

Psalm 34 Series Part 2

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[0 : 00] How are the mighty fallen? This morning we were considering the experience of David following his hour of great glory as he vanquished Goliath.

And though we will maybe just briefly remind ourselves of the train of events that followed that occasion, we won't do so in the detail that we did, in the morning.

But this morning we were considering the catalogue of disasters that befell David following that victory over Goliath. And the reason that we did so was that it was only as we appreciated those events could we appreciate the background to the psalm that we considered and that we will be continuing to consider this evening, Psalm 34.

We read there in the introduction to the psalm of David when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away and he left.

The same occasion as I was commenting that is behind Psalm 56. So, to briefly remind ourselves, following that great victory over Goliath and the trappings of success that brought for David, the popularity, the acclaim, the friendship that was able to be forged with Jonathan, his marriage to the daughter of the king.

[1 : 40] But then things began to go wrong, all really as a result of the insane and perverse jealousy of King Saul.

And so consequently David was in danger of his life and he had to flee from Saul. And eventually he ends up in Gath of all places, the very place from where Goliath, whom he had conquered, came. There, again, his life was in danger and he is able to evade this fate by feigning lunacy. And then he escapes to the caves.

And that brings us to the psalm that he writes, very possibly in those very caves, though we can't state that categorically.

Certainly at that time he pens Psalm 34 in response to these desperate circumstances that he is living and experiencing.

[2 : 47] Well, this morning we explored David's commitment to praise God at all times and in every circumstance, not only at the point of deliverance, but in the very midst of the trial.

But deliverance does come. And what follows in the psalm, what we are going to be considering this evening, verses 4 to 7, is David giving testimony to his deliverance at the hands of the Lord, the manner in which, in his affliction, in his crisis, he experiences God's deliverance.

And so we have, in these following verses, this personal testimony of the psalmist that he shares. In the first instance, perhaps with all those who gathered around him, equally afflicted, but in God's providence is shared with us also, even this evening.

So let's read Psalm 34. We won't read the whole of the psalm, but we'll read from the beginning through to the end of verse 7. And our concern this evening is to consider verses 4 to 7 and this theme of deliverance.

Psalm 34 then, a reading from the beginning. I will extol the Lord at all times. His praise will always be on my lips.

[4 : 15] My soul will boast in the Lord. Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He answered me.

He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant. Their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him.

He saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them. Let's consider then this testimony of David to his deliverance.

And again, for fear of repetition, stressing that we can best appreciate the sentiments expressed and the words that he shares with us as we consider the occasion in which he writes these words.

And as we do consider this experience of David's deliverance and the theme of deliverance that is before us, that we would do so as an encouragement to ourselves.

[5 : 33] Seek the deliverance that God is ever ready to grant us. But also, that it would challenge us and encourage us to share with others the good news concerning this God who delivers, who saves, who redeems, who helps, who lifts up those who seek His help.

There are five things I want to notice or share with you to highlight in these verses, verses four to seven, concerning deliverance.

And we'll go through them one by one. I won't say what they all are at the beginning, but you know beforehand that there are five, and so you can be ticking them off one by one.

That will give you an idea if we're nearly coming to the end or if we've still got a long way to go. First of all then, the first thing I want to notice here in these verses is the need for deliverance, the need for deliverance.

And two words stand out in identifying the need that David had of deliverance. Two certainly that I want to draw to your attention. First of all, the word troubles in verse six.

[6 : 45] He saved him out of all his troubles. David was experiencing, as we very much know, especially as we were considering this morning, he is experiencing tremendous trouble and difficulty and crisis and tragedy in his life.

So this reference to troubles speaks of his need for deliverance, but also in verse four, David speaks of his fears. He delivered me from all my fears.

Troubles and fears. Now, we don't need to dwell on the troubles he was facing because we have done so in some detail already today.

But what of his fears? This is not the same word, it's worth just noting, as the word that is used in verse seven. In our English versions, the same verb is used in verse seven to speak of those who fear God.

But this is a different word. The word in verse seven is that word that speaks of that deep respect and reverence for God. But the word that David uses in verse four, where he speaks of being delivered from his fears, is really a word that perhaps could be best understood in English as terrors.

[8 : 06] That which gripped him with fear and terror and trepidation. And David's testimony is that he was delivered from those fears. So, this need for deliverance is deliverance from his troubles and deliverance from his fears.

Now, we might ask the question, or I'm going to pose the question, given that this is a poetic composition, are these two words simply to be understood as synonymous?

Different ways of expressing the same truth. This is something that is often done by the Psalms. and it could be so. However, I think we can draw a distinction between the two words and I hope helpfully as we would apply these truths to ourselves.

