrostic except it's not because there are certain parts of it where uh it's out of kilter it's out of sync and there's one of the the letters of the hebrew alphabet that's not alphabet that's not included and so um that's why it's often called a broken acrostic but it's not merely because it's a grammatical thing that's been noticed in the psalm i think more so it's because it reflects the life of david and it reflects my life and it reflects your life as well our lives are like a broken acrostic this psalm reflects in many ways what a broken life looks like isn't the case we're taking two steps forward maybe three back four steps forward and then we stand still for a while we're going a b c and then d e and f are missing and we we jump ahead or come back uh to before that i think it's so true our lives are very much a broken acrostic nothing is just so and if we're ocd about life then we've got big problems because nothing in our lives or very very little is just so it's you know a a perfect square or a perfect circle and that's why this is a great psalm this is a great song a great poem for us today because it speaks into our lives that's why the psalms are great because they really do speak into our lives and david in this psalm gives us four things that we can do as we live out a broken acrostic life four things to really give us guidance and direction and hope and purpose and we all need that today i think it's one of the things that the coronavirus the and the lockdown and coming out of lockdown has taught us is is made a stop and ask what is my life really all about what does my life consist of uh it's it's so it can be so uncertain and so unsure and david speaks into this context context for you and for me and it's all about the lord it's all about jesus jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever whatever epidemic or pandemic or any situation that we're going through

he is the same he's a solid rock he is immovable and it's because of him that we can go through this broken acrostic life of ours yes broken in many ways but with hope and with confidence that he loved us and died on the cross for us and rose again and is in charge of everything so let's just look at this psalm then okay and there are four things that david brings to our attention for living in a broken acrostic life the first thing he tells us is to praise the lord verses one down to verse three i will extol the lord at all times he says his place will always be on my lips my soul will boast in the lord let the afflicted hear and rejoice glorify the lord with me let us exalt his name together some wonderful three verses which which in which david is saying and calling us to praise the lord praising the lord in a broken acrostic life what does it do it it focuses our attention on what really matters see he says i will extol the lord or magnify is a word that's used in some versions magnify by definition magnifying something means it brings it up closer doesn't it it focuses our attention by praising the lord we focus our attention on what really matters we focus our attention on the lord we

focus focus our attention on on jesus and by so doing we are given strength and grace to in the brokenness of our lives to just to to know what's worth keeping going for remember peter the apostle peter when he was um when he was in the boat uh in a boat and jesus came to them on the on the real stormy waters and he said lord of the jew tell me to come to see you and he stepped out onto the water remember he got out of the boat and walked on water stormy though it was and he walked on water what happened when he took his eyes off jesus it's then he began to sink it's then he went down and done that and even then jesus ensured he didn't drown but you see when we focus our minds when we extol the lord when we magnify focus our minds and hearts on jesus we can weather the storm when we praise the lord it really does enable us to know why we're doing what we're doing i wonder when was the last time you praised the lord when was the last time you focused on the great and good and gracious things of jesus we're so prone aren't we to focusing on the negatives there's something else that draws us away from positive and negative and if we focus on what is negative then that is going to shape our thinking and shape our feeling as well but if we focus on what is on good focus on what is good that again will equally encourage us and shape us and mold us david says praise the lord have you been focusing on the lord magnifying the lord looking at who he is and what he's done reflecting on jesus christ and who he is the person of jesus his life death and resurrection his ascension his what we call a session his ruling as king and glory over everything it does it does it does it does it does it does it does it does it does it does it to praise the lord in our lives because it keeps us going in the right direction i pray and trust that that will be true for us all so the first thing is this he says david says praise the lord the second thing he tells us in sam 34 is to seek the lord versus four down to eight he says i sought the lord and he answered me he

