

PWORDS

PRAISE • PEACE • PRAYER

1. PRAISE PSALM 34

Few people living today have ever experienced the times in which we now live. The economic fears and political adversity of our day are extremely disturbing, both nationally and globally.

How should we respond? What are we to do? Where do we turn?

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:1-8 NKJV).

This is an incredible Psalm of praise and promise. Let's "walk" through these verses together.

Psalm 34 begins with a call to worship.

Worship Requires Personal Participation

"I will bless" (Psalm 34:1 NKJV).

Worship is not a spectator sport. Leaders on the platform should not be viewed as "actors" on a stage

with God as the prompter and the audience witnessing the play. This is not real worship. Instead, you and I are the prompters. We are the ones who carry the witness of the message and God is the audience.

Worship Involves the Priority of Praise

The book of Psalms is the songbook of the Bible. You were made to worship God and be an instrument of glory in His hand.

Westminster Catechism: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

One way to bless the Lord is through praise. Praise is the heart overwhelmed with the wonder of God and expressed in many ways—psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Worship Transcends the Practice Sessions

Sundays are practice sessions and pep rallies with a lot of energy, but worship involves much more.

"I will bless the LORD at all times" (Psalm 34:1 NKJV).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV).

Not everything is good, but in and through all things we can give thanks, whether in crisis or delight.

Worship includes my mouth. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1 NKJV). It is great to praise God in the heart where true praise begins. It is also great to praise God with your mind—when you understand more of Him. But with your mouth, you can praise Him with words. "Praise the Lord" is not some religious slogan, but words you can say and mean.

Psalm 34:12-14. Our mouth is made for praise.

"But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh" (James 3:8-13 NKJV).

If you are "down in the mouth," speak praise and like a lozenge, it will be refreshing to you.

There is power and peace in the name of Jesus. There *is* something about that name.

Billy Sunday said, "We need to take some groans out of our prayers and add some hallelujahs!" May we be known in our community as a house of praise.

We also need to praise at times when we are alone. Some may think their praise is not fit for human consumption, but if praise is genuine, it will come out of the heart and to the ear of the Father.

Worship Blesses Our Lives and the Lives of Others

Thus far, we have discussed the mechanics of praise. Now it is time to put it all together and to come to terms with the performance of praise and its practice in our lives.

Praise uplifts. “be glad” (Psalm 34:2). When people are down and discouraged, they need a Christian with a heart full of Jesus and a mouth full of praise to come near with the words, “Praise the Lord,” and to speak of God’s love and grace. How often have we gathered and needed encouragement, inspiration and a lift, and someone sang praise and suddenly there was refreshing and renewing?

Praise encourages the humble—those whose lives are receptive. How often praise lifts us up! When we lift Him up, we get lifted up.

We don’t need to boast of anyone or anything but Jesus. Bragging on Jesus should be a major part of our gathering.

Praise unites. We will be as strong as our collective praise.

In an orchestra, every instrument must be in perfect pitch to play in harmony. It is the same with our hearts. We must be in harmony, in one accord as we praise. We need more “Amens” and “Praise the Lords!” as our hearts overflow with praise. We should not tip our cups, but let our praise overflow.

If you want to “irk” a pastor, simply yawn when you should be singing, praying, smiling, participating, etc.

One of the hallmarks of this church through the years has been the power and influence of music in this place. Yes, there have been many great pastors, leaders and preachers, but there have also been men who could lead God’s people to praise.

Praise empowers. “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4 NKJV).

God delivers us from our fears, our frustrations, and the forces of evil when we praise Him.

“Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:23 NKJV).

Praise will bring you out of dead end streets and situations that say, “No Exit.” Praise is mightier than armies. The walls of Jericho could have been viewed as “stop signs” to the blessings and promises of God, but they saw opportunities, not obstacles.

Praise delivers. 2 Chronicle 20. Jehoshaphat. “The battle is not yours, but God’s (2 Chronicles 20:15 NKJV).

Praise releases. Praise is more powerful than bondage or prisons. I don’t know what you need in terms of deliverance today. Maybe it is some habit, some sin, some situation that holds you in bondage. Praise will bring you out.

For example, Paul and Silas were in jail for Christ. Prisons were horrible in those days—stocks and bonds, etc. Roman soldiers were present and other prisoners were cursing the night and darkness. I imagine Paul opened his eyes and said to Silas, “Let’s sing.” How about longing for Jesus like that? Paul may have sung tenor; Silas possibly sang baritone. But God’s voice could be heard in the earthquake when the prison walls came down.

The jailer was ready to kill himself, but was saved by the power of Jesus. If you were found in the same situation, would you be griping, complaining, moaning and groaning?

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!... Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:4, 6 NKJV).

Do you want peace, encouragement, fellowship, power, etc.? Then praise!

“I will bless the LORD” (Psalm 34:1a NKJV). WHEN? At all times!