



February 26, 2017

Psalm 34

"God's Mercy for our Mess"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

You aren't alone if you've ever gotten yourself into a terrible predicament and felt hopeless and desperate. In the Bible, David made some bad choices that were motivated by fear, and those decisions nearly resulted in his death, but God intervened on his behalf, as he often does for us. As a result, David wrote Psalm 34 as a song of thanksgiving to the Lord who rescues us from the messes we create. In Pastor Gary's message we will learn from David's story and be reminded of God's mercy.

Historical Background

1. Psalm 34 is an alphabetical acrostic, which means that the first word of each verse begins with a different Hebrew letter, which includes all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - a. The list of alphabetical acrostic psalms includes the following: 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145.
2. This style of psalm/song was written to help with memorization.
3. David wrote Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 from the cave of Adullam.
4. Abimelech was not a proper name, but the royal title of King Achish.
5. The details for this event are found in [1 Samuel 21](#).
6. Saul was the first king of Israel, and by the time this event took place, he had been disobedient to the point that God had selected David as his replacement.

7. Samuel the prophet anointed David to be the new king when David was about 15 years old, and it would be approximately another 15 years before he would assume the throne.
8. David was a valiant hero who became very popular with the people of Israel, and the slaying of Goliath, the Philistine giant, was obviously a major reason.
9. Saul was jealous because David received the adulation of the people.
 - a. [1 Samuel 18:6-7](#) - *“When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’ ”*
10. Because of his anger and jealousy, as well as a tormenting spirit, King Saul had murderous intentions toward David.
11. David was on the run from King Saul for ten years, and the constant fear of death, as well as the physical and mental exhaustion of the life he was forced to live, had taken a toll on him.
12. In desperation, David made a foolish decision to go to Gath, Goliath’s hometown, thinking that he would find refuge there because Saul would never think to look for him in the land of the Philistines.
13. Pastor Gary said: “[David] was in a desperate situation, and you know the saying: ‘Desperate people sometimes do desperate things.’ And usually the result is catastrophic.”
14. [1 Samuel 21:10](#) - [1 Samuel 22:2](#) - *“That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, ‘Isn’t this David, the king of the land? Isn’t he the one they sing about in their dances: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?’ David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. Achish said to his servants, ‘Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?’ David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father’s household heard about it, they went down to him there. All those who were in*

distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.”

15. To give you some idea of how mixed-up David was at this time, he actually went to Gath with Goliath’s sword strapped to his hip!
 - a. **1 Samuel 21:8–9** - *“David asked Ahimelech, ‘Don’t you have a spear or a sword here? I haven’t brought my sword or any other weapon, because the king’s business was urgent.’ The priest replied, ‘The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one.’ David said, ‘There is none like it; give it to me.’ ”*
16. When the servants of King Achish recognized him, David immediately became an award-winning actor who played the role of madman.
17. When David escaped and made his way to the cave of Adullam, he wrote Psalm 34 as a song of thanksgiving and gratitude, because God rescued him from what may very well have been a death sentence.
18. David wrote this psalm as an alphabetical acrostic because he wanted others to learn from his life.
19. Pastor Gary said: “David [wanted] the generations after him, including ours, - here we are 3,000 years after David - to know and understand that God delivers undeserving people from the mess we create. That’s what this psalm is about, and David [knew] it first-hand... [David] would make other messes in his life; he’s in his early 20s here. His affair with Bathsheba happened when he was [about] 50, so he’s going to make some other blunders, [sins and mistakes] in his life. [He wrote] Psalm 34 as a young man in his 20s, and he [basically says], ‘I just want everybody to understand, [that] God is a merciful God and he will deliver undeserving people from the messes we create.’ ”
20. David admitted that what got him into his mess was sin, and his sin was fear, because David seems to have feared Saul more than he trusted God.
21. Pastor Gary said: “Any time we fear something more than we trust God; [that] is sin... Whenever we fear something or someone more than we trust God, what we are saying, in effect, is that God is not able to handle the problems that I face; I am... [Fear is when] you are so consumed and obsessed with your situation and your problem, not trusting God, but being so consumed with it that in essence what you are saying is, that God is not big enough to handle it, [but] I am. Whenever we think that, either subconsciously or consciously, what

we end up doing is subordinate God below us... Anyone who subordinates God has then exalted themselves above God, and anything that exalts self above God is idolatry, and idolatry is sin.”

David’s Advice – Pray For God’s Deliverance

22. **2 Timothy 1:7** – *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* (NKJV)
23. **1 John 4:18a** – *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.”* (NKJV)
24. The Bible tells us that God is love, which means that fear is the antithesis, and therefore, fear and love cannot coexist.
25. **Psalm 34:4** – *“I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”*
26. **Psalm 34:6** – *“This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.”*
 - a. David recognized his spiritual poverty.
 - b. **Matthew 5:3** – *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
27. **Psalm 56:3–4** – *“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?”*

David’s Advice – Experience God’s Goodness

28. **Psalm 34:8** – *“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”*
29. There are some things you’ll never be able explain to others, because there are some things they’ll just have to experience for themselves.
30. Knowing Jesus and having a personal relationship with him is the way you experience his goodness.

David’s Advice – Fear God

31. **Psalm 34:9, 11** – *“Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing... Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”*

32. Pastor Gary said: “David [exchanged] a bad fear, which [was] not trusting God, with a good fear of God... standing in awe and reverence of a holy, and majestic, and perfect God... The fear of God goes a long way as a deterrent to sin. When you have an awesome reverence of a holy and righteous God, and you know how much he loves you, and you understand that he’s merciful and forgiving, that love relationship motivates [you] to holy living.”
33. [Proverbs 16:6](#) - *“Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.”*
34. [Deuteronomy 6:2](#) - *“... fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands... so that you may enjoy long life.”*
35. [Psalm 103:11](#) - *“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him...”*
36. [Psalm 111:10a](#) - *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.”*
37. [Psalm 128:1](#) - *“Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Psalm 34](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Provide an overview of [1 Samuel 21](#). (View the Teaching Library message from 08:20 to 18:45 and read #15 above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the ways God delivers undeserving people from the messes they create. (See #20 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about fear being sin. (See #22 above)
6. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Lord rescued them from their mess in answer to prayer.
7. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared regarding praying for God’s deliverance. (See #23 through #28 above)

8. What are some of the ways you've experienced the goodness of the Lord? (See #29 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about having a healthy fear of God. (See #33 above)
10. Spend time talking about the Scriptures that encourage us to have a healthy fear of God. (See #32, and #34 through #38 above)
11. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).