



Studies in the Psalms Keys to the Joyful Life 2

Summary: The joyful life includes trusting God's character in the face of adversity.

We're making our way through the Psalms this summer looking for the keys to the blessed life, the joyful life. We're focusing in on this phrase: [blessed is the man who](#) and learning how Scripture fills in the blank. What does the blessed man do, what does their life look like, and what does it not look like?

And remember, grammatically the phrase is generic, like mankind. So really, it's blessed is the person who... which means these things we see apply to all of us. These are the keys to the life we are all hungry for.

Last week we found our first two keys. We learned from Psalm 1 [Blessed is the man who](#) ignores what others have to say and delights in the way God says things should be. And we learned from Psalm 32, the blessing of admitting our failures and finding forgiveness from God. This morning we collect another key and we find it in

[Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!](#)

Some of your Bibles may say, [blessed is the man who takes refuge](#) in God – it's all the same idea – there is some weakness, some vulnerability in your life, and you turn to God for protection and help, you turn to Him for refuge and place your trust in Him as your defense.

Well, the man who wrote this knows what he's talking about because he learned this truth the hard way – by trusting in himself instead of God. If you look at the beginning of the Psalm, you probably have a little note in the margin above verse one. Mine says:

[A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.](#)

David is King David, the one who faced Goliath as a young man – that happened when someone else was king – Saul. And Saul grew jealous of David because everybody was always talking about how great David was and what an amazing thing David had done. The ladies sang a song, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands!" All of that made Saul kind of insecure so he started to bully David, he would have actually killed him if David hadn't escaped the capital city.

Even then, Saul went out looking for David, searching the entire country for him. David, the giant-slayer, was now a man on the run, in search of refuge, a safe place where he could ride things out and let Saul chill out. But when the man you're running from is the king of

the country you're living in, it can be kind of difficult to avoid detection. So, David comes up with an idea – he'll move down to Gath, where Goliath was from and see if the king down there will take him in.

And the king does. He figures, 'if the guy who killed my best warrior, wants to come be loyal to me, why not?' But the rest of the city hears about it and people start talking and they're like, 'you can't let him live here, what if he turns on us' and David catches wind of it, and realizes, he's gotten himself into a mess.

So, he goes to the gates of the city and acts like he's crazy, he starts slobbering and has spit running down his beard and causes a scene and the king says alright, that's enough, you're going to have to find somewhere else to go, we can't let you stay around here – and David escapes with his life, but it was close. It could have gone either way.

Now I don't know if you can relate to that, but I can. Oh, not exactly, but I've gotten myself into stupid situations before and then had to figure a way out and felt like a fool in the process or felt scared hoping my escape plan would work.

We get ourselves into those situations when we take matters into our own hands. When we try to plot out our own life. When we think we have to solve our own problems. When we think there's no one we can count on, no one we can turn to, no one who is willing to help. We get ourselves into those situations when we lose sight of God.

Which is why David would later write:

Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts [in Him!](#)

Blessed is the man, the woman, the retiree, the high schooler, the young adult, blessed is anyone who trusts in God instead of taking matters into their own hands and trying to solve life's problems alone.

David sees that now, after he escaped, he sees how stupid it was and how dangerous. And he repents, he turns 180 degrees in his thinking and reflects on how much better it would have been to just trust God first. And so he wrote this Psalm to help himself, and those of us like him, to remember how much better life is when we put our trust in God. Read with me:

Ps 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.

**8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**

9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!
There is no want to those who fear Him.
10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.

11 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Who is the man who desires life,
And loves many days, that he may see 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 on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.
20 He guards all his bones;
Not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

You will face adversity in life. Hard times will come your way. It may be your own fault, a result of selfish or stupid decisions, like David, or it may be due to things like lab results that come back positive, or a sudden accident, or a boss or neighbors that are just hard to

get along with, but adversity will come. No matter how much you love God. No matter how hard you work. No matter how well you prepare. Adversity will come.

And when it does, then what? What will you trust in? Where will you turn for shelter or help? Where *do* you go for refuge? When you feel vulnerable, when you sense uncertainty, when you face a threat or a need – where *do* you go, what *do* you do?

If you want to be blessed, if you want to have peace that passes all understanding, if you want to know joy in the midst of chaos, if you want to find the key to the joyful life, Scripture says you should turn to find refuge in God. David even gives us seven reasons why that's a reasonable thing to do and they're all based in God's character.

The first thing you should know about God if you're going to trust in Him is that He is **Aware** of what's happening. Nothing happens in your life that escapes God's notice. He is omniscient, that's a fancy, theological term that means He knows everything. He knows what happened to you in the past, He knows what you're facing right now, and He knows what's waiting for you next November.

Look with me at vs [15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous](#). Christian, you need to know and be assured: God's eyes are on you. You are not forgotten. You are not alone. And, you don't have to work really hard to catch His attention. His eyes are already on you. He knows. For good or bad, He knows everything about you and your life. Nothing escapes His view. There is no incognito or private browser mode for God. So, let's start there, you need to know that God knows. You need to know, He is aware.

