

Psa. 34:0 A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

In trying to find the reference of the incident being referenced, I didn't find the names to match up. In the incident I first thought of, the king's name was Achish, king of Gath (1Samuel 21). *Abimelech* appears to have been used as a proper name as well as a title. It was the name of the Philistine king whom Abraham tried to deceive by calling Sarah his sister (Genesis 26). In Strong's Hebrew, it is also simply a word meaning "father of king, king, royalty." This seems to be the title used by the Philistines for their kings, since Achish was also a Philistine king.

Psa. 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually be in my mouth.

Psa. 34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

This Psalm was written shortly after David had to flee from Saul. He sought refuge with Achish, but the servants of Achish reminded him that David was a mighty warrior, even mightier than Saul. This evidently made Achish think that David was going to try to overthrow him, and David realized this. So he pretended to be a mad person in order to escape.

David had been anointed king by Samuel, but circumstances certainly didn't seem to support that this was God's intention. David is on the run and hiding in a cave. Instead of falling victim to his circumstances, David lifts up his voice in praise to the Lord.

David has made a choice. He is going to praise God at ALL times—continually. He is not going to let the circumstances of life cause him to start questioning God. The word *boast* includes the idea of celebration and singing praise. The word *humble* includes others who are depressed and/or in needy circumstances. The idea is that David is conscious of his example in his times of distress and need and aware that his response to the Lord will influence the response of others.

I think we sometimes think that we are not important enough for our example to make such an impact—but it does. We all have a circle of influence. Our example can be powerful when we choose to trust God in spite of the circumstances. There are several precious saints in my memory that greatly influenced me as a teen/young woman with their steadfastness of faith and lack of complaint regarding their circumstances in life. I wasn't even in their close family circle; they were just precious older saints in the church whom I was privileged to know and observe and with whom I was able to spend a little time. I would pray that my influence would impact others in the way theirs impacted me.

Psa. 34:3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

At the time when David wrote this Psalm there were about 400 men traveling with him.

1Sam. 22:2 And every one *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

David not only praised God himself, he encouraged others to join him in praising God. I can really connect with David in this area; it's how I feel in particular about the study of God's word. I have experienced the blessing and thrill of connecting with God's heart through the study of His word and am eager for others to share that connection. That is the whole purpose behind establishing a web site to post my journals.

Psa. 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

So many of the psalms contain reference to David's *seeking* the Lord, the Lord *hearing* David's prayer, and the Lord *delivering* David in answer to his prayer. Why does David express this truth so many times? Because he knows from experience that God will respond.

Psa. 9:10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, **hast not forsaken them that seek thee.**

Psa. 4:3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD **will hear when I call unto him.**

Psa. 54:7 For **he hath delivered me out of all trouble:** and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

Psa. 34:5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

"They" – This appears to be referring back to *the humble* from verse two. David has not only had personal experience of God's faithfulness, he has been witness to God's faithfulness to others. The word *looked* does not simply mean to see. The Hebrew states, "look intently at; by implication, to regard with pleasure, favor or care." This helps explain the next phrase. To be *lightened* references to sparkle and to be cheerful. When our focus is on the Lord with pleasure and favor, then our countenance will radiate that attitude. Using Hebrew poetic expression through repetition, David repeats that thought in a different way—"their faces were not ashamed."

Psa. 34:6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psa. 34:7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

"poor" = depressed, afflicted, needy

David is reiterating that when the Lord hears one of his servants calling out to Him in need, the Lord will answer with deliverance.

"angel of the Lord" – This phrase is always thought provoking. There are times in the scripture when I believe that this is a direct reference to Jesus preincarnate and times when I believe it is a reference to one of His angelic host on duty ministering to believers. In this instance, I don't think it matters to be able to identify the angel specifically. The important point is that the Lord is making

provision for men/women of faith who are living in obedience to Him and delivering/equipping/strengthening (all from the Hebrew for *delivereth*) them according to their need.

Psa. 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

I liked one of Webster's definitions for *taste*--"To become acquainted with by actual trial; to essay; to experience; to undergo."

"see" = to discern, have experience, perceive

"Taste and see" is obviously referencing knowledge based on experience, on relationship and intimate fellowship. If we will submit to the Lord and follow Him in faith and obedience, we will find that the Lord is good. This is not an *if* statement; it is a statement of fact. Fellowship and obedience to the Lord always result in a happy person. What does it mean to be happy? Again, let's look to Webster.

...Experiencing the effect of favorable fortune; having the feeling arising from the consciousness of well-being or of enjoyment; enjoying good of any kind, as peace, tranquillity, comfort; contented; joyous....

This definition includes the obvious, but it also includes the not so obvious—a feeling of joy and peace because your conscience is clear and you know you are in fellowship with the Lord. We know that every servant of God will experience times of testing that God allows in our life for spiritual growth, but we can still experience peace and joy through those times if we keep our focus on God's love for us and knowing that the reward will be well worth the experience.

