

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

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Psalm 34 — Happiness in Christ

The title of Psalm 34 I think probably sums up the desire of every Christian and that is 'happiness in Christ.' But happiness in Christ comes to those who genuinely trust in Christ and I think at the beginning of 2008 it is very important for us to look at how we approach each year as it comes and goes at an every increasing rate I might add. David in this Psalm gives us some very good advice not only in terms of dealing with difficult situations but how we should actually walk through each year as we journey with the Lord day by day and moment by moment.

This is a Psalm that was written when David was feigning madness before Abimelech who then drove him away so he wandered off on his own. I think that out of this situation David would have found himself rather lonely and filled with fear. Who knows? But as always in the Psalms as he takes time to meditate on the things of the Lord he says some wonderful things to encourage us in all that we do.

So first of all David said; "Bless the Lord" in verses 1-3. The opening verse really indicates David's determination when he says; "I will bless the Lord," not only on odd occasions but at all times. I don't know about you, but I find that is not always easy. It kind of reminds me of the statement that George Mueller made in his biography where he stated that; "I never allow myself to become discouraged." I found that statement very hard to understand because it seems that discouragement is ever nipping at one's heels, especially when you want to see your church grow, or you want to see your family really growing in their faith, or you want to see a certain prayer answered, maybe more quickly than it has been or in a particular way rather than in the way it's worked out. The end result is that we become discouraged because things haven't worked out the way we'd hoped.

Just recently I've been reading through Genesis and in particular the chapters on Joseph. I've been quietly amazed at seeing what Joseph went through for thirteen years and especially so when much of what he went through was totally undeserved. I am sure he had plenty of reason to be discouraged, despondent and even disillusioned by what had happened but somehow or other he managed to keep his focus on the Lord.

Well, David does the same here when he says that he'll not only bless the Lord at all times but then says; "His praise shall be continually in my mouth." Now usually what comes out of the mouth is what's been running around in the mind and if his mind is filled with praise then his mouth becomes the expression of that mind. Not only would he praise the Lord, but then he goes on to say he will boast in the Lord. Now this really means that he is looking to boast in the Lord as his deliverer, boast in the Lord as his provider, boast in the Lord as his protector so one can only be amazed, grateful and thankful as we go through each year and realise that this has been our testimony.

In closing in this point David reaches a sort of crescendo when he says to all of the Lord's people; "O magnify the Lord with me and exalt His name together." I think there's no greater privilege at the beginning of each year to make a declaration that we as the Lord's people want to magnify the Lord and exalt His name together.

Secondly you will notice that David declares that he will seek the Lord in verses 4-8. In difficult times I know from my own experience that often the last thing we do is to seek the Lord. Often we will seek advice elsewhere, sometimes going to counsel in the wrong place or to the wrong people. That's why Psalm 1 and verse 1 says; "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." Then verse 2 goes on to say; "But his delight is in the Law of the Lord in which he meditates day and night."

So seeking the Lord is such an important part of being able to avoid being discouraged in circumstances. George Mueller in his biography went on to say that the reason he did not allow himself to become discouraged was that he found out that discouragement became the window for so many other temptations. Well I can only agree with that statement because I have found myself so discouraged at times, and the enemy will always use occasions like this to bring in all sorts of difficulties and struggles that we had not anticipated.

So as we seek the Lord there are a number of things David says to us that are really important in keeping us focused on the Lord. We see that when we seek the Lord, He hears us. Sometimes we are tempted to think that because a response hasn't happened immediately or it hasn't happened maybe in the way we desired, that somehow or other the Lord hasn't heard our cry. But not only does He hear our cry, David goes on to say, that He delivers us.

Now again being delivered out of circumstances is something that is not always the easiest of things especially when we come to the Lord in prayer with a particular agenda, rather than what the Lord has given to us. Sometimes when things don't happen as quickly or in the way we desire we feel that God has abandoned us and hasn't heard our prayer and isn't willing to deliver us. But of course as Joseph and Job and others like Daniel point out nothing is further from the truth.

David then declares that he saved him out of his troubles. We see there in verse 6 his declaration is that in his difficulties this poor man cried out and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles. But notice there's is a little word there that is so encouraging and I deliberately left it out of my first quote, but it says; "And saved him out of all his troubles." Now I don't know about you but I find that particularly encouraging because there are no troubles that are greater than the power and majesty and love of God. There is nothing that God cannot deliver

(Please turn over)

us out of other than the fact of our rejection of Him. But not only does He deliver us out of troubles but notice also that He protects us in our troubles. Look at verse 7. He has His angels encamped all around us to those who fear Him and delivers us. I like that word fear because it has the idea of standing in reverential awe at the majesty, the

power, the glory and the awesomeness of God. Let me tell you when you get a view of God like that you will have no doubt that not only can He save us out of all our troubles but He can protect us in all our troubles.

