

Psalm 34 Virtual Bible Study

Hello everyone. Welcome to our online study of the Psalms. Today we are on Psalm 34. It is a Psalm of wisdom, a Psalm of thanks and praise to God.

Let us read what Luther has to say on Psalm 34.

The 34th psalm is a psalm of thanks, much like the preceding psalm. It offers us the history of David as an example for all the righteous so we might learn from him that God never despises the cries of His saints. Moreover, it teaches us to fear God and no one else; further, to be on our guard against false teachers, against curses, grumblings, and slander. We should have patience, bless enemies rather than curse them, wish them all good, do good to them rather than evil, and so (as much as in us lies) to live at peace with all people, whether they are evil or godly. For it is certain (the psalmist says) that the righteous will suffer many things. It cannot be otherwise. If you will be righteous, you must take up your cross and suffer. This is how it must be. On the other hand, it is certain that the Lord will truly help us out of all these afflictions, that none of the least of your bones will be taken away or missing. Yes, even the hairs of the head are numbered. Although the bones of the saints in their martyrdom were often broken, some of them burnt to ashes, and many more decaying in their graves, they will yet return and not remain eternally broken or be called broken. Rather, for a time they will be broken, but afterward they will all again be more whole and healthy than they formerly were. This is the first psalm that speaks about angels, that they attend to the righteous and wait on us. They are not simply with us or around us. The angels are like an army—armed soldiers encamped around us, pitching their tents, keeping watch, and fighting for us against the devil and all his minions. This is a great and excellent comfort for all who believe, as the prophet Elisha, following this verse, made clear with his clear and correct example (2 Kings 6:17). But this verse is taken from Genesis 32:1–2, where the angels encounter the patriarch Jacob, because of which he called that city “army” or “camp.” For they were his troops and camped around him as a protection, as the psalm here states.

So let us get into it, Psalm 34

- ¹ I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!
- ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be 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 encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- ⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
- ⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,

- for those who fear him have no lack!
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- ¹² What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
- ²⁰ He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.
- ²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- ²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

All right. Psalm 34 really focuses upon the presence of the Lord and how we can put our trust in Him and how we should praise Him and bless his name at all times. Like the first verse says, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." And part of that is if we are blessing God and praising Him all the time, we have much less time to argue, to complain, to whine, to throw pity parties or anything like that. We boast in the Lord. We praise the Lord. Our focus is upon the glory and majesty of God and it leaves us less time to focus on evil or to be afraid of it. We trust the Lord. We can boast in Him because we know that He takes care of us. We should magnify His name, exalt His name together. We should seek the Lord because He answers us and deliver us from all our fears.

So, are you afraid? Then go to the Lord. Praise His name. Trust Him, exalt Him, magnify His name because in doing so you will learn and be reminded of how great our God is and how much He loves us and how He has sent His angels to watch over us, to encamp around us. I love that imagery of a nation or an army at war and protecting us, the camp around us. Angels, in spite of what we see during Christmas and in Hallmark cards and other specials and things, angels are not soft cuddly things. For one thing, they are spirits so they have no physical form. But when they are described in a physical form, when they are described, it's this mighty warrior who does battle against evil.

I mean, these are creatures that when they choose to make themselves known to people, everyone cowers in fear and falls to the ground in fear and bows their head. Every time the angel has to say, get up, it's not me,

it's God that you should bow down to, to be afraid of and to respect and honor. But these angels are all camped around us and protect us.

Now, this is talking specifically [and] is a prophetic voice about God that the angel of the Lord encamps around Christ, that delivers Him and keeps Him because He is the only righteous one. But for the sake of Christ, we get that benefit as well and we thank God for that. I love this next verse, verse eight, "O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." Taste. I mean, it's a very tangible thing that you do when you taste something that is wonderful, there's a sense of joy and peace that comes upon you, like this is a wonderful thing. And we are to taste and see that the Lord is good so much so that even ... We do taste God. We get His body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine at the Lord's supper. And so we do taste and see that God is good when we receive the Lord's supper, knowing that in that, through the Word of God, we receive the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. What a joyous thing that is.