Matt. 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Matt. 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for **great** is your reward in heaven:

2Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight (**abundance**) of glory;

2Cor. 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Psa. 34:9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is no want to them that fear him.*

Psa. 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

Continuing in poetic repetition, David is emphasizing that the person who fears the Lord will lack nothing that they need, in fact they will lack nothing that is "good" for them. To fear God is to recognize Who He is and to respond with obedience and reverence according to that knowledge. The "young lions" seems to be a reference to lions that are not yet mature and knowledgeable enough to be consistently successful in their endeavors at getting the necessary food for growth and sustenance. Those who *seek* (pursue, to worship, with diligence) the Lord will be given every good thing needed for spiritual growth and sustenance.

The Lord is obviously aware of our physical needs and will supply those as well. The fact is that He is more concerned with our spiritual needs. The thing to remember is that how we define our needs compared to how He defines our needs may be entirely different. Jesus taught it this way in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matt. 6:25-33 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Psa. 34:11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Psa. 34:12 What man *is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?*

Psa. 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Psa. 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

David is not afraid to assume the position of teacher in an area of spiritual knowledge with which he has experienced some success. He wants to share what he has learned with others. Verse 12 seems to be a statement that living in fear of the Lord will also result in a good long life.

- Do not speak evil or deceitfully.
- Depart from evil.
- Do good.
- Eagerly seek peace.

I'm always interested in the order in which the Spirit inspires some listings in scripture. The first thing addressed in showing fear of the Lord is control of the tongue. That has surely been one of my biggest areas of weakness. It's much easier to sin with your mouth than through other actions. Most actions require at least some thought and intent; words can more easily just come spilling out.

James is very specific regarding the tongue.

James 3:5-10 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 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. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But

the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

We are sinners from birth. We must determine to turn away from the wicked desires of our sin nature and choose to do *good*. The psalmist is aware that we have the ability to make choices in life. If we have a great desire to experience peace (both of mind and with our fellow man), we are more apt to be making choices that are in line with the character of God. Obviously, this will not be true 100% of the time in our relationship with other people because sometimes our choices according to God's truth clearly identify another person's sin, and this can result in persecution. Even so, you will possess the peace of God through that time of persecution because you know that rewards in heaven are well worth any testing/persecution experienced in this lifetime.

Psa. 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

God is omniscient; He sees everything done by everybody—righteous and unrighteous. David is saying that the Lord is watching His servants with eyes of love and concern for what is good for us. His ears are always listening for their cries for help in time of need/distress.

Psa. 34:16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

This is a very strong statement regarding the wicked. This is a statement of contrast to verse 15. Though the Lord watches His servants with love and concern, He watches the wicked with a desire to rid the planet of their wickedness. Most of us don't like to hear this truth presented; we would rather hear about God's love and forgiveness. God would rather that all men repent and live, but those who choose not to repent will be judged accordingly. Planet earth will one day be renewed and will never again experience the effects of sin.

Ezek. 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live:

Rev. 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Is. 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Psa. 34:17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

Psa. 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Verse 17 is basically a repeat of verse 15. Note that the Lord will hear and deliver the righteous from their troubles. The righteous will have troubles, but they can

always look forward to deliverance. The unrighteous can only look forward to worse trouble—an eternity without God.

Verse 18 expands the thought of God's deliverance of the righteous. A broken heart or contrite (crushed, bruised) spirit can be caused by someone else or can result from agony of spirit due to your own sinfulness. I think God's nearness is evident to His servants in both types of experience. The nearness of God speaks to me of love, comfort, and sustenance. Salvation speaks of complete deliverance through healing and/or forgiveness.

Psa. 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Psa. 34:20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

The psalmist acknowledges that the righteous will experience many afflictions (bad things at the hand of the wicked, trouble, adversity). The key is that he will be delivered.

David's psalm definitely takes on a prophetic inspiration at this section. Scripture goes on to tell us that it is only because of the righteousness of Jesus that we can be made righteous.

1Cor. 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: Jesus, the righteousness of God, was greatly afflicted by man, but victoriously delivered by the Father through the resurrection. Verse 20 is a statement that through the many ways that Jesus was beaten and tortured in death, the Father did not allow one of His bones to be broken. This statement obviously cannot be said about many of the righteous in faith who have lived through the centuries; it is specific to the Savior.

Psa. 34:21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

This verse makes me think of John 3:18:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It is man's wickedness, his choice to reject God, that will result in the destruction of the wicked. The Righteous Judge will pronounce the judgment and enforce the punishment, but each man basically convicts himself.

Psa. 34:22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

In contrast, the Lord has provided redemption for those who choose to believe in Him and accept that provision.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

The deciding factor is trust/faith. No one who places faith in the Lord will be desolate (punished, perish, found guilty).

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Eph. 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

How is that faith reflected in our lives?

John 13:35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

1John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments....