

Psalms 19-02-14a

I would like to greet you with felicitations for a pleasant evening and a fruitful Bible study. This is February the 14th, 2019. We continue our study in the book of Psalms.

We're going to be doing something a little bit different than usual tonight in the sense that our Psalm is Psalm 34. Psalm 34. This will be the third Psalm that falls in this particular category that makes it interesting.

And because of that, we're going to be looking at a linked Psalm that shares this feature in common. And then we're going to be looking at another linked Psalm that has a content link. So if that was not cryptic enough, stick with me and it'll be even more mystifying.

Now, Psalm 34 is an acrostic Psalm, meaning that the verses generally begin with sequential letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And one of the Psalms that we did not look at recently, we did not look at it recently. We've never looked at it, but having done Psalm 23 and 24, we did not look at Psalm 25, but we're going to be looking at it in conjunction with this Psalm because it has a virtually identical acrostic structure right down to missing letters.

And then we're going to also see a linked Psalm, and we're going to be looking at this Psalm in several chapters ahead because it sheds light on this one in terms of its content. So we have a lot to do, want to get right to it. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study.

We'll take a look at this Psalm and see what it's talking about and a quick look at its structure. And then we will see how these other two Psalms are going to help us in terms of illumination, both of the structure and of the content. Let's ask God's blessing and we'll begin.

Father, how grateful we are for the nourishment for our souls that comes from your word. We regularly ask your blessing on our physical sustenance and ask the blessing for our meals. And we similarly are grateful for your blessing on our times of spiritual contemplation and seeking a better understanding of who we are, why we're here, what your plan and purpose is for us.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word tonight in Psalm 34, that the Holy Spirit will illuminate it and will bless it to each heart in a unique, pertinent, and personal way. Each of us has a different assignment. Each of us has different strengths, weaknesses, potentials, and restrictions.

And yet your word is so powerful and its inspiration is of such a nature that we find it useful and helpful in any of those circumstances. So we ask your blessing on each one as we study this truth together. And we pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified and our representation of him on this earth until he returns for us will be enhanced and will reflect your glory.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you have found Psalm 34, you will see, especially

if you have glasses, you will see that in your New King James, it has a superscription which is very apt, David praises God and exhorts others by his experience.

This is a lot of our exhortation and encouragement for one another is it comes out of our experience. If you're anticipating some medical procedure, or if you're going through some bout of an ailment, it's interesting to talk to people that have already been there and been through it and know something about it. And it gives us comfort.

You're looking at somebody who has obviously been through it and survived. Hopefully they don't scare us to death with too many negative experiences. But people that have been in for various kinds of ostomies and ectomies and other procedures, this sense of community and of shared experience is, even in the secular world, a source of comfort.

But especially in the spiritual realm, being able to reflect not only on what an experience is like, but the pertinence of God's word and the effectiveness of God's provision is something that links us together and as a group and as a fellowship back to God himself. And this transcends the merely lateral fellowship that we have in a group of people with similar experiences. So he is going to exhort others by that experience, and then blessed are those who trust in God.

The superscription of this psalm is important. I can't tell you how many times we come to superscription. You go to the commentaries and they say, well, we're pretty sure somebody added this later, and they probably did it because of this word or this verse.

But it's most certainly likely to be bogus, or it's likely to be certainly bogus, and doesn't necessarily take anything into account. I will tell you that the superscription on this psalm, when you read it and then you read the psalm, they don't look like they have anything in common. And yet the superscription is a key to identifying what's going on and how it is going to be pertinent.

So we don't want to overlook it. It says, a psalm of David, La Dawid, as we've seen before, when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed. This, of course, is going to be found in 1 Samuel chapter 21, if memory serves.

And so before we continue, let's flip back right quick, because we have been invited by the superscription to remember those circumstances. So let's turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 21. You remember this chapter begins with him going and visiting the priests, getting the consecrated bread, picking up Goliath's sword, and then he continues on to Gath, the hometown of the owner of the sword.

This is sort of jumping out of the frying pan of King Saul and into the fire of the Philistines. But when we are motivated by fear, it often debilitates our reason along with our spiritual perspicacity, our spiritual application. This David, who is fleeing, is the same David who just a few chapters earlier was announcing to that same Goliath in chapter 17 verse 45.

David said to the Philistine, you come to me with a sword, this sword that we're looking at in

chapter 21. David says, you come to me with this sword, with a spear and with a javelin, I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. This is 1745 of 1 Samuel.

