

Psalms 19-02-14b

We pick up our study now in Psalm 34. We're going to accelerate the pace just a little bit. We spent some time on these first 10 verses because this sets the tone for the remainder of the Psalm in terms of encouragement and exhortation to praise God, to appreciate God, to bless His name based on what God has done in my life.

You can encourage others to appreciate God when you relate what God has done in your life. This is a legitimate function. It's kind of like automobiles.

If you hear enough about crashes and drunk driving and irresponsible texting and so on, you think, well, we ought to just get rid of cars altogether. It's just doing more harm than good when it isn't the case that we should take bad examples or misuse or abuse and throw everything overboard. Same thing here.

There is such a thing as abuse of testimony time or using celebrity or some notable occurrence to sort of draw attention to oneself. It's a for who's standing there taking the bows. Is it you or are you actually helping people have more appreciation for God and God's grace and the way God works, the often indirect and subtle ways.

Just as a piece of trivia, this is the first time in the Psalms where you have a reference to an angel providing aid. You would think by now, there would have been some mention of that, but in the previous three dozen Psalms, that has not been referenced. Here you have the angel of the Lord in camping, and that's an interesting concept to follow.

You can go back to Genesis and think about when Abraham's servant is going to find a wife for Isaac, and it becomes clear that he is expecting God's messenger to go with him. God himself says he will send his angel. He tells Moses, I will send my angel before you and the people to go into the land.

It'll be like a nest of hornets. It'll be like a hive of bees that will go in, but I'm not going to drive them completely out all at once. I'll drive them out little by little.

Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to hold the land. If I drove them all out, it would create a vacuum and they'd all come back in. You've got to grow to fill the land.

That's a very interesting concept when you reflect on it, that sometimes God's deliverance is gradual so that we can grow into it. He doesn't take a problem completely away because we're not big enough to inhabit the results. We have not the experience or the numbers or the resources, and it would very quickly collapse back in on itself.

It's a variation on the story Jesus told about the man who had a demon and it was cast out. He went off and nothing entered the house. Nothing took the place of the demon in the house.

He went and found seven friends and came back and found the house all clean and swept and

ready for occupancy by even more demons. So in thinking about deliverance, deliverance from our fears, deliverance from our opposition and so on, God is so wise in measuring our deliverance, tempering our deliverance, and meeting out or doing our deliverance in stages so that we can handle it and so that we can grow into the space and the freedom that it creates in a healthy way. Oftentimes they will tell us about people who get too much fame and too much success and too much wealth too quickly, and it messes them all up because they can't handle it.

They haven't grown gradually into it and taken it by steps. And these rock bands that are made in and destroyed in a couple of years, it's too heady an experience and they just don't have the flight controls to navigate that hurricane of success. So the deliverance of God is of that nature.

It is beneficial and divine in its measure, in its extent, in its timing, in its mechanism. It might be the angel of the Lord, it might be another way, but in some way, shape, or form, I should say an angel of the Lord. But God fits the deliverance to the individual and to the circumstance, and it is always perfect.

And if we find ourselves questioning and saying, well, Lord, you know, you did this, but I still find this over here. Be patient. There's a reason.

God left Paul with a thorn in the flesh and he said, you may not realize it, but you need this thorn. You need this pain so that you don't wind up having a level of success and a level of power in your hands greater than you can control. And so Paul talks about that.

And the thorn in the flesh is a blessing in disguise. It's a thorn, but it's a blessing thorn. And we want to be cautious about second-guessing God in that regard.

We're going to read the rest of the psalm, and then I want to talk quickly about the acrostic. Verse 10 ends with, Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good. And you can just cross out thing, because this is good of any nature, tangible, intangible.

Thing is a tangible idea, but there's no good that you will lack. The good that you need, you will have. Sometimes even the bad that you have will be good.

Come you children, listen to me. Verse 11, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Who is the man who desires life and loves days that he may see good? It doesn't say many days. It says he loves the days where he's going to see good. I love a good day, any good day, as many good days as I can get.

Who is the man who desires life and loves days where he can see good? Well, if you're that person, you want to redeem the time and have good days. Keep your tongue from evil. Keep your lips from speaking deceit.

Do you remember my review in the first session of all of the deceitful avenues and paths that David took trying to deliver himself from the hands of Saul? David knows a little bit about deceit, doesn't he? Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. So, if you desire life and love days that you can see good, watch your mouth, separate from evil.

Instead, seek peace. So, I sought the Lord and he delivered me. When you seek the Lord, you're seeking peace.

He is the God of peace. Jesus said, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives. It's peace with God.

Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their cry. All you have to do is start the seeking process.

God is watching and God is listening. And where there is turning, remember in the New Testament where Peter says, it is not the will of God that any perish, but that all come to change of mind. It's not God's will that any perish.