delivered me from all my fears and then he unpacks that and verse 8 he says taste and see that the lord is good blessed is the man who takes refuge in him so seeking the lord is the next thing that david tells us in our lives to do seek him and what does that what does seeking mean well verse 8 is really a helpful way of kind of unpacking and explaining what that means because seeking him means to taste and to see that the lord is good and what that means the word taste there it's not like a sip or you know the way you see people um tasting wine and they might swallow it about in their mouths uh and then spit it out or whiskey there's all these kind of um uh whiskey tasters and you take a tiny little bit and you know you see that you smell it and i don't even know if you spit it out to be very honest with you but it's not that kind of tasting the word here and the whole idea around the word tasting here is it's something that you take a long while over it's it's it's tasting in such a way that that you really experience what has been tasted you benefit from what has been tasted it does you good you digest what has been what has been tasted and that's the context in which david says to seek the lord in our broken acrostic lives really go after him and finding him lay hold of him i guess is really the way of of explaining it um you know in revelation chapter three jesus says and he's writing to the church we forget this quite often folks that uh revelation chapter two and three the seven letters to seven churches in asia which is modern day turkey um it's the church that jesus is speaking to it's not the world it's a church and remember revelation 3 and 20 behold i stand at the door and knock and if anybody hears my voice and opens the door i will come in and i will remember the old word i will sup with him i i will i will i will eat with him and and he with me or they with me and that word there describes not like a you know a quick snack or a takeaway meal it is the meal in the day of the day where the people would sit down and really have a prolonged meal they would really enjoy one another's company and enjoy the food on the table and enjoy the experience and savor the moment and be blessed and benefited by the food that they were eating and the company that they were in that is the idea around seeking the lord seeking the lord if you were to seek a career in something if you were to pursue a career in some field or other would you just give it a one-off try or would you commit and devote if you're really seeking this your attention and your energies and your your direction to that of course you would you would do the latter you would go for it you would give your all to to pursuing the career you wanted or if you were in love with somebody and you you wanted to marry them you thought this is the person for me and you were going to seek them would would it be just a one-off and half-hearted or would it be i am going to seek the one i love and find them and hold on to them that's very much the picture in the song of solomon in chapter five so the solomon is a wonderful book in the bible it's a love story which in context as we find it first of all is it it's solomon and uh one of his wives the shunammite but of course i mean it's got to be about jesus and the church and you know why i say that because it wouldn't be in the bible otherwise it would be redundant if it wasn't about jesus and in chapter five

of of song of solomon this solomon has come he's knocked the door um of the house where his wife was and she couldn't be bothered getting up to let him in and off he goes and then oh she's she's brokenhearted and she goes out seeking after him and she meets people in the street to see who are you seeking i'm seeking my my uh my solomon my husband and and she's so desperate to find him that they say what is he more different than anybody else and you know that passage in song solomon where it's she describes him and she says he is altogether lovely he's altogether lovely um that's the kind of cp that's that david is talking about here in psalm 34 where we really want jesus love jesus need jesus desire jesus and we will therefore give our all to seeking him and when we find him and when he finds us uh we'll we'll not want to let him go we'll not want to let him go so the question i have for us today is are we praising the lord uh magnifying uh focusing our attention on him are we actually seeking him tasting and seeing that the lord is good you spend time in jesus presence and spend time in jesus company on your own and with others as well and you will see you will find that the lord is good and blessed is the person who takes refuge in him as the psalm says make much of your relationship with jesus so that's the second thing first thing is praise the lord the second thing is seek the lord in this broken acrostic life of ours the third thing is is fear the lord fear the lord in this broken acrostic life of ours and this is verses 9 down to 16 and this is really helpful because i think what we have in verses 9 to 16 is more specific directions and instructions of what it actually means to to to live out the seeking of the lord it's like an unpacking of what that means specifically not exhaustively um because the whole of the bible is an exhaustive uh explanation and description of what it means to to to seek and define and to live for jesus yeah but verses 9 to 16 give us four specifics that help us to know what it is to fear the lord now fear in the lord in the bible the word fear is it's not a repellent um you know just just now we're here uh in the manse in gerloch and it was selling the manse and and moving into hopefully another property in the village and god has been good he's really with us in this and please keep praying that this will progress i will covet your prayer for that and and we've noticed that there was these wasps started appearing uh in a certain part of the house outside and so in the local shop got this stuff this powder and it just says you know pour this powder into where the wasps are and and it'll repel them and did that and sure enough all these wasps just lying dead in the on a windowsill um it's the fear of the lord is not like that the fear of the lord is is is more like a magnet and i know there's two sides to a magnet but the the the the magnet that draws the metal to itself that's in the bible what fearing god is like now those that that don't know god uh those that rebel against god these folk have got every reason to fear him because he's a just judge but when we have our faith and trust in jesus we have no need to fear him because our judgment has been taken away our judgment has been dealt with once and for all the cross of christ the three hours of darkness that that's the key that is where the just for the unjust jesus took our place god's justice was satisfied and his love was demonstrated and so you know in a way friends if we're christians today judgment day is gone for us as far as that's concerned the fear of the lord that we have is this drawing being drawn to him being an of him being drawn by his awesomeness and that is what it means to fear the lord and what does it look like four things to fear the lord means to desire what is good verse 12 whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days so in other words it means to desire what is good and to desire what is good means to love life to love life see the christian life is not you know this this is a passing through we have this phrase within this uh it's a con um no permanent city and it is just passing through the abraham isaac jacob the patriarchs were described as those who just pitched up tents because they have they weren't building a city their place here was temporary and our lives is temporary but it definitely doesn't mean that we just have we don't enjoy life absolutely not remember in jeremiah 29 and verse 11 where the israelites have been taken into babylon captivity and then they were returned there they were going to be returned in 70 years but jeremiah the prophet god through jeremiah the prophet says settle down where you are build houses get married have family seek the peace of the city because this is where i want you to be for the time being so this is the idea behind desire what is good love life you know love life in the sense of of thanking god for the good things every good and perfect gift comes from our father who is in heaven jesus says in john 10 and 10 um i have come that they may have life in all its fullness and that passage he speaks about himself being the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep so that the the cross and christ dying for our sins is essential and crucial but the whole of our lives is lived in light of that let's enjoy what is good in life redeem our culture i suppose is what it is redeem culture we're redeeming technology technology is often described as as bad and as evil well or used for the evil purposes we are redeeming what is good um and so

