

Over a century ago Northwestern University, located on Lake Michigan near Chicago, had a voluntary life-saving crew among its students. One of these crews became famous for rescuing shipwrecked sailors. On September 8, 1860, just off the shore of Lake Michigan and near the college campus, the *Lady Elgin*, a crowded passenger steamer, went down. Answering the emergency distress call, a life-saving team at Northwestern University immediately formed themselves into rescue teams and launched out into the waters. Among the students that perilous day was Edward Spencer, a young man who was preparing for the ministry.

Seeing a woman clinging to some wreckage far out in the waters, Spencer threw off his coat and swam out through the heavy waves, successfully rescuing her and pulling her back to the shore. Sixteen more times that day young Spencer braved the fierce waves, saving a host of lives. Exhausted and spent, this heroic young man collapsed from fatigue. Spencer never completely recovered from the exposure of that near-tragic day. With broken health he lived quietly the rest of his life in relative seclusion, disabled, unable to enter the work of the ministry.

Many years later R. A. Torrey, pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, was telling about this incident at a meeting in Los Angeles when a man in the audience called out that Edward Spencer was present! Torrey invited Spencer to the platform. An old man with white hair, he slowly climbed the steps to the pulpit as the applause rang out. Torrey asked him if anything in particular stood out in his memory. "Only this, sir," Spencer replied. "Of the seventeen people I saved, not one of them thanked me."

## 1. David didn't want to fall into this attitude of ingratitude

A. In this Psalm he expresses thanksgiving to God for rescuing him from a very perilous situation

**Transition:** To understand what he is thankful for we need to see the background

**Interesting superscription: Ps 34 (ESV)** Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away

**Psa 34:1(NIV)** Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

A. Abimelech seems to have been a general term for a Philistine Lord or King

1). It was actually the Philistine King Achish that David acted insane before

## 2. Background to this Psalm

A. After defeating Goliath David had become a hero in Israel

1). As the people exalted David – King Saul become jealous and felt threatened

2). Eventually he decided to protect his throne David must die

3). David flees for his life as Saul pursues him all over Israel

a). Through it all David trusted the Lord – did the right thing and God protected him

B. But eventually it seems – as the trial wears on – David's faith begins to falter

1). He does what panic and fear can cause us to do – makes a series of bad decisions

2). He goes to Achimelech the priest and weaves a tale filled with lies

a). He's not fleeing from Saul – he's on a secret mission sent by Saul himself

b). Cons the priest into give him the showbread to eat – an offering to God

And talks him into giving him Goliath's sword

3). Then he makes a huge tactical error – go where Saul couldn't reach him – land of the Philistines

a). What was he thinking? He was the man who killed their hero Goliath!

**The result: 1 Sam 21:10-13 (NIV)** That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. (11) But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'" (12) David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. (13) *So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.*

1a). What a way for the future king to be acting

b). I love King Achish's response

**1 Sam 21:14-15 (NIV)** Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? (15) Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"

4). David is freed and he flees back to Israel to live in the cave of Adullam

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**Transition:** It was there in this cave that David composed this Psalm of gratitude

- A. In spite of his folly God rescued him and David wants to thank Him  
He also writes to instruct us from his experience how to live in a way that enjoys God's blessings
  - B. We could say this Psalm has two parts – Devotional and instructional
    - 1). Devotional shows us the great mercy and kindness of God
    - Instructional shows us how to live a life that is blessed by God
  - C. This is a lot of verses so we'll have to skip lightly over the top of some
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## I. DAVID'S WORSHIP

**Ps 34:1-3 (ESV)** I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>(2)</sup> My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. <sup>(3)</sup> Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

### 1. David recognizes the grace he's been shown – how kind God has been

- A. He responds accordingly  
I will bless the Lord – I will praise Him– I will make my boast in Him (what he does)
- B. Notice the extent – *continually* His praise will be on my lips

**Thought:** Sounds about right – if our lives are experiencing daily goodness then...

### 2. David wants his praise to influence others too

Ps 34:2 (ESV) ... let the humble (afflicted) hear and be glad.

- A. He wants his praise to affect others so they will exalt God too! So His glory will increase!
  - 1). Let them hear what He's done for me and be inspired to praise Him too!