"O fear the Lord you His saints, for those who fear Him have no lack." Fear the Lord. It means trust in Him. Put your awe in Him. Put your healthy respect only in Him. Do not be afraid of anything else. Do not be afraid of death or disease. Do not be afraid of thieves who can steal and rust that destroys. Do not be afraid of earthquakes and famines, persecution and any other natural disasters or man-made disasters. There is nothing that we are called to fear because we know that we can take refuge in Him. That's why we as Christians should act in boldness and confidence at all times and not act out of fear no matter what. Now, be wise as serpents, innocent as doves. Do not be foolish in your actions. Do not, as they say, tempt fate, but also don't be afraid because you don't need to fear anything.

It even says, "The young lion suffers want and hunger but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." Even if we deal with suffering, and it says later on that we will have many afflictions in our lives, but we will lack no good thing because the one good thing and the one needful thing is Christ Himself and He promises to be with us to the very end of the age. So even if temporarily some people may lack what we might consider good things, they have the best thing which is Christ and they know that even if they die or are persecuted or martyred for their faith, they still have all good things because Christ has redeemed them and brought them to everlasting life.

So the reason that we have no fear and the reason that we can trust God to give us all good things, is we do not view this world as our permanent residence. We do not view this world as our hope and our promise. We cannot wait for the coming of the Lord. We cannot wait for this world to be destroyed and the new heavens and the new earth be created so that we might live with God for all eternity. So this world is temporary, its situations, its afflictions, its frustrations, its fears, are temporary and so we live in a more eternal place. We live in the hope and the confidence of eternity with Christ. So we don't need to be afraid.

"If you desire life, love many things and see what is good, then keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit." That's good advice for anybody at any time. How difficult is it to control our tongue? When we see something that we disagree with or we see somebody being rude or even just obnoxious, how easy is it for us to use our tongue to speak evil, sometimes speaking evil in the name of good. I've said before, I've said to some people, you can be right in what you say but wrong in the way that you say it. We need to be careful that that is how we speak, that we are right not only in what we say but in how we say it. That we say all things in love and peace, that we seek peace and pursue it. So in other words, we may disagree with things going on in this world. We may disagree with people's lifestyles and their behaviors but we speak with peace

and love when we say that these things are wrong or these things are sin. Because we know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory including ourselves. And so it's not passing judgment, it's simply declaring what the Word of God says and saying that that applies not only to me but it also applies to that as well. Always focusing upon the log in my own eye, rather than the speck in my neighbor's.

"The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears toward their cry." In other words, He is waiting to hear our pleas. He wants us to call to Him in time of trouble. He wants us to cry to Him for help because He promises to deliver us from all of our troubles. There will be afflictions. It says many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Christ suffered and died but yet Christ was restored to His position at the right hand of God and now sits in glory. So God will deliver us. Again, going back to this world is not our home. This world is not our hope.

It even says, "Affliction will slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be condemned." In other words, for us affliction is temporary and we know that it will pass. But for the wicked, it will slay them and kill them and they will suffer for all eternity because of it. And so, we are not afraid of affliction because we know it is temporary. "The Lord redeems the life of His servants. None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned." This is why we take our refuge in Christ. I am baptized. I am covered in the blood of Christ. That is my strength and my refuge. I know that I have an army of angels encamped around me because I am God's child and the angels guard and protect God's children. Therefore I need fear no evil and even if affliction and hardship and persecution comes, I know that I can stand firm because God is with me. And if I die, then I can say with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as they were about to be thrown in the fire, look, our God can save us. But even if He doesn't, He's still the true God. That confidence that no matter what happens, God is still God and He will protect us and guard us and bring us to be with Him. We will not be condemned because Christ has already been condemned for us.

Let us pray.

O God, Spirit of truth, who spoke of old by kings and prophets, enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may read aright the psalms of Your servant David, learning from them that Jesus of Nazareth is He of whom the Scriptures spoke. Cause us ever more clearly to see that He, and He alone, is the Savior of our souls, that our heart may cling to Him alone. Amen.