feeling the lord means desiring what is good really embracing and enjoying life have the good life um psalmist says in psalm 37 delight yourselves in the lord and he'll give you the desires of your heart he'll give you what is good so delight yourself in god and he'll give you good desires the second thing is this it's speak what is true verse 13 feeling the lord in this broken acrostic life of ours means also speaking what is true keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies the tongue how powerful is the tongue you know in

[20 : 22] proportion to the size of the body the tongue in proportion to the size of the overall body it's probably one of the most powerful muscles that we have we can do so much good with it can't we it's in a james that talks about with the tongue we praise god we praise the lord and with a time we curse people we destroy people we destroy people we dismantle people and david here is saying use his tongue to speak what is true always speak the truth uh the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth and i think especially when it comes to evangelism you know it's interesting these verses uh some of the verses of psalm 34 are included by peter in one peter three when he's talking about evangelism uh he says always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you and amen so speak the truth we must be ready to excuse me to speak what is true about what we believe and we pray god will give us the government the wisdom that we will not be gagged and will not be criminalized for speaking the truth of the gospel always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us but do so what does he say with gentleness and kindness speak the truth but be kind with it speak the truth but be gentle about it and jesus is such a wonderful model who faces every situation that he faced facing some chronically broken and sinful lives and sad lives he always spoke truth into these lives with kindness and gentleness except of course if it was the pharisees who he walked he just hates religious um phariseism he absolutely does and sometimes we need to be hard and harsh speaking the truth challenging people to their face but in the main i would say speaking that speaking what is true always tempered with gentleness and with respect we can win people friends for the gospel um sometimes more so by the way we say what we say desire what is good speak what is true pursue what is right it's the third thing he says in verse 14 turn from evil and do what is good turn from evil and do what is good so pursuing what is what is right means repenting so we're uh we are uh turning towards the lord but we need to turn away from what is dishonoring to him this is what repentance is all about repentance is turning from ways that jesus does not want us to live in and turn it's not a neutrality it's turning to them um it's not a kind of giving up stuff or reforming of our character it's a repenting in a relationship um and the some puritans um used to say keep short accounts with god that's a great phrase that you know in other words when you owe god when we've sinned when we know we've done wrong uh just don't hang on to it tell him about it tell him about it say sorry um remember the blood we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness god is not going to hold anything against us when we confess to him see what happens when and we will this will be the case in this broken acrostic life of ours um if we hold on to sin in our lives uh you know what happens it kind of begins to

weigh us down and then slow us down and eventually it'll just run us down all together into the garage but like when uh uh you know you're a slow leak in a tire um a puncture you know you can go for so long but eventually you can tell the car it's just there's something wrong and it's handling and steering goes all to port and then eventually it actually becomes quite dangerous best to get it fixed sooner rather than later that's the kind of idea here repent i don't see what jesus said when he comes into the repent for the kingdom of heaven is here that word repent is continually keep on that's why jesus and the lord's prayer teaches us to to pray forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us it's just continual pursuing of what is right in the sight of the lord maybe today we've in our christian lives we've actually grown sluggish and become feeling that's heavy and run down maybe it's because there's stuff that we actually need to tell the lord about the stuff we need to open up to him about the stuff that we need to repent of let go forgiveness means to let something go and when god forgives us he gives us the grace to let to let it go we need to stop holding on to um sin turn from it and turn to the savior desiring what is good speaking what is true pursuing what is right and then finally expecting what is best this is still under the fear of the lord or fear of the lord expecting what is best verses 15 to 16 the eyes of the lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry the face of the lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth we need to remember that the lord sees everything and and he will bring about this is what these verses tell us he will bring about what is just and what is right so we