**Thought:** This is how we should want to live – our life a billboard for His glory!

- A. When God works in our life – it is meant to bless us AND reach others
  - 1). Remember in Joshua 4 – God parts the Jordan for the Children of Israel to enter promised land  
Instructed to take up 12 stones out of the middle of river bed to put on the bank -why?
    - a). A memorial to remind them of what God had done for them

**Josh 4:23-24 (NIV)** For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. (24) He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

- B. I think – in a sense – that is what David is doing – a verbal memorial in this Psalm
  - 1). How powerful it is to be honest about God's blessing  
Just telling others how good He's been to us – what He is doing!
  - 2). People can act like were lucky in a time of blessing – we should correct that – No!
    - a). Your life is becomes a testimony of how great He is

### 3. The invitation to all – Worshipping God together in community

**Ps 34:3 (ESV)** Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

- A. He wants people to be inspired by what God has done in His life  
Then he wants them to join him in praising Him – Amen!

**Transition:** In v. 4-6 David tells us what the Lord did – Why he is so grateful

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## II. DAVID'S WITNESS

**Ps 34:4-6 (ESV)** I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. <sup>(5)</sup> Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. <sup>(6)</sup> This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

## 1. I'm praising Him because of answered prayer

- A. He answered me and delivered me from all my fears (v. 4)  
 Heard me and saved me out of all my troubles (v. 6)

**Thought:** This is the thrill that flows out of a healthy prayer life – fail to pray and you lose this

- A. God wants to answer your prayers – He wants to thrill you – bless you

**Exhorts us to pray so He can answer our prayers: Mat 7:7-11 (NIV)** "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (8) For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (9) **(the encouragement to pray)** "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? (10) Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? (11) If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*

- 1). I want to give you good gifts – I love blessing you – being generous *but you must ask*  
**James 4:2** *"You do not have because you do not ask"*

**Question:** Why do I need to ask if He already knows what I need?

- A. Because so many good things happen when we pray and see those prayers answered

- 1). See it right here with David – our gratitude, praise go off the charts – and affects others  
 2). Our faith and confidence in the Lord increases – fear is defeated

**Ps 34:4 (ESV)** I sought the LORD, and he answered me *and delivered me from all my fears.*

- 3). It increases our love for God

**Psa 116:1 (NLT)** I love the LORD because he hears and answers my prayers.

- a). We see His love for us in answered prayers – our hearts naturally respond

- B. There are so many good things that happen when prayer is answered

- 1). Therefore God will wait until we ask so those things will happen

**Point:** So you want to have a healthy prayer life – because it breathes so much life into us

- A. The excited Christian is the praying Christian – look at what David says

**Ps 34:5 (ESV)** Those who look to him **(Context – look to Him in prayer)** *are radiant...*

- 1). They have joy! God is alive in their life! They live near to Him! Experience Him  
 That joy stealing monster – Fear – is not defeating them!

- B. The situation was still the same – Saul was still pursuing him

But through prayer – David was living with an awareness of God – he wasn't afraid!

**Ps 34:5 (ESV)** ... and their faces shall never be ashamed.

- A. Here's the one who prays and trusts

**William MacDonald:** Frowns are transmuted to smiles of joy, and depression and despair give way to delight. No one who commits his life to the Lord will ever be disappointed; *He cannot fail the trusting heart.*

**Transition:** I think in v. 6 David understands his poverty and is overwhelmed by God's grace

## 2. The amazing grace of God

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

- A. This poor man who had no resources to rescue himself – God rescued!

- B. The poor man who acted so spiritually impoverished – acting so foolish

- 1). Stupid decisions – then scheming to try to recover with foolish actions

Acting insane – muttering – letting saliva run down my beard – I'm ashamed

- a). Yet God was merciful and kind!
- 2). Can you relate? The foolish things you've done – those decisions you look back on and shudder
- a). Yet God has rescued you! He has been so kind and gracious!

