

I will bless Yahweh at all times

Reading: Psalm 34

As we come around the emblems once again brethren and sisters, we are once more struck with the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who magnified his Father and his Fathers will, above all other considerations, including his own will and life.

And what of us brethren and sisters how well do we do - each day, as we try to set our Heavenly Father and his will at not only the forefront of our minds, but also as a priority in our hectic lives, day by day?

Psalm 34 and Verses 1 - 3

“I will bless Yahweh at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in Yahweh: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify Yahweh with me, and let us exalt his name together”.

Here in the opening words of this powerful and comforting psalm the psalmist David provides us with an example to follow an exhortation to heed and a challenge to take up.

One of the key means that David kept our Heavenly Father before him continually was through the practice of praise, even daily praise. No wonder then that this faithful man is elsewhere described as the sweet psalmist of Israel. Here then my dear brethren and sisters is our first challenge to become men and women of praise; the idea behind the Hebrew word here is of a song, which contains thanksgiving and adoration.

David in these first few verses of the psalm instructs us brethren and sisters in how to become such men and women in our day. He states in that opening verse *“I will bless Yahweh at all times”*. A statement, which is easy to say, but more difficult for us to carry out in that - **all times**, is all encompassing including both the good times and the bad. It harbours no exceptions, in this we are to be like that worthy of old – Job.

In Job Chapter 1 and at Verse 21

“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh”.

Or indeed like Paul and Silas, who after being beaten and placed in the dungeon at midnight prayed and sang praises unto our God. Is this the sort of response that we each give brethren and sisters when the severest of trials enter our lives?

To be able to do so brethren requires that we like David apply all four ways we can understand, this simple phrase *“I will”*. For here we have a four-part process, which will enable us to learn to praise as David did. Here we find the **desire** of David, the **decision** of David, the **determination** of David and the **devotion** of the psalmist.

The sweet psalmist of Israel had a desire to bless Yahweh and we too brethren and sisters must have this same desire. A desire, which is so strong that it, generates action in our daily lives. For like the one we have come to remember our lives must be wholly given over to the blessing of Yahweh.

Now what do we mean, when we speak of *blessing* our Heavenly Father? How can you and I brethren and sisters bless the great creator and sustainer of the universe?

Well the idea here of *blessing* is to return unto the Almighty what are his rightful dues in terms of *our thanksgiving, our love and our service*. In this we see then that becoming men and women of praise is much more than speaking mere words. We must heed the warning and exhortation of the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah Chapter 29 and verse 13 records

“Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me”.

Our whole lives are to become a hymn of praise in that we are to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is recorded of the Master in Psalm 40:

Psalm 40 and verses 7 – 10

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Yahweh, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation”.

Indeed earlier in that psalm in verse 3 it records *“he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Yahweh”*. Each one of us are living witnesses to the truth of this verse brethren and sisters. For we have come to know the fullness of the life of praise, which is the Lord Jesus Christ’s. Seen in the emblems before us upon the table of bread and wine.

Yet when we look around at one another brethren and sisters do we see this *desire* to give our lives to bless our God? When we meet together do we see the praise of our God in one another’s lives and so likewise learn to fear and trust our Heavenly Father at all times?

Thus David in Psalm 34 and verses one makes a decision to give his life to the blessing and praise of his God. We did the same brethren and sisters when we were baptised into Christ, but as the Greek in Romans twelve shows. That initial, decision with its resulting action of baptism, although it was a once for all action – it has an ongoing outworking, a commitment which, is to be renewed day by day.

Romans Chapter 12 and verse 1

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”.

Thus we read that which is recorded of our beloved Lord: “*not my will, but thine, be done*”. This likewise must become our motto if we are to lead lives of blessing and praise to Yahweh.

We have seen so far brethren and sisters that this simple “*I will*” statement we tend to read over contains a four aspects. Indeed four stages in a process, which instructs and exhorts us to follow in the footsteps on not only the sweet psalmist of Israel, but in the way of the Beloved himself.

We have seen then both the desire and the decision of our Lord, now we shall briefly consider the determination required. For it is one thing to have the desire and indeed to make such a decision, but without determination nothing shall be accomplished.

Luke Chapter 9 and at verse 51 records

“it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem”.

Here we see *determination* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A determination that is equally required in each one of us brethren and sisters if we are to manifest a life of praise before our Heavenly Father, which after all is our reasonable service / worship.

It will indeed take determination to bless and praise our Heavenly Father in the dark times, when things are not going well for us, when we are bewildered and are unable to understand what the Father is trying to specifically accomplish in our lives.

Cast your eyes across to psalm thirty-five indeed here is a very different psalm with the psalmist David in dire situation being persecuted by those close at hand. Yet **notice** verses 9, 18 & 28:

“And my soul shall be joyful in Yahweh: it shall rejoice in his salvation. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long”.

