

# David; or Faith's Experience.

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*1 Samuel 21; Psalm 34.*

## "Handfuls of Purpose" Part 3 (Miscellaneous, chapters 15 - 30).

*Let fall for eager Gleaners.*

*Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents*

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### CHAPTER 15 — DAVID; OR, FAITH'S EXPERIENCE.

It has often been observed that the Book of Psalms is intensely experimental. It is not of course that in that book we rise to the full height of Christianity, but the One whom we know now, fully revealed in the Son, is the One whom the Psalmist knew, and the exercises that he passed through are very similar to the exercises that the saints of God pass through in this day. There is consequently in them that which is very helpful to our souls. I have no doubt that in every age many a saint has drawn comfort from many of these Psalms. David was a man after God's heart. And, beloved friends, it is a great thing to be a man after God's heart.

A noticeable point of the thirty-fourth Psalm is the circumstances under which it was written. What I have read to you in 1 Samuel 21 tells us the moment when David wrote it. At least that is the heading of the Psalm. Now I do not think that anybody will say that the experience of David in the twenty-first chapter of Samuel was anything exceedingly creditable to a saint. He fled from Saul, and he got the bread, and the sword, but not in the simple way he might have done. It is a great thing to get your bread, and your sword rightly. You may not always obtain it after a divine way.

When you come to the end of the chapter you see David down among the Philistines, and then taking shelter under their king — Achish — who was an enemy of God's people, and God does not support him. They said, "Is not this David the king of the land?" (1 Sam. 21: 11). Yes! And here was the king flying, and taking refuge with the Lord's enemies. And then David "changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard" (1 Sam. 21: 13). Not a very nice thing for a saint to do. Then King Achish says: "Lo, ye see the man is mad; wherefore have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence?" (1 Sam. 21: 14, 15). This word of the king evidently touched David, and we read, "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam" (1 Sam. 22: 1).

In the cave of Adullam David was in the right place, and his experience was, I presume, recorded there. Every saint has experiences, and the person who has not had them is not a Christian. I do not say that you and I ought to have experiences like David, but if a man has in any measure been wrong, it is a very blessed thing, when he gets right, to express his recovery in the language of Psalm 34. It is very simple, very practical, and very wholesome, and I daresay thoroughly known to most of us. It is a Psalm that always reaches my soul every time I read it. If you do not want it, I want it, and I am very thankful for it.

You will find that the Psalm is divided into five sections. The keynote of it is, "at all times." "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34: 1). It reminds me of a New Testament servant, deprived of liberty, not flying from the foe, and taking refuge among the enemy voluntarily, but a servant shut up in the walls of a prison, and out of it there rings the trumpet-note of Holy Ghost liberty and joy, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." So said Paul in the epistle to the Philippians (Phil. 4: 4). And now I find David saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times." You may depend upon it his soul was thoroughly right when he penned that line. Have you always been right? Have I always been right? You know I have not, and I know you have not, because you and I are exactly alike, since "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 37: 19),

The first four verses, which is the first section of the Psalm, celebrate what the Lord is — Jehovah. Of course, brethren, when things are all nice, and smooth with us, we can sing like nightingales. Oh, then we are such a happy people! But then, the storm comes, and trouble arises, and difficulties cross our path, and we do not sing, do we? "I will bless the Lord at all times," expresses a beautiful state of soul. "Giving thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5: 20) is the New Testament echo. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms," says the apostle James (James 5: 13). No matter what the circumstances be, this will always be true, if a saint is right with God, "I will bless the Lord at all times."

If we follow the Lord along His pathway, we find Him saying in one of the darkest days of His pilgrimage, "I thank thee, O Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11: 25-27). Let us mark this perfect Son and Servant, for such was He, I need not say. As a Man He was our example. He has passed the road we tread, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2: 21). This is beautiful. He could truly say: "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." There is nothing so refreshing as to meet a praising saint. A mourning saint, or a murmuring saint, does not do you any good, but a praiseful saint, full of the goodness of the Lord, and the delight of what the Lord is — if you meet with such a saint — he leaves his impression on you.

But again, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord" (Ps. 34: 2). It is an Old Testament saint anticipating the New Testament injunction, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1: 31). "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Lovely words! Look at the effect of this boasting. It is very impressive. There is nothing impresses people like this. It may be a testimony that produces hatred, but there is no testimony so powerful. Look at the sixteenth chapter of Acts, and see two captive servants of Christ in a loathsome Roman prison, with their feet fast in the stocks. With bleeding backs, cold and hungry, they "prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16: 25). There was a wonderful testimony in that prison that

night. How could these men be so bright and joyful under such depressing circumstances? What was the secret? It was their joy in the Lord.

"The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad," verse 2 continues. It is only the humble that fully take in the import of this boasting. If able to boast thus, I shall be certain to find some who will thankfully join me, and be glad. Who are they? They are not the high, nor the proud, but they are the humble. It will produce gladness, deep gladness in the heart of others, that your soul is so constantly and abidingly in the joy of the Lord, and making her boast in Him,

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Ps. 34: 3). Fellowship is sought now. It wants others to be in its company. And then the last verse of the section gives, so to speak, the reason for all this. Now we get the basis of it. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." You will find the speaker is delivered himself, a verse or two lower down the Psalm, but here he is delivered from all his fears. I think the Lord oftentimes works to deliver us from our fears before He delivers us from our foes. Here is a man who was delivered from the fear of the trouble, before he was delivered from the trouble. It is the discovery of what God is. It is the soul deepening in its acquaintance with God, no matter what the difficulties may be.

In the next few verses (Ps. 34: 5-10) we get really what the salvation is. You are instructed in what the salvation is that God ministers to the soul that thus really turns to Him. It is a statement of a broad universal principle, no matter who it is. "They look unto him, and are enlightened. Their faces are not ever ashamed" (ver. 5). The sure effect of the soul having to do with God, is that it is enlightened. I am not talking of conversion now. It is true the soul is enlightened when it is converted, but here it is more in the pathway. It is a principle of the deepest importance. If you and I look to the Lord, what will be the effect? He will give us light. Why? Because God is light. And what He loves above all is to lead a soul into light, and your face is never ashamed. I have no doubt David was ashamed as he remembered the sorrowful circumstances of Samuel 21. We hang our heads too as we think of much of our pathway. That is quite right. But you will never hang your head when you look at Him. Oh no, you have the sense of the blessedness of having to do with God.

And now note the next thing: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps. 34: 6). What poor man was that? Of course David was the writer of the Psalm, but I have no doubt that that "poor man" was Christ. You will find in His pathway here He was always trying to God. It does not follow that there will always be deliverance from circumstances. That is not the point. In a world of evil we must never forget that righteousness may suffer, but God governs. In these six verses (5-11) you have really a little epitome of the pathway of the Lord Jesus. Where He now is, exalted in glory, is the divine answer to the cry of His blessed and holy soul in all His pathway here.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34: 7). A remarkable statement, beloved friends, and yet what an immense comfort for the soul to feel that it has angelic walls, so to speak, round it. If you fear the Lord, you are encamped in a safe place. You have many an illustration of it in the New Testament, and in the Old Testament too. Take the apostles in the fifth chapter of Acts: "Then the high priest rose up, and

all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth" (Acts 5: 17-19). Take Peter in the twelfth chapter of Acts: "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12: 6-11). How God steps in, if He pleases, in a remarkable way, to deliver His saints! But it is always "them that fear him," whom He delivers.

And now you have a call. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed *is the man* that trusteth in him" (Ps. 34: 8). The Hebrew word for *man* here is very striking. It is the *mighty man*. It is not the word expressing a poor weak man. No, it is a mighty man. And what is the secret of his might. He trusts in God. He has all his springs in God. You will find there are three things here. There is fearing the Lord, trusting the Lord, and seeking the Lord. In the eighth verse it is, "Blessed is the man that *trusteth* in him." In the ninth verse, "There is no want to them that fear him." And in the tenth verse, "They that *seek* the Lord shall not want any good thing." This is a moral set of holy principles that keep the heart always blessedly in touch with God. The soul, exhorted to taste what the goodness of the Lord is, will taste it if these principles are active.

In contrast with this the Psalmist says, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Ps. 34: 10). The Lord is the One who meets the soul in every possible circumstance. He uses the lions as an illustration, because the lion is the master of creation. "A lion is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any" (Prov. 30: 30). Spite of that even they might hunger, but "they that *seek* the Lord shall not want any *good* thing." Now there is a little difficulty perhaps with some as to this. You say, I have sought a good many things, but I did not get them. It does not say in our Psalm that they sought the things, it says they sought *the Lord*. We all of us would like many things which we regard as good for us. But by-and-by we shall be thankful that we did not have them. It has been the curse of his life to many a saint that he obtained what he longed for at sometime. The coveted thing was not good; but determination laid hold of it. "No *good* thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84: 12). Lay hold of that, dear friend, and if something you have desired is withheld, be sure it was not good for you. If you accept this your heart will say to Him, Blessed be Thy name, I am sure it was not good for me, Lord. There is great sweetness in this, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

That is the general principle of the way in which the Lord deals with us. The soul is conscious of the light of His presence. You have the sense that the Lord saves you, and that the

angel of the Lord is round about you. Then you have the conviction, I am looking to Him, I am counting on Him. If you do not get what you wanted, after a little you will certainly say, O Lord, what a good thing it was that Thou didst not let me have it.