need to expect that today we need to expect that god knows what he's doing that there are wheels that are called the wheels of justice and in our society but in the spiritual realm and although these wheels may turn slowly they they still turn and they will one day of course ultimately you know stop turning and there will be that great time of judgment when everybody in the universe and the world will stand before the judgment seat of christ but in our day and this at this time we need to hold on to justice we need to expect from god he's going to do what is right and just and true he sees he sees and knows in psalm 33 there's a section there that the words for looking and seeing and considering and noticing are repeated and it's a reminder of us to do to us today that god knows what is best and god will do what is right and we need to hold on to this all of us today will be carrying with us some sense of injustice some sense of god what are you doing why are you not acting the psalms are full of it stuff said against us said stuff done to us perhaps and we're struggling and we're racing with with this idea of welfare is the god of justice we need to expect what is best because god is just and he will do what is right and those who who make our broken acrostic life even more broken and who delight in it and who who love it in some ways god will deal with them and god will deal with their sin just as he dealt with your sin and my sin upon the cross we must never forget we are as much in need of the cross as anybody else is expect what is best focus on the cross remember yes god is just and will not the judge of all the earth do what is right and what is righteous justice and truth at the foundation of his throne so that's what it means to fear the lord i think it means desiring what is good speaking what is true pursuing what is right and expecting what is best praise the lord seek the lord fear the lord and finally trust the lord verses 17 to 22 the righteous cry out and the lord hears them he delivers them from all of their troubles the lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit and then so on trust the lord david is saying the lord is close to the brokenhearted trust him the little girl walking along the street it was a rainy day um and i don't know about you but here in gerlap it was chucking it down earlier on it's kind of getting a bit brighter now um such as the weather here walking along the road and splashing in the puddles and there have been a car parked at a certain puddle and deposited a little bit of oil and this little girl looked in the puddle and said to her mom look mom the rainbow's broken because the colors had of course went all over the place the color from the oil look mom the rainbow is broken maybe that's what we feel today that the promises of god the hope given us by god the sense of expectation and aspiration that maybe we had at one time ah maybe it's like somebody's pulled the plug and it's watching it going down the sink in this context david says trust the lord in the brokenness of our lives trust the lord and you know as i was thinking of this i thought well that's back on david sees basically trust the lord but the heading of the psalm says when he pretended to be insane before abimelech who drove him away and he left so was david not not not trusting the lord was he pretending to be mad so that he could get away from abimelech when he should have just trusted god in the situation to to free him well you know i think the answer to that it's not a simple answer but the answer is that trust in the lord means that there are times where he opens doors for us to go through and there are times when he doesn't but whichever context whichever doors are there open or closed our calling is to trust in him so there are times where in the brokenness of our hearts the brokenness of our lives there just seems to be no way out we just trust in him we stay put we have to be where we are but whether our doors open there's of course there's nothing wrong with going through that door you just look at the ministry of jesus and sometimes he stayed in places other times he said if they don't accept the message shake the dust the the dust off your feet you their dust off their walk away you know he just walk away from them the apostle paul was the same in his missionary journeys sometimes he's stuck with a people in corinth and in acts 18 he was told by god specifically stevia other times he just moved on so if there's no hard and fast rule should i stay or should i go as the old song went but what's crucial in in every context where we are is we are looking to the lord for this grace and guidance that we need and that's what i mean that's what trust in the lord means he is in charge even jesus himself in the garden of gethsemane father if it's possible take this cup from me what did he say yet nevertheless not what i will but what your world is so in all our brokenness and all our hardships and all our difficulties trust in the lord and i suppose praising the lord and seeking the lord and feeding the lord is a summary statement of what it means to trust the lord do you think it is kind of the the package trusting unpacked relying on him remembering reminding ourselves that as christians we're actually in the position of victory already you know we're not living our lives hopefully going to be saved one day or hopefully going to get the victory we are living our lives

having been saved by christ on the cross and living as victors day by day by day so that's our broken acrostic lives when we become christians god begins to mend us god begins to take all the pieces of our brokenness and our our sinfulness and our waywardness and our foolishness he begins to take all of this and just piece us together we're in the hands of god we're in the grip of grace um he has glue that will put us together a glue that that will ensure that we will we will be completely restored one day in the new heavens and the new earth and this world for the moment is just that experience of god um helping us putting us together i hope and pray and trust that this will be the case for each every one of us here today let's just pray for a second father in heaven thank you for your inspired word and thank you for your inspired king david we remember that he himself was as broken as we are we thank you that he pointed points us to the king that was broken in no way that was not wayward or foolish king jesus the the the son of david and the king of david as well and our hope and our trust is in him today we pray your blessing upon our lives and upon today and the rest of the week that you will be putting us together again with our hand in your hand and our eyes looking to you we ask all of these things in jesus name amen