



GOD IS

Real Life Studies

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**Note: All scripture references will be from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.*

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Lesson 1

God Is King

Lesson Text: Psalm 47:1-9

Introduction

There are 195 recognized countries in the world today. Of those, 43 currently have a monarch ruling over them. The remaining are ruled by presidents, prime ministers, or some other head of state. Each country is primarily, if not exclusively concerned with its own interests. As we watch the news, we hear of military positioning, one nation attacking another, and inflammatory political rhetoric that makes us uneasy. These can be scary times in which we live.

While there are some 195 countries with various heads of state, there is still only one King over all the earth. God is King. It is a message that should reverberate in every state house, presidential mansion, royal palace, and in the hearts of every individual: God is King.

Psalm 47 is born out of Israel's experience with its enemies. In it the Psalmist recognizes that God is worthy of praise because He has given His people the victory over their enemies. In this Psalm, we come to understand the nature of the kingship of God.

God is a powerful king (v. 1-4)

Though God gave Israel the victory, the Psalm calls for all people to praise the Lord. Hand clapping was associated with celebrating the crowning of a king. In 2 Kings 11:12 Joash is crowned King and the people clapped and celebrated. When the Psalmist says, "O clap your hands, all people", that means that everyone everywhere is to celebrate the Lord God as King. The Lord is unique in His position. He is the Most High. There is no being that can compare to God in His power.

We are to have a reverence, a fear, and sense of wonder, amazement and awe when we consider who God is and what God has done. Israel was to celebrate because God had done for them what they could not do for themselves. Kings were not just governing officials, they were military leaders. Kings would lead their country into battle. God is not some detached figurehead. God is a mighty warrior.

Israel found themselves in a position where they could not fight for themselves. They were outnumbered, outmanned, and outmatched. God fought a battle for Israel that they could not win for themselves. They should have been defeated, and would have been defeated if God had not stepped in to subdue the enemy. In giving them the victory, God enlarged their territory.

God fights for His people. If you have ever been in a situation where you had no power, no hope of victory, no way out and God showed up and showed out, then you owe it to God to shout to God with the voice of joy. Every child of God in here ought to give God praise. We were lost in sin. We were without hope and without God, then King Jesus stepped in and gave us the victory. In Christ, we are more than conquerors. The Lord Most High is to be feared because there is no army that can defeat Him. There is no king who can conquer Him. God is a great King over all of the earth. He is not just God in one part of the world. He is not just sovereign over a nation or a people. He is the great king over all of the earth.

This is really a picture of Jesus. In Revelation 1:5, Jesus Christ is described as the ruler of the kings of the earth. Every monarch, dictator, president, prime minister has a king. We need to learn to celebrate the King. There should be joy in our hearts that comes out of our mouths. There should be joy in worship because God is a powerful king.

God is a personal king (v. 5-7)

God is depicted as taking His rightful place in the world. He is king over all the earth. He is also our King. It's personal. The picture that is painted is that of celebrating God's victory over the enemy. We are on the winning team because the King over all the earth is our King. Revelation 17:14 state, "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (ESV) .

Though we may feel powerless, our King is all powerful. Our King sits on His throne and is to be celebrated by His people. We can claim the victory because we are with the King of kings. We have been called out of darkness into the light. We have been chosen by God. And if we stay committed and faithful to Christ until the end, we will be victorious.

The proper response to our salvation by the sovereign King of the universe should be one of personal and corporate expressions of joyful worship. Life doesn't have to be perfect for us to sing praises to our King. We may have problems, but our problems should not stop our praise. We may come to the house of the Lord with worries, but we turn our worries into worship. We sing praises to the One who reigns over all of the earth. And when we come to worship to celebrate our King it should be personal.

God is a perpetual king (v. 8-9)

No matter the time, God reigns over the nations and sits on His throne. Nations rise and fall. Kings live and die. Presidents come and go. Governments are overthrown. Empires tumble. But our King still reigns. God rules over every nation, including this one. God is King, which means that we don't have to worry about election results. Sure, exercise your right to vote. Just know that true power is not found at the ballot box. True power is found in the Lord (read Luke 1:30-33 & Revelation 11:15).