We come now to another section of our Psalm. I think from the eleventh to the sixteenth verses you get the Psalmist giving us most beautiful instruction as to the secret of a happy, progressive, and blessed life. He says, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 34: 11). There has been a good deal about the fear of the Lord in the first part of the Psalm, but now he fully explains it to us. There is one verse in a previous Psalm that is very instructive in connection with this. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever" (Ps. 19: 9). I think that gives you the keynote of the scripture, as regards the fear of the Lord. Without this you cannot progress in practical holiness, or sanctification.

I believe David teaches us the true secret of it. Now, beloved, this is not the condition, the state of heart that keeps back from the Lord. It is the path of progress — not of the backslider. Another writer — Solomon — says, "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Prov. 28: 14). It is not the fear of judgment and wrath, but it is that holy and blessed fear in the soul, which the Spirit of God always begets, a fear lest we fail so to walk in everything as to please Him.

If you will turn to the book of Proverbs, you will be interested to see how you get "the fear of the Lord" spoken of so very frequently there. In the Proverbs I believe God gives us the furnishing of the understanding. If you have time, read a chapter every day of your life. It will preserve you from much sorrow and trouble in your pathway here. I want to point out the way, in the structure of the Bible, in which it is connected. The next two books, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, have to say to the heart. You have the conscience in the Psalms, the understanding in Proverbs, and in the next two books, the heart. They are the complement of each other. In Ecclesiastes Solomon talks of the heart, only to confess that it is empty, and in the Song of Solomon it is more than full. In the one the heart is too big for the object — the world, all under the sun — and in the other, the object — Christ — is too big for the heart. One book is heart-ache, and the other is heart's-ease. The secret of divine peace and joy is found in the Song of Solomon. It is occupation with the love, and the Person of Christ.

But now for the Proverbs. You will find seven times in this book what the fear of the Lord is stated to be. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1: 7). The fear of the Lord is the first step to knowledge and progress. Now pass on to the eighth chapter. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov. 8: 13). Things which He hates, we should, or His fear is not in us. Next we get, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9: 10). There is a great difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge may puff me up, but wisdom will never puff me up. Knowledge is the apprehension of the truth, but wisdom is the capacity of using the truth. It is the way in which the soul, led of God, can use what it has rightly, and divinely. Then, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. 10: 27). It is very similar in its tone to what we shall find in our Psalm. Next we read, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. 14: 27). A sure way of escaping Satan's snares is of priceless value. Sixthly, we read, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of

wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Prov. 15: 33). Wisdom is always willing to learn, it is only fools who need no instruction. And now lastly, "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil" (Prov. 19: 23). Abiding satisfaction is a sweet fruit of this holy fear. You will find now that this verse chimes in with our Psalm most beautifully. If you want these points illustrated they are all visible in the dying thief on the cross" (see Luke 23: 40-43).

Now turn back to our Psalm. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." It is presented as a daily practical thing. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" (Ps. 34: 12). That question appeals to each of us. Do you love life? Do you want many days, and to see good? Is it good you are seeking? Here is the instruction how to secure these blessings. "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile" (Ps. 34: 13). It does not begin here with my heart. It begins with my tongue. "Keep thy tongue." Oh, that is a most difficult job. How do you find it? We all know how hard it is to keep the tongue. But here it is. Are you set to see good? That is the question. I know the people who are desiring good, by the way they use their tongues.

And now, why so keep the tongue? Well, I think the sixth chapter of Luke will answer that question. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6: 45). What is really filling my heart will come off my tongue. And therefore you can always tell what my heart is occupied with, because I have a tongue. I cannot long deceive you.

When you come to the epistle of James you find a great deal about the tongue. Strange to say, it is not very often read, and yet that is a most important epistle. No saint gets on rightly that is afraid of James. "For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3: 2-13). Yes, it is quite true, "in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." I am quite sure I am not that man. But I think it is a beautiful thing to find such a man. Do you know him? No, nor do I ever expect to meet him. Let us meet him in you. A son was once complaining to his father of the evil in the

world. Said the old man, "Improve the world by one man, John!" i.e., begin the correction with number one. Wise old man!