I think the troubles that David speaks of are those objective circumstances that he is enduring. The threat to his life from King Saul.

the loss of the friendship and fellowship of his family and loved ones at this time of flight.

[9 : 17] The loss of all the privileges of the palace and the physical difficulties he is enduring, the poverty and the lack even of basic necessities.

These are the troubles he is facing. But the fears, it seems to me, is rather a reference to what troubles produce in us. The troubles produce in us a mental anguish.

They produce in us stress and concern and worry and depression and troubles produce these things in us and this in a sense amplifies the problem that we have.

Not only the troubles but what they produce in us in our experience. trouble and affliction attack us we might say in a two-pronged way.

The trouble itself and the distress it commonly produces. Indeed, often and I wonder if this is true in your experience often the distress that trouble produces is much more intense than the trouble itself.

[10 : 27] I think that's often the experience of many. Well, this is where David was and David stood in need of deliverance.

I wonder if we know the half of it. We know some of the troubles he was enduring perhaps in some detail but no doubt there were other troubles that he was facing but what we can be sure of because he himself grants us this testimony is that he was delivered from all of his troubles.

there it is very clearly stated by David he saved me out of all my troubles he delivered me from all my fears and that's particularly I think helpful for us.

We might say well I'm not in the situation that David was in and thank God that we are not. Maybe your troubles are different maybe they might appear of less significance than the troubles that David was enduring maybe they're very different in their nature and yet the testimony of David applies to us because David's assurance to us is that he was delivered from all his troubles from all his fears whatever they were regardless of the nature of them and this is the confidence that we too can have as a God's people.

so many troubles that we need deliverance from. Spiritually of course we recognize that our sin is a great problem it produces tremendous trouble for us great distress well we can be delivered from the guilt and the burden of our sin as we would put our trust in Jesus but there are of course other troubles that afflict us we're not spared all manner of troubles as Christians there can be problems in our family we can have relationships that break down and all the pain that is associated with that we can be the victims of the jealousy and the opposition or rejection of others as was experienced by David but perhaps in other circumstances the victims of injustice and oppression of one kind or another financial problems problems and difficulties problems problems at work problems at home problems with this body that we have that breaks down and doesn't work properly and produces all manner of pain for us for some much more intense than for others all kinds of troubles all manner of fears we stand in need of deliverance we stand in need of help we stand in need of one who can help us in our many and varied troubles this is the first this is the first thing that we notice here in these words of the psalmist the need for deliverance but secondly we find in these words the cry of the trouble the cry of the one who is in need of deliverance there is little that David can do to solve his problems they are of a magnitude that goes beyond his capacity to bring a solution but there are two things that he can and must do he can't solve his problems he can't deliver himself but there are two things he must do and these are identified in the psalm in this part of the psalm first of all he must recognize his need and concurrently or as a result of that he must cry out for help these are two things that he can do and two things that he must do and they are the things that precisely he does do he recognizes his condition he recognizes his weakness he recognizes that he is vulnerable and fragile and lacks the resources to deliver himself and so see how he describes himself here the one who had been the great hero of Israel how does he describe himself in verse 6 this poor man called this poor man called he recognizes his condition he recognizes he is weak and vulnerable and fragile and he cries out for help and of course

[15:17] David is not alone we are all men and women boys and girls we are poor men poor women we are weak we are vulnerable we are incapable of solving the many problems that we have but one of the great difficulties that sometimes places an obstacle to our deliverance is that we are too proud to admit this reality maybe some even if they were to hear this description of the human condition that we are but poor men at best some might respond well what a miserable message how lacking in confidence in the human condition and yet that pride that would rebel against recognizing who we are is the very obstacle that would preclude us from securing the help that we need David recognizes that he is but a poor man and in recognizing that he calls out to God for help and so we must do the same as we recognize our condition as we recognize our need as we recognize our sinfulness as we recognize the problems that surround us some of which we are maybe guilty of having created and others that we are victims of the sins of others or the circumstances of life that have presented us with difficulties and problems we must cry out for help and this cry of course must be directed to the one who is able to help

David directs his cry he doesn't cry in the dark hoping that somebody out there might listen somebody out there might be able to help no his cry is directed I sought the Lord and he answered me this poor man called and the Lord heard him he directs his cry to the one who is able and willing to help him so as well as the need for deliverance there is also the cry of the one who is troubled but then we also have in these verses the answer that is received by David and there are I think three verbs that David uses to present to us the answer that he received we can notice as we go through the verses