Never underestimate the sovereignty of God. We need to remember who is on the throne. Every military is at His disposal. The heart of every government leader is in His hand and He turns it wherever He wishes. He is the King over all the earth. That means that God rules over everyone and everything on the earth. There is no situation beyond His control. There is no ruler beyond His reach. There are no circumstances that are outside of His expertise. The King over all of the earth is worthy of praise!

Reflection Questions

When you think about God's power, what situations in your life remind you that you cannot handle everything on your own?

How does God's power change the way you think about the problems you are currently facing?

What does the statement "God is King" mean when you change it to "God is my King"?

Is there an area of your life where you acknowledge God's authority in theory but struggle to actually let Him be King? If so, what is it?

What would change in you if you genuinely believed that there is no situation beyond God's control and no ruler beyond His reach?

Lesson 2

Two Sides of the One God

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 4:21-31

Introduction

It is impossible to fully define or describe God. The more we discover about God, the more we realize that there is so much more to discover. We will never exhaust the depths of God. As we ponder who God is, there are aspects of the nature of God that seem to be contradictory. Romans 11:22 speaks of both the kindness and the severity of God. God is both.

When we consider Jesus, God come in the flesh, His nature seems contradictory. He is God, yet also man. He is judge and savior. He is King and servant. He is exalted yet humbled Himself to obedience that led to His death on a cross. No wonder Paul would say in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

In Deuteronomy 4:24, Moses describes God as a consuming fire. In verse 31 God is described as a compassionate God. These are two sides of the One God.

Often our view of God is incomplete. On one side you have a God of judgment. Growing up in the church we often heard about God's anger, wrath, and judgment. As a result, God is to be feared. On the other side you have a God of mercy. Some people would speak of God's love, grace, and mercy. As a result, God is seen as friendly.

Reflection Question: Think about your own experience. What picture of God did you see more of? Which view of God do you hold to a greater degree?

The reality is that we do not get to choose which version of God we want. To have one view or the other is to come away with an inaccurate view of God. God is not a tyrant, nor does He just tolerate any and every thing. God is both a consuming fire and a compassionate God.

In Deuteronomy 4, as Moses is preparing the children of Israel to enter into the Promised Land without him, he reminds

them of their experience with God and gives them greater insight into the nature of God. The people pushed Moses to the point that he acted out of character and disobeyed God. He hit the rock when God told him to speak to the rock to give the people water. As a result of his disobedience, Moses would only be able to see the Promised Land but would not enter it. Now Moses, who had led the people of God for over 40 years, is preparing the people to move forward in their walk with God without him.

God is a consuming fire (v. 21-24)

God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and made them His people. Now they are about to enter that land that God promised to Abraham hundreds of years earlier. Moses tells them to watch themselves. The people were to be mindful of the covenant that they had with God. Moses especially has in mind the first two of the 10 commandment found in Exodus 20. “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:3-6).

God is bigger than anything that is created. God has the sole right to be recognized and worshipped for His sovereignty and His choosing of a people to be His people. No other has done for us what God has done for us. No other can do for us what God can do for us. No other will do for us what God will do for us. Therefore, only the LORD our God deserves our total allegiance.

God knew that idolatry would be a major issue for His people (Read Deuteronomy 4:15-20). God didn’t appear to the children of Israel in a visible form because He didn’t want them making an image that looked like Him and call that their God. Since the people of Israel saw no form of God in His most glorious self-revelation at Mt. Sinai, why should they think they could capture His essence in any kind of image? The argument is that if God

would have wanted an image made to represent Him, He would have appeared to them as something. But instead, they heard His voice, but did not see His form.

Any image that is meant to depict God would fail to capture the fulness of God. Perhaps that is why we do not have any verifiable relics even from the life of Jesus. If we had the nails or pieces of His cross, or some other item, we would likely find ourselves worshipping the relics instead of worshipping the Redeemer.