Chapter 17 verse 45, I come to you in the name of the Lord. You're coming with a sword and a spear and a javelin. You don't have a prayer, literally.

You've got a sword and a spear and a javelin, but you don't have a prayer. I come to you in the name of the Lord. This day, verse 46, the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you and take your head from you.

And this day, I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth so that all the earth may know there is a God in Israel. The most formidable opponent David probably ever faced and he's got a slingshot and five rocks. This guy's got size, strength, experience, and weaponry all in his favor.

David says, well, I feel sorry for you because I represent the Lord, God of Israel. In this day, he's going to prove that he is the God of Israel and you're going to lose your head, you're going to lose your armor, you're going to lose your weapons, and you're going to lose your life. Well, this is the same sword in chapter 21 that David collects in verse 9. Sword of Goliath of Philistine whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is.

A little subtle reminder from the priest. The Sword of Goliath, remember the guy you killed in the valley? Remember how that went and in what strength and in what power and with what boldness you faced down fear and represented God and glorified Him? If you will take that, take it. There is no other except that one here.

David said, there's none like it, give it to me. Well, there is no God, but God. There is no other God like Him.

But David has now essentially picked up the weapons of the enemy. Now he is going to go to the hometown of the enemy. Verse 10, 1 Samuel 21.10. Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath.

Achish, the king of Gath. What's the king's name? Achish. What's our superscription say in Psalm 34? When he pretended madness before whom? Is there a mistake in my Bible? Achish and Ahimelech are not spelled the same.

There was Ahimelech the priest, there's Abimelech back over in Genesis chapter 20. Abraham gets tangled up with Abimelech, remember that? But this is Achish. So what's going on? Is there a mistake? Did the editor get confused perhaps by Ahimelech in the previous section at Nob? Is there a confusion of letters between the H and the B and Ahimelech became Abimelech? But you can't make the rest of it work because it says that David pretended madness before Abimelech.

Well, pretended madness is another one of those cases we have looked at in the past. Remember when we did Shakar and decided that it was not dawn, it was darkness? Because it's always accompanied by the word lift, the lifting of the darkness. Lifting of the darkness is dawn.

The darkness itself is not dawn. How thou art fallen from heaven, O shining one, Lucifer, son of Shakar, darkness. Son of darkness.

He's a shining one but he's a son of darkness. Not son of the dawn. Not morning star.

The morning star is a wonderful reward that the Lord Jesus will give to certain categories of overcomer. Same thing here. When it says he pretended madness, the word translated pretended does not mean pretend and the word madness doesn't mean madness.

Neither one of them is right. Now the upshot of it may not be far wrong, but if you're looking for an equivalence here, you will not find it. The word pretended literally means to change.

It comes from a root, an old Semitic root that means to fold. And typically if you fold something, you fold and you fold again. And so it means to do again or to do over or to repeat a thing in some contexts.

But this idea of doubling or of doing again really means you do a thing and then you change back so you can do it again. A record changer plays a record, then the record changes, then it plays it again. There's a change and a repeat.

Change and repeat. Lather, rinse, repeat. Lather, rinse, repeat type of thing.

So all of that is bound up in the word here that is translated pretend. So it means to change. The second word that is madness doesn't mean madness.

It means judgment. It means your face, your visage, your presentation of a thing. And change comes to mean to disguise.

Remember when the king was going to ride out in battle and the prophet had told him he shouldn't go? And so it's the kings of northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. And so one of them puts on plain clothes and the other one puts on royal robes. So it can mean to disguise, change your clothes so that you're not recognizable.

So depending on the tense of it, it can mean to, the reflexive means to change and change and change is reflexive. So you do it to yourself. But what this essentially means is the first word is to change or to become repetitive in a thing or to disguise.

And the second one is judgment or your sanity. It also means taste. And this even works in English when we say, well, he is a gentleman of refined taste.

It means refined judgment, your taste in clothing, your taste in art, your taste in music. It's your judgment. It's your discernment, your capacity for elevated thought.

So what it actually means is David changed or disguised his capacity for refinement. He changed his civilized behavior. And so madness is a little extreme.

He just was, I mean, you can say, well, he pretended to be an idiot, but it doesn't mean to pretend. He consciously changed his behavior. He changed his behavior.

I think actually the old King James has a closer translation of that. So he changed his behavior before Abimelech who drove him out and he departed. Now in my mind, this is a bit redundant.

