

Sermon Notes, Psalm 34, “The Unbroken King”, Sunday 3rd August 2025

Life can be cruel (to you, family, on news). Makes you wonder if God is cruel.

Many who don't believe in God don't because they think if he's there he must be cruel. They'd rather live in a world with nobody in control than with a tyrant in charge.

Or if God is good, how do I know he'll be good to me? Or is he just good to others?

But what if God was actually good and it's a goodness we can experience?

Would it help to hear first-hand testimony of God's goodness?

That's what this psalm offers. Verse 8.

The King's Testimony

Like the other psalms we've looked at, this is by King David.

He's looking back and thanking God for delivering him from all his troubles. Verse 6.

All the way through, he tells us that his experience of God is typical. This is what God is like. All God's people will have the same experience of God that he had.

One of God's people fits his experience more than any other. We saw in Psalm 2 that God promised David a son to be the perfect king, and those promises come true in Jesus. As Jesus looks back after his resurrection, he can say verse 6. He can pray this psalm. As he does so, his experience is typical. We can all have the same experience of God's goodness that Jesus had.

It's a psalm we're meant to memorise. If you're into memorising Scripture, or want to start, this is a good place to start. It's an acrostic, to help the original hearers to learn it – an A-Z of God's goodness.

This psalm has been precious to me for many years, and to many Christians. It would have been precious to Jesus. So many of these verses can be called to mind and prayed in.

The Goodness of God

Let's look at what God did for David, did for Jesus, and does for all his people.

Verse 4. That word is stronger than that sounds. More “terrors” than “fears”. Maybe translate “all my worst fears”. “All my nightmares”. When you seek God, he answers, whatever you most dread.

Verse 5. Might remind you of the transfiguration. People of God have no need to be ashamed. Notice often that when people become Christians there is a gradual change in their appearance. Dignity. Beauty. Flowing from knowledge God loves them and they don't need to be ashamed.

Verse 7. Word “encamp” military word. Setting up camp. Angel of the Lord was the one who gave instructions to Joshua on how to capture Jericho. Who appeared to Gideon before he defeated the Midianites. As Jesus sweated blood in Gethsemane, an angel came to strengthen him (Luke 22:43). If you’re a Christian, God’s angel sets up army camp around you to deliver you.

Verse 10. Speaks for itself.

Verse 15. Always watching. First time new parents, constantly watching their little one to check all is OK. Never takes his eye off you. Always listening in case you need anything.

Verse 18. Beautiful. Broken-hearted. Spirit crushed. God is close. Near. But not just for company – close to help. He saves

Verses 19-20. Stops this whole psalm from being glib and triumphant. You can be righteous and have many troubles. As Job found out. But God rescues you from them all. We heard how Jesus didn’t have his legs broken on the cross. Ultimately this is fulfilled as God raises him from the dead, and for us as God raises us from the dead. Delivered from all our troubles. Completely whole.

Jesus testifies: God is good. This is how he’s been good for me. This is who he is. If you’re one of his people, this is how he’ll be good for you.

Three times, David draws the audience in, invites us to respond to his testimony.

Praise God with Me

Verses 1-2a. That’s David praising God. Here’s where we fit in: verses 2b-3.

Jesus is celebrating God’s deliverance. His resurrection. His ascension. What his death achieved. And he calls us to get caught up in that and celebrate with him.

We do this when we sing songs like “Thine be the glory”, “To God be the glory”, and many others.

This transforms our praise. Hard to praise God at all times, always on our lips. Often our praise of God is selfish. (Thought of that before?) Thanking God – for what he’s done for me. As if that’s the most important thing! God’s praise is always on Jesus’ lips, and if we’re joining him in praising God for all God’s done for him, we can do that even if we have many troubles.

Anyone go to London on Tuesday to celebrate the lionesses win at the Euro championships? There’s your picture of what it looks like to get caught up in other people’s praise.

Taste God’s Goodness

Second time we’re drawn in: Verse 8. Taste and see. Try him out.

How do you do that? Take refuge in him. Picks up the closing verse of Psalm 2. “Blessed are all who take refuge in him”, that is, Jesus.

How do you do that? Fear him. Verse 9. Matthew 10:28.

God is so good. But you only know that if you try him. Keep him at a distance, he doesn't look like much. Make him your refuge – the one you choose to keep you safe in this life and in eternity – and you discover just how good he is.

Story: A sketch at school about some jam.

Learn from me

Third time drawn in: Verse 11.

You want this experience of God, let me teach you how it's done.

Here's the answer, David says: Verses 12-14. Does that remind you of anybody?

Live like Jesus. This is what's involved in making God your refuge. Trust that you don't need to get yourself ahead in life. You can live like Jesus did, and trust God will look after you.

Jesus called people to follow him, and called them disciples. The closest modern-day equivalent is an apprentice. Some of you are about to start an apprenticeship; others employ apprentices. Jesus says: "Watch me! Look how I do it. Follow me!" Not because we impress God to make him love us. But because we trust him to be a Father to his children enough to put our lives in his hands.

Conclusion

These are precious words. They were precious to king David. They were precious to king Jesus. They're precious to the children of God, because the God who was good to Jesus is the God who will be good to us.

So store this up. Commit part or all of it to memory. Chew over it, and then respond to Jesus' call: To praise God with him. To taste God's goodness for yourself. To learn from him, and to walk through life with him.