God expects there to be no other gods that compete with Him for headship in our lives. Not our jobs or our families, not our success or achievements, not pleasure or money; NOTHING should compete with God.

In God's righteous jealousy, God is compared to a fire that utterly destroys what is in its path. God is serious about His! In Numbers 25 24,000 people died who had worshipped Baal. The people that Moses addressed in Deuteronomy 4 would have remembered what happened to their fellow Israelites. So Moses basically says, don't think that what happened to them can't happen to you.

Don't worship people, don't worship animals, don't worship nature. If you put your faith in people, they will fail you. If you put your faith in any created being, it will not last and has no power to save you. Worship the LORD God alone. The LORD your God is a consuming fire.

God is a compassionate God (v. 25-31)

Moses tells the people, when you get into the land and get comfortable, your comfort will take you away from your God and you will turn to idols. Comfort can make us ungrateful. Ingratitude can lead to forsaking God. We don't typically leave God in the fire of affliction. We are more likely to leave God in the air-conditioning of prosperity.

Moses told Israel that should they decide to leave God, God would drive you out of the land. When we leave God, we should not be surprised if God takes His protective hedge from around us. You will serve idol gods who know nothing, hear nothing, see

nothing, eat nothing, and smell nothing because they are nothing. But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find Him when you search for Him with your total being. For the LORD your God is a compassionate God.

The word picture is that of the care and compassion of a mother toward her infant. That is the tenderness of God. When we finally come to ourselves and realize that the idols we have been serving are not serving us, there is still hope and help available. The discipline of God is designed to bring us to the place of repentance. Losing the land was not about destroying God's people, it was about restoring God's people.

How can God be both a Consuming Fire and a Compassionate Father? In Christ on the cross the two sides of the one God meet. In His holiness, God is a consuming fire who cannot tolerate sin. But in His compassion, God has provided a way out of sin through His Son, Jesus. On the Cross, the "Consuming Fire" of God's justice for sin fell on Jesus, so that the "Compassionate Heart" of God could be opened to us. God hates our sin enough to be a fire. Yet He loves us enough to be compassionate. In His righteousness He destroys the idols, and in His grace He heals the idolater. On the cross, God's justice was satisfied, and God's mercy was offered.

When you are at your lowest, in the pit or in the pig pen, you can still find the LORD. Just like in the parable of the prodigal son, when you come to yourself and humble yourself, God will welcome you back home. You may feel like you are not worthy to be called a son or daughter of God anymore. But your Father is waiting on you to return home where you belong. He will not fail you and He will not destroy you. He will restore you.

God does not turn His back on us even when we turn our backs on Him. Even from there, there God can be found. Even from your place of exile God can be found. Even from your place of rebellion, God can be found. Even from your place of discipline, God can be found. Even from your addiction God can be found. Even from your immorality God can be found. Even from years away from God, He can be found. Even from the place where you are serving self, sin, and Satan, you can seek the Lord and find Him when you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. Even when

you are where you are because of your own doing, the LORD your God is not done with you!

God does not want to take you out, He wants to bring you back. God does not want to consume us, but He does want to consume everything in us that is not of Him. Though you messed up, God still cares about you. He is merciful and compassionate. God gives favor where it is not deserved.

If you have been baptized into Christ, you have entered into the new covenant with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. As an heir to the covenant of promise, you are able to return to God. First John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God doesn't just forgive us for what we have done, He cleans us up!

If you have not been baptized into Christ, salvation is available in Christ and Christ alone. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and desire to turn away from sin, you are ready to confess Jesus and be baptized. In baptism, God washes away your sins, gives you His Holy Spirit, and places you in Christ (Acts 2:36-41, Galatians 3:27).

Reflection Questions

What experiences from your childhood, church background, or life have shaped the way you view God?

What is something good in your life that could become an idol if you allowed it to take God's place?

What are some warning signs that you may be becoming spiritually comfortable rather than spiritually committed?

Why do you think we sometimes have a hard time believing that God will forgive us?

