

Psalm 34
A Song of Praise

By

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All Scriptures quotations
are from the 1769 KJV.

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Psalm 34

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

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

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

*O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his
name together.*

*I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered
me from all my fears.*

*They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their
faces were not ashamed.*

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

*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them
that fear him, and delivereth them.*

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

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

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

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

*What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many
days, that he may see good?*

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

As indicated by the heading at the top of the psalm, it was written by David, as a remembrance of his escape from Achish. David, accompanied a band of “outlaw” men who had gathered around him, had been forced to flee for his very life from his own father-in-law, King Saul. Saul had, on two occasions, disobeyed God by his arrogant and defiant attitude and actions resulting in his being rejected by God (I Sam. 15:26). The Spirit of God left Saul and “*came upon David from that day forward*” (I Sam. 16:13-14). Saul became insanely jealous of David and, on more than one occasion, sought to slay him right in the royal palace!¹

Three times in I Samuel 18 the Bible speaks of Saul being afraid of David (vss. 12, 15) and being “*...yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David’s enemy continually*” (v. 29). Why was Saul so afraid of his humble servant David? Because

¹ See I Samuel 18:11

he saw that *“the Lord was with him,”* (v. 12) and because he *“behaved himself wisely”* (v. 14); *“very wisely”* (v. 15) and *“David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul...”* (v. 30). He also *“saw and knew that the LORD was with David...”* (v. 28). All of this wisdom and wise behavior on David’s part, even toward a man who hated him and had tried to kill him on multiple occasions, nearly drove Saul mad in his increasing hatred for David. David was forced to flee for his life and was driven into the wilderness to be hunted like a wild dog by Saul and his evil advisors.

On the occasion of which this psalm is a recollection, David had hit a new low in his life, spiritually, socially and politically. It is difficult to imagine a man like David, a *“man after God’s own heart,”*² to stoop so low as to feign himself mad before an ungodly king. But, instead of a proper

² See Acts 13:22.

fear of the Lord, David had a terrible fear of Saul and was forced to run for his life.

In I Samuel 21:10 to the end of the chapter, we have David's appeal to Achish, the king of Gath. When David heard the servants of Achish talking about "*Saul slaying his thousands and David his ten thousands,*" David became *sore* afraid of Achish. Interesting here to note that David first *feared* Saul, causing him to flee. Now he became *sore afraid* of Achish, so much so that he "*changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.*" He was at once rejected by Achish as being mad and not fit to serve in the king's army. The very heading of the psalm marks it as a remembrance of the occasion: "*A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away and he departed.*"

Having feigned himself to be mad in order to save his life from this Gentile king David once more fled. Upon escaping with his life, he continued his flight until he came to the cave in Adullam where he and his men took refuge. I cannot begin to imagine the thoughts that must have flown through David's mind as sits in the darkness of that cave; hated and hunted by Saul and rejected by an ungodly king, Abimelech.

There are some who suggest that the term "Abimelech" is a title rather than a name,³ much as the term "Pharaoh" was a title for the kings of Egypt. That being the case, there is here no contradiction as to the identity of the man in the heading.

This psalm, in spite of many difficult circumstances (fears -v.4; troubles – v. 7, 17;

³ *The Psalms: An Exposition* by Arno Gabelein; Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, NJ, 1939, p. 153.

and many afflictions – v. 19), is a psalm of praise.

It is also interesting to note that there are a total of twenty-seven references to Jehovah, either by name or by use of a pronoun referring to God. There are two major divisions to the psalm as follows: Part One: Praising God (verses 1-10) and Part Two: Practical Propositions for the People of God (verses 11-22).

PART ONE

PRAISING GOD

- I. A LIFE OF PRAISE (vss. 1-3)

- II. A LIFE OF PRAYER & PROTECTION (vss. 4-7)

- III. A LIFE OF PROVISION (vss. 8-10)

A LIFE OF PRAISE (34:1-3)

A. Personally (vss. 1-2)

1. *In my Mind* (v. 1, 2a)

It is worth noting the phrase with which David begins this psalm, “*I will bless the LORD...*” There are three ways to examine this phrase. First, the determined exercise of his own will, “*I,*” not someone else but, “*I will bless the LORD.*” Whether anyone else blesses the Lord or not is not the issue. You (and I) *can* bless the LORD.

Second, David expresses a determination of his will to so bless the LORD when he says, “*I **will** bless the LORD.*” It is an easy thing to place the responsibility that we ourselves have on to others and say what *they* should, or should not, do. Here David begins with a deliberate and determined act of his will that,

whatever else happens, he is personally going to bless the LORD.

Third is the use of the word *bless*. In the original language, it carries the idea of “an act of adoration,”⁴ though the words *adore*, or *adoration* themselves are not found in the Authorized Version of the Bible.

A common phrase is sung by millions around the world during every Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Originally written in Latin in the mid eighteenth century,⁵ “O Come All Ye Faithful” has become one of the most beloved Christmas carols around the English-speaking world. The music came first, followed by the lyrics about a year later. It has become one of the best-loved carols of the season.

⁴ *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, H1288.

⁵ *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas* by Ace Collins; Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2001, pp. 126-128.

“O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord.”

He is worthy of our praise, our exaltation, our adoration, not only for what He has done, but for Who He is! In Revelation 5 we find these words:

*11) “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12) Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and **blessing**. 13) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, **Blessing**, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:11-13).*

Twice the word *blessing* is here used conveying the same meaning as the Hebrew word in Psalm 34. Strong's Concordance puts it this way in one of several usages: "*fine speaking, that is, elegance of language; commendation; that is, (reverentially) adoration...*"⁶

Now David moves on to instruct as to when and how long God's children should thus *bless*, or *adore* Him. Note that it is to be a constant blessing as the word *all* implies. When used to describe the word *times*, its meaning is quite clear. There is never to be a time in the believer's life when he is *not* blessing, or bowing in adoration of God - yes, even in the midst of adversity, problems and peril. This psalm makes that quite clear as David further on in the psalm relates the fears, troubles and afflictions he had to endure.

⁶ Strong's Concordance, G2129.

God's faithful servant Job did not cease to praise, worship and adore his God even when he endured those almost incomprehensible trials. The loss of all of his wealth, the loss of all ten children, the loss of his health, the loss of his wife's support and encouragement and, as if that wasn't enough, his three so-called friends Job later called out as "*miserable comforters are ye all!*" (Job 16:2)

The Apostle Paul's challenge to the Philippian church was to "*rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice*" (Phil. 4:4). A few verses later he continues with this challenge: "*Be careful⁷ for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be known unto God*" (v. 6). The word *thanksgiving* is described as "grateful language to God as an act of worship."⁸

⁷ Lit. "full of care or anxious."

⁸ *Strong's Concordance*, G2169.

2. “In my Mouth” (v. 1b, 2b)

Those only bless and praise God in the mind have not, in reality given Him praise and adoration. David here makes it clear that true praise and adoration must also be in the mouth as well as the mind, and continually so. *“I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth”* (v. 1b). The word here translated *praise* is a “laudation; specifically...a hymn.”⁹ There are two thoughts regarding this word and its application. First, based on the actual meaning of the word, is the idea of a spoken word, a verbalization of such praise. In other words, not what some have called “secret service Christians.” One who is afraid to verbalize his praise of God perhaps, has no real praise in the heart.

Second is the idea of praising God in song. After all, the entire collection of the psalms were originally intended to be sung. What a rich

⁹ *Strong’s Concordance*; H8416.

blessing it is to hear a group of sincere Christians lifting their voices in song! My advice to the reader is this: if you desire to really enjoy and be blessed by the song service, DO NOT SIT IN THE BACK OF THE AUDITORIUM! I guarantee you will miss the blessing of hearing God's people worship Him in song. Best place to sit (and participate, of course) is near the front or somewhere in the middle of the congregation where you are surrounded by the singing! It is very much like the "surround sound" that people like to have in their homes. Only this is surround sound of the heart.

In another psalm, David penned, *"Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honor all the day"* (Psalm 71:8). Once more there is an emphasis on praising God all the time, all the day, every day. And why not? Is He not worthy of such praise, even in the midst of difficult times? May I say that praising God is never out of season? Spurgeon wrote that "He who praises God for mercies shall never want for a mercy for

which to praise.”¹⁰ The Apostle Paul likewise wrote, “*In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*” (1 Thess. 5:18).

3. “*My Soul*” (v. 2)

David goes from the *mind* to the *mouth* and now to the *soul*. Now he has gone from blessing and praising God to boasting in the LORD. One of the several meanings of the word *boast* is “to shine; hence to make a show; to boast...”¹¹ It is interesting to note that, in verse one, David writes of “blessing the LORD” and here, in verse two, he is “boasting in the LORD.”

It is an easy thing to boast and brag on ourselves and our accomplishments, as is all too often the case. Instead of allowing the flesh to brag on itself, the spiritual man does his bragging

¹⁰ *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, Third Printing, 1981, p. 135.

¹¹ *Strong's Concordance*; H1984.

on God. The idea here is one of bragging sincerely on God and His goodness whereby others are forced to take notice, whether or not they agree.

Commenting on the second part of verse two (*“the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad,”*), Spurgeon wrote, “They [the humble] are usually grieved to hear [human] boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord’s goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.”¹²

B. Publicly (vs. 3)

¹² *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, Third Printing, 1981, p. 136.

1. *“O magnify the LORD...”* – To magnify the LORD is to advance Him; to promote Him; to be proudly speaking of Him. After all, the Christian life is not about the individual, it is all about God and His salvation offered through Jesus Christ. Pastor John Ross, in 1907, wrote an article in which he stated, “We can add nothing to God’s happiness or greatness, but we can please Him with our adoration, and we can promote His glory and magnify His honor before the intelligences of earth and heaven.”¹³

2. *“...with me...let us...together.”* This is what corporate worship is all about; worshipping God together as a group of redeemed ones. The psalmist (unidentified) wrote, “*O come, let **us** worship and bow down: let **us** kneel before the LORD **our** Maker*” (Psalm 95:6). There is nothing more precious than God’s people worshipping him together in spirit and in truth with hearts overflowing with melody!

¹³ Lecture Two in *The Psalms in Worship*, Edited by John McNaugher; The United Presbyterian Board of Publications, Pittsburg, 1907, p. 18.

3. “*exalt His name!*” Allow me just a sampling of the importance of His ***name***.

** Psalm 8:1 – “O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”

** Psalm 72:17 – “His name shall endure for ever...”

**Psalm 72:19 – “And blessed be his glorious name for ever...”

** Psalm 76:1 - “In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel.”

**Psalm 138:2 - “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth...”

**Psalm 148:13 – “Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.”

Many a hymnwriter has beautifully reflected on the name of the Lord in song. I will quote the choruses of only two.

“O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Thy name.
Mountains, valleys,
All creation tells Thy fame.
Heavens declare it,
All Thy wondrous works proclaim;
O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Thy name.”¹⁴

“That beautiful Name,
That wonderful Name
From sin has pow’r to free us!
That beautiful Name,
That matchless Name,
That matchless Name is Jesus!”¹⁵

¹⁴ *How Majestic Is Thy Name* by Ron Hamilton. Taken from *Bible Truth Hymns*, Newport News, VA, 2008, p. 52.