And, you can talk to Him about what's happening. Whether you brought it on yourself or it happened to you. Because He is, number 2, **Approachable**.

Look at vs

[4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.](#)

And vs

[6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles.](#)

Two times David says I reached out to God *and He heard me!* You need to know: God listens to your prayers. Now, He doesn't always answer them, and there are all kinds of reasons for that, that would be another whole series: you might be asking for the wrong thing, it might not be time yet, or there may be something else you need to deal with before the answer comes – again, there's a lot that we could dig into there and this is not the time for it, but it is the time for you to know, God is not only **aware**, He is **approachable**. When you pray, He hears, He listens, and David says He delivered me, He saved me out of my troubles. When you need refuge, when you need someone to trust, you can turn to God.

Who is, number three, **Compassionate**. Look at:

18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

David wrote this in Hebrew 3000 years ago in what we now call the Middle East and he talks about having a broken heart. Hearts are broken by all kinds of things, but *it's a common human experience*. At some point in this life, your heart will break. It could be a teenage romance. It could be a devastating loss. It could be a shattered dream, or a goal you're never going to reach. We all experience disappointment, loss, and devastation. There's a sense in which life is a scavenger hunt for scars.

But in those moments, when you feel crushed, hurt, devastated, gutted, shattered by life, **the LORD is near** and He is compassionate on those who have been broken.

And, and this is very important, He also **saves such as have a contrite spirit**. See, maybe you blew it. Maybe it is all your fault. And now you're crushed by what you've done. If you have a contrite spirit, God is there, ready to pick you up off the floor and be your refuge.

We are all theologians. We all think about God. But we're not all good theologians, because we don't all have the right thoughts about Him.

How do you think God sees you? Do you think God is happy when you show up looking for refuge, happy to hear your prayers, is God willing to be near you? Or do you think He's begrudging, reluctant, and ready to kick you out? Listen to King David, a man who blew it, say, God is compassionate, He **is near to the broken hearted** and willing to forgive and a save those who are contrite. Your life will be blessed if and when you trust in this God, when you make Him your refuge.

He is, number four, **Good**.

8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD **is good**;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Notice what it says, because a little grammar makes a LOT of difference. He's not just "good for you," no, He IS good. All kinds of things are "good for you" that may not *be* good, or enjoyable. Think of the way you react when someone says, "take this, it's good for you." Some of you had parents that went through a health food craze. Some of you ARE parents going through a health food craze. It's hard to get excited about something when the best thing you can say about it is, 'It's good for you.'

But if someone says, "Try this, it's amazing!" you're a lot more likely to put it in your mouth. It might still be good for you, but it's also *good*. That's what David is saying about God – He is not just good for you, He *is* good. And, he says, try it out. Experience it. **Taste and see**. Not

one of those tiny samples from the lady in the hairnet at Costco, no, go ahead and take a big old bite. [8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!](#)

Again, we're all theologians, but we're not all good theologians. Sometimes we think of prayer as a sales pitch, that we've got to try to change God's mind – we want this good thing and we think He doesn't want us to have it, so we have to convince Him to join our team, to be on our side. That's a wrong way of thinking! The Scripture says: [taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!](#)

It's not always easy to try new foods, and it's not always easy to trust, but this is a key to the blessed life – if you want to have joy, *find it in the LORD*, trust in Him, when you face adversity, don't try to solve everything on your own, handle it all on your own, make it through on your own, trust in the God who is Aware, Accessible, Compassionate, Good and number five, **Provides**.

[9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!](#)
[There is no want to those who fear Him.](#)
[10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;](#)
[But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.](#)

Now, again, a little grammar makes a big difference: notice it does not say you won't lack *anything*, it says you will not lack *any good thing* and you have to let Him define good.

But Jesus taught us to pray “give us this day, our daily bread.” God *wants* us to be in a dependent relationship with Him. He wants us to bring our needs to Him. He wants us to pray for things, but He also wants to teach us what kind of things to pray for: what are the good things we should be seeking? And then, Jesus said, God will provide – He is a good father, better than any you have ever known.

He is also, number six, a **Protector**.

[19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,](#)
[But the LORD delivers him out of them all.](#)
[20 He guards all his bones;](#)
[Not one of them is broken.](#)

Take note of that Christian. Take note of that everyone who hears. [Many are the afflictions of the righteous](#). Life is hard. There are heart breaks. There is opposition. Bad things do happen. But God is a protector and deliverer for the righteous.

[7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,](#)
[And delivers them.](#)

Remember, He's **aware** of what's going on, His eyes [are on the righteous](#). Remember, He is **good**. Affliction will come your way, pain will come your way, there will be setbacks and

loss and suffering. But God is there. He is your shield, your defense, your protector, and your deliverer.

But what are you tempted to turn to first? What are you most likely to trust when difficulty comes your way? David made a mess of things when he tried to handle the situation on his own. Remember that. Remember that he is writing after the fact. He's already paid the stupid tax, and now he's trying to help us avoid making the same mistake. He's telling us: let God be your protector, your deliverer, instead of trying to take care of it yourself.

