

PSALM 34

The historical background of this psalm is found in I Samuel 21. The setting is in David's life when he was a part of King Saul's court before he himself became king. Some jealousy broke out between Saul and David. People were beginning to think that David was the greater person. They were writing folk songs about him saying, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Saul became so jealous that he tried to kill David. So David fled south, from the frying pan right into the fire, into the country of the Philistines where he was captured. The Philistines recognized him immediately as their enemy who had killed Goliath. He was dragged before King Achish (in the title of the psalm he is called Abimelech, the traditional name for the Philistine kings, but his personal name was Achish). At this point David was fearing for his life. In order to escape he pretended to be mad by falling down and groveling in the dirt, drooling down the front of his beard and making a fool of himself. Evidently Achish was touched with pity for this man or he thought he already had enough madmen around him, so he drove David away. David then went down into the wilderness where he found a cave, the cave of Adullam, and hid there for a number of months until his mighty men joined him.

It was a time of intense loneliness and fear for David. He had been anointed king but was unable to sit on the throne. He had been abandoned by his own people as well as by his enemies. Here he was hiding in a cave, frustrated, discouraged - and scared to death. These were the experiences that produced this psalm which is his account of what he learned about facing fears.

From Folk Psalms of Faith
Psalm 34; David Roper

Read Psalm 34.

If you want to read the actual setting of this psalm, read I Samuel 21:10 -22:2.

Memorize Psalm 34:4.

Read Psalm 34:1-3.

1. What is David saying he is going to do?

2. What response does David encourage from those who hear his words?

3. Why does David single out the "humble" or "afflicted" and call them to rejoice with him?

Read Psalm 34:4-7. Notice that the action words *sought, answered, delivered, cried, heard, saved* describing David's experience with God relate *past* action.

4. How is this past action on David's part and God's part a foundation upon which verses 1-3 are built?

5. What kinds of things was David afraid of at this time? (See the introductory paragraphs above or read I Samuel 21:10 -22:2.)

6. From verse 4 and verse 6 what did David do with his fears?

7. Check to see from verses 4-7 *how* God responds to David's cry. What characteristics of God do you see in these responses?

8. Notice that verse 5 indicates that others, too, can find God faithful to deliver them if they seek him. *How* will they be changed? What makes the difference?

Read Psalm 34:8-18.

9. We've just been told that God delivers us from fears and now we're told to "fear the Lord." (The first fear means "terrors;" the second "reverence.") Please explain how these statements, which seem to contradict each other, can go together.

10. David says that he'll teach us to fear the Lord if we'll listen. He seems to divide his teaching into two parts. List the things David says of each.

a. If I do fear the Lord, I'll *do* this (verses 13-14).

b. I can fear the Lord when I *know* this about Him (verses 15-18).

Read Psalm 34:19-22.

11. Based on these verses what do you know about affliction?

12. What do you know about condemnation (or "to be held guilty")?

13. Now let's get the truth into life. Choose 3 to answer.

a. Think of a scary situation - past, present, or future. How do you handle fear if you do it like David did?

- b. When God replaces your fear with peaceful radiance who could you tell and why would you want to?

- c. What picture of God do you get from Psalm 34 and what does that encourage you to do?

- d. Many are seeking "the good life" or a satisfied mind. According to verses 11 and 12 and following, God says these come from fearing Him. What can you do in your life to show you believe that satisfaction comes from fearing Him?

- e. What have you learned from Psalm 34 that will most help you or another?