¹⁵ *That Beautiful Name* by Jean Perry. Taken from *Bible Truth Hymns*, Newport News, VA, 2008, p. 50.

Addressing the subject of corporate worship, Charles Spurgeon put it this way. “Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is likest heaven where it abounds.”¹⁶

¹⁶ *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, Third Printing, 1981, p. 136.

II

A LIFE OF PRAYER and PROTECTION (34:4-7)

A. The Parallels between verses 4 and 6.

There are four notable parallels in these verses that are well worth considering. They are as follows:

1. Verse 4: *"I sought the LORD..."*
Verse 6: *"...this poor man cried..."*

It seems apparent to this author from the context that both expressions, "I" and "this poor man," refer to the same person, David. Seeking the Lord is a most important spiritual exercise. *"Seek and ye shall find"* is the admonition of Scripture (Luke 11:9). But how we seek is also of utmost importance for the psalmist said,

*“Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with **the whole heart**”* (Psalm 119:2). One of the problems in the 21st Century church is that of half-heartedness, in seeking, in praying, in serving, etc. Rather, there needs to be whole-heartedness with enthusiasm in both seeking and serving the Lord.

2. Verse 4: *“...and He heard me...”*

Verse 6: *“and the LORD heard him...”*

In Psalm 145:18, David wrote that *“The LORD is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him **in truth**”* (Psalm 145:18). Paul said that *“whosoever shall **call** on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13).

3. Verse 4: *“...and delivered me...”*

Verse 6: *“...and saved him...”*

God delights in delivering His people from many varied circumstances when 1) they recognize that only He is able to so deliver, and

2) when they call and cry out to Him for His mercy. The word *saved* here is not used in the same sense as when one is *saved from his sin* in a conversion experience; here it is to be saved or delivered from *fears and troubles*.

4. Verse 4: “...*from all my fears.*”
Verse 6: “...*out of all his troubles...*”

In the twenty-first chapter of First Samuel, where this experience of David's is recorded, it is said that David was “*sore afraid of Achish*” (v. 12). The word for *sore* means “vehemently; by implication wholly... (often with other words as an intensive or superlative).¹⁷ Another way of putting it would be that David was *terrified* of Achish and what he might do to him.

The word for *troubles* refers to “adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation,”¹⁸ any

¹⁷ *Strong's Concordance*, H3966.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, H6869.

one of which by itself would describe what David was going through during this low point in his life.

In the light of all this, the two words *from* and *out* must not be overlooked. Praise God, when He delivers, He does not deliver *in* our troubles; He delivers His people *from* their fears and troubles. Psalm 40:2 declares that “*He* [God] brought me up also **out** of an horrible pit, **out** of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” God does not save His people *in* their sin; He saves them *from* their sin! And further, He takes them from the miry clay and the slime-pits of sin and sets them on a solid Rock and establishes their goings from that time forward. What a great God He is!

An interesting side note here. Although I am unable to recall where I read this, but it has been said that verse four was President Abraham’s favorite verse; that in his Bible there were significant stains beside it where his fingers had rested upon it. Think about that verse and the

tremendous burden that the President bore on his shoulders as he led our nation through four of its darkest years known to the world as the Civil War. *“I sought the LORD and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears.”* Remember that the Bible says that *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment”* (1 John 4:18).

B. The Phrase - *“They looked unto Him”* (v. 5)

In looking unto *Him* can only be a reference to their looking unto the LORD, especially when kept in the context of the preceding verse where David said, *“I sought the LORD.”* Observe that it was only as they looked to the Lord that their hearts were lightened and the burden they carried was *lightened*, or lifted.

In Acts 27: 18 and 38, the Apostle Paul found himself in a life-threatening storm while on his way to Rome as a political prisoner. The storm was so bad that it was recorded that they

*“lightened the ship by casting out the tackling”*¹⁹ of the ship (v. 18-19) and, later, by *casting out the wheat* (v. 38), a major part of the ship’s cargo.

The looking up to God here is almost that of a quiet, inward prayer in contrast to the out plea of verses five and six. Having sought the Lord and having the ear of God, coupled with His deliverance, the text says that *“...their faces were not ashamed.”* There can be little doubt that, in fleeing for his life from Saul, David suffered some sense of shame, though he had done nothing to warrant Saul’s hatred. Perhaps there was also some shame attached to his recalling his own dishonesty and deception in his behavior before Achish. But, having sought (and found) the LORD, that sense of shame was as well lifted from his shoulders. Can you yet hear the voice of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote these challenging words: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,*

¹⁹ “Tackling” refers to the rigging and equipment used to control the sails on a ship.

whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusted in Thee (Isaiah 26:3). In other words, God's perfect, or all-encompassing peace, is the experience of those only whose hearts, and minds are completely and totally stayed or fixed on His person. Get your eyes off the Master, and, like Peter's experience in his attempt to walk on the water like Jesus, you find yourself sinking in the sea of self-concern instead of basking in the joy of being Savior-concerned. It is an easy thing, to take one's eyes off the Master and begin to look at ourselves, our circumstances and our problems. That is when the peace of God is lost.

Upon making his request of Jesus to walk to Him on the water, Jesus granted His permission. There were some pretty good-sized waves on the sea, but no matter, Jesus had already given His disciples His presence and His peace. Now He grants to Peter His permission and His power to do the humanly impossible. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, all was well. It was, as he took

his eyes off Jesus and looked around him at his situation and circumstances, that he lost the peace of God, though he still had His permission, and immediately found himself in serious trouble. It was only as he humbled himself and cried for help that he was saved.²⁰

C. The Protection of God (v. 7)

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.”