And he's really talking about leave this life before they have come to God in repentance. It's not God's will that any disappear, that any leave, that any go away or pull out of the game, but that all change minds. His eyes are on the righteous.

His ears are open to their cry. If you've already changed your mind and you're pursuing righteousness and seeking peace, there's no iniquity separating you from your God. There's nothing making his ears heavy that he cannot hear or his arms short that he cannot save.

And so he's going to be watching and listening. But the face of the Lord is against those who practice evil to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. They are going to perish.

They and their works, the remembrance of them is going to perish. Verse 17, the righteous cry out and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The righteous is in italics there.

It's just they. How do we know it's the righteous? Because this is another little chiasm in 15, 16, and 17. So you have the righteous on the outside and you've got the ones who do evil in verse 16.

So 15 and 17 are the righteous. They cry out, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

This is broken in the sense of not proud, not willful, not rebellious. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. How could you appreciate deliverance if you never had something to be delivered from? How could you appreciate a savior if you didn't really need saving? You really can't teach a subject unless the student has a sense of

need.

Do we need peace with God? Do we need deliverance? Do we need strength? Do we need guidance and direction? Do we need to have fresh ways to appreciate God in our lives so that we don't take him for granted? We don't inadvertently forget to put him into our calculations about what we're going to do today and tomorrow and in the long term. It's always an interesting question. I was talking with Patty about this earlier today.

I've been on both sides of the interview table, as have many of you, certainly being interviewed. Sometimes you're high enough up that you get to do the interviewing. But one of the helpful interview questions in a corporation especially is, and you can ask this yourself, and self-help books saying, here's how to do well in an interview will tell you, you need to have a ready answer for this question.

Where do you see yourself in five years? What does the picture look like in your mind five years out? Do you expect to be working here at this firm if we hire you? Do you expect to have gotten promoted or be in the same job? Do you expect to be making more? What are your personal goals? Are you starting a family, having a family? Are you going to relocate? Are you going to get more education? Are you going to advance your technical skills or your experience level? Or do you want to travel? Where do you see yourself in five years when you look out? And this is a good gut check from a secular point of view in terms of what are my goals? Have I got any goals or am I just kind of the hamster in the wheel and the thing is spinning and my legs are moving so it must be okay, but I'm not actually going anywhere? What's our spiritual five-year plan? Do we know areas of weakness that as old as we may be, we still fail? Well, have we pretty much given up and said, well, if I haven't learned by now, it's just the kind of hairpin I am, you know, I'll have to wait for my resurrected state to get over that particular besetting sin. No. What is your goal? If you haven't achieved a goal in a long, long time, maybe we need to employ a different kind of strength, maybe strength from a different source.

Maybe we need deliverance from on high instead of trying to affect our own deliverance or implement our own plan to solve it. It is the Lord, verse 17, who delivers them out of all their troubles. It doesn't specify whether these are external troubles or internal self-inflicted wounds.

God delivers out of all of them. If we're not getting delivered, we're not going to the source of deliverance. We're doing what David did.

We're trying to deliver ourselves and we're just going to wallow. We're going to end up in gath with spit on our beard. David says, when I sought the Lord, that's when deliverance came.

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, who look at their heart and say, this heart needs help. This seat of motivations needs correction. God's word is a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And if it judges it and looks at its intents and finds it broken, that's where my deliverance needs

to come. Start at the source. Then the afflictions of the righteous, when the Lord delivers him out of them all, he will guard all his bones.

Not one of them is broken. So you may have a lot of flesh wounds. You may suffer a lot of external insults, but your bones, your strength, your inmost self is solid and unbroken.

God will guard what counts. You may need, if you ever had a wart or something and you have an accident and the thing gets knocked off and you think, wow, I should have had that thing taken off a long time ago. Here's something that cut it off accidentally.

It was sticking out in a place it shouldn't and I've worn it off or knocked it off or got it scraped off. And that was a good thing. God delivers out of them all.

He guards the bones. Not one of them is broken. And of course, this is carried forward talking about the Lord Jesus.

He endured the cross, but none of his bones were broken. And we say, well, this was a characteristic of the perfect sacrifice. Its bones were not broken.

But beyond that, the essential inmost self of the Lord Jesus was sustained by God, even on the cross. He guards his bones. Remember Job? You can do anything you want, but you can't take his life.

God will set limits on the afflictions of the righteous and will guard and ensure that our suffering works together for good. Our challenges and our afflictions work together for good. Evil shall slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.

People with a bad attitude and people that are pursuing bad ways, their fate is certain. God is just as sure to judge and punish evil and the hate of the wicked as he is to reward the righteous. The Lord redeems the soul of his servants.

