

THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE

PART 12 (2)

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PSALM 34

(A Psalm of David)

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.*

In this study we shall be considering the remaining verses of **Psalm 34** and as we do, I will highlight certain matters for specific comment. It will be good however to remember what David said in the first section that we looked at, when he stressed that, irrespective of the season in life he is passing through, he will “*bless the Lord at all times*”. Nothing as far as he was concerned was going to stop him making an audible expression of praise to the Lord.

Looking at the remaining verses of the *Psalm* let us note in **verse 11**.

1. HE CALLS.

David says “Come”. He sends out the invitation to come and give attention to what he wants them to be instructed in. He calls them to assemble to receive instruction on a particular aspect of God. It is a call to be taught how to respect and to reverence the Lord. David says “*I will teach you the **fear** of the Lord*”.

The word ‘**fear**’ is usually associated with something bad. **Fear** is a phobia that grips people so tight that it is difficult to break free from it. People of all ages and all types of background have ‘**fears**’. There is **fear** of the unknown; the **fear** of places; **fear** of spaces; **fear** of sickness; the **fear** of death; **fear** of the future, and the **fear** of loneliness.

It has to be stated quite clearly here that David has no intention of teaching people how to get griped by a phobia that is going to destroy their lives and lifestyle. The meaning of the word **fear** here is ‘reverence and respect’. Therefore, his aim and purpose is to teach the people how to reverence and respect the Lord, not to **fear** him in a bad sense.

Back in **verse 9** David says “*Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing*”. To **fear** the Lord is to our advantage, not disadvantage. Having respect and regard for the Lord means that the commandments of the Lord will be accepted and adhered to. David does not want to teach the people that the Lord is a tyrant, and if you do not obey Him you will suffer some severe catastrophe. He does not want to inject a negative **fear** into the people. His intent is to show the people the advantage of knowing the Lord so intimately that one’s love for Him exceeds what it had been previously.

This call therefore is not to be taught to **fear** the Lord in a bad sense, but to have reverence and respect for Him, as one’s creator, redeemer, deliverer and sustainer. To have reverence for the one who “*upholds all things by the word of His power*”.

Psalms 89 v 7 says “*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*”.

The next thing David does in **verses 12 to 14** is.

2. HE COUNSELS.

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

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

What sound advice we receive from David here. He deals first of all with the **tongue** and **lips**. I have made reference to the **tongue** and **lips** on various occasions when ministering on God's word. It will however do us no harm to consider once again what the Bible has to say about them.

I notice from my online Bible that there are 126 references to the '**tongue** and **lips**' in the scriptures. The above are a few of them.

2 Samuel 23 v 2 *The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.*

Job 6 v 24 *Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.*

Job 6 v 30 *Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?*

Job 13 v 19 *Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.*

Job 27 v 4 *My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.*

Psalms 15 v 3 *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour*

Psalms 120 v 2 *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*

Psalms 126 v 2 *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.*

All of the above scriptural references are found in the Old Testament, so let us now note some from the New Testament.

James 1 v 26 *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

James 3 v 5 *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*

James 3 v 6 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.

James 3 v 8 *But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

1 Peter 3 v 10 *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

The counsel of David in relation to the **tongue** and **lips** has to be taken note of because he knows the damage that can be caused by the **tongue** being loose and the **lips** unrestrained.

Verse 11 is connected to **verse 12** because David sees the advantages of the properly controlled life. He counsels the person to depart from evil, which is **destructive**, and to seek peace and pursue it, which is **constructive**.

Psalms 52 is given the following title. *For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech.*

We do not have the time to consider this *Psalm*; however when the whole *Psalm* is read it soon becomes clear that Doeg committed evil by the use of the **tongue**, and sought the destruction of David by advising the King of where he was. Doeg sought to destroy; he did not seek peace. By betraying David he pursued an evil cause, and ended up the worse off for it, which is the ultimate end of all who seek evil rather than good.

Let us take heed to the counsel of David and be very careful how we use the **tongue**. Use it rather to praise the Lord, use it to encourage, use it to advantage someone, use it to lift - not to demolish. Use it to introduce people to the Lord Jesus - not to drive them away. With words of kindness you can influence people in a good way causing them to desire what you have.

Further in **verses 15 to 22**.

3. HE CONSIDERS.

In these verses he considers so many things. He refers in **verses 15 & 16** to the **'Eyes'**, the **'Ears'** and the **'Face'** of the Lord. He highlights those who the Lord is **for** and who the Lord is **against**. Notice that the Lord is **for the righteous**, but **against the unrighteous**.

I believe that **verse 16** should be taken very seriously, because it states that the Lord will cut off the remembrance of those that do evil from the earth. There is nothing lasting about the works of those that do evil. I know that at the time when evil acts are being committed, the minds of the people living at that time are filled with hatred and disgust, but eventually no one wants to have anything to do with people who have committed acts of evil. Think of some of the people who have performed acts of wickedness against humanity, there are no lasting monuments erected in memory of them.

Think now of the people who have lived righteously and done good works. There are many institutions, hospitals, orphanages all erected in memory of righteous people and bearing their name. Think too of the many men and women who left their places of birth to go and stay in countries that God had put in their heart. We cannot remove their name or their accomplishments from of the face of the earth; they will be remembered because the seed they sowed is still producing the fruit of righteousness.

No one wants a Hitler, a Stalin or even a Lenin; no one wants a 'moors murderer', or a 'Gloucester Street' serial killer. **Psalms 1 v 6** says *"For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish"*. How very true these words are.

We are asked to consider something which is very comforting to us in **verses 17 to 22**. It is that the Lord **'Hears'**, **'Delivers'** and **'Saves'**.

Spurgeon says *"Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment"*.

Notice in **verse 19** that ‘afflictions’ is plural: “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous*”, whereas in **verse 21** ‘evil’ is in the singular: “*Evil shall slay the wicked*”.

‘Hints to the Village Preacher’ from **Spurgeon** says “*Wickedness, is its own executioner, illustrated by scriptural cases, by history, by the lost in hell*”.

One singular act of evil is sufficient to slay the wicked. The evil act they commit becomes ‘self destructive’.

However, it is good to know that no matter how many afflictions the righteous suffer, the Lord delivers out of them all.

David had probably considered what happened to Job. He knew the afflictions that Job suffered, but he was delivered out of them all. It is a good thing to give some consideration to situations that are recorded in scripture, for by observing the lives of the righteous and the wicked the conclusion we come up with is the same as that of David, who could say at the end of his composition of this *Psalm*.

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