Some of you may indeed be in such a dark period and I exhort you to take courage brethren and sisters. Indeed the Apostle exhorts us to count such trials a joy because of the fruit of character, which comes forth from those experiences. Our determination brethren and sisters will result in endurance unto the end if we continue to develop and cultivate the final aspect in the four-part process.

Now the final stage within this “*I will*” statement is that of devotion. For we know that determination can only carry you so far brethren and sisters like fear it is weak through the flesh. Whereas *devotion* is a deep-seated love that overcomes, for love brethren and sisters is the most powerful motivation force, known to mankind, *why?*

Because it is our Heavenly Father’s motivation – for He is love we read and He indeed is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. In that He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, as is evident in the bread and wine before us.

In Galatians Chapter 2 and at verse 20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (or faithfulness) of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”.

Here we see the devotion of our Lord Jesus Christ for us brethren and sisters and in this verse in Galatians.

Yet at the same time we see also modelled by the Apostle Paul in this verse what must be our reasonable response a **reciprocated devotion** to our Master and our Heavenly Father.

Verses 11 – 14

“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of Yahweh. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it”.

Here we see within the psalm it’s self that this praise, which must be on our lips, within our hearts and lived out. Is only hollow and empty if it is not accompanied with a righteousness of life.

This four part process of acting upon the *desire*, taking the *decision*, being *determined* to carry through and *devoting* ourselves to the daily praising of our Heavenly Father actually has a dynamo effect. In that each stage leads into and strengthens the next, but this is all the result of having the heartfelt urge to bless and praise our God firstly in words.

It is the action and the resulting effects of such praise on a daily basis brethren and sisters, which enables the whole process. So that we might come to know the wonderful truth of the following two verses. *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure and I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”*. Indeed that we each might learn to praise our Heavenly Father after the manner of both David and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in the second half of this first verse of psalm thirty-four David continues *“his praise shall continually be in my mouth”*. Having seen the process, we now are introduced brethren and sisters to the method of keeping our lives focused upon the right things, eternal things, even the continual praise of our Heavenly Father.

This praise is to be **in our mouths continually**, now it is clear from verse two that part of this methodology of praising our Heavenly Father involves vocalised praise in the presence of others of like mind.

Verse 2

“My soul shall make her boast in Yahweh: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad”.

Again **note carefully** the use of the term *“my soul”*, it speaks of our whole life and being, so praise brethren and sisters is much, much more than just our words.

Now when we boast or brag about something it is usually to others and often it has a negative effect upon them, but that is not the case here. Rather the opposite effect occurs for we read that they hear and are glad. The Hebrew word “*glad*” actually means **to rejoice**, so in effect the praise of our Heavenly Father is multiplied. We spread his name and his fame amongst one another, which builds confidence both individually and ecclesially in our Heavenly Father and his providential care.

Implied here is the concept that praise is *contagious* and that when we make our lives a praise to our Heavenly Father it rubs off onto one another and redounds to his glory. When we vocalise our praise and our blessing of our Heavenly Father one of the benefits of it, when done collectively is that it strengthens others in their **desire** to praise, in their **decision** to praise, in their **determination** to praise and their **devotion** to continually praise our God. It has then a dynamo effect ecclesially, as well as individually.

David throughout this psalm is explaining through his own understanding of how our Heavenly Father works providentially in the lives of his saints. Additionally and most importantly He exhorts us through his own experience of our Heavenly Father in his life. We are being exhorted brethren and sisters that our Heavenly Father is nigh unto them and is faithful in his care for them, so David challenges all that will hear in verse eight: “*O taste and see that Yahweh is good*”.

“*O taste*” the psalmist proclaims, this is the language of our senses indeed it is the language of experience. That of **taste**, which if Christadelphians are to be observed is the most pleasant of our senses.

David exhorts us brethren and sisters to place our faith and trust in our Heavenly Father, for although we can intellectually appreciate certain points. The fullness of their understanding can only come through actual experience, hence the exhortation to “*taste and see that Yahweh is good*”.

There is another exhortation for us here brethren and sisters in that we need to share our experience of our Heavenly Father at work in our lives as the David does here.

For in doing so we are praising our Heavenly Father, as the psalmist does here and we are allowing others to learn and benefit from our experiences both positive and negative.

Returning back to the second half of verse one where we read “*his praise shall continually be in my mouth*”. Let us consider a little further David’s method; firstly we have seen the need to talk to and encourage one another. Secondly and importantly there is a need to rehearse these things ourselves individually day by day for us to become men and women of praise.

Let us remember that the word “*praise*” here is speaking of a song or melody that contains both thanksgiving and adoration. Within scriptures our Heavenly Father is praised on two accounts firstly for who he is, in terms of his personality and his attributes and secondly for his works and his purposes.

