

# THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE

## PART 12 (1)

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### PSALM 34

(A Psalm of David)

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.*

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.*

I propose to deal with this *Psalm* in two parts. **Verses 1 to 10** being the first section we will deal with in this study, and **verses 11 to 22** in the next study.

It is said that this *Psalm* was written by David following the occasion when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech. When he was in real danger of being killed, David pretended to be mentally unstable in order to save his life. The story of this can be found in **1 Samuel 21**, but Abimelech is not the person referred to, it was Achish king of Gath. However, he is called here Abimelech in the *Psalm*, because that was the common name of the Philistine kings. All the versions agree with the title as it stands in our version.

David actually adjusted his behaviour to save his life. I think that it should be stressed here that although he deceived the King by what he did, David did not commit a sin. He told no lies; he just faked being someone who was insane.

It was therefore under the guise of feigning madness that he accomplished his goal, which was to save his own life. To do something under the guise of one thing to accomplish another was not new to David, for in the first book of Samuel 16 we read that following the rejection of Saul as King over the nation of Israel.

*1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."*

*2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'*

*3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."*

*4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"*

*5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

On the instruction of the Lord, Samuel was sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as King in place of Saul. However it was under the guise of offering up the sacrifice, which was a good thing, that God was able to point out to Samuel who to anoint as King. Nothing wrong was done, for under the umbrella of the sacrifice God accomplished His purpose. No lie was told when Samuel went to sacrifice to the Lord, for he instructed Jesse to bring his sons to the sacrifice, which was performed. One good act was done under the pretext of another good act.

Sin is committed, if under the pretext of doing something one intends to escape from the discovery of a wrong that has been done.

Take the sin of David with Bathsheba. Let us note **2 Sam 11 verses 14 & 15** where we read:

*In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so that he will be struck down and die."*

In one instance under the pretext of madness he does not sin, and yet under the pretext of sending Uriah to the front line of the battle he did sin. I think we need to be very careful to identify the motive behind what we do. If we identify the motive behind Samuel being instructed by the Lord to go and sacrifice at Bethlehem and invite Jesse and his sons, no wrong was committed, neither did any deceit take place. It was the same when David faked madness, there was no evil motive behind what he did.

When we consider his action against Uriah, who thought it was an honour to represent the King on the front line of a battle, we have to note that behind this decision of David there was a hidden agenda, he intended evil against Uriah to cover up his own sin.

During the past two years we have distributed videos about Jesus to this community. It has been our good intent that the purpose behind the distribution was that people would accept the Lord as their Saviour. My advice therefore after considering what David did, is that each one of us is to make sure that what is done is done with the ultimate purpose of accomplishing something good, and that good should always come out of what is undertaken.

I want at this stage to come now to give some thought to what David wrote in some of the first 10 verses of this *Psalms*. Let us note.

**1. HIS RESOLUTION. Verse 1 & 2** *"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad".*

It is very interesting that one of the shades of meaning, which is not reflected in the K.J. or the N.I.V. is that the word **'Bless'** means to **'Congratulate'**. David is saying that he will show his appreciation to the Lord at all times. It is not easy to say something like this especially when some of the issues in life are against you, and you are passing through some difficult patch.

It is not always easy to show your appreciation in circumstances that are not conducive to feeling good. We have to admit that situations can militate against us giving praise, for it is not straightforward at all. The hardest thing to do is to offer praise to someone, when you need to be lifted up in your own spirit by a word of encouragement.

We have to admit that it is far easier to show gratitude when you are feeling grateful, but it is not so easy when you do not feel like giving praise, because some situation has affected your mood.

David resolved that no matter how he was feeling he was going to show his appreciation to the Lord at all times, which means in all situations, and through what ever circumstance he was experiencing personally, he resolved in his own mind to bless the Lord!

I think Paul and Silas had resolved to do the same, for we read in **Acts 16 v 25** *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them”*.

Whist in prison they prayed and sang to the Lord. Put in prison for their faith in Christ; put through hardship because they had been used to do a good deed to a girl who was a ‘problem case’.

They never bemoaned the fact that they were in prison; they saw it as a situation in which to praise the Lord. Both could have been very negative and complained to the Lord because of where they had been put. It seems to me that they had resolved that no matter what happened to them they were going to sing praises to the Lord. It is obvious that this is something which can be done, but the resolve has to be there to do it.

It is hard to praise the Lord when things go wrong.

It is hard to praise the Lord when the battles long.

It is hard to praise the Lord when you have no song.

It is hard, but! Remember it is to Him that you belong.

If your head is bowed down low all you see will be the ground.

If your head is lifted high it is then you see the sky.

Try to see beyond the clouds for the sun is always there.

Open up your heart in prayer for the Lord is always there.

David said *“I will bless, (congratulate) the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”* Then we have.

**2. HIS REQUEST. Verse 3** *“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together”*.

Notice that David believed in enlarging the Lord, and wanted the people to be together in exalting the God of his salvation. He did not want to be the lone voice; He did not want to be singled out as the only one who praised. His heart’s desire was that all will be involved in magnifying and exalting the Lord.

If you look at a word under a magnifying glass what you see is the same word but it has become enlarged, it’s the same word but it has been magnified.

On my computer I have a tool which can enlarge or reduce the size of a word; it is the same word but looks bigger because it has been enlarged. We can magnify the Lord. However we cannot add to the Lord’s being or character in any way, but what we can do is make known the ways of the Lord so that there is an added dimension, we see the Lord in a new way. By listing the works and accomplishments of the Lord we actually are magnifying Him.

**3. HIS RECOLLECTIONS. Verses 4 to 10.** I will not quote the whole section of verses here because of how many there are, so I will highlight certain ones as we proceed.

It is clear to me that David moves into recollection mode. He is recalling the instances in which the Lord had been a help to him. It has been said that to go into recollection mode is a sign of old age. I do not think this is always the case, sometimes it does good to remind oneself of the times and occasions the Lord has come to our aid.

In all seven verses David recalls something to pass on to others. In **verse 4** he says *“I sought the Lord”*. In **verse 6** *“This poor man cried and the Lord heard him”*. In the remaining verses he is stating so much about the Lord that he had personally discovered.

I want here to say something relating to **verse 5**, which says (quoting the N.I.V.) *“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame”*. The K.J. says *‘lightened’* the N.I.V. *‘radiant’* another meaning is *‘brightened’*.

David had discovered that whoever looked to the Lord experienced something which was a great help. Their lives were lightened or brightened, and they became radiant as a result of their contact with the Lord. It is therefore good to look to the Lord for we find in Him.

#### **4. SAFETY.**

As long as you have the Lord with you are in a place of safety. It tells us in **Mark 4 verses 38 to 40**. *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”* Then they looked to Him for.

#### **5. SHELTER.** Listen to these verses from other *Psalms*.

**Psalms 27 v 5** *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*

**Psalms 31 v 20** *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

They looked to Him for.

#### **6. SECURITY.**

**Psalms 121** is a poem in which one is given an assurance that all is well when you are trusting in the Lord.

If we consider the N.T. with regard to ‘looking to Him’, we discover that people looked to the Lord for

#### **7. SUSTENANCE.**

**Mark 8 v 4** says:

4 *His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”*

5 *“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven”, they replied.*

6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so.

7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.

Finally they looked to Him for.

## **8. SIGNS.**

### **Mark 13 v 4:**

4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5 ¶ And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils;

8 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterwards the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

9 About four thousand men were present.

and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

From these verses we have been able to see how David resolved to praise the Lord during every season of life he passed through. He requested the people to join him in magnifying the Lord, and then how he was able to reflect on what the Lord had done for him and others.