I sought the Lord and he answered me in what way well he delivered me from all my fears then in verse 6 this poor man called and the Lord heard him and then in verse 7 once again he speaks of being delivered and in verse 6 of being saved so different verbs that are used by David to describe the answer that he receives to the cry that he makes I suppose if we were to consider them in

logical order the first one and a very necessary one to highlight is this verb heard this poor man called and the Lord heard him of course if the Lord doesn't hate us then he certainly won't answer us but David's experience is that the God to whom he cries is a God who hears him and maybe very particularly because the one who calls recognizes that he is a poor man this poor man called and the Lord heard him our God is a God who hears us our God is a God who hears us very particularly when we come humbly to him his ears are particularly attentive to the cry of the one who recognizes his need and his poverty and his inability to solve his own problems we think of the words that David shares with us in Psalm 138 though the Lord is on high he looks upon the lowly but the proud he knows from afar he hears very clearly the cry of the lowly so it was in the experience of David but the Lord not only hears

David assures us that the Lord also delivers and saves here again it's very likely that these words that David uses should be understood as synonymous just different words to describe the same reality delivered by God saved by God but perhaps we could imagine that they do respond to the two aspects of trouble or affliction that we had noticed earlier the trouble itself and the distress that it produces and in David's experience both of these things are attended to by God he receives an answer in these two regards God is pleased to deliver him from the actual objective trouble that he is in but also to relieve him and to deliver him from the distress that he is suffering and of course these two things are inextricably linked and go together

I think it is worth noticing and of practical I hope help to notice that the deliverance that David is thanking God for and giving testimony to is not the deliverance that is immediate or even complete at the point at which he is giving thanks remember that he writes this psalm while he is still a fugitive there is a sense in which he has already known something of God's deliverance he hasn't been found by Saul he hasn't been killed by Saul he managed to escape the king of Gath who it would seem would have had as his intention to kill David and these things have not befallen him so there is a sense in which he is enjoying the deliverance of God but he is still a fugitive he is still effectively an outlaw he is by no means somebody who could say well I have been fully and wholly delivered from all my troubles and yet though that is his condition though these are circumstances he is still able to give thanks for the measure of deliverance that he has enjoyed and I am sure in faithful expectation of the full deliverance that in God's good time he will experience and I think that is something that we do well to ponder on are we prepared to praise God for sparks of gracious deliverance or comfort we are human beings and of course when we cry to

[22 : 41] God seeking deliverance it's our desire and that is entirely reasonable and understandable and natural and human our desire is that God would graciously and immediately and miraculously deliver us from all the trouble that we endure but of course we know in our experience that is seldom the manner in which God works and so again I ask the question are we prepared to identify to give thanks for those sparks of a gracious deliverance or comfort perhaps to illustrate I am reminded of one occasion this was several years ago in Roskeen and I was visiting a fellow in Milnafua some of you who know Roskeen or Alnes will know that Milnafua is quite a what shall we say a well known neighborhood with lots of problems and social difficulties there but I was visiting a fellow there who was a Christian he had become a Christian as an adult and he had terminal cancer and he would soon die

I think following the visit perhaps a few weeks he lived and then he died and his body was racked with the effects of the cancer that he was experiencing and one of the effects was often a temperature that would soar and on the occasion that I was there he was in pain and very much a victim if you wish of these soaring temperatures which of course were being controlled in one way or another but what I most recall is that while we were conversing and his lips were very dry again because of this same situation his wife or somebody in the home I can't remember who brought him a glass of water so here is this man he's dying of cancer he was relatively young probably in his 50s if I remember rightly and he's given a glass of water you say well that's no great no great thing and he took a sip of this water and the word that he then pronounced having sipped just a tiny bit of water these were his words gift of God gift of God here is this man he's dying of cancer he's surrounded by those he loves and that he knows he in all probability will soon be separated from he's enduring physical hardship and pain and yet this spark of

God's grace delivered through the agency of a loved one and he is able to identify and to give thanks to God for this gift I think there is much of this in David's words in these psalms here he is languishing in a cave still in danger of his life in desperate circumstances and yet he is able to sing

and to give testimony to God's deliverance and I think also in our experience God's deliverance can be immediate of course God is able to grant us such deliverance if he so chooses but often his deliverance will be partial or delayed at least delayed from our perspective it's a function of the nature of the need and the purposes of God that will determine the manner of his deliverance there is of course deliverance that we can be assured from the promises of scripture that is immediate so for example that great need that we have of deliverance from the burden of sin and guilt is immediate for the confessing sinner we think of the words of the hymn the vilest offender that truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives but deliverance from persecution or deliverance from ill health or deliverance from a thorny problem at work or in the family may be partial or delayed or delayed again from our perspective and indeed in some cases may only be fully experienced at death but in the life to come but deliverance it remains so we have here in these verses the answer received but we have also fourthly the result of the deliverance in verse 5 those who look to him are radiant their faces are never covered with shame what is the result of this deliverance that David is enjoying is it simply the removal of the trouble or the solving of the problem by no means in David's testimony he speaks of this radiance that he is able to experience and enjoy as he is delivered by God those who look to him those who are delivered by him those who seek his help are radiant what does this mean what is being said here how are we to understand this expression of David those who look to him are radiant their faces are never covered with shame