**Transition:** Now a very interesting thought that brings such comfort and confidence

**Ps 34:7 (ESV)** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

### 1. Most think this is speaking of Christ – a theophany

- A. But whether that is Jesus Christ or an angel – the truth is still the same – there is protection

### 2. Notice: This blessing is for all who fear the Lord

- A. We will see what this fear of the Lord means in a minute

**Thought:** I believe I walk through this world with angels watching over me

- A. God my Father knows me well enough to know He needs to assign guardians
- B. Angels are all around us

**Heb 13:2 (ESV)** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

- 1). They are sent to minister to us

**Heb 1:14 (NIV)** Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (all believers)

- C. Wouldn't it be interesting to see an angelic activity chart for our lives
  - 1). All the ways they were involved in our lives while we lived here on earth
    - a). Here a car was going to smash into me – angel slowed it down – tapped into another lane
    - b). I was headed towards a disaster and the angel redirected me – Lot in Sodom
- D. I feel protected knowing the angels are watching over me
  - 1). I remember in grade school – one of my buddies was the baddest kid in class
    - I felt really safe when I was with him – nobody bothered me
    - a). I should feel much safer knowing angels are around me – protecting me
    - One angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers – they can take care of business

**Transition:** What confidence this brings – I am so protected until it's time to go home

- A. Then God will take me home at the perfect time and in the perfect way – His choice!
  - 1). God has put everything into place so we don't have to live or lives in fear!
- B. Now David turns to instruction
  - 1). He exhorts his readers to live in such a way they will enjoy the blessings of God

## III. DAVID'S INSTRUCTION

### 1. He urges those listening to go to God so they can experience this goodness

**Ps 34:8 (ESV)** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

- A. I've told you He's good – now you need to go to Him and taste of His goodness yourself
  - 1). I can try to tell you how good a great steak tastes – but you've got to taste it yourself
  - 2). I can tell you how good God is but you have to go to Him and experience it yourself
- B. **THE PROMISE** for all who do go to Him – trusting Him

**Ps 34:8 (ESV)** ... **Blessed** is the man who takes refuge in him!

- 1). You WILL BE blessed – nobody who trusts Him will be ashamed

**Transition:** So go to Him personally – taste of His goodness and blessings will flow into your life

### 2. He urges those listening to fear the Lord

**Ps 34:9 (ESV)** Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

- A. What does it mean to fear the Lord – not a cringing fear – He is your Father
  - 1). It means to take God seriously, reverence Him deeply, honor Him greatly
  - 2). The evidence you are doing this is: You walk in His ways and obey His Word
- Thought:** Psalms is an interesting book – a central theme is living in the blessings of God
  - 1). But there is a condition for those blessings that appears again and again
    - a). Those blessings flow into the life that fears the Lord
    - b). Half-hearted, indifferent, apathetic Christianity will not experience these blessings
- B. **THE PROMISE:** Those who fear the Lord *will have no lack!*

**Ps 23:1 (ESV)** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

- 1). We may not have luxuries – but we will have the necessities – that is enough  
The Lord is my true treasure – all the necessities will be given – that is enough
  - a). We get ourselves into trouble when we NEED what we WANT  
Rather than simply WANTING what we NEED
- 2). But I can rest – every need will be supplied as I walk with Him!

**Transition:** Now David shows the futility of life apart from trusting the Lord

**Ps 34:10 (ESV)** The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

- A. The lion was known for it's strength – might – prowess
  - 1). Yet even this one sitting at the top of the food chain will suffer want and hunger
  - 2). IOW might and power aren't enough to assure the necessities
- B. **THE PROMISE:** Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing
  - 1). He is our Father – He will provide our needs – but He's also generous – loves to bless
  - 2). He will give us nothing that will become an idol – why would He give that which destroys?
    - a). But He will give good things – great blessings! Just because He loves us

**Transition:** David views this whole idea of fearing the Lord as being so important – look at next verse

### 3. He instructs his readers to fear the Lord

**Ps 34:11 (ESV)** Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

- A. He sees it as so important – a lesson we must teach the children
  - 1). Why? To set them up for a life blessed by God!
- B. We saw that fearing the Lord was reverencing Him – walking in His ways – obeying His Word
  - 1). David distills that down to some specifics here  
**Ps 34:12–14 (ESV)** What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? <sup>(13)</sup> Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. <sup>(14)</sup> Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
    - a). You want to be blessed – enjoy your days – see good
    - b). Watch what you say with your mouth = be honest – guard your tongue from lies  
Turn away from evil = read God's Word and let it direct you  
Seek peace with God and man and pursue it = don't be contentious – always in a fight
  - 2). I think we could sum all this up with Proverbs 3  
**Pr 3:7 (ESV)** Be not wise in your own eyes; *fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*
    - a). Those who do – blessings will flow into their lives  
Those who don't – will continue to live without the touch of the Lord on their lives
      - 1a). They will live their lives in the spiritual wilderness

