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Singing about the Fear of the Lord; Psalm 34
CEFC
8.9.15

Introduction – David's theme here is the fear of the Lord. In the first 10 verses he brings out the accompanying graces of fearing the Lord and he calls upon us as believers to fear the Lord. In the remainder of this psalm he teaches us about the fear of the Lord. In Psalm 33, fear of the Lord, was one of three ways in which that psalm calls us to rightly relate to God. Of those 3 ways in which we worship the Lord, the fear of the Lord is the one we grapple with the most. Psalm 34 follows Psalm 33 by giving us insight and instruction in the fear of the Lord.

It's interesting that here David does not seek to define the fear of the Lord so much as to describe it. He's not providing us with a lexical definition; he's describing for us what it looks like and how it functions. In terms of application to our Christian life, our interest is not so much in being able to define it as being able to implement it. That's what Psalm 34 enables us to do.

We know the fear of the Lord is not a frightening fear that causes panic or scare like an unsettling noise in the middle of the night. We know it's not a fear arising from evil or malicious intent because God is not evil or malicious. We also know it's not the kind of fear that sometimes overcomes us when we succumb to hypothetical, worrisome situations, which superimpose upon God qualities that are not His nature. That kind of fear and worry is to be met with faith in our Father who is watching over us, caring for us, always faithful to us, and always working things for our good. So what is this fear of the Lord, or better, what does it look like? That's where Psalm 34 instructs and helps us.

- I. How the Fear of the Lord and the Goodness of the Lord Work Together (vv1-10)
 - a. We learn in these verses that the fear of the Lord is actually attached to the goodness of the Lord, which makes this kind of fear totally different than all other fears. Rather than arising from a perceived or skewed view of God that questions His faithfulness, the fear of the Lord is actually connected to a confidence in the goodness of God. Let's see how David makes this connection.
 - i. First, David declares his constant praise to the Lord, and then issues a call for us to join Him in this exaltation of God.

1. I will bless, I will praise, my soul boasts in the Lord. That's what the humble do, they do not praise self or another, they praise the Most High. And that kind of humble worship of God makes us glad!
 2. Humble, praise to the Lord is constant and ongoing, and it yields gladness. Worship of the Lord makes glad worshippers. You've heard the saying "Don't worry-Be happy." David would say, "Do Worship-Be Glad!"
- ii. Then David takes a step back and tells us what caused him to praise the Lord continually. Gladness comes from worshipping, but what brought forth this constant, ongoing, humble worship of God? It is the goodness of God.
1. V4 – David was caught up in ungodly fear, and he turned to the Lord, which is what we have to do when ungodly fear grips our hearts, and God answered and delivered him from his fears.
 - a. These fears are nothing like the fear of the Lord. The fear of man, fear of the hypothetical, fear from worry are not of the Lord. They paralyze and cripple, whereas fear of the Lord delivers and brings life. That's what v5 means. Those who look to their fears are distraught and those worries etch themselves on our face, but those who look to Him away from their fears are radiant and their faces show it.
 2. So David says in v6, that's what happened to me. Read. He saved me from all those things that caused me so much fear. He is so good, therefore His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- iii. Now he takes one further step backward in v7 and shows us what's going on behind the scenes. I will praise Him continually because He answers, He delivers, He saves. He is good. He is good because "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them."
1. All of the goodness in vv4-6 that yields all the praise of vv1-3 is coming from the special relationship between God and His people – they fear Him and He encamps around them.

2. So what do we learn about the fear of the Lord in these verses? The fear of the Lord does not guarantee the absence of other fears, but it does say when those other fears are present, I will remember the presence of the Lord who encamps around me. I will cry to Him, and He will deliver, and I know He will deliver because He is good.
 3. Fear of the Lord turns to the Lord when other fears are present until the Lord makes them absent. And then it humbly praises Him and is glad!
- b. Now what David says in vv8-10 is a call for us to see for ourselves.
- i. Read. Turn to Him, take refuge in Him, that's what the fear of the Lord does. And when you do you and you will be blessed. We will never disprove the goodness of God!
 - ii. We who fear the Lord will not only be blessed because He encamps around us to deliver us, but He provides for those in His camp! Vv9-10
 - iii. So what does the fear of the Lord do? What does it look like? It seeks the Lord. That's simply restating vv4 and 5 isn't it? "I sought the Lord" "Those who look to Him" Here he says "those who fear Him have no lack" and he parallels that with "those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."
 - iv. To fear Him then is to seek Him as your help and as your satisfaction, and He is good. You will not be disappointed! Taste and see for yourself!

II. How the Fear of the Lord Keeps His People (vv11-22)

- a. The rest of this psalm David is teaching us about the fear of the Lord and the main lesson is this: Fear of the Lord is one of the chief means God uses to keep us living for Him and believing in Him. Fear of the Lord is one of the greatest deterrents against sin!
 - i. Sin destroys; God saves. Sin fights God, resists God. Sin corrupts image-bearers of God. Sin mars the glory of God. Therefore, no sin goes unpunished. It is either punished in the Son or in the sinner. Christ bears it for us, or we bear it.
 - ii. The fear of the Lord, in part, is what causes us to turn from sin. We fear the Lord and do not wish it to be said of us, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul." We fear the Lord and do not want to hear the

Lord say to us, "Depart from me, I never knew you." No, we fear the Lord in such a way that we live our lives to hear Him say, "Well done. Good and faithful servant."

- b. Vv12-14. Read. David says, "You want to really live? Don't sin. Do good." That's what it means to fear the Lord, striving to live for Him and resisting the fleshly urge to live for self.
- c. Vv15-18 expand on this truth. Read. To fear the Lord is to know that He is not against me, but in Christ He is for me!
 - i. I'm not going to pursue evil and be cut off! No, I fear the Lord. I'm going to pursue Him by faith in His Son because He is good, and He saves, and He delivers.
 - ii. By the way, the fact that God hates sin does not make Him bad; it is precisely because God is good that He hates evil and will judge it! We fear Him because He is good, He's good enough to right every wrong and punish every evil.
 - iii. And His goodness is not just displayed in how He treats sin, it is displayed in how He treats those who are His!
- d. Then the final way David shows us how the fear of the Lord keeps us living and believing in the Lord is in vv19-22.
 - i. Look how David describes the relation of the righteous to affliction and condemnation contrasted with the relation of the wicked to affliction and condemnation.
 - ii. Read and explain. V19-20 – being a believer doesn't guarantee freedom from afflictions in this life, but it does guarantee the Lord's deliverance from them, in some way, in some sense. Sometimes He removes them. Sometimes He sustains us through them. Always He keeps us in them.
 - iii. But that is not the case for the wicked! Vv21-22 There is no deliverance. In fact, there is only condemnation.
 - iv. We know the end of the wicked and we know the end of His servants, and therefore we take refuge in Him, or to say it another way, we turn to Him, we cry to Him, we live for Him, we believe in Him, we trust in Him. That's what the fear of the Lord looks like.

Conclusion – If the fear of the Lord causes us to take sin and judgment seriously, then to dismiss or justify sin, or to cover the justice of God with the love of God to do away with judgment, is indicative that we have lost the fear of God. The most fearful thing in the world is to lose a fear of God.