

Session 4

May 5, 2024

WORSHIPING GOD

Psalm 34:1-3; 8-10; 15-18

I have always believed and taught that there are five major functions of the church: (1) worship, (2) missions/evangelism, (3) discipleship, (4) ministry, and (5) fellowship. And while all are essential elements of a healthy and vibrant church, none is more important than worship. In fact, I always said if we gather together on Sunday morning and fail to worship, we have failed as a church! Psalm 34 is a psalm of deliverance, penned by David. In it, three worship themes are highlighted.

Praise (vv. 1-3). Praise is the cornerstone of worship. By its very nature, praise consists of exalting the Lord while humbling the believer. There are three words in the Old Testament translated as praise. All three connote honor and thanksgiving; and all three underscore the worthiness of the recipient. In these first verses, three aspects of praise are mentioned. First, there is *continuity*. David said he would praise the Lord “at all times,” and that praise would “always be” on his lips (v. 1). Second, there is *humility*. Interestingly, the word “boast” has the same root as the word *hallelujah*. So, to “boast in the Lord” doesn’t imply some kind of arrogant bragging, but rather a humble exaltation that points all attention to the Lord. Notice the positive vibe of his praise as well. Those of like mind will hear his praise and rejoice in it (v. 2). Third, there is *community*. Proclaiming the Lord’s greatness is the essence of praise, but here David invites the congregation to join in (v. 3). While solitary praise is certainly a part of our quiet, personal devotion, exaltation is multiplied when other voices join the choir. For reflection: *Think about the whole “praise chorus” phenomenon in our churches. Do you think praise teams and praise bands enhance our worship? Do they ever distract from it? How do you decide?*

Provision (vv. 8-10). Few phrases capture the senses better than this: “Taste and see that the Lord is good!” While verse 3 invites the congregation to give Him praise, verse 8 invites the congregation to receive of His goodness. To taste is to *sample* it; to *try it out*. There is great confidence here. David, a man after God’s own heart, had experienced the Lord’s bounty and he invites others to come beside him. In Him, they will find refuge (v. 8). The word translated “refuge” is literally the word “trust.” The idea here is confidence. Blessed in the one who is fully dependent upon Him; in Him, there is security. Those who revere Him are rewarded by Him. Literally, they “lack nothing.” The illustration that follows is dramatic. Even lions that are young and strong find themselves hungry at times! But those who pursue the things of God will *never* lack that which is good (see James 1:17). For reflection: *The words “fear” and “seek” have prominent positions in these verses. How does one fear the Lord and still seek Him?*

Compassion (vv. 15-18). The third element of worship is compassion. Notice the features of the Lord turned towards man. His *eyes* are vigilantly watching the righteous; and His *ears* are trained towards us lest some evil threaten us (v. 15). To “set one’s *face* against,” is to confront head-on. David knew no warrior would dare turn his back on the enemy. Here, the Lord is confronting the threat of evil face on, with the intent that the wicked, all their ancestors, and all their influence be obliterated from memory (see Ps. 109:13). Verses 17 and 18 are set in startling contrast to the harshness of those before. With the same intensity that he punishes the wicked, He will deliver

the righteous! With the same passion He judges the proud, He will bind up the brokenhearted and save those who are crushed in spirit. For reflection: *Look up Jesus' pronouncement in Luke 4:18-19. How does this portrait of Christ fit into our discussion?*