And this soul, nefesh, means life. He redeems your life. You're what counts.

The things that are important will be redeemed. And none of those who trust in him shall be condemned. Trust in him, he will bring it to pass.

Well, we have two things to look at here really quickly, and I'm not going to get a chance to do more than suggest to you the feature of interest on this acrostic. The acrostic psalm that we skipped was Psalm 25. Keep your finger in Psalm 34 and just turn back to Psalm 25.

And the theme here, just to give you the destination before we get there, is that Psalm 25 in corresponding letters is going to address similar subjects as those letters denote in Psalm 34. So, for example, the letter M in Psalm 25 is found in verse 12. Who is that man that fears the Lord? Just put an M next to verse 12 of Psalm 25.

That's maim, M-E-M, but it's the letter M. I won't tell you how to draw a Hebrew letter, but it

looks like a little hut with a chimney on one side, basically. But who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he chooses. Keep your finger there and turn back to 34, verse 13.

Verse 13 is the maim here. So look at verse 12. Who is the man who desires life and loves many days that he may see good? Here's how to do it.

It's fleshed out. It's the same idea. If you love life, you're in the maim realm here.

If you look at the word maim, it's the same thing. It's the same idea. It's fleshed out.

It's the same idea. Psalm 25, verse 8. Psalm 25, verse 8. This is the T or the Tov. So 25, 8. Good and upright is the Lord.

Tov is the word for good, right? T-O-V, T-O-V. Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore, he teaches sinners in the way.

That's verse 8. That's the T in Psalm 25. This is in 34, verse 9. So in 34, verse 9, it begins in verse 8. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him.

And then it continues. Fear the Lord, you his saints. There is no lack, no want to those who fear him.

So you've got the notion of God being good and in the Tov of Psalm 25. And then you've got an answer that is in the Tov in the following verse in Psalm 34. So there are interesting connections like this all the way through.

You can also look at, I'll give you just one other example. Psalm 25, verse 15 is the Sade. My eyes are ever toward the Lord.

This is the Ayin, not the Sade. This is very small print. It's the Ayin, which is the eye.

And it even looks like an eye when you draw it. So my eyes, verse 15 of Psalm 25, are toward the Lord. He will pluck my feet out of the net.

Well, that same verse is in Psalm 34, verse 16. Look at verse 15, the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their cry. So in Psalm 25, it's the eyes of the righteous being on the Lord.

And in Psalm 34, it is the eyes of the Lord that are on the righteous. And so it continues in this vein on a great number of these letters. And you can do a really fruitful study just looking at the acrostic Psalms.

Find a listing. My New King James doesn't do it, but I've seen Bibles where it does put the letters out beside. And then compare because these were memory aids.

So if you've memorized the acrostic Psalm 25 and you remember the main verse, and then

you've memorized Psalm 34 and you go to the main verse, this gives you cross-pollinated reflection and insight and ideas that are associated across these Psalms. Acrostic. It's across the two.

Now, and I don't have time to develop that any further. I hope I didn't confuse anybody with the verses, but you get the idea. We have another thread running through.

The other thing that's very interesting is, you remember the superscription on this Psalm puts us in 1 Samuel 21 in the days when David is changing his behavior. He's changing his judgment. Robert Alter says, when he altered his good sense before Abimelech.

Well, we have another Psalm that has a superscription referring back to this same occasion and it's Psalm 56. So you can leave Psalm 25 behind, keep your finger in Psalm 34 and turn forward to Psalm 56. This one is to the chief musician set to the silent dove in distant lands.

We'll get to 56, I think, and probably cover it. But I just want to give you a quick insight into why these superscriptions count. Look at this.

It says, a mictum of David, when the Philistines captured him in Gath. There's only one time when the Philistines could have incarcerated David in Gath and it's 1 Samuel 21. So we get a detail here that tells us that the superscription is very old.

This isn't somebody looking at 1 Samuel and trying to pick an occasion to match up the Psalm. 1 Samuel doesn't say he was incarcerated. It doesn't say he was caught and imprisoned.

But the superscription here tells us that he was held and the reason Achish drove him hence, he said, turn him loose and get him out of my sight. I don't want him incarcerated. I don't want to keep him here.

Get rid of him. But look at the content of this Psalm just real quickly. It's not long.

It's only 13 verses. Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up, fighting all the day he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High.

What's his situation? His own people are hunting him and ready to betray him and tell Saul where he is. He goes to a nearby area. Well, that's an enemy.

This is the hometown of Goliath and he comes within an eyelash of being executed there. So men everywhere, Jews and Gentiles, friends and foes, so to speak, are all against him. So this Psalm 56 is more of a during the crisis song where Psalm 34 is now that it's over with, let me tell you how God delivered me and why he delivered me and why he is such a good God and why you should trust in him and turn to him and celebrate him with me.

