

## PSALM 34

## A SONG AND A SERMON

“A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.” Of this event, which reflects no good credit upon David’s memory, we have a brief account in 1 Samuel 21:1-15; he pretended to be a crazy man in the presence of the Philistine king Abimelech (also called Achish), in order to preserve his safety and his liberty in an enemy land – where he never should have gone in the first place. Although the gratitude of the Psalmist prompted him to thankfully record the goodness of the Lord in giving him such an undeserved deliverance from the hands of the Philistines, yet he does not weave in any of the incidents of the escape into this Psalm; rather, he only dwells upon the grand fact that the Lord had heard him in the hour of his peril. From his example, let us learn to not parade our sins before others – as certain vain-glorious persons do when they seem as proud of their sins as experienced military veterans are of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool in the Philistine king’s presence with singular dexterity, but he was not so great a fool that he sang and boasted of his own acts of folly.

If we hope to spend eternity praising God, it is only proper that we should spend much of our time here on earth in this work (verses 1-10). The Lord never said to anyone, “Seek ye me in vain.” David’s prayers helped to silence his fears; and many others besides him have looked unto the Lord by faith and prayer, and it has wonderfully revived and comforted them. When we look to the world, we are perplexed and at a loss. But looking to Jesus secures to us life and salvation, and all things needful thereunto. “This poor man” (verse 6) – whom no one looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern – was still welcome to the throne of grace; the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. Even Jehovah’s holy angels minister to the saints, and stand for them against the powers of darkness. By taste and sight, we make discoveries and have

**Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:**

*This is “a Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.” In the original Hebrew, the wording does not convey the idea that the Psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Abimelech; rather, it seems that David wrote it in order to commemorate that event. It is a good thing for us to mark our mercies with well-carved memorials, for God deserves our best handiwork. In remembrance of the special peril from which he had been rescued on that remarkable occasion, David took great pains with this Psalm; he wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second of the alphabetical Psalms, with the 25<sup>th</sup> being the first.*

*The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of verse 10, when the Psalmist – having expressed his praise to God – turns to directly address men. The first ten verses are a song, and the last twelve are a sermon.*



enjoyment of the Lord's goodness; we take notice of it, and take the comfort of it. He causes all who trust in Him to become truly blessed. In regard to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of spiritual life. And as to this earthly life, they shall have what is necessary from the hand of God. Those who trust in themselves, and think their own efforts to be sufficient for them, shall suffer lack; but those who trust in the Lord shall be fed.



The Psalmist, in verses 11-22, proceeds to give advice to his audience – particularly the young – to set out in life by learning the fear of the Lord, if they desire true comfort on earth and everlasting happiness in heaven. Those will be the most happy who begin the soonest to serve such a good and gracious Master! Everyone has a desire to be happy, even though their life on earth consists of only a few days that are full of trouble. But how many persons truly go about seeking their happiness in the things which the Psalmist here lays out? Alas! Few have these things in their thoughts. True religion will create a diligent watchfulness over the heart and over the tongue. It is not enough to merely not do hurt; we must endeavor to be useful, and to live to some purpose; we must seek peace and pursue it; we must be willing to deny ourselves a great deal for the sake of peace.

It is the constant practice of real believers, when they are in distress, to cry unto God; and it is their constant comfort to know that He hears them (verse 17). The righteous are taken under the special protection of the Lord – even though they do have their share of crosses in this world, and there are many who hate them. Yes, the afflictions of the righteous are many. But no matter what troubles befall them, not one of them shall hurt their souls; for God preserves them from sinning when they are under them.

We might not have expected to meet with anything that speaks of the Lord Jesus here; and yet we cannot close our study of this Psalm without observing the perfect fulfillment, in the New Testament, of the 20<sup>th</sup> verse: “He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” In John 19:36, we read that when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with the Savior, they did not break His! He was under the protection of this promise. It was He Who was foreshadowed in the picture of the Passover-lamb, which the Lord specifically required to be without any broken bones. And since the promises of Scriptures – such as this one – are made good to Christ, they are sure to all His people as well!

*Lord Jesus, we pray for Your special grace to be given to parents, as they teach their children in Your ways. Enable them to communicate the faith and fear of God to their sons and daughters, and to inculcate upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety! Amen.*