In this psalm there are four references to *trouble, fear and afflictions* (verses 4, 6, 17 and 19) and yet there are five references to God’s deliverance (verses 4, 6, 7, 17, 19). It is interesting to note that there is always more than enough of God’s deliverances to meet any circumstance you may have to endure for a season.

²⁰ See Matthew 14:25-41.

Note here the phrase *“the angel of the LORD.”* Twice in Genesis 22, the *“angel of the LORD”* is mentioned. In verses twelve through fourteen, the first time the *angel of the LORD* spoke to him was to provide an alternate sacrifice in the place of his son Isaac. The second time the angel’s voice is heard is in verses fifteen through eighteen, where Jehovah gave to Abraham His promise of future international blessing among the people of the world. *“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice”* (v. 18).

Here, also, we find *“the angel of the LORD”* encamping around those that fear Him. The word *encampeth* here is used in a somewhat unusual way. It often is used historically referring to an army surrounding a city (encamping) in order to starve thus forcing the city to surrender. An example of that can be found in II Samuel 12:28 where Joab, King David’s chief general is speaking, *“Now therefore gather the rest of the*

people together, and encamp against the city, and take it..."

In the personal spiritual struggle, the psalmist wrote, *"Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear:"* (Psalm 27:3).

In the case of Psalm 34:7, we find that, instead of the enemy laying siege against God's child in a sinister attempt to cause him spiritual failure, we find that it is God Himself, as *"the angel of the LORD,"* Who is surrounding His people protecting those thus surrounded from the onslaughts of the enemy!

Even Satan recognizes this Godly "encampment" calling it a "hedge." When God challenged Satan about whether or not he [Satan] had ever considered Job, it is almost as though Satan hadn't even bothered with Job until that point because he recognized the hedge God had set around him. *"Doth Job fear God for*

nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him [similar to the “encampment of Psalm 34] and about his house, and about all that he hath now on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land:” (Job 1:9-10).

Ought God’s people rejoice and take confidence in that divine provision of protection? Maclaren wrote, “The depth of a man’s religion may be roughly, but on the *whole fairly*, tested by his irrepressible impulse to bring other men to the fountain from which he has drunk.”²¹

²¹ *The Expositor’s Bible: Psalms, Vol. 1*, by Alexander Maclaren; Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1892, p. 326.



A LIFE of PROVISION

A. *Taste* (v. 8) – To taste means to personally experience for one's self that which is being offered. No one can do the "tasting" for another. I may watch another person eating an orange all the while commenting on how sweet it is. But until I take an orange and taste for myself, it is nothing more than theoretical. Only as my taste buds come in contact with the sweet nectar of the fruit do I personally experience that flavor and have my appetite satisfied. And so it is in the spiritual realm. A saved child of God may tell another person about the sweetness of his relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but, until that other person "tastes" by faith for himself, he remains personally ignorant as to the reality of that relationship, though he be yearning for it. That must be personally experienced.

B. *See* (v. 8) – Here is another case of individual participation. Others cannot see for you what you will not see for yourself. *See* for yourself that what God has said is true. See it, believe it, trust it and receive it by faith!

C. *Trust* (v. 8) – The word *trust* means “to flee to for refuge.” There is the need, not only to so flee to God for refuge from sin in salvation, there is likewise the need to trust in Him all the time, in every circumstance and situation in everyday life. In the matter of salvation, the Bible says that “*whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:21). The word *believe* involves having faith “with respect to a person or thing; by implication...to put **trust** with.”²²

With respect to trusting God as a child of God on a daily basis, the Old Testament is nigh well full of references to trusting God for deliverance from their enemies. The prophet Isaiah wrote

²² Strong's Concordance G4100.

under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *“Trust ye in the LORD forever; for in the LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength”* (Isaiah 26:4).

During one of the old camp meetings at the famed Ocean Grove Assembly in northern New Jersey in the early 1880’s, a powerful and stirring message was preached from the text in Job 13:5, where Job cried, *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!”* The message so stirred the heart of one of the listeners, Pastor Edgar Page Stites, that he wrote the words to the following poem that was later set to music by Ira Sankey.²³

“Trusting Jesus”

*Simply trusting ev’ry day
Trusting thru a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.*

²³ *Al Smith’s Treasury of Hymn Stories* by Al Smith; Al Smith Ministries, Greer, SC, 1985, p. 272.

*Trusting as the moments fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting Him whate'er befall,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.*²⁴

D. *Fear* (v. 9) – The word *fear* is not used to convey the idea of terror or fright as it is commonly thought. However, for the unsaved individual there is a sense in which there might be such a terror for the Bible does say that “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10:31). But the psalmist is not here addressing the unconverted. He is addressing the Lord’s people. It basically means having a deep sense of reverential awe in understanding and appreciating Who God is. W.E. Vine refers to it as a “wholesome dread of

²⁴ *Worship and Service Hymnal*, Hope Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1968, p. 301.

displeasing God.”²⁵ Well said. The Apostle John wrote that *“There is no fear [terror] in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”* (I John 4:18). On the other hand, Proverbs 1:7 says that *“The fear [a moral reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...”* Again in Proverbs 9:10a we find this statement, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:”*

There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge deals with the accumulation of facts whereas wisdom deals with how to wisely put those facts into good use. Someone has said that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable and wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad!

