

Psalm 34 – The LORD Hears! (part 2 of 3)

III. **The Benefits of Being Heard (vs. 8-10)** – Head knowledge of God's Word was never the intent of God's inspiration. God's Word has always been for the purpose of obedience. When the Word of God is obeyed, the life of the believer is supernaturally transformed to become more like Christ. His relationship with God becomes more intimate and deeper. Such was the testimony of David when he penned this psalm on having his prayers heard by the LORD! He wanted all of God's children to experience the same blessed intimacy he had with his God. He cried, "O taste and see that the LORD *is* good." Using an anthropomorphic term like tasting, David urged all believers to taste and see for themselves. There is no comprehensive way to describe something that is extremely delicious in one's mouth except to ask the person to taste it himself! Like eating a creamy thick chunk of bitter sweet durian, the king of fruits! The beauty of a sunrise cannot be fully comprehended by a blind man no matter what words are used to describe it. David used this same phenomenon to describe the goodness of God in the believer's life! It should not be vicariously experienced such as reading a testimony or a biography of a courageous martyr even though these are encouraging; they must never replace a believer's personal experience with his LORD. This is what God greatly desires from all His children as they serve Him on earth!

There is no better experience on earth for the believer than the goodness of God. These good "things" include the experience of forgiveness. God's forgiveness is one of the greatest experiences in the believer's life, for it begins his journey of salvation in Christ! This experience of being forgiven continues because he is not perfect and sinless. He will continue to sin on earth as he serves the LORD as Christ's witness. He needs to experience the goodness of being forgiven so that holiness will continue to characterize his life of witness. This goodness will also include the intimacy of having our prayers answered by our Heavenly Father who is in heaven! To pray without ceasing and not experience the goodness of seeing the hand of God in a believer's life would be very tragic. Thank God, He truly answers prayers and it is wonderful to have such memories being stored up in our prayer bank! The goodness of God also includes His daily protection and provision. To serve Him constrained by the love of Christ and the desire to be holy and then to see the Lord providing a roof over the believer's head and the daily needs of his family is priceless. These are precious intimate moments that will last a lifetime in the believer's memory bank! The list of the goodness of God goes on and on as the believer sees God's hand upon him, directing and guiding him from one challenge to the next until he arrives home in glory.

Using synthetic parallelism, David states that such a man is "blessed", for he trusts in the LORD. The word for "blessed" when used by God to describe a person always means that the person is happy because he knows that he has a personal relationship with God, Almighty! In other words, to experience the goodness of God in the believer's life is for all of God's children and not for some special ones! This experience is the norm and not an

exception for a few! The one who will experience the goodness of God is the one who trusts in the LORD. To trust in the LORD is the same as obeying the Word of God. The one who obeys the Word of God is also someone who studies and understands the Word of God. The sequence of experience in trusting begins with the study of God's Word. He cannot obey and trust in what he does not know. To trust in God is to obey what God says. All that God says are found in the Bible only and nowhere else! God has given to His children only one Book and that is the perfect Bible! The Word of God is given for obedience only. Studying the Bible and obeying it is one of the best things that will characterize the believer's life, which becomes an evidence of his true salvation in Christ!

Verse 9 (synthetic parallelism) – Another benefit is that the believer will not lack any good thing in his life. The reason is that the believer fears the LORD. This is the good kind of fear. This is the fear that started his journey to seek Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This is the fear that he continues to possess in his heart to keep him from sinning; and whenever he does sin he knows his God is angry with him and he will truly repent of his sin and make right his relationship with the LORD. David understood this truth in his life very well as he endured much tribulation as a fugitive in the days of King Saul, having to flee to Philistine territory and to feign madness to keep himself and his men and all their families safe. This must have been more than trying for him with so many people depending on his faith and walk with the LORD to see them through as they were prepared to follow him wherever he went. David called these believers who have the fear of the LORD in them "saints" which means "holy ones." Only believers can appeal to this fear of the LORD and be protected. They desire holiness in their lives because there are holy within. What they are inside of them will be reflected by their lives of holiness, for such consistency is normal for all who possess unfeigned faith in Christ!

Therefore the result of this fear of God in the heart of the saints is that they will not lack anything in life. David wrote these words in the context of being ousted from his own beloved homeland of Israel. The meaning of "lack nothing" does not mean that believers will all be millionaires. It does not mean that everything a believer touches will turn to gold! He will face trials and difficulties in life like everyone else. He will suffer illnesses like all human beings on earth. What is different is that the believer will set his heart on things eternal, for he knows experientially that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 14:17). Therefore all that matters to him is his close walk with his Saviour regardless of the physical status in his life. He could be starving or be chased out by his own people or languishing in prison or facing the fiery furnace or being thrown into the lion's den; he will still lack nothing because in Christ he has everything. If he were to die he knows that he will be absent from his body but present with his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! David was thinking in terms of eternity and not things temporal. If this is not properly understood, some believers might wrongly construe that

they will not experience hunger or thirst or persecution. It is a wrong understanding of no "lack." To suffer for Christ's sake has always been the condition of salvation from the beginning of time. It has never changed. The life and testimony of Job is evidence of this truth! If the believer has no food he learns to fast and pray to the Lord. If he has no lodging and has to live under the night skies, which was common in the time of David as well as the apostles, then so be it. Their longing was their walk with their Lord and not in things material!

This understanding is emphasized by David in the next verse.