If somebody drives you out, you have departed, right? So why does it mention both things? Well, let's handle Abimelech first since that's in between. David changes his behavior. We know that it's before Achish.

Anybody familiar with David's life knows that it's Achish. So why does it say Abimelech? Well, because what this tells us, not that this is a late editorial thing. By the way, there's a big theory that says any acrostic psalm is late, that they're far after the fact and they were artificially aged to look old, but that they're post-exilic and all the rest of it.

But this to me is a clue that this is not only pre-exilic, but is several centuries pre-exilic and that it's contemporary with David because the ancient hereditary title of the kings in this part of the land was Abimelech. Abi, my father, Melech is king. My father's the king.

I'm the prince. My father's the king. Abimelech.

So the reason I'm king is my daddy was the king. I'm in the dynasty. And so this becomes similar to the title in Egypt of Pharaoh or in Rome of Caesar or in other parts of the world of Tsar.

And it simply means that he's being referred to here by his office name. If Necho is the Pharaoh that does certain things in the days of shortly before the decline and fall of the Southern kingdom, Necho you might call him or you might call him Pharaoh. Well, here he's Abimelech, which is his title in first Samuel 21.

He is Achish, which is his name. But we know because both Abraham and Isaac get tangled up with Abimelech, who is the guy who is the king in this central part of the land during their lifetimes. And that title has persisted for several hundred years, probably 800 years and is still used.

In the same way that we talk about the energy czar and the drug czar and the immigration czar, we use these words even today. So, Psalm of David, he changed his behavior before Abimelech, which is Achish, who drove him away. Remember that? Have I need of madmen? I've got a fair supply of them already.

I don't need one more. And he sends him away. But the reason it's doubled here, I think, is look at the inclusio here.

It's a tiny chiasm. David is the actor on the outside brackets. Abimelech slash Achish is the actor on the inside brackets.

David changes his behavior before Abimelech. Abimelech drives him away, and David departs. So, in the center there is the important part, which is that Abimelech drove him away.

Abimelech did not execute him. Abimelech did not incarcerate him indefinitely, although he does for a time. But David messes up.

David changed his behavior, but David did not suffer the ultimate penalty for that. And it's God's grace that in spite of his mistake, changing his behavior, which he shouldn't have done and shouldn't have had to do, he's trusting in all the wrong things and he's being motivated by fear, he's preserved. And at the end, when it says he departed, he not only departs from Gath and departs from Abimelech, but he departs from changing his behavior.

He's not going to sink that low again. He's not going to use that resort again. So, it's a learning experience for David.

And in this little nutshell introduction, we have a couple of clues. One is, this psalm is going to be about learning, even when you're not necessarily doing the right thing. It's like learning from what you missed on a test instead of what you got right.

And this is something David is going to share with others. So, David praises God and exhorts others by his experience, you have in our uninspired heading here, but that's true. Now, why are we focused on that? Your experience in terms of the relationship between circumstantial navigation and spiritual life is valuable.

And speaking about that with others is a good thing. Obviously, any good thing can be done wrong. Any good thing can be taken to excess.

Any good thing can be perverted, subverted, messed up. That doesn't change the fact that when done properly, sharing your testimony with another person or with a few others, I don't think stadiums full of people necessarily need to hear, but I don't really know. I just know that this psalm is going to argue for sharing what God does in the circumstances of our lives.

It's not just, let me give you my curriculum vitae, let me tell you my resume and my life history and what a great person I am and all the crazy experiences I've had. But this is what God has done in my life, what he has done for me in my times of challenge. I share that with you so that you have the opportunity to celebrate him for even more things than what we already know he has done that are recorded in Scripture.

Scripture is a record of what God did in the lives of people. He continues to work in the lives of people and we can continue to share that. So watch for that in the psalm.

We haven't even read it yet, but this is what the superscription tells us. This psalm comes out of

an experience where David himself was not commendable. Who was commendable? The Lord in his mercy and in his grace.

David isn't telling a story about how ingenious and clever he was. He says, I was not only feigning being an idiot, I was being an idiot in spiritual terms. And yet God blessed me and preserved me anyway.

So that's the superscription. Let's read the psalm. I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear of it and be glad.

Did you catch that? I will bless the Lord. His praise is in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the Lord.

The humble shall hear. Notice of it is in italics. The humble is going to hear David blessing the Lord, praising him continually with his mouth and his soul, celebrating what God has done.

The humble are going to hear and be glad, be gladdened, be encouraged, be refreshed. So what does this tell you? There is value in so doing. Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

I'm sharing this experience of God's sustaining grace. I'm glad that his strength was made manifest in my weakness. Celebrate with me.

Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. Notice it doesn't say let us commiserate my stupidity together.

Let us dwell on my shortcomings and failures together. Let's go look at other people who have shortcomings and failures. What is the common ground that is shared and dwelt upon after this experience? It is God's grace.

It is God's name. Verse four, I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. I don't have time to rehearse it, but if you go back and look at everything that happens to David, from the time they start singing, David has slain his ten thousands and Saul starts winging javelins and looking for ways to end his life.

David becomes increasingly fearful and there is an increasing level of deceit. He doesn't go to the palace for the feast and he asks Jonathan to lie for him. Tell him I had to go home to Bethlehem and offer a sacrifice.

When he leaves in the middle of the night, his wife, Michael, dresses up an idol and puts it in the bed in his place. A full-size idol that was evidently shaped like a human. What an idol is doing in Saul's palace remains to be known, but there is an image that is put in the bed.

This is significant when you think about it. The David that should be lying in the bed has been replaced with an object of worship. Well, guess what? That's the direction David has gone and

he's going to keep on doing deceptions.

He's let down out the window, he goes to Nob and he lies to the priest. He says he's on a secret mission for the king. He's abjectly fleeing from the king, but he lies to the priest and it's going to cost 84 priests their lives there and a Hymaleic.

Then he goes to Gath and he's got to put on another lie, another deceit. So when he says he delivered me from all my fears, these lies and these subterfuges and these extreme measures where David isn't where he's supposed to be and he is where he isn't supposed to be and he's getting people to cover for him and he's making a real hash out of his life because he's not the David that stood in front of Goliath and said, I don't care what kind of weapons you've got or how big you are, I represent the Lord God of Israel and he's going to demonstrate who he is today and it doesn't matter that I'm a shepherd and all I've got is a sling because it's the God I represent that you're really fighting. But he's lost all of that.

So what does he need deliverance from? What is motivating him to do all of this lying and fleeing and waiting in the field and watching arrows fly and getting Jonathan in trouble and everything else? What does he need? He needs to beat back fear. Fear is what kept the army of Israel from advancing against the Philistines because of Goliath. And David knew that then, but he forgot it in the days when he was in flight there back in 1 Samuel.

So he says, I sought the Lord and he heard me and he delivered me from all my fears. Fear was his problem. It was solved by seeking, remembering where the source of strength is.

You know, if you have to seek the Lord and he says, seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart, seek him early, call upon him while he is near. But if you're having to seek, what does that tell you? If you're seeking your keys, what happened? If you're seeking your glasses, what happened? You've gotten separated from them somehow and it wasn't the glasses or the keys that moved. We did something unthinking, something in haste, something distracted us and we separated ourselves from the thing that we are now seeking.

That's what happened with David. And he says, when I realized that the important thing wasn't with me, I went after it. I sought it.

I sought the Lord and he heard me. David doesn't say, I climbed every mountain, forded every stream, followed every rainbow until I found the Lord. He says, when I started seeking, God heard me seeking and God came and delivered me.

All we have to do is initiate the search. God will complete it. He is the shepherd who goes out and finds the 100th sheep out in the field.

The sheep may start bleeding and saying, where's the shepherd? Where's the shepherd? But the shepherd is the one that is going to come and collect him and bring him back. So he says, they looked to him and were radiant and their faces were not ashamed. Well, that's a weird change of pronoun.

Who are they? Who's the only plurality we've seen in the Psalms so far? I will bless the Lord. I'm singular. The Lord is singular.

My soul makes its boast. Who's the plurality that's been mentioned here? It's the humble, right? It's those who hear of it and are glad and those that he calls to magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. He's talking to those who have the humility to recognize the need for the Lord and to initiate that seeking.

And he says, they who hear David's story, we've heard David's story now for century upon century upon century, and we learn from that example and we seek the Lord, we celebrate God's grace. They look to him and are radiant and their faces are not ashamed. This poor man crying out.

And they say, isn't it interesting he's gone from first person to third person plural to third person singular. I would argue that David has already grouped himself with the humble back in verse two and three. And he says, they, the humble are going to look to him with radiant faces that are not ashamed.

And then he says, this poor man cried out and he's pointing at himself. You occasionally run into people who will refer to themselves in the third person. I edit sermons for a guy who starts every one of them with, this is the pastor bringing the message entitled.