There are two kinds of fear; one positive and one negative. One produces spiritual

²⁵ *Vine's Dictionary of N.T. Words* by W.E. Vine; Fleming H. Revell, Grand Rapids, 1952, p.84.

blessing and the other spiritual blight. One produces a deep sense of peace and an abiding security and the other a hopeless sense of one's own helplessness. C.H. Spurgeon also comments, "Fear God and fear nothing else."²⁶ How truly sad to see folks today who seem to be the very embodiment of Romans 3:18 which says that "*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*" There is a brazenness today against the things of God that is shocking. One protestor carried a placard that read "If Jesus comes back again, we'll kill Him again!" No fear of God...until the great day of judgment comes, and they find themselves standing before the very God they declared did not even exist; the very God against Whom their hearts were filled with such a wretched and pathetic hatred. But, alas, in that day it will be too late.

E. *Seek* (v. 10) – and you'll not go hungry!

²⁶ *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon, Volume II; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p. 138.

The Bible has much to say about the importance of seeking the Lord. Allow me to give but a sampling.

1. Isaiah 55:6 – *“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:”*

2. I Chronicles 16:11 – *“Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. ”*

3. Matthew 6:33 – *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

4. Psalm 119:2 – *“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.”*

5. Psalm 84:11 - *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*

One pastor put it this way, “[God] has said to no one, ‘Seek ye My face,’ in vain.”²⁷ By way of contrast, the Bible makes it very clear that those who have no relationship with God are not really interested in having such a relationship with Him. Paul writes. *“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Romans 3:11-12).

C.H. Spurgeon, shared the following in his *Treasury of David*.

“People are apt to fancy that a wild beast’s life must be happy – in a brute’s sense But the contrary is the case: the career of a flesh-eating animal must be wretched, even from the tiger’s point of view. They must often suffer the pangs of long-continued hunger,

²⁷ Lecture Two, by John Ross in *The Psalms in Worship* Edited by John McNaugher; The United Presbyterian Board of Publications, Pittsburg, 1907, p. 18.

and when they find and kill food they frequently have to wage desperate war for the enjoyment of their victim....If the opportunity occurs for watching them in the chase, they are seen to sneak and sniff about, far less like “kings of the forest,” than poor, dejected, starving wretches, desperate upon the subject of their next meal. They suffer horribly from diseases induced by foul diet and long abstinence; and very few are found without scars in their hide – the token of terrible combat. If they live to old age their lot is piteous: their teeth are worn down, their claws are blunt, and in this state numbers of them perish by starvation. Not one half of the wild animals die a natural death; and their life, so far as can be observed, is a series of stern privations, with desperate and bloody fights among themselves.”²⁸

²⁸ *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon, Volume II; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p. 145-146.

PART TWO

PRACTICAL PROPOSITIONS

- IV. A LIFE OF PURITY (vss. 11-17)
- V. A LIFE OF PARDON (v. 18)
- VI. A LIFE OF PERPLEXITY (vs. 19-21)
- VII. A LIFE OF PRESERVATION (v. 22)

IV

A LIFE OF PURITY

A. The Challenge (v. 11)

1. “*Come*” - Literally, “Gather around me. I have something to tell you.”

2. “*Ye children.*” – There are three possibilities as to the use of the word *children*. First, David could actually be addressing in this psalm younger children even up to young men. Second, it might also be a possible reference to the band of some four hundred men who had followed David during the time of his exile. Third, it could be a reference to the nation as a whole, who are frequently referred to in the scriptures as “the children of Israel,” almost like a national

title. Whatever the group thus addressed, David is about to teach them about the perils of life and how to live with God's blessing.

Solomon, his son, later wrote, reminding young people to "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) before going on to describe the infirmities of old age.

3. "*Hearken unto me.*" – Basically he is saying, "Listen in earnest to me; I have something of great importance to tell you. Listen to me. Heed what I have to say." There is here a sense of earnestness in even the tone of his voice as he almost pleads with his listeners to listen, learn and live what he is about to teach them.

4. "*I will teach you...*" – "I will teach you and instruct you from my own experience. Listen, Learn and Live!" There is no better

teacher than experience. A mother can sincerely and earnestly teach and warn a child not to touch a hot stove. In the mind of the child, however, looms the question, "Why?" Just like Eve in the Garden of Eden. That which is forbidden often becomes more attractive through the sense of curiosity. When the child finally disobeys his mother and touches the hot stove; well, then he has learned an important lesson for himself, hopefully without extensive injury!

5. *"The fear of the LORD."* – Of equal importance is not only the exercise of teaching but what is taught. Here David has a heart for his audience that they learn about and understand the importance of a proper *fear of the LORD*, keeping in mind what that fear is; a reverential awe of the Person of God, the Position of God and the Power of God.

Matthew Henry made this comment: “David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he does not say to his children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all the arts and sciences, better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves and to teach our children.”²⁹

B. The Question (v. 12)

Now comes the question, “*What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days,*

²⁹ *Matthew’s Commentary* by Matthew Henry, Fleming H. Revell, Neptune, NY, originally published in 1710, p. 357.

that he may see good?” It would seem that the answer to this question should be obvious. What man is he that does *not* desire to live a long and prosperous life? Unfortunately, for many that desire is only for the accumulation and enjoyment of earthly things, material possessions, the “good life,” as it were. For the child of God, however, the “good life” is not about things but about serving God and enjoying His blessings for whatever years He allows. David takes the next ten verses to answer the question he has raised.

C. The Answer (vss. 13-22)

The answer to the question is a rather extensive one, but one that needs to be seriously considered.

1. Speaking truth (v. 13) *“Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile.”* We are living in a day when men care little for

truth, much less, *the Truth*. Yet, the Word of God commands that our words as well as our actions be honest.