**Transition:** David continues on with the blessings of those who are walking with the Lord

- A. More encouragement to taste the goodness of the Lord – to do what is necessary to experience Him

#### 4. The blessings of the righteous

**Ps 34:15 (ESV)** The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.’

**Ps 34:17–21 (ESV)** When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. <sup>(18)</sup> The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. <sup>(19)</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. <sup>(20)</sup> He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

- A. Notice: Living for the Lord doesn’t guarantee a problem free life
- 1). Many are the afflictions of the righteous – but many are the afflictions of the wicked too
    - a). The difference is the believer has God walking through the trials with them
    - b). We have the promises that all this is allowed by love and is sent for our good
  - B. David says God’s eyes are monitoring the situation – making sure it works for our good
    - 1). Making sure it never exceeds what we are able to bear
  - C. David says God’s ears are listening to the faintest cries from His child
  - D. Those who feel they are being crushed by circumstances – who feel brokenhearted
    - 1). You are not alone – God draws near to you  
Go to Him – pour your heart out to Him – He loves you – He cares
    - 2). And He will help

**Ps 34:17 (ESV)** When the righteous cry for help, *the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.*

- a). In His timing and in His way – which will always be perfect – He will deliver you
- b). But you must trust Him! You choose how that deliverance will come!
  - 1a). We love to dictate to God – “Now here’s my plan for my deliverance”  
God knows what He’s doing! Learn to trust Him!

**Transition:** So those are the blessings for those who walk with the Lord – who fear Him

- A. Now David warns us about the results of those who don’t

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## IV. THE WAY OF THE WICKED

**Ps 34:16 (ESV)** The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

### 1. Now why did you have to go and say that Bill? It was going so good!

- A. Can I say – why wouldn’t I say this? God did so I must! I am not allowed to soften these things!
- Ravenhill:** “If Jesus had preached the same message that ministers preach today, He would never have been crucified.”
- 1). I’m not out for your temporal comfort – I’m aiming at your eternal comfort  
I want you to get to a place where you’re enjoying the blessings of God in your life

### 2. Are you against God? Have you rejected His Son? He is against you!

- A. He’s not up in heaven thinking – It’s OK! Their rebellion – their enmity against my Son is fine!
- 1). He is against that – He is angry about that – His righteous anger burns  
**Heb 10:31 (NASB)** It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
  - B. I thought God is love – absolutely – He is also holy and just
    - 1). Because He’s holy He is angry at the sinner because of their sin  
**Psa 7:11 (NKJV)** God is a just judge, *And God is angry with the wicked every day.*
  - C. But God is love too! Therefore He offers a loving solution for you to escape His wrath
    - 1). He is willing to pour out that anger you deserve on His Son instead of you
      - a). Then you can enjoy His blessings in your life

- 2). We see both God's love and His justice in John 3

**John 3:16-18 (NIV)** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, *but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

- a). The Christ rejecter is already condemned – Eph 2 – He is a child of wrath!

**Point:** So God is love – but God is also holy and just

**Rom 11:22 (NKJV)** Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God...

- 1). You choose what side of God you will experience – it's a no brainer isn't it?

**Transition:** Now look at the difference in affliction between God's children and the wicked

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**Ps 34:21 (ESV)** Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

**1. While the affliction of the believer makes us better**

**Ro 5:3-4 (ESV)** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>(4)</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

- A. God is directing it all to end in good for us

**2. The affliction of the wicked will slay them**

- A. Their affliction leads only to destruction

- 1). It is all part of that downward trajectory into hell

**3. Those who hate the righteous will be condemned – of course they will**

- A. They hate the righteous because they have rejected God's ways

- 1). When I hated God I hated those who followed Him

- B. But when you fall in love with God and go His way

- 1). You also fall in love with His children who are going the same way

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## CONCLUSION

**1. David writes about the great blessings the believer enjoys**

- A. But not every believer – those who pray – who trust God – who fear God (Live for Him)

- 1). What an encouragement to do whatever it takes to taste of this life

**2. He writes about the horrific path those who reject God's way are walking**

- A. They walk with God's wrath already upon them – walking into hell

- B. God is holy and righteous – fortunately He is also loving and merciful

- 1). He has given you a way out – it is by turning from your sins and embracing His Son by faith

- a). Trusting in Him alone for the salvation of your souls

- C. Consider the goodness and the severity of God – you get to choose which one you'll experience