One final thing to know of God's character so that you can trust Him. He is **Just**.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

Notice, there is a final reckoning for those that oppose you when you're living righteously. God isn't asking you to just suck it up. He's not all about mercy, there is also justice. Those who hate your righteous convictions will be condemned. But no one who trust in Him will face the same fate, because He redeems you.

Throughout the Psalm you get this common theme – we are in need, and God is willing to help. We don't have to take matters into our own hands. And we can make huge mistakes when we do. Instead, we should invite God into the process. Acknowledge Him, turn to Him, trust in Him, take refuge in Him because His character proves to us, we can.

God takes in the refugees that come His way. He has an open border policy. He is welcoming, kind, calm, approachable, generous, and aware. He offers to be your sword and shield, your source of strength and help when you trust in Him.

And here in Psalm 34, David shows us what trust looks like. Instead of fear, worry, anger or anxiety, it looks like transformation and praise.

When you trust God instead of yourself, you stop using your tongue for the wrong reasons.

13 Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.

When you're backed into a corner, looking for some place to find refuge, you might lash out against the people you feel are against you. You might be ready with the hot take, quick with your response. You might be a fighter, up for the challenge, somebody says something harsh against you and you're ready to go right back. Don't do that. **Keep your tongue from speaking evil.**

But also, keep your **lips from speaking deceit**. Don't say negative or depressing things. Don't be the one who fills the air with frustration and doubt and cynicism or fear and worry.

Fill the air around you with praise instead.

Have you noticed that it's hard to worship and worry at the same time?

You need to praise God instead of your problems. Some of us have no issue with praise and worship, we're just praising the wrong thing. We talk about the problem we're facing, that issue, that person, that situation, more than we talk about the LORD. We *praise* it, talk about every aspect of it, keep coming back to it, over and over again, what a big problem it is, what a fine mess it is, how messed up we are. Look, you need to praise God instead of your problems. Stop giving so much head and heart space to your issue and trust in God instead.

13 Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.

Now, sometimes, notice, that's a conscious choice. David says,

Ps 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.

Trust is an act of the will, not just the emotions. You can't go off of what you *feel* because there will be times you *don't feel* like trusting God but if you decide to worship at that moment, and say I WILL bless the LORD, my soul SHALL make it's boast, you can take back control of your thoughts and feelings by bludgeoning them into submission with praise.

And notice that praise is not just conscious, it's also communal. David says **Magnify the LORD with me**. He says **the humble will see and be glad**. He encourages others to **taste and see**. There is an awareness that others are around me and so, an invitation to them to join me, that I might encourage them to trust in God too. That we might communally encourage one another to trust in God, to find refuge in Him, that we share with one another the reasons why should based on things we know of God and have experienced.

So, what do we do with all this? How do we use this key to the blessed, joyful life most of us say we want to have? Let me give you three action steps.

First, identify – where do you normally put your trust, where do you normally turn for refuge, is it God? If not, why not? Who or what else do you turn to, and why?

Second, face the threat. Whatever it is that has you concerned, worried, stressed, right now, face the threat. Face every detail of it, and say, “yes, all of that, I'm worried about that” and then say, “and that's exactly what I'm trusting God with. So LORD, if you want me to do anything about it, please just let me know and give me strength otherwise, I will do my best to rest in You and Your character. I want Your perspective and to be on Your path.”

Then, trust Him and be patient.

And third, worship while you wait. Praise God for what He has already done. Praise Him for all the things He has already brought you through in the past. Praise Him for His nature and character, praise Him for who He is.

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.

8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Here's a key to the blessed life church.

You will face adversity. Difficulty, uncertainty, opposition, will come your way. You might bring it on yourself, or it may come from outside, but either way, if you are willing, you can put your trust in God, you can find your refuge in Him, His eyes are on you, His ears are listening, His arms are open. He is good, and if you trust in Him, you will be blessed.

Let's pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Studies in the Psalms Keys to the Joyful Life 2

Summary: The joyful life includes trusting God's character in the face of adversity.

- Have you ever made a mess of your life by coming up with your own escape plan or scheme, like David? How did that end?
- What are some reasons we're prone to look for our own solutions to the problems of life, or to take matters into our own hands?
- Review Psalm 40 which also says, "blessed is the man who puts His trust in the Lord."
 - What kind of deliverance is described there?
 - What additional lessons do you learn about trusting God?
- God is:
 - Aware
 - Accessible
 - Compassionate
 - Good
 - He Provides
 - Protects
 - Is Just
 - Which of these do you most need to be reminded of in the adversity you face?
- "We're all theologians, we're just not all good theologians." Where has your thinking about God been wrong before, and what is God teaching you now?
- How do praise and worship affect the way we see the challenges and adversity in our lives?
 - What are some of your go-to worship songs for reinforcing your trust in God?
 - Has there ever been a specific song, prayer, or aspect of praise that God used to carry you through a challenge or trial?
- Ps 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
 - How has God used other people to help get you through a trial or season of difficulty?