You see the relationship? Psalm 56 tells us here's how I felt when it was happening. Psalm 34 is when I look back on it, this is what God did in me and for me and through me to bless others.

So we keep on in 56 here.

Enemies hound me all the day. Verse 2, verse 3, whenever I am afraid I will trust in you. Remember that? What time I am afraid I will trust in thee.

We learned that at camp way back, Psalm 56 3. In God I will praise his word. In God I have put my trust. I will not fear.

What can flesh do to me? I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? Remember Jesus saying don't fear man who can put your body to death. Fear the God who can put both body and soul in hell.

Right? There's a long story there but that's another support for the notion that your entire self is going to perish in the final judgment if you're not related to God. Look at verse 5. All day they twist my words. All their thoughts are against me for evil.

They gather together. They hide. They mark my steps.

They lie and wait for my life. Shall they escape my iniquity? In anger cast down the people's, O God. You number my wandering.

Put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? When I cry out to you my enemies will turn back. This I know because God is for me.

And this is David's turning point. He has been running and lying and hiding and deceiving and fleeing and changing his behavior and trying to deliver himself and he finally says God you're going to have to display your anger on my behalf. You're going to have to come down and cast down my enemies.

You know my wanderings. You've seen my tears. They're in your book.

When I cry out my enemies will turn back. This I know because God is for me. Verse 10.

In God, notice there's a refrain here. I will praise his word just like there was in verse 4. In the Lord, I will praise his word. In God, I have put my trust.

I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? You can imagine that the tune is repeating here in this song even as the words repeat like a refrain and that there may be a counterpoint. Somebody is singing lead and someone is singing these other phrases in harmony.

It's going to be a wonderful thing. I look forward to hearing David and the Levitical singers performing some of these wonderful songs and we can recover. People have tried to figure out well is the tune encrypted in the text somewhere? Is there a way we can forget it? Just wait.

We will get to hear these songs. There's a lot of music in glory and this is going to be one of them. Vows to you are upon me, O God.

I will render praises to you. Of course, we just got through talking about the vow that Paul took

as we finished up our Corinthian study. Vows to you, notice binding and made is in italics here.

Vows to you are upon me. David says, I have dedicated myself. I have committed myself in a special way and I will render praises to you for you have delivered my soul from death and my feet from falling that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

As a result of that, 56 actually kind of precedes 34 but we know these are connected by the superscription. So what is the upshot of this? We can look back at Psalm 25 for the questions that are answered in Psalm 34. We can look up at Psalm 56 and see more of the nature of the specific afflictions and difficulties and attacks that he was suffering at the time and more of the turmoil in his soul where Psalm 34 says God delivered me from them all and now is my time of sharing my joy, sharing the grace of God, encouraging you to share it with me and to turn to him and seek him in a time of trouble because look at what a great privilege we have.

You are You can't help but be impressed with verse 9 of Psalm 56. When I cry out, my enemies will turn back. This I know because God is for me.

You have it repeated in the New Testament. If God be for us, who can be against us? Verse 4. In God I put my trust. I will not fear.

What can flesh do to me? This is the means, this is the procedure, this is the how-to of making the change and getting through the difficulty so that you can reach the point of Psalm 34 and celebrate God's victory and celebrate his grace and his willingness to watch and to listen and to respond in our time of need and to work even our self-inflicted sufferings together for good. So if you have a chance to do some personal time of reflection in the coming week, I encourage you to lay these three psalms side by side. The reason Psalm 25, there are some other acrostics like Psalm 119, we saw the acrostic pattern in Psalm 9 and 10, but these psalms exactly repeat the acrostic right down to both of them leaving out the wow and ending up with an extra verse that starts with Their structure is so similar.

There's only one minor variation, but they're nearly identical and they cry out to be laid side by side. The superscriptions cry out for 56 and 34 to be laid side by side. God's Word interprets itself.

If you look at it, it tells us what we need to know even when it comes to understanding what it's saying. And this is a beautiful example with linkage between these three psalms. I encourage you to explore it in greater depth than I've been able to cover it here.

But you've seen the psalm and the gist of it. You get the big idea I trust. And so we'll close at this point with a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of being your children, of having the full-orbed revelation of the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Torah, the prophets, the writings in the Old, the gospels and the epistles, and the revelation in the New. We have an embarrassment of riches to which we can turn to fortify our souls, to give us perspective and orientation to the

events of our lives. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our path and to the extent that we are humble, to the extent that we are righteous, to the extent that we are faithful and obedient, reveal your truth to us as it pertains to us personally, as it pertains to our immediate surroundings and decisions, so that the remainder of our lives will reflect your glory and redound to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for Him and we pray these things in His name. Amen.