*** “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of **honest** report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” (Acts 6:3)*

*** “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things **honest** in the sight of all men.” (Romans 12:17)*

*** “Providing for **honest** things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” (II Corinthians 8:21)*

*** “Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is **honest**, though we be as reprobates.” (II Corinthians 13:7)*

****** *“But speaking the **truth** in love...”*
(Ephesians 4:15) | It is one thing to *speak the truth*; it is quite another matter to so *speak the truth in love*. It is not always easy to tell someone the truth, especially if there is the possibility of that person being hurt by the truth. However, truth is truth and sometimes is absolutely necessary to be spoken. When done in the right way, to the right person, at the right time and in the right spirit, the results must be left with the Lord.

2. Separation from evil (v. 14a) – *“Depart from evil...”*

The doctrine of separation is much neglected, even denied, in many circles today. But it is clearly taught in the scriptures beginning in the Book of Genesis and carried throughout the rest of the Bible. Partly due to the endurance of the reader, as well as the limit of space, I will not even begin to attempt

an exhaustive study of this subject. A few samples will suffice.

In Genesis 1:4 we find these words: *“And God saw the light, that it was good: and God **divided** the light from the darkness.”* Then in Leviticus 20:24 and 26 we are told, *“I am the LORD your God, which have **separated** you from other people”* (v. 24). In verse 26 we find, *“And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have **severed** you from other people, that ye should be mine.”*

Please note the three different English words used here. Each of them comes from the same Hebrew word meaning “to distinguish or make a difference.” In a nutshell the purpose of separation, whether in the physical world (i.e. day and night, sunrise and sunset, etc.) is to maintain a difference between light and darkness, between good and evil, between right and wrong.

While there is a tendency to emphasize the negative side of separation (i.e. separation *from*³⁰), it should be remembered that separation is primarily a *positive*, i.e. separation unto the Lord. The principle of separation is rooted in the holiness of God.

Pickering writes, “God is a separatist. He is separated from all that is evil. Holiness is a principle of His nature. It is consistent, therefore, to expect that bodies which He would establish upon this earth to represent Him would be required to be holy (separated) as well. They would expect to mirror His character.” He continues, “It should be noted that the same standards held up in the Old Testament are maintained in the New as well. Peter declares that the church is a ‘holy

³⁰ See II Corinthians 6:17 as an example.

nation' (I Peter 2:9), which phrase is also used in Exodus 19:6."³¹

On a personal level, Moses wrote in Leviticus 11:44-45, *"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore **be holy, for I am holy.**"* Though some might claim these verses as being Old Testament and therefore not for today, the Apostle Peter brings that passage right on into the New Testament writing, *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so **be ye holy in all manner of conversation...**"* (I Peter 1:15).

³¹ *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church* by Ernest Pickering; Regular Baptist Press, Schaumburg, IL, 1979, p. 173.

Paul wrote that *"...the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world..."* (Titus 2:11-12). In his letter to Timothy, Paul exhorted his young friend in the ministry to *"flee youthful lusts"* (II Timothy 2:22).

It is, as one separates himself to the Lord, that he finds it necessary to separate from all that displeases the Lord. The former is the Cause and the latter is the Effect.

3. Sowing good (v. 14b) – *"...and do good..."*

The doing of good here is not for the purpose of attaining salvation but rather a result of already having been saved. The Bible clearly states that we are saved by grace *through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man*

should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). But the very next verse goes on to talk about the relationship of works coming as a result of that salvation.

*“For we are his workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

In his letter to Titus, Paul wrote that *“[Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**”* (Titus 2:14).

*To the Corinthian church Paul wrote the following: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always **abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that **your labour** is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Corinthians 15:58). The doing of good for the believer is as natural a thing as

breathing air. In fact, it is vital, when done in the right spirit and attitude, to enjoying God's blessing.

4. Seeking peace (v. 14c) – “...seek peace, and pursue it.”

To seek peace literally means “to search out or strive after.”³² Strong also suggests that the word *pursue* means “to run after; to put to flight, follow.”³³ Jesus said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers*” (Matthew 5:9). It is sad that, in many churches today, there is much dissension and not an abundance of peace. And yet, the exhortation of scripture is to love the brethren. “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (John 13:35). “...esteem them [pastors and church leaders] *very highly in*

³² Strong's Concordance, H1245.

³³ Ibid., H7291.

love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (I Thessalonians 5:13).

Spurgeon said, “Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power.”³⁴ Commenting on the word *pursue*, he continued, “Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire...Follow after peace when it shuns you; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit.”³⁵ The psalmist said, “*Behold, how good and pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133:1).

³⁴ *The Treasury of David* by C.H. Spurgeon, Volume II; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p. 139.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

5. Sanctified living (v. 15) - *“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”*

We have here what seems to be a look that is one of observance and of tender compassion. When the righteous (those who are in a right relationship with God) cry, that cry does not fall on deaf ears. Notice that His ears are *open*; as though He is waiting and listening for the call of His child. Wonderful is the promise that the child of God, not only has the privilege, but has been invited to *“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16). Notice that it is boldness, not arrogance. The word means an “all out spokenness, that is, frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication assurance.”³⁶

³⁶ *Strong’s Concordance*, from G3956 and a derivative of G4483.

6. Solemn warning against evil living (v. 16) –
“The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Interesting to observe that, while the Eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, His Face is set against the workers of iniquity. *Of the few instances where the Face of the LORD is mentioned, most have to do with His wrath against the ungodly. Here are but three examples.*

*** “For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire” (Jeremiah 21:10).*

*** “And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face” (Ezekiel 38:18).*

*** “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).*

For a study in the contrast between the righteous and unrighteous man, see the author’s book *Psalm 1: A Song of Contrasts*.