And now pass on to Peter's first epistle, where he quotes from this thirty-fourth Psalm. He there exhorts us: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3: 9). We are to carry blessing to others. If my tongue does not carry blessing to others, it is a great pity, because a Christian has been blessed by God infinitely, and he is left by God in this world to be a blessing to others. Some people say to me, "All these Psalms are for the Jews." Peter does not leave them all for the Jews. He knew better than that. I am sure it will be a very useful thing for our souls if we heed what he says. Thus then he quotes, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3: 10-12). He stops there. He knows how to quote the Scripture. He omits the end of the sixteenth verse of the Psalm, which runs thus, "To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." He does not go on with the Psalm, because that will only take place by-and-by, when the Lord Christ as a righteous King reigns, and righteousness will judge all evil at once. The man that lets his tongue was wrongly in that day will be cut off.

But even now, in the government of God, if I am not careful of my tongue, I may come under His discipline. The seed I sow will certainly bring forth its corresponding crop by-and-by, and so will what you sow. I speak very plainly, for I get about a good deal among the saints, and I could not tell you the mischief that is done by unguarded language, and letting forth that which is not profitable. Ah, beloved, God give us all to be more careful.

I must not, as a saint, allow that which is not profitable to issue from my lips. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4: 29). All conversation either ministers grace to you, or it corrupts you. I do not think we ought to turn aside the keen edge of the Word of God in respect of this.

But to return again to our Psalm, we find the instruction of wisdom bidding us "Depart from evil, and do good" (Ps. 34: 14). This sweetly harmonises with "But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13: 16). Think of Jesus, He "went about, doing good" (Acts 10: 35). What the Psalmist by the Spirit presses on us here, is what the blessed Lord Himself illustrated in all His unselfish pathway here.

"*Seek peace, and pursue it*" (Ps. 34: 14), is the next injunction. How we are reminded of the Lord's words here — "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5: 9). Again, "Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6: 15). The man that is not a peace-maker is, in the spirit of his soul, a peacebreaker. Why? Because he is not walking in carefulness before God.

Again, turning to the epistle of James, we find that "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3: 18). We are called to walk in peace, and, beloved friends, it is a blessed thing to be a peace-maker.

The apostle Paul in the fourth chapter of Philippians exhorts us to follow in the pathway of Christ, saying: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4: 6-9). It is not only that if you are prayerful and thankful, the peace of God will keep your heart, but if occupied with Christ yourself, you will carry with you the sense of the presence of the God of peace. And it is a lovely thing, beloved, for a saint to be passing through this world in that character.

But we are further told in our Psalm that "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Ps. 34: 15). How comforting, striking, and also encouraging: only let us mark well that it is the righteous He ever thus regards. The doom of the unrighteous is given in the next verse, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil. to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Ps. 34: 16), which points distinctly to the judgment of the ungodly in a day to come.

Now you come to the fourth section of the Psalm, which is an experience I have no doubt that the blessed Lord Jesus knew full well. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34: 17, 18). What kind of man could God walk with? With the man of a contrite spirit. If you want to secure the presence of the Lord, what must there be? A broken, and a contrite heart. In plain language, there is a moral state that engages the company of Christ.

From the nineteenth verse to the close is the last section of the Psalm. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps. 34: 19). That is the principle. He delivers in His own way, in due time, because He has His eye so upon His people. "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken" (Ps. 34: 20). Who could that be, but the blessed Lord Himself, when on the cross? Who could deny the application of this passage to Him? It is absolutely prophetic, and the apostle is very careful to say, "That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19: 36). How God preserved Him! What a sense, beloved, our souls should have of the preserving hand of our Lord.

Then you get in the last two verses a contrast. "Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall bear their guilt (margin)" (Ps. 34: 21). That is a very striking statement, but illustrated all through Scripture. Evil turns round upon a man that indulges in it, and slays him. It is a broad principle. "And they that hate the righteous shall bear their guilt." That shows the righteous retribution which God must administer. But the Psalmist adds, "The Lord

redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall bear guilt." The same word.

How blessedly, does the Spirit here, by the pen, and the lip of this really restored man, teach us to find all the springs of our souls in God. May His grace indeed lead us more and more to walk with Him, and to pass through this scene, as a blessing to others, while waiting for His Son from heaven.

"My heart is full of Christ, and longs  
Its glorious matter to declare.  
Of Him I make my loftier songs;  
I cannot from His praise forbear.  
My ready tongue makes haste to sing  
The glories of the heavenly King.  
Fairer than all the earth-born race  
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;  
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,  
And full of love Thy tender heart.  
God ever blest, we bow the knee,  
And own all fulness dwells in Thee."