How does knowing that, "God does not want to take you out, He wants to bring you back" change the way you understand God's discipline?

Lesson 3

The Impartial God of an Imperfect People

Lesson Text: Acts 10

We live in an “Us vs. Them” world. Men vs. Women; Young vs. Old; Democrats vs. Republicans; White vs. Black vs. Hispanic vs. Asian; Android users vs. iPhone users. Many groups find their identity in opposing other groups. If you are like me, you are exhausted by the division.

As deep as division runs among us, the “Us vs. Them” divide runs deeper in the pages of scripture. There was Israel, God’s chosen people, and then there was everybody else. When the people of God go into Babylonian captivity, they start to be referred to as Jews. When we get to the times of the New Testament this “Us vs. Them” is expressed in terms of Jews vs. Gentiles (everyone else). The Jew–Gentile divide wasn’t just cultural—it was spiritual, historical, and reinforced by centuries of religious practices. Yet, ultimately, God’s choice of Israel was about inclusion and not exclusion.

Yes, God chose a certain group of people. But He chose a people so that salvation could come to the whole world. God is not partial. John 3:16 state, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Jesus came to bring salvation to all the world, both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel tears down walls that divide us.

This becomes abundantly clear in Acts 10 with the conversion of Cornelius, his family, and his friends. Acts 10 is not just about the conversion of Cornelius, it is also about the conversion of Peter. Cornelius was a Gentile; a military leader in the Roman army who was living in Caesarea. He was a good man. He was a God-fearing man. He was a generous man. He was a praying man. Yet he was still a lost man.

That is the case for many people today. There are a lot of good people who have yet to become God’s people. They are seeking and searching for God. They have a reverence for God. They even pray and seek to serve God. Yet they sense that something is missing. They have not discovered what it takes to be

a child of God. If that is you, I want you to know that God sees you and knows what you need.

God sent a special delivery message to Cornelius. One day, around 3pm he sees an angel of God in a vision. The angel says to Cornelius, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Send some men to Joppa, to the house of Simon the tanner and ask for a man named Simon who is called Peter." Cornelius does what the angel says. The next day, around noon, lunch time, as the men from Cornelius are traveling to Joppa, Peter gets hungry. While he is waiting on lunch to be served, Peter falls into a trance and sees the sky open up and this object that looks like a huge sheet is being lowered to the ground. On the sheet there are all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds. Things that a Jew would not dare eat. But the Lord tells Peter to eat what he considers unclean.

Peter is perplexed by the vision, but when men show up from Cornelius' house, it begins to make sense. The vision that Peter had wasn't primarily about dietary laws. It was about salvation. It was redefining or rather clarifying who God accepts. In Acts 10:34-35 Peter declares, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him."

Interestingly, God did not use the angel to preach the gospel to Cornelius. God used the angel to have Cornelius send for Peter so that Peter could preach the gospel. God uses people to proclaim His message. God works through us to share the good news of salvation in Christ. He also works on us so that we will see people how He sees them.

Cornelius needed to hear the gospel. Peter needed to live the gospel. We have to deal with our biases, prejudices, assumptions, and stereotypes in order to go where the Lord sends us with the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. I ask you: in the "Us" vs. "Them" dynamic, who is your "Them"? While we can say we love everyone, who are the people that you find hard to include in your "everyone"?

God works through us, but He also is working on us. Are we willing to welcome people that we have been taught to avoid?

Not just welcome them when they come to us, but actually go to them with the message of Christ. A change needs to take place in us so that the gospel can be taken to those who are hungry for God.

God is not partial. God does not show favoritism. God does not shine upon some and then look down on others based on heritage, background, country of origin, ethnicity or any of the factors that we tend to use to judge people.

Christ is Lord of all. He is not just Lord of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. Every outsider can become an insider because Christ died for all. Jesus was hung on a "tree." In Jewish law, this signified being cursed. Jesus became the ultimate "outsider" (the cursed one) so that no outsider would ever be excluded from God's family again. Christ was rejected so that we could be received.