7. Salvation from trouble (v. 17) - *“The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”*

I here use the term “salvation” in the sense of a deliverance, not from sin, but from the trials and difficulties of life, or as David refers to *their troubles*. There are those who would have us believe that, based on this verse, God will deliver His children *out* of every difficult circumstance, thereby making their life easier. Such is not the case, however.

Just think about the many difficult times David experienced and, yes, God did ultimately deliver him safely through. Likewise did God graciously bring Job through his extremely difficult time, even blessing him and causing him to prosper more than He had aforesaid.

But then, there is the Apostle Paul. He, too, experienced life's many trials and God's deliverance through them. There were, however, those times when God chose, in His infinite wisdom, to *not* deliver him. In II Corinthians 12, Paul prayed three times for deliverance from what he described as a "thorn in the flesh. Referring to the many revelations he had been given, Paul wrote, *"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, 'My grace is*

sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

You will notice that God answered Paul’s prayer with a definite, “No.” The easiest thing for God to do would have been to heal him from whatever that thorn may have been. Instead, God gave Paul something he never even thought to pray and ask for – a more than sufficient supply of grace. Rather than bemoaning his situation and complaining that God never answered his prayers, he responded by glorying in infirmities. Why? Because when he was weak physically, he was strong spiritually. To him, that was a cause for rejoicing!

In II Corinthians 1, Paul stated that God, the Comforter, *“...comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God”* (II Corinthians 1:4).

The ultimate delivery of Paul from his earthly trials came in a completely different way – by taking him Home to heaven (See II Timothy 4).

V

A LIFE OF PARDON

(v. 18)

A. A Crushed Heart over Sin – *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a **broken** heart...”*

The word *broken* in verse eighteen expresses the idea of being crushed. There are many causes of a “broken heart” such as the loss of a loved one, a broken romantic relationship, or the loss of a particular position. In each case, there is an emotional weight borne on the shoulders of the individual. They may feel as though they have been “crushed.”

In the case of verse eighteen, this burden being borne, this sense of being “crushed” is the result of sin. In Psalm 38, David spoke of

the burden of sin as being too heavy for him (Psalm 38:4). There will never be a heavier burden than the burden of unconfessed sin. Since sin is against the Lord, confession must be made to Him, not some priest. David cried, *“I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me”* (Psalm 38:17). Later, he would write, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight”* (Psalm 51:4). It must be understood that *all* sin is first, and foremost, against God (See Genesis 39:9).

B. A Contrite Spirit – *“... and saveth such as be of a **contrite** spirit.”*

Both words, *broken* and *contrite* convey the same idea of being under a virtual unbearable load of sin. David was a broken man over his sin and repented. As a result he was restored to the place of fellowship and blessing. On the other hand, Saul stubbornly continued to resist refusing to repent until it was too late. One thing lacking in the modern

church today is a lack of brokenness over sin. All too often an admission of having made a “mistake” or used “bad judgment” is made rather than a heartfelt admission of the *sin* that has been committed.

C. A Converted Man – “... and **saveth** such as *be of a contrite spirit.*”

God only saves *convicted* men, not *competent* men. Without conviction, there is no conversion. Without repentance, there is no regeneration and without a godly sorrow for sin, there is no salvation. Remember that Jesus did not come to save *righteous* people, He came to save *reprobate* people. Until there is a broken heart and a contrite spirit over sin, there is no hope of salvation. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost!

On three occasions Jesus said that He did not “*come to call the righteous, but sinners to*

*repentance.*³⁷ Until a person is willing to admit that he (or she) is a sinner and, as a result, under the condemnation and wrath of God,³⁸ there is no hope of that person ever being saved. In God's divine plan, there is no room for self-righteousness; only the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ imparted to those who will believe and receive Christ.³⁹

³⁷ Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32.

³⁸ See John 3:16, 36.

³⁹ See John 1:12.

VI

A LIFE OF PERPLEXITY (vss. 19-21)

A. The Problems (v. 19) – *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”*

As children of God, we can be assured of one thing – life will not be a bed of roses without the thorns of affliction to remind us of God’s hatred and judgment of and for sin. Those who tell a person that if they just accept Jesus all of their troubles will be gone, are either totally deluded and ignorant of scripture or they are outright dishonest.

Paul challenged Timothy that *“...God hath not given us the spirit of fear [or cowardice];*

*but of power⁴⁰, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the **afflictions** of the gospel according to the power of God;"* (II Timothy 1:7-8) It is expressly because God has not given the spirit of fear that the believer needs to be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. Paul continued later by saying that *"If we **suffer**, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us"* (II Timothy 2:12).

In the very next chapter, Paul reminds Timothy how he [Timothy] *"hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, **persecutions, afflictions**, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what **persecutions** I*

⁴⁰ The same word from which comes the English word for "dynamite." Also the same as in Romans 1:16 where it is stated that the gospel of Christ is the **power** of God unto salvation.

*endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall **suffer persecution***" (II Timothy 3:10-12). Indeed, suffering is a part of the normal Christian life. But, through it all, God is with His children and will ultimately see them through by His grace and for His glory. Sometimes, God sees His children right through the circumstance or affliction and into His sweet presence.

B. The Prophecy (v. 20) – *"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."*

There can be little doubt as to the prophetic nature of this particular verse is quoted in John 19:36 where it says that *"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."*

It was a common practice in Roman times to break the legs of a crucified victim in order

to hasten his death. There was a small wooden step on a cross where the victim's feet could sort of "rest." As time went on, the victim would try to push his body up in an effort to get another gasp of air before sinking back down. By breaking the legs, that became impossible and the victim would slowly suffocate. It was, indeed, a barbaric, savage and inhuman way to die.

