

# Psalm 34 • How to Fear the Lord

## Introduction

In the NASB, the phrases “fear the Lord” and “fear God” appear at least 82 times. There are other variants, to be sure. The meaning of “fear” in this biblical context ironically comes down to the fact that the answer to man’s fears for this life is fear of God—responding to Him out of reverence and respect to serve Him only. “You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.” (Deuteronomy 6:13) It’s the simultaneous act of living a life committed to what we worship. In this Psalm David provides insight into how his own fear of the Lord works and how we can tell if it’s sufficiently present in our own walk and behavior.

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

### [Read v.1-3]

**Q: Based on these verses, what would you say the fear of the Lord begins with?**

A: Praise; giving Him the credit.

**Q: Yes, but examine the activities David describes. Is this one-time or occasional praise?**

A: “...at all times...” and “...continually...” sort of jump out at you. Notice that it’s not just with the mouth but from the soul, something that is not only sincere but constantly with us—something we might term “a continual attitude of praise”.

**Q: Is this a solo or exclusively private activity?**

A: In v.3 David’s praise is infectious, spreading to everyone around him. His praise is not just visible but promoting participation.

**Application:** Can you give something due respect—even exalted respect—without lauding it for its superior qualities? Would you characterize your praise of God to be indwelling and always active, or just something that comes up once a week during church service? Do you see that praise is the most visible sign of our respect and fear for the One True God?

<sup>4</sup>I sought the LORD, and He answered me,  
And delivered me from all my fears.  
<sup>5</sup>They looked to Him and were radiant,  
And their faces will never be ashamed.  
<sup>6</sup>This poor man cried, and the LORD heard  
him  
And saved him out of all his troubles.  
<sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD encamps around  
those who fear Him,  
And rescues them.

### [Read v.4-7]

**Q: What do each of these characterizations have in common? Of what do they collectively speak?**

A: We should know from both our own personal experience and from the testimony of others that we are always in the center of His protection.

**Application:** How can you not respect and revere He Who answers, delivers, hears, saves, and rescues us? Shouldn’t that give a healthy boost to our godly fear of Him?

<sup>8</sup>O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
How blessed is the man who takes refuge  
in Him!

<sup>9</sup>O fear the LORD, you His saints;  
For to those who fear Him there is no  
want.

<sup>10</sup>The young lions do lack and suffer  
hunger;  
But they who seek the LORD shall not be  
in want of any good thing.

<sup>11</sup>Come, you children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>Who is the man who desires life  
And loves length of days that he may see  
good?

<sup>13</sup>Keep your tongue from evil  
And your lips from speaking deceit.

<sup>14</sup>Depart from evil and do good;  
Seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>15</sup>The eyes of the LORD are toward the  
righteous

And His ears are open to their cry.

<sup>16</sup>The face of the LORD is against  
evildoers,  
To cut off the memory of them from the  
earth.

<sup>17</sup>The righteous cry, and the LORD hears  
And delivers them out of all their  
troubles.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD is near to the brokenhearted  
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

### **[Read v.8-14]**

**Q: According to v.8, is our fear of the Lord something accomplished from afar?**

A: It specifically describes our position as taking “*refuge in Him*”; that is, to dwell continually in his presence and protection.

**Q: Do v.9-10 promise anything and everything desired by the heart of those that fear the Lord?**

A: Absolutely not. First, to take refuge in Him will certainly have an effect on what you want—your desires change from your own to His; and second, we “*shall not be in want of any good thing*”, a personal judgment which is almost certainly to also come into alignment with God’s view of what is good and not our own. Our wants and desires come under His influence and subjection.

**Q: So how are the actions described in v.11-13 an extension of our taking refuge in Him and bringing our wants and desires in alignment with His?**

A: They’re all the actions of personal obedience. If we’re in the right place (taken refuge in Him), of the same mind (brought our wants and desires in alignment with His), our life’s actions and choices are brought into obedience to complete us.

- “...keep your tongue from evil...”
- “...keep...your lips from speaking deceit...”
- “...depart from evil and do good...”
- “...seek peace and pursue it.”

**Point:** To fear the Lord first begins with an attitude of praise, reinforced by living according to the knowledge of always being in His protection, and bringing one’s place, attitude, and heart into obedience to Him.

### **[Read v.15-18]**

**Q: Does the Lord ever sleep? Then for how long are His eyes, ears, and face so fixed as described?**

A: Always. The point is that the Lord is always present, whether we are righteous or evildoers.

**Point:** Certainly everyone should fear God Who never sleeps, who is always near, and Whom we know will respond in kind to the deeds of each person. It’s important to note that God does not say the righteous will not experience trouble, a broken heart, or even a crushed spirit, but that He is faithful to respond, to deliver, and save from these conditions.

**Application:** Do you fool yourself into thinking that God is not always watching, not always listening, or not always near? How would the quality of your fear of the Lord change if you began to live like you believed this to be true?

<sup>19</sup>Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.

<sup>20</sup>He keeps all his bones,  
Not one of them is broken.

<sup>21</sup>Evil shall slay the wicked,  
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,  
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

### **[Read v.19-22]**

**Q: Does a right relationship with God guarantee that one will never have any problems in this life?**

A: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”. There will definitely be problems in this life. “But the LORD delivers him out of them all”. This is the difference between those that fear the Lord and those that don’t.

**Q: What does the Lord do on behalf of the righteous—the one that biblically fears Him?**

- “delivers” (v.19)
- “keeps” (v.20)
- “redeems” (v.22)

**Q: What happens to the wicked—those that don’t fear Him?**

- “slay” (v.21)
- “condemned” (v.21)

**Point:** Here is the summary of God’s work in life, whether or not a person chooses to respect, revere, and regard Him as Lord of their life. Having this knowledge that in the end He lifts up those that choose Him and brings down those that don’t, we have the motivation to fear Him for knowing that He follows His Word through with His actions.

### **Overall Application**

- Fear begins with a heart that continually praises Him both in the inner man and visibly by encouraging others to do the same.
- Fear is built out of our commitment to seek and remain in His protection, to take up refuge in Him rather than the world.
- Fear is the result of following through with personal obedience.
- Fear is born out by what the Lord does, how differently he treats those that follow Him completely and those that don’t.

*Is our respect and reverence for God a part-time or full-time activity? Ever notice that the people who are the greatest examples of Christian maturity never cease to praise Him, never cease to talk about Him? Going forward, how are we going to properly fear the Lord?*