I think there's two or three things we might mention one I think that's the predominant thought but one that I would suggest is the idea of vindication I think especially when David here speaks of their faces never being covered with shame and I'm drawn to think of that occasion following which he writes this psalm where he's before the king of Gath and he's feigning lunacy if ever there would be a picture of something so shameful and humiliating it's difficult to imagine something greater than this and yet he is able to testify those who look to him are radiant their faces are never covered with shame there is vindication for those who cry to the Lord but perhaps the predominant theme in this word those who look to him are radiant is the theme of joy indeed the same word is used by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 60 and verse 5 and there we find very clearly that the idea behind it is very much that of joy let's just read that verse then you will look and be radiant your heart will throb and swell with joy we don't have time to consider the context of these words but the meaning of being radiant is very clearly presented to us there your heart throbbing with joy indeed I was noticing in the sing psalms the word joy is used rather than the word radiant and so this is very much the dominant idea that is being presented those who look to him are radiant they are joyful in the experience of God's deliverance but as we consider this radiance of which

David speaks surely there is also the theme of glory the reflected glory of those who commune with God as with Moses of old on his descent from Mount Sinai he was radiant from his encounter with the living and true God and perhaps even more significantly what we are told in the New Testament that it is the set and fixed intention of the Lord for his people that they be radiant that they reflect the glory of God we've read in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and we simply repeat the reading of the final verse and we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit the result of this deliverance joyful enjoyment of the deliverance the opportunity to reflect the glory of

[30 : 51] God to others the deliverance or salvation the Lord would have his people enjoy and experience is full and broad in its extent we are not only forgiven but justified not only cleansed but imputed with the righteousness of Christ not only healed but restored not only delivered from bondage but granted freedom not only freed from death but granted life in all its fullness the result of this deliverance is broad and deep and great and as we consider just one final thought concerning this radiance that David speaks of is it not so very clear that to speak of a face that is radiant is to speak of something that is visible to others or by others and is indeed to be enjoyed by others so it should be with us the Lord shines his face upon us not only that we might enjoy the warmth of his countenance but that we might reflect his glory and splendor and love to others but then finally we have also the scope of this deliverance now in a measure this is something we've already been considering but just a couple of final thoughts in reference to verse 7 the final verse of this section that we're considering the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them in this verse

David speaks of the angel of the Lord encamping around those who fear him now the identification of this character or personality described as the angel of the Lord has occupied the attention of commentators and theologians and Christians across the centuries and it's not my intention on this occasion to touch on this matter but what is clear in this verse is that the angel of the Lord is identified as participating in the deliverance and care of God's people in two ways first of all permanently this deliverance in its scope is permanent because you see David having shared his experience of God's deliverance now speaks of his present experience and indeed of what he is sure will be his future experience the angel of the Lord encamps present tense he's not saying I cried to him in the past and he heard me in a moment of great crisis he was willing to intervene no he says that this is the permanent activity of God in his favor he encamps around those who fear him his care is permanent but also it is thorough he encamps around those who fear him your back is covered also and again when we think of David fleeing from Saul how comforting it must have been for him to lay hold of this truth that the angel of the Lord encamps around about those who fear him and though his enemies would seek to approach from all the angles possible and seek by subterfuge and all manner of cunning to grab hold of him and to do him harm yet this is his confidence that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them that this would be a great comfort for us the Lord is with us many of you perhaps have read the book by Francis Schaeffer entitled the God who is there well the experience of the psalmist is of the God who is here of the God who is with me and by my side of the God who encamps round about his people so then as we draw things to a close and briefly recap David as he considers and as he praises God for his deliverance he identifies and recognizes that great need that he had he speaks of the cry that he made to the Lord of the answer that he received of the result of the deliverance in his own experience and of the scope permanent and thorough of God's care and protection of him well may we be of those who recognize our need for deliverance who cry out to the one able and willing to deliver who experience the reality of an answer received may we also with the psalmist radiate the joy and the glory of God to others in the assurance that our God is with us and encamps round about us always let us pray that vnia and others who are and or who are in the way and they will actually they in the how I go and love and God that