

The Psalms of David

*Franklin Christian Church
Fall 2017 Life Group Study*



Psalm 34 (Week of Sept. 24; 1 Sam. 18-23)

Introduction: Life sometimes takes us unexpected places. In this week's sermon, we looked at a handful of chapters from the life of David (1 Sam. 18-23) and tracked his journey as he fled from Saul, made a covenant with Jonathan, and found himself in some unforeseeable circumstances. One of these circumstances involved David acting like a madman before a foreign king to disguise his true identity (1 Sam. 21:10-15). Psalm 34 is attributed to this very event in the life of David. It's a psalm of thanksgiving that arises from a bizarre and potentially life-threatening experience in David's life. David's heart was one that could not help but express gratitude to God for watching over him through a time like this. Think about some unexpected turns your life has taken and how God may have formed your heart through these times as you read and discuss this week's psalm.

Have a group member read the psalm aloud. Group members with Bibles can follow along and note anything that stands out.

1. (vv. 1-3): Psalm 34 opens with verses of joyful praise. Depending on what translation you're using, verse 2 says something like, "My soul will boast in the Lord." The Hebrew word for "soul" that David uses here is *nephesh*, and it conveys a sense of the innermost part of a person's being—the part that integrates mind, body, and heart. We could say of this verse that David's "innermost being" boasts in the Lord. Think about your innermost being. Deep down, what does your heart boast in? What would you say defines you as a person? (Accomplishments, education, career, income, mistakes, past, God, etc.) Discuss ways you are tempted to "boast" in your soul in things other than your identity in Christ.

2. (vv. 4-7): These verses perhaps recall a prayer from David's heart as he feigned insanity before the king of Gath. "This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles." Take some time for each group member to give God glory by sharing a way he has brought you through a difficult circumstance in your life.

3. (vv. 8-14): In verse 8, David begins to instruct us in following the Lord based on his experience with God. His invitation to "*Taste and see that the Lord is good*" implies *real life experience* – living a life with God that is submitted to his ways. It's as if David is saying, "Go all-in on God and you won't be disappointed." It's one matter to *know about* God – to know Bible stories and have answers to Sunday School or Life Group questions. It's another matter to *know God* – to experience daily life with him – to taste and see that he is good. What are ways you experience God in daily life? That you "taste and see" him working, even in normal daily circumstances?

4. David follows his invitation to "taste and see" (v. 8) with an instruction to "fear the Lord" (v. 9). The fear of the Lord has been described as a recognition of who you are in light of who God is – seeing a glimpse of our finitude and sinfulness in light of God's immeasurability and holiness.

How have you understood what it is to fear the Lord in your life?

How does this differ from other ways we might be "fearful" (of death, spiders, or public speaking)?

Have you ever known someone who lived with a healthy fear of the Lord? What in their life exemplified this?

5. (vv. 17-18): These verses contain a comforting assurance to those of us who are suffering: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." These verses bring to mind the humanity of Jesus – he is not a God who is unfamiliar with our sufferings (Acts 3:18; Hebrews 4:15) but one who knows what it is to suffer. How have you experienced God's nearness in times of suffering in your life?

6. What does this psalm reveal about David's heart? What about God's heart? What has this revealed in your hearts?