

Lesson Five – June 28

THE HEART OF FORGIVENESS

PSALM 34:1-10

Overview: Psalm 34 is a praise Psalm starting with a call for praise followed by the reasons why we should praise God. David finds himself on the run after he determines that Saul is seeking to kill him. He flees to Gath, and is confronted by the Philistine King of Gath, here referenced as Abimelech, but whose true name is Achish. David is caught in a real predicament as the Philistines began to question David to the point David feared for his life. David was overcome with fear and decided that his only chance of survival was to pretend to be insane. The trick worked and David was allowed to leave. Not knowing where to go and filled with fear David made his way to a cave where he hid from Saul. He writes this Psalm to praise God for not abandoning him even though his decision to run to Gath was probably contrary to God's will. Fear drove David to run from Saul without thinking and in so doing, he ran from a dangerous situation to an even greater one. It was a really bad decision, and David is praising God for being faithful in rescuing him even when he did not make a wise choice. God is willing to forgive us of our stupid decisions when he knows that our heart is right with him. David praised God, calls for others to join with him in praising God and acknowledges that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear the Lord, ready to pluck the faithful out from the danger they have stupidly allowed themselves to get caught up in. David has come to realize that God will be there to protect and defend those who trust in Him. Why? Because David truly knows that God is good and that for "those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

What is the central focus of this Psalm? What is David telling us?

David is praising God for being faithful and keeping His promises in all circumstances. God is consistent and His ways never waver or fluctuate, and for those who trust in Him, He will shower them with joy and happiness. David is overwhelmed with God's tremendous love and when David realized that God had forgiven him of his hasty and stupid actions, David was grateful and called for all to "magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. He wanted others to see God's love and His power and to share in his joy. Through God's protective care, David was delivered from all of his fears, and for those who

looked to God they became “radiant and their faces were not ashamed.” (verse 5) A reference to the radiant face of Moses, who after meeting with God would return to the Israelite camp and God’s glory would radiate from Moses. David is expressing the radiance that exists for those who trust God and are experiencing a true relationship with God for God is a God of love and desires to be in a relationship with us. He loves it when we finally get a glimpse of Him and see that He is all that really matters. If you feel like you are doing without something you think you need, maybe, just maybe, God is allowing you to go without it because He wants you to see how much you need Him. That is what David had come to realize, that God wants us to trust in Him and turn to Him for all our needs, concerns, fears and especially for our protection. David found that as he ran out of fear to escape impending danger, that he failed to seek God’s guidance and in so doing he ran in the wrong direction and found himself in an even greater dilemma. David chose to flee and ran into the hands of the Philistines who hated David for having killed Goliath. But David turned to God’s forgiving love, and was allowed to escape. David as he pens this Psalm does so with great joy and happiness because he has come to realize that He can trust God and experience His goodness when he cries out for His help.

Progression or Steps that lead to a deeper relationship with God

The progression we see in Psalm 34 is first, based upon a relationship between God and David. David in fleeing King Saul finds himself facing near death as he runs away from one king into the hands of another king. So, what did David do? He prayed and God answered. God rescued him from what he was fearing at the time – which was the Philistine king and the possibility of death at his hands. David was running from one fear (King Saul) to another fear (the Philistine king). God delivered David from both of those fears forgiving him of his unwise decision to flee to Gath. And David praises God for what He did, then he turns his praise to what God has done for others. That is significant as David wants others to join with him in praising and honoring God. For those who fear (revere or are in awe) the Lord, they are to rejoice to show their trust in God and in that way, they can delight in the goodness of God. This progression is built around trust which forms the basis for one’s relationship with God. Trust in God; pray for His intervention and know that through His grace He will provide the resources to overcome the situation. And through His actions you will be able to taste the goodness of God and can rejoice with joy and happiness with others who have come to see and recognize the power and love of God as well.

How does this impact your walk with God?

Psalm 34 teaches us to remember God's great commandment as recorded in Matthew 22:37, "Jesus said to him, "you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your mind." If we love God with all that we are, we will always have all that we need. He is truly all that we need. Like David we can run toward the world to find refuge, like David did as he ran to Gath and the Philistines to escape Saul. Or we can run to God and seek His help, His guidance, and His protection in all that we are faced with. When we can trust God and understand His truth, knowing that God is a faithful God – consistent and never changing. And because God never changes, we can take Him at His word, which is Truth. God through His love for us sent His Son, Jesus, as our rescuer and in Him we have eternal life, and through Him we can overcome the world and shine as lights without fault in this crooked and perverse world as we hold firmly to the word of life. "And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain." (Phil. 2:16) Our hope rests in Christ and when we run, let us run in the assurance of that hope, not in vain as David did when he ran from Saul into the land of Gath and the Philistines who hated David as much as Saul did. Put your faith in Jesus and through Him we will have joy and happiness knowing that we can trust Him. Do you ever find yourself running without seeking God's help? How do you deal with a friend that is running to the world to deal with his struggles?