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Psalm 34: A Psalm of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

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Psalm 34

**A Psalm of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech,
so that he drove him out, and he went away.**

(RSV)

- ¹ I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.**
- ² My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and be glad.**
- ³ O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!**
- ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.**
- ⁵ Look to him, and be radiant;
so your^(a) faces shall never be ashamed.**
- ⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles.**
- ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.**
- ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good!
Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!**
- ⁹ O fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no want!**
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.**
- ¹¹ Come, O sons, listen to me,
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.**
- ¹² What man is there who desires life,
and covets many days, that he may enjoy good?**
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.**
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.**
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous,
and his ears toward their cry.**
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.**
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and delivers them out of all their troubles.**
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.**
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous;
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.**
- ²⁰ He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.**

- ²¹ Evil shall slay the wicked;
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.**
- ²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.**

Footnote:

a. (v.5) Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *their*

Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, meaning that each succeeding verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, except that in Psalm 34, the sixth letter of the alphabet is omitted, and the final verse, which follows the completion of the twenty-two letter Hebrew alphabet, begins with the seventeenth letter (corresponding to our letter “P”). Psalm 34 may be considered as a companion Psalm to Psalm 25. Both have similar acrostic structure and wisdom teaching, but while Psalm 25 is an alphabetical lament, Psalm 34 is a hymn of thanksgiving, beginning with praise in verses 1-3. In verse 4 the Psalmist states that in his hour of need the LORD answered his prayer, and delivered him from the unnamed fears. This is followed by a tribute to the LORD’s provident care (verses 5-10), which include an invitation in verse 8 to taste and see for yourselves that the LORD is good. This invitation does not refer to merely checking and considering God’s credentials, but is a warm invitation to take the necessary steps of trust and obedience in order that we might experience how truly good God is. If we do not taste, we will not see.

Beginning with verse 11, the Psalmist assumes the part of a teacher of wisdom, addressing his audience (including us) as “sons” (compare Proverbs 1-8). The remainder of the Psalm is then directed toward instruction of the lessons of his illness and other experiences, and encouragement to live in the reverent fear of the LORD, at all times attempting to please him with righteous behavior. The apostle Peter quotes verses 12-16 as he instructs Christians about proper conduct in the midst of suffering (1 Peter 3:10-12). Note also that verse 20 is a prophecy about Christ when he was crucified. Although it was the Roman custom to break the legs of the victims to speed death, not one of Jesus’ bones were broken (see John 19:31-37, especially verse 36 referring to scripture being fulfilled).

Prayer to accompany Psalm 34:

Lord, graciously hear us, for we seek you alone. Calm our bodies and minds with the peace which passes understanding, and make us radiant with joy; through your son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Linger longer over verse 8:

**O taste and see that the LORD is good!
Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!**