

Taste and See!
Communion Meditation based on Psalm 24: 1-10
by Rev. Keith Davis

Tonight congregation we are going to be going through all 10 verses, but we are going to consider how they all feed into verse 8. The theme for tonight's meditation: **The Psalmist Calls Believer's to Taste and See that God is Good.** Notice two aspects of this call:

1. **The Background of this Call;**
2. **The Benefit of this Call.**

1. The Background of this Call

You may have noticed that immediately preceding Psalm 34 there is a superscription. As you may already know, these superscriptions are uninspired; yet in this Psalm we have no reason to doubt that this Psalm was tied to this particular event in David's life.

We don't know how old David was when he wrote this Psalm, but he did so while looking back, while reflecting on a very difficult time in his life, a very dark and trying time. It was when, as a young man, he was fleeing from the wrath of king Saul.

Now, if you are a lover of the Psalms, as am I, then you know that David was a man very much like any of us. In his own life he had experienced many ups and downs, as we call it. He had reached great spiritual heights; but he had also plummeted into the darkest and deepest valleys.

As a young man, the youngest of eight brothers, he was anointed king of Israel. Shortly thereafter he was placed into the service of his king, king Saul. During that time David had developed a very close bond with Jonathon, the king's son. He was like a brother to him.

Shortly after that, David showed his trust and faith in God by single-handedly striking down the champion of the Philistines, a 9 foot blaspheming giant named Goliath. After that David enjoyed great success in battle killing tens-of-thousands of Philistines. His name was sung in songs!

As spiritual highs go, it doesn't get any higher than that. Surely God was good; David could taste and see the goodness of his God from a very young age. But as we ourselves know, there

are other periods in life when tests and trials overtake us; when we don't stand so tall; when instead of rising above the turmoil and tumult, we're pulled under; the wind and the waves buffet us, and we sink deeper and deeper in darkness.

That is what happened to David following his impressive series of spiritual triumphs. David was forced to flee from king Saul because Saul kept trying to kill him; as a result, he had to leave his home, his parents, even his own home land. That in itself was enough to drive him to despair.

But that was only the beginning of his troubles. David's circumstances went from bad to worse-- he went 'from the pot into the fire' as they say. He escaped the spear of Saul only to find himself at the mercy of king Achish of the Philistines.

Of all places, David sought refuge in the land of his enemies. It wasn't like David was a stranger to them either. I Samuel 21: 11 tells us that David was famous in Gath as well! They knew who he was. He was the one Israel sang about: ...David had killed his tens-of-thousands. Well, those tens-of-thousands were their own fathers, and uncles, and brothers, and sons.

King Achish would have liked nothing better than to kill the very man who had subjected his armies to one humiliating defeat after another. But to avoid being killed, David faked insanity. He literally shamed himself before his enemy. He acted like a madman, drooling saliva down his beard, making marks on the doors of the gate.

David narrowly survived that encounter, and the Bible tell us he found shelter in a cave at Adullam; that was an apt hideout for someone who was now isolated and lonely, cut off from family, friends, and helpers. He's surrounded by darkness on every side; he didn't know where to turn; he was undoubtedly wrestling with fear, despair, hopelessness, lack of faith.

This is where we see that although I Samuel provides the necessary details of the events in David's life it doesn't dwell on the great depths to which David sunk at this time. It doesn't record for us David's fears, struggles and sadness. Those sentiments are reserved for the Psalms.

Looking at Psalm 34, you think, *this isn't a Psalm of despair and sadness. On the contrary, it seems to be a Psalm of joy and triumph. David is not dwelling on his darkness and despair here.* But again, we have to remember that this Psalm is written from the perspective of David looking back on that dark period in his life, when God's goodness was hard to see, bitter to the taste.

He's reflecting upon his own feelings of darkness and despair, shame and sadness, fear and hopelessness, and he is testifying before one and all that he has been there; he knows what's it's like to go through times like that; but most importantly, David writes of how the Lord God mercifully, compassionately, and lovingly picked him up, and delivered him out of his darkness.

Verse 4, for example, speaks to the fact that the Lord delivered him from his fears; those fears were real, not imagined! Verse 5 speaks to the fact that those who look to Him (God) are radiant, their faces are never covered with shame. That speaks to the fact that even though David shamed himself before king Achish, the Lord had miraculously spared David's life!

In vs. 6 David says *this poor man called* (that word poor means wretched, lowly, destitute — someone brought very low!) *and the Lord heard him, he saved him out of all his troubles.* Verse 7 says, *the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them.*

During those moments David felt himself to be isolated and abandoned, forsaken—by man, and perhaps by God himself. But now, years later, looking back over that episode in his life, David saw that he was not alone. His covenant-keeping LORD was with him every step of the way.

2. The Benefit

That's the advantage of reflection and hindsight, isn't it? When we get the call that our son or daughter has been killed or badly injured in a terrible accident; when we get the call from the toxicologist that we (or our loved one) has been diagnosed with cancer; when we discover that a close friend or companion, or even our spouse has betrayed us, or sinned against us, that's when we're totally overwhelmed with feelings of grief, and sadness, anger, darkness and despair.

That's when we feelings of hopelessness creep in; that when many of us begin to direct anger and resentment in our hearts against God. We demand to know why God did what He did, why God has seen fit to bring such pain, such tragedy, such hardship upon our loved one, or upon us. That's when we start to doubt that God is good; we doubt that any good can come out of this.

Very often it isn't until weeks, months, sometimes years later until we can look back at that situation and see where God held us up; where we can see where He remained faithful despite our sinful resentment and anger.