In Jesus' case, the breaking of His bones was not necessary as He had already "given up the ghost." As the sacrificial Lamb, so typified by the lambs offered on Passover, not one of His bones was to be broken. The command in Exodus 12, where the Passover was established, was simply, "*neither shall ye break a bone thereof*" (Exodus 12:46).⁴¹

In establishing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament church, Paul

⁴¹ This same command was further given in Numbers 9:12.

wrote, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is **my body, which is broken** for you: this do in remembrance of me”* (I Corinthians 11:23-24). Interesting that His was a broken *body*, but not a broken *bone*. Why? As a fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

C. The Punishment (v. 21) - *“Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.”*

“A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn” (Proverbs 12:2). Eventually the wicked man’s deeds and thoughts catch up with him and he is caught in a snare from whence he cannot extricate himself. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked”
(Isaiah 57:20-21).

The second part of Psalm 34:21 states that *“they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.”* The word *desolate* means “to be condemned or held guilty.”⁴² That is, in fact, exactly what Jesus told Nicodemus recorded in John 3:18. He said, *“...he that believeth not is **condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* At the end of the same chapter John added, *“...and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (v. 36).

This condemnation, or judgment, is not something in the future, but is the present condition of every person without Jesus Christ! In other words, you will not *be* condemned at some future point (so you can “cross that so-called

⁴² *The Expositor’s Bible: Psalms, Vol. I*, by Alexander Maclaren; Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1892, p. 331.

bridge when you get to it"); you are *already*, right now, this very moment, not only condemned, but already under the wrath of God! Did you get that? Do you understand that? My friend, this is a question of the utmost importance because your eternity depends on it. Heaven or Hell – there are no other choices.

VII

A LIFE OF PRESERVATION

(v. 22)

A. Converted - *“The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants:”* (v. 22a)

The word *redeemed* is a precious one for the believer. It can mean to make a purchase by paying a price, or it can mean to buy back that which once belonged to the purchaser. In the former case, the concept refers to salvation, the fact that the believer has been delivered from the penalty of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul put it this way, *“For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

What was the purchase price for eternal life? Peter said that *“Forasmuch ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible*

things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;" (I Peter 1:18). Salvation cannot be purchased with all the money in the world. Salvation cannot be earned by all the good works in the world. Salvation is given as the gift of God through the Lord Jesus Christ (See Romans 6:23).

Jesus even made salvation available to those who were not worthy. Paul says that "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). In conversion, the sinner is made a new creature in Christ. He no longer belongs to himself but now belongs to God. The hymnwriter put it this way:

*Now I belong to Jesus,
Jesus belongs to me,
Not for the years of time alone,
But for eternity.⁴³*

⁴³ *Now I Belong to Jesus*, words and music by Norman Clayton; 1943 (standard in nearly every hymnbook).

B. Not Condemned – “...and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.” (v. 22b)

There are two key words in this part of the verse. They are *trust* and *desolate*. First is the word *trust*. Maclaren comments, “The word that is here translated, rightly, ‘trust,’ means literally to fly to a refuge, or to betake oneself to some defense in order to get shelter there.”⁴⁴ It is a reliance on God alone to do what God said He would do, apart from any human effort. What a wonderful blessing to know, not just intellectually, but experientially, that “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1).

Guilty? Ah, yes, guilty as charged for the Bible says, “*that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:*

⁴⁴ *Expositions of Holy Scripture* by Alexander Maclaren; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982, Vol. 4, p. 222.

*that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty** before God” (Romans 3:19). Guilty? Yes! Condemned? NO! Why? Because Christ paid the penalty for sin by “his own self [bearing] our sins in his own body on the tree...” (1 Peter 2:24). Are you trusting in Christ alone for your salvation?*

*Second, the word, **desolate**. In discussing verse twenty-one, we noted earlier that the word means “to be condemned or held guilty.” A careful observation reveals the identical phrase used in both verse twenty-one and verse twenty-two. The phrase is, **shall be desolate**. While the same phrase is used, the meanings are exactly the opposite.*

In verse twenty-one, it is clear that the person spoke of shall be found guilty and therefore be condemned. But in verse twenty-two, there is another key word, the

word *none* – *one of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*” In other words, none of those who are trusting in the Lord will be condemned because of their trust in the Lord. One is condemned and the other is without condemnation.

It is a wonderful thought to realize that God, in His grace, will preserve us until He is ready to take us Home to glory. After that, He will preserve His own throughout eternity! What a blessed thought. So, in spite of the problems and perplexities that flood into His people’s lives, those lives can be lives of praise.

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (II Timothy 4:18).

Allow me to conclude our study in this wonderful psalm with the words of the well-loved gospel song by Fanny J. Crosby,

“Praise Him! Praise Him!”

Praise Him! Praise Him!
Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
Sing, O Earth, His
Wonderful love proclaim!
Hail Him! Hail Him!
Highest archangels in glory;
Strength and honor
Give to His holy name!
Like a shepherd
Jesus will guard His children,
In His arms
He carries them all day long:

Praise Him! Praise Him!
Tell of His excellent greatness;
Praise Him! Praise Him!

Ever in joyful song!⁴⁵

This psalm has been an old Hebrew song of praise. May our hearts be filled with that same praise today for He alone is worthy!

AMEN!

⁴⁵ *Praise Him! Praise Him!* Words by Fanny J. Crosby, music by Chester G. Allen.

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