These two areas are to be sources of our praise brethren and sisters, but how do we do this on a daily basis as we each go about the day to day activities of life. Well I have a few suggestions for you:

- We can pray
- We can sing hymns to ourselves
- We can meditate upon scripture
- We can rehearse / remember how God has worked in our lives in the past

All four of these activities can be done in the background, as we go about our daily business. For example when I am alone in the car I often pray as I drive or attempt to sing hymns to myself. The only problem here is I don't know the tunes, and can only remember odd lines, so a number of hymns get blended together or at worst the same few lines get mass repetition.

Indeed I have found it a profitable exercise to pick a verse and think about it during the subsequent few days. In fact this is how this exhortation actually came about brethren and sisters, as I started to meditate upon verse three of this psalm and then upon the earlier two verses. Truly the idea here is to fill our minds, our hearts and our mouths with the things of the truth, with our Heavenly Father and the work of the Master we have come to remember and of course with the word of life.

We need to learn to praise in this way brethren and sisters, because we become much more aware of our Heavenly Fathers interaction and blessings in our lives. As a result we have a more positive outlook in our day by day existence and its purpose in conforming us to the image of the Son.

Scientific studies into the area of happiness show that thankful people who at least vocally give thanks for at least three blessings a day are people who are more positive and have a happier outlook upon life. They are less subject to stress and are more optimistic about the future.

If we can learn to praise in this way then additionally brethren and sisters the negative and fleshly characteristics of verses thirteen and fourteen will be greatly diminished in our lives.

Verses 13 & 14

“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil”.

Essentially what we are seeking to do is let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom. By *“speaking to our selves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”*. In order that that we may daily perform our vows unto our Heavenly Father.

In Hebrews Chapter 12 and at verse 2 we read

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the stake, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”.

Our Master brethren and sisters set the kingdom, the fulfilment of the purpose of God before him. The Greek in this verse in Hebrews indicates that not only was this *setting before* a personal choice, but also importantly it was a daily principle he applied in order to overcome. We must do the same with our praise brethren and sisters.

When we fill our mouths in such a way, particularly with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs it effects us emotionally. So that our hearts and our minds are connected in the process, for as the Master warned the Pharisees “*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*”. We desire our speech to be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man.

Thus brethren and sisters when we praise and bless our Heavenly Father in performing these things we are not only keeping our selves from evil, but more positively we are setting our individual affections on things above.

Now there is one more important lesson brethren and sisters contained in the first two verses of psalm thirty-four for us, which I would like to bring before you.

Verses 1 & 2

*“I will bless Yahweh at all times: **his praise** shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her **boast in Yahweh**: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad”.*

If we **carefully notice** that *the praise is his or our Heavenly Fathers and that our boast is in Yahweh our God*. Here then brethren and sisters is an antidote to pride, which is undoubtedly the worst of all the sins of mankind in our Heavenly Father’s sight. Thus our blessing and praise of our Heavenly Father enables us to think soberly and not to think too more highly of our selves in his sight.

In learning to become men and women of praise, as our beloved Master was - we develop the quality of humility before our God. Acknowledging that the focus of our lives is upon our Heavenly Father and his purpose and not upon our selves. The scriptures speak of such humility as being in the sight of God, riches, honour and life.

In Philippians Chapter 2 and at verses 8 & 9

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the stake. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name”.

Now as we begin brethren and sisters to draw our minds around once more to the emblems upon the table and to the example of the one we have come to remember. The Lord Jesus Christ whose entire life was a hymn of praise in that He only did those things, which pleased and glorified the Father.

In the bread brethren and sisters we see the word made flesh, we see the one who came in the volume of the book to praise our Heavenly Father in a life of faithful obedience. Thus in the bread we have the exhortation to partake of the word that the new song may be put into our mouths, even the praise unto our God.

Then in the wine we see the Master’s sacrifice both in terms of his ministry and then in his death upon the stake. The blood, which speaks to us of the pouring out of his

life in the ultimate sacrifice of praise, thus in the wine we see how we are to lay down our lives in praise for the brethren, as living sacrifices. *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”*.

Let us take **careful note** brethren and sisters that when the purpose of God is complete, we in the mercy of the Father will spend eternity praising him with our Lord and Master in the great congregation. Therefore let us each heed David’s faithful example, let us each take the exhortation to heart and let us each rise up to the challenge to be men and women of praise. Let us collectively learn to rejoice in praise now brethren and sisters for we read it is comely for the upright so to do.

Finally then brethren and sisters let us leave the last words to David from the third verse of psalm thirty-four. Let each of us meditate upon this verse as we partake together and see it as a personal appeal from the one we have come to remember, David’s greater son.

Verse 3

“O magnify Yahweh with me, and let us exalt his name together”.

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