In the end, even in the face of danger, disease, or death we can see that God was right there with us every step of the way, guiding us, helping us, despite our resentment and lack of faith. That's the benefit of hindsight! That's the perspective from which David is writing Psalm 34!

Look at the way this Psalm begins. *I will extol the Lord at all times! His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord!* What did David learn from his experience? Looking back, he learned not to minimize God in times of trouble (or get angry with God or blame God as Israel so often did) but to magnify God **at all times** (again, not just when God *seems* good to us).

In the last part of verse 2 he writes, *let the afflicted (same word in vs. 6 for 'poor') hear and rejoice!* David commands those who are lowly and downcast not to sink into the pit of despair, not to immerse or drown themselves in a sea of self-pity, not to walk around with a forlorn look on their faces all day and everyday, but to rejoice! Again, to magnify God at all times!

Then in verse 3, it's as if David looks at everyone around him, in any and all circumstances, in the heights and in the depths, and he proclaims *Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.* He also says, *extol the Lord, may His praise never pass from your lips, make your boast in the Lord, glorify the Lord and exalt his name!*

Why does he call for such rejoicing and boasting and praising? For the singular reason that God is good; no matter how dark and gloomy and hopeless your circumstances are, God is right there with you; God can bring you through it; and God can strengthen you through it!

God will not leave you; God will not abandon you. Now, it may very well be that your own sin and your own unfaithfulness has gotten you into trouble. But if you approach your circumstances in faith, if you cry out to God for forgiveness and direction, He has promised to answer you and supply what is needed. He will provide an answer. He will provide salvation.

Finally, in verse 8, David says *taste and see that God is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him*. In many places in the OT, the Hebrew word for *taste* is translated just as it is written here, as if you were tasting with your tongue, your mouth the sweetness of honey (that word is actually used in the passage which speaks of Jonathon eating honey).

But the same root word is also used in Proverbs 31: 18, where Solomon describes the woman of virtue. He writes *she sees that her trading is profitable*. There the word is translated see (not taste), and it means that this woman can *perceive*, she *understands*, she *recognizes*, that her trading have been profitable; it is beneficial (a conclusion drawn by experience and observation).

Looking in our passage, I believe that both aspects of this word are in play. Certainly there is a sense in which we can speak of God's goodness being sweet to the taste. God blesses our lives with goodness in more ways than we can count. Health, strength, old age, children, with happiness and fellowship. That's a sweetness that fills our being, that's sweet to the taste.

But there are other times when we taste of God's goodness by way of experience and perception; we learn God's goodness through patience and long-suffering. We say of wine that it is an acquired taste; you don't open a bottle of merlot, or another fine wine and start drinking it like water or Pepsi. You have to learn how to appreciate that wine; you acquire a taste over time.

It can be that way with us when it comes to God's goodness. Over the years of our lives, as we go through tests and trials, Lord willing, we are growing in our knowledge and understanding and appreciation and love of the Lord our God. That means that as we grow older, we grow wiser, stronger in the faith, grow closer to God.

You know, we Christians catch people by surprise when we pray to God in thanksgiving even in the midst of tragedy and death. People don't understand how we can rejoice in the midst of our sufferings, how we can say with Job that God is good, blessed be the name of the Lord, right after He has just taken everything from us!

An unbeliever simply cannot perceive the goodness of God like that. Even a new Christian may struggle with that. But again, as we Christians grow and mature, as we have the advantage of hindsight; as we reflect upon our lives, we see that God is ever faithful; always loving; compassionate; kind; gracious; he supplies every need (lions may grow weak and hungry...).

Beloved, verse eight is not an invitation. It's not an invitation to those who don't know God, or who may be depending upon other means, other gods, other saviors to help get them through life, and their trials. This verse does not invite people to *give God a try, give God a shot, and see if you like him.*

No. This verse is a command. It's a command for God's people to literally feast upon the goodness of God. To taste of the sweetness and goodness of His perfect will for our lives; to taste and feast upon the sweetness of His divine Word—that's why Peter quotes this verse in I Peter 2:1, he call God's people to live lives of holiness and to drink of the pure milk of the Word, now that they have tasted that God is good!

And lastly, God commands us to taste, to feast upon the sweetness and the goodness of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who on the cross has given his own body and blood, so that through the Spirit Christ might become for us our real spiritual food and drink.

Ultimately this Psalm points to the One who is better than David, even our Lord Jesus Christ. He too was made to suffer in isolation, he too was cut off from His Father, his family, and his friends; he too was also taken outside the city and placed at the mercy of His enemy.

Christ also was made to suffer isolation in the darkness of Calvary, calling out *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.* Christ the darkness Christ endured far worse than David

experiences. Christ endured eternal darkness; Christ endured the eternal blackness of hell itself all to save us from our sins.

But in the cries of Christ, there was not a shred of sinful despair or hopelessness. Christ did not shame himself in the face of His enemy by pleading for mercy or trying to escape death; He did not minimize God, or question His will, or murmur or doubt or complain. Christ never felt anger or bitterness against His Father. The Son never once questioned the goodness of God.

Christ endured the darkness in perfect obedience, all for the sake of our salvation. He did that so that we would never experience the darkness of sin, the separation from God, the accursedness of hell. Christ endured all that, so that we would know nothing but sweet communion and fellowship with God both now, and forevermore.

So, as we come to the table of our Lord, beloved, we're called to reflect. We're called to *take, eat, drink, remember* and *believe* that God is good! We're called to remember that God has provided everything we need for body and soul, sacrificing His only begotten Son for us, pouring out His Holy Spirit upon us!

So as we come to this table, let's do so in obedience to God's command to taste and see--to taste and see that God is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. Amen.