Then thirdly David . . . See conclusion next month

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

Praise

1. Praise the Lord for a really great response for our Christmas edition of Challenge. We generated almost 90,000 copies for churches all over the country and it was great to hear where some of these churches had a great response to the distribution of the paper and in particular to invites to Carols and Christmas Day services.
2. Praise the Lord for gifts from farmers who have put wheat or other crops in the silo on our behalf. We are enormously grateful for these farmers especially for some who have gone through very difficult times this year and yet have still been faithful to their commitment.
3. Praise the Lord for new staff members coming on board in 2008. First of all we have Andrew and Karen Trezona and their five daughters joining the Challenge team in May this year. Andrew will be taking on the role of the promotion and development of the paper here in Australia and we are really trusting the Lord for great things. Secondly Don Kennedy will be helping us out part-time in Victoria.
4. We want to really praise the Lord for our writers who are so faithful in supporting our work not only here in Australia but for those who also write for us in Africa, North and South America. Also can I say a huge thank you for all our partner organisations.
5. We want to praise the Lord also for the new opportunities that are coming our way overseas for the further spread of the good news of the gospel through Challenge; in India, Egypt and Malawi.
6. We do praise the Lord for our faithful volunteers here in Australia who give of their time and effort and skills in promoting the paper, in wrapping the paper and in helping to get the paper distributed effectively.

Prayer

1. We need to pray for Australia this year as we endeavour to strategically bring on board new staff to grow the distribution of the paper by the grace of God.
2. We do want to pray for New Zealand as we negotiate with Christian Literature Crusade for the possible printing and distribution of the paper in New Zealand.
3. We want to pray for the paper in Africa and we would value your prayer for first of all South Africa where we have partnered with Multi Ministries headed up by the Rev Harold Peasley. We are very keen to expand the Prison Edition into Botswana and Kenya this year. We would value your prayer for the distribution in Botswana under the leadership of Andrew and Sandra Freeman. Slowly but surely we are seeing the paper gain a grip in this country and we hope to add to that with another publication called *Face the Nation*, which is an initiative of the Open Baptist Church in Gaborone, Botswana. This is a paper designed combat the spread of AIDS in this country which stands at close to 40%. Zimbabwe is another country that is desperately in need but at the same time is wide open for the gospel. As seems to always happen the churches are growing rapidly and we really want to be on board with putting out at least 30,000 papers into Zimbabwe. In Zambia we are working very closely with Pro Christo Global Outreach and we are asking for the Lord's blessing on the 20,000 papers we put in there per edition. And then Kenya— we have been going into Kenya for about the last two years and we are putting in about 15,000 papers every 2 months into that country. We are looking to get into the prisons as well as getting into the broader area of Kenya. With the most recent unrest, it just further highlights the need for the gospel in places like Kenya.
4. Future prospects: These are looking good. We are really praising the Lord for the fact that we are putting out our first genuine bilingual edition of our paper into Malawi which is going to happen in March this year. Please pray for the organisation, the availability of the right material and for effective translation work. Also new work this year is involving further investigation into Nigeria, India and also Egypt. We plan to visit Egypt towards the end of the year to look at the prospects of an English/Arabic edition of the paper.
5. South America. At present we are putting in a total of 25,000 papers into Argentina and Uruguay every 3 months under the banner of Word of Life in South America. We are still very much in the fledgling stage and would value your prayer for the growth of the support and effective distribution. Future prospects involve the possibilities for a Portuguese edition for Brazil and also for the spread of our Spanish edition into Peru, Ecuador and Paraguay.
6. North America: At this stage we are getting the Challenge into North America/Canada every 3 months. We would value prayer for the distribution of the paper on this Continent. We are seeing God do some interesting things especially with the Southern Baptists and we are hopeful that God will continue to open special doors to enable us to get not only the paper into churches but also generate a real flow of mission support for our work elsewhere around the world.
7. We would value prayer for the ongoing work of Challenge. As you would be aware there is an ever ongoing demand for the finances that we have and we would value your prayer for churches that would like to sponsor different countries that we are going into. Please pray that these churches would see the vision and be keen to give to it.
8. Please pray for the Challenge staff who do an incredible job in staying on top of the ever pressing demands of deadlines for different papers in different parts of the world.

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