

June 28, 2020

## Psalm 34

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left.

- <sup>1</sup> I WILL BLESS the Lord at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- <sup>2</sup> My soul makes its boast in the Lord;  
let the humble hear and be glad.
- <sup>3</sup> O magnify the Lord with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.
- <sup>4</sup> I sought the Lord, and he **answered me**,  
and **delivered me** from all my fears.
- <sup>5</sup> Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- <sup>6</sup> This poor soul cried,  
and was **heard by the Lord**,  
and was **saved from every trouble**.
- <sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord encamps  
around those who fear him,  
and delivers them.
- <sup>8</sup> O taste and see that the Lord is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.
- <sup>9</sup> O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,  
for those who fear him have no want.
- <sup>10</sup> The young lions suffer want and hunger,  
but those who seek the Lord lack no good  
thing.
- <sup>11</sup> Come, O children, listen to me;  
I will teach you THE FEAR OF THE LORD.
- <sup>12</sup> Which of you desires life,  
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- <sup>13</sup> Keep your tongue from evil,  
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- <sup>14</sup> Depart from evil, and do good;  
seek peace, and pursue it.
- <sup>15</sup> The eyes of the Lord are on THE RIGHTEOUS,  
and his ears are open to their cry.
- <sup>16</sup> The face of the Lord is against evildoers,  
to cut off the remembrance of them from  
the earth.
- <sup>17</sup> When the righteous cry for help,  
the Lord hears,  
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- <sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit.

**The Book of Psalms** is the prayer book of the Bible. Eugene says that it provides us with the language for prayer: our responding to the God who speaks to us. "Prayer is not just what good people do and say when they're doing their best. It's the language by which we become honest, true, and personal in our response to God. It is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God."

First Testament Scholar Walter Brueggemann introduces Psalm 34 writing that "the shaping of new life required discipline and fidelity to principle. In this song of Thanksgiving. The moment of rescue is remembered. But the speaker cannot refrain from instruction that counsels others in how to consolidate and sustain the new orientation, so this psalm has strong features of wisdom instruction. The the psalm has such deliberate intentionality is also evident in it's [] construction, which suggests it is not an emotional outburst of gratitude but a quite disciplined statement for new world building."

I WILL BLESS אֲבָרֵךְ from the Hebrew Verb בָּרַךְ pronounced [barak] meaning : 1) to kneel (on knees in prayer, supplication, recognition, entreaty, respect or humility); 2) to bless (as in a salutation at a greeting or a departure, a word of congratulations, or gratitude, recognition of faithfulness or friendship)

**The actions of God [in bold]** Looking at them in that way can be helpful in seeing what's going on relationally within the conversation of the text.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD the word fear is problematically small in modern English. The Hebrew word יָרֵא pronounced "yaré] means : to fear - such as 1) to stand in awe of, or 2) to revere, honor or feel deep respect or admiration for (something); or 3) to be afraid of a thing or person.

THE RIGHTEOUS : "It's precisely the righteous whom the Lord sees (15), hears (17), is near (18) and delivers (19-20). The use of "the righteous" requires a "class reading" of the text. The righteous may or may not be the good, but they are surely the socially marginal, who no longer expect the dominant society to succor them, and so they go to Yahweh as the alternative source of help. Thus the cry of the righteous is an act of delegitimizing the primary structures that have reduced people to helplessness. In verse 21 the righteous are not hated because they are marginal or because they are good, but because they look to Yahweh. They have discovered something remarkable and subversive about Yahweh. Yahweh's peculiar inclinations are with the brokenhearted and the ones with crushed spirit. That is, Yahweh's solidarity is not with the ones who go from success to success, but the ones denied success."

<sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of THE RIGHTEOUS,  
but the Lord rescues them from them all.

<sup>20</sup> He keeps all their bones;  
not one of them will be broken.

<sup>21</sup> Evil brings death to the wicked,  
and those who hate THE RIGHTEOUS will be  
condemned.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord redeems the life of his servants;  
none of those who take refuge in him will be  
condemned.

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- What part of today's psalm grabs you?
- What does the word "bless" mean to you?  
How do you receive blessing? How do you  
give it?
- How do you struggle to glimpse and taste  
God's goodness to you even when things  
aren't what you wish?
- What connections do you hear between  
Psalm 34 and the teaching of Paul in  
Romans 8 (the conclusion of his major  
argument for why one would choose to  
follow Jesus)?
- How is God inviting you to reorient the way  
you see God, the world, others, yourself?

## Romans 8:18-31

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<sup>18</sup> I [the apostle Paul] consider that our present sufferings  
are not worth comparing with the glory that will be  
revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits in eager  
expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For  
the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own  
choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope  
<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage  
to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the  
children of God.

<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as  
in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

<sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of  
the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our  
adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in  
this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope  
at all. Who hopes for what they already have? <sup>25</sup> But if we  
hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

<sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We  
do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit  
himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. <sup>27</sup> And  
he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit,  
because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in  
accordance with the will of God.

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of  
those who love him, who have been called according to his  
purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to  
be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the  
firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he  
predestined, he also called; those he called, he also  
justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If  
God is for us, who can be against us?