He doesn't say I'm Sam Hall bringing the message, but this poor man cried out and the Lord heard. And he's back to verse four. I sought the Lord and he heard me.

This poor man cried out and the Lord heard and saved him out of all of his troubles. Fear was his primary problem. And that created a whole cluster of related troubles.

Then it says in verse seven, the angel of the Lord encamps around all those who fear him and delivers them. This is the messenger of the Lord. Now you have a text note there in your New King James that it might be capital A angel, the angel of the Lord.

It's an interesting metaphor. If you think about a single angel in camping all around you, I've camped in the military, you get a shelter half and pin it down, put your sleeping bag, rubber lady under that. And, you know, take your boots off at night, crawl into the sleeping bag and try to stay warm and dry.

But if somebody said, can you encamp all about me? Well, how do I surround somebody? But when he says the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear him, you get the idea that this angel has got resources beyond just his personal presence. He seems to have help or his presence is such that just standing there, there's some sort of bursting radius of glory or effective minimum distance beyond which things can't come in. And his presence creates a safety zone by whatever means.

We're not told by what means, but if the angel of the Lord encamps, it means he stays. It's the

staying place like we saw in Psalm 23, encamps all around those who fear him and delivers them. This tells us that there is agency involved.

He said up in verse four that the Lord delivered me from my fears. He says at the end of verse seven, the Lord delivers. But what is the means of deliverance? God sends his angel to create an encampment, to create a defensive safe place.

The angel of the Lord basically puts him in a place where he cannot be attacked. Now we have a familiar phrase, oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him.

And we saw this when we did first Peter chapter two. Half of the manuscripts say, taste and see that the Lord is Christ, because Christos and Christos, the confusion of that single letter, which are both vertical stroke letters. Christos is two vertical strokes with a little loop at the top.

It's like an N with a long tail. And that's Christos. Well, Christos is of course just a single iota.

So scribal error, taste and see that the Lord is gracious, Christos, or that the Lord is Christ. Which one is it? Well, we know that it's quoting this verse, and it's easy to sort. Taste and see.

Taste and see. Take a step of faith. When you taste a thing, somebody says, oh, this pepper is not hot.

This is not one of these ones that sends you to the hospital with a blister on your tongue. Taste it and see. Well, there's a measure of faith.

I don't like having my mouth burned particularly. And if someone says, oh, taste this. It's not too sweet.

It's not too salty. It's not too sour. It's not too this or too that.

Well, you've got to trust the person telling you this. Taste and see. So you receive a witness and receive a testimony that something is good.

And you assign some credibility to that. And so you go ahead and try it. What is this Psalm about? Go back to our, David is exhorting others by his experience, right? He says, look, the Lord has been gracious and faithful in my life.

He will be gracious and faithful in your life. Try it. Step out.

I'm a living example. It's a legitimate exhortation. It's a legitimate piece of encouragement.

I can tell you that God has been good and that being patient, waiting, not getting ahead of myself, not exiting the next off ramp and going into trying to find my own solution, being patient has paid off. Waiting has paid off. Trusting and looking to him, letting him engineer the deliverance has worked.

Taste. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him.

Blessed. The man. Anyone who trusts in him is going to be blessed.

Oh, fear the Lord. You, his sanctified ones. You, his set apart ones.

There is no lack to those who fear him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger. Why? They are trying to succeed by their own strength and their own wiles as predators.

But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. Young lions are seeking prey and it's very hard to catch. Those who seek the Lord, the provision comes indirectly.

It's going to come through the angel. It's going to come through the encampment. The Lord is not a slot machine.

You don't find him and put in a shekel and out comes deliverance. But when you're seeking him and you accomplish that restoration and enlivening of your relationship, provision is a side effect. Deliverance is a concomitant.

It's associated. It's strategy of the indirect approach. Well, those are the first 10 verses and you can see the pattern here that David is appealing to a dire situation in his own life where he doesn't look good.

This isn't something there. If he was an Egyptian prince, they wouldn't be carving, changing his appearance in Gath on the walls of his monuments or painting it on the inside of his pyramid. This wouldn't be one of the celebrated moments.

David says, no, it's not me. This is a time when the Lord delivered me from my own fear and my own foolishness. So he's going to start in verse 11, talking about the children.

Come you children and listen to me. So we'll pick up here after the break. We're also going to return to our recognition that this is an acrostic Psalm and this links us in two directions in the book of Psalms to shed some light on not only the content that we've been looking at, but its form and its pertinence.

So we'll see that when we come back.