Verse 10 (emblematic parallelism) – David explained using an emblematic parallelism which is also antithetical in nature. The contrast is very clear here. Young lions are well looked after by the lioness and the food comes regularly because these big cats are ferocious animals and they would do whatever it takes to provide for their young. They would hunt. They provide milk. When one lioness is not able to, other lionesses will help. "Lionesses are caring mothers who will even take care of a neglected cub, allowing him/her to suckle and giving it a chance to survive. Two or more lionesses in a group tend to give birth around the same time, and the cubs are raised together." [http://www.onekind.org/education/animals_a_z/lion/] With such communal care, young lions seldom lack any food at all. Yet the LORD says here that even such young lions with so much communal care from a few lionesses will lack and suffer hunger! The food that these young lions need to survive to keep them healthy is being compared here. It is their well being through the milk or food they eat which is the instinct of every lioness. Yet they will fail their young at times under certain very extreme circumstances.

Using this contrast, David demonstrates from personal experience that the ones who seek the LORD will never want any good thing! The verb "seek" is the same as the one used in verse 4. It is not a perfunctory search but a genuine sincere search with the desire to find. The determination will sustain the seeker and he will not let up no matter what the obstacles are in his path that might hinder him from finding his goal. He will not allow hunger, threats, imprisonment or even death to stop him. His purpose in life is to seek the LORD which means to obey the Bible at all costs! He will not give up. There was a sick believer who wanted to be baptised before she was called home to glory. But her husband threatened her that if she was baptised, he would not give her a Christian burial. So she did not get baptised! When she passed on, her husband told the pastor that his wife will not be given a Christian burial because she was not baptised! Another case was when the unbelieving husband threatened his wife that if she got baptised, he would stop going to church completely. She did not get baptised. Now both of them are not going to church! Those who honour the LORD, the LORD will likewise honour. When believers do not put obedience to the LORD first, how can they expect the LORD to bless them? When believers

love their unbelieving loved ones more than they love Christ, how can they expect them to accept Christ?! The ones who seek the LORD will obey the Word of God at all costs and will never lack any good thing! These good things are eternal things. God will take care of their spiritual well being just as the young lions will not lack or suffer hunger because the lionesses will care for them.

IV. The Invitation to be Heard (vs. 11-12) – Seeking the LORD and being heard by Him is not something that can be commanded and done superficially like a ritual without the heart! David knew this better than anyone else! Therefore he pleaded with all believers to listen to his testimony! Whatever the LORD desires to see in His children so that they would reflect a right image of Christ, all must be done obediently and not by compulsion or by necessity as a duty! A willing heart is crucial to sustain the life of obedience. David knew that in order for the believer to see the goodness of the LORD in his life intimately, he must come willing. This means a sustained and perhaps even a lifelong seeking that will draw the believer closer and closer to his LORD with every passing week. David wanted to teach the believer the fear of the LORD.

The fear of the LORD has to be learned. The believer has it at the start of his salvation journey but he needs to consciously nurture it so that it will deepen and not depart! It departs from the believer's life after salvation when he allows the love of money to crowd out his motivation of love for Christ as he serves. Then the fear of man and loss of life and lack of trust in Christ to provide all things good will enter into the believer's life. When that happens he has already backslidden. His testimony for Christ at this juncture is one of carnality and sin. He fears man and the devil more than he fears the LORD. To such a one David said to come to him and he would teach him how to fear the LORD all over again. He needs to repent and start praying! This will allow the believer to become conscious of the abiding presence of the LORD in his life, when he sees his prayers to the LORD answered, like David. He will stop sinning and begin to walk aright once more. His testimony for Christ will begin to be repaired and hopefully the damage done was minimal.

Verse 12 – David promised all believers that if they listen to him and learn from his example of seeking and trusting, their lives will be different. They will have life. Firstly, this life is described as living many days. It will be the abundant life that Christ promised all believers as they serve Him on earth. What kind of man on earth does not want life and live long on the earth and see good things? Anyone in his right mind would want this! This will become the believer's life once more if only he would learn from David to fear the LORD all over again! The first thing on this list as enumerated by David is life. Every man desires life. The world is filled with people who desire life. There are people on earth who are prepared to do anything to stay alive, if possible to live forever and not die. David said that by learning from him the fear of the LORD, life eternal will be experienced. David was not just talking

about life here on earth! He was referring to a life that death is not able to stop! This is the life whereby all sins are forgiven forever since sin is the cause of death. This is the life that only Jesus Christ can give because He alone died on the cross for the sins of the world! The fear of God is the start of this salvation journey as mentioned earlier. The sinner who knows he has sinned in the eyes of God and fears God will be driven to Christ and he will accept Him as his Lord and Saviour! He will live eternally because all his sins have been taken away by Christ who took the punishment on Him for his sake.

Secondly, it is a good life. If a man is a beggar, it is not good to live many days on earth. That is why David qualified further by saying that the believer will live many days and see good! The goodness of God in his life is unto eternity! It is the goodness of God that allows him to serve Him faithfully and be remembered by Him forever so that after this service here on earth is done, his good works will follow him. God's goodness in his life will be brought to others like sinners who can know the Saviour, and other brothers and sisters in Christ who can become better believers. Finally, there will be the good life that he will enjoy in the very presence of God when he arrives home in heaven! It all begins with the fear of the LORD which David desired all believers to learn from his example!

[to be continued]