Through Christ we have peace with God, freedom from the devil, and forgiveness of sins. Peace with God is not just the absence of conflict, but the end of guilt, shame, and distance from God. Freedom from the devil means that you're not stuck in what used to control you. Forgiveness of sins means that your sins are not merely covered. They are completely removed.

God is not partial. Salvation is exclusive, being found only in Christ, but it is not discriminatory. Christ will judge the living and the dead. But if you are in Christ, you don't have to fear the judgment. Romans 8:1 states, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." God wants you to be part of His family. You can be saved by putting your faith in Christ, committing to follow Jesus, confessing Christ, and being baptized into Christ. The invitation is available for all!

Reflection Questions

Why do you think we are so quick to find identity in what separates us from other people?

How can we communicate the gospel to people who are already moral, religious, spiritual, or successful?

Who are some people who may feel like outsiders? What responsibility should you have toward them?

Lesson 4

God Is In Your Midst

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 7:17-24

Historians note that the longest war in human history was the Reconquista involving Spanish and Portuguese forces against Muslim rulers of the Iberian Peninsula. It lasted 781 years, from 711 to 1492. Yet there is a war that has lasted significantly longer. It is not one between countries, it is the one between our ears. The battlefield is not a piece of land, but for our peace of mind. Truly, the longest war in human history is the war within. The flesh battles against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell address to Israel. The generation of leaders who were about to enter into the Promised Land is different from the generation that left Egypt. Other than Joshua and Caleb, the oldest people who are entering into the Promised Land were 19 when Israel escaped from Egypt. Some of them weren't even born yet. So now, forty-years later Moses tells the story of the deliverance and promises of God for a generation less familiar with the account of the Exodus.

As this new generation prepares to enter the Promised Land, Moses knows that what happened to the previous generation that caused them to miss the Promised Land could happen to this new generation. The previous generation missed entering the Promised Land because they did not think that they could defeat the nations who occupied the land God promised to give them. So Moses says to the new generation, "If you should say in your heart, "These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?" Don't let fear have the final word. Remember that God has the final word.

The key to overcoming fear is to recognize the presence and nature of God. Don't be fearful of the opposition. Don't be terrified of the enemy because the LORD your God is in your midst – that's His presence. He is a great and awesome God – that's His nature.

Israel was right: the nations that were living in the promised land were greater than them. But they missed the fact that their God who was with them was greater than the nations. The magnitude of God is greater than the strength of the opposition. The terror of God is to be feared more than the opposition.

God often gives us an assignment that is greater than our ability. God gives us a task knowing good and well that we can't do it on our own. It is not that we cannot do the task. It is that we cannot do it on our own. The question is: What is our core belief when the assignment is bigger than our ability? What is our self-talk? What am I telling myself when the assignment is bigger than my ability?

Do we tell ourselves: "This won't work." "I can't do this" "I am too young" "I am too old" "I am not smart enough" GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD!

In order to get out of the wilderness, you have to get out of your head. The wilderness is the place of "How can I?" It is a place of "I am not enough..." It is a place of "I will never be able to..." In the wilderness, you don't like where you are, but in your mind, you can't see yourself anywhere else. Get out of your head and let God speak to your heart. When you get out of your head, you can get out of your wilderness.

Negative self-talk does not need to go unchecked. Don't let what you say to yourself override what God has said to you. If you question your ability, that is not the time to let fear take over. That's the time to remember that the God is in your midst. That is the time to remember what the LORD has already done for you.

Reminders are the remedy for fear. When David faced Goliath, he remembered that God had already given him the victory over a lion and a bear. If you have to face a Goliath, remember that this is not the first giant that you have had to face. Remember what the LORD has done in the past. Don't focus on the remembering your distress. Focus on remembering God's deliverance. Remember how God blessed you to overcome. When your heart asks, "How can I do it?" remember what God has already done. When your mind starts to

doubt, remember what you saw God do before. It is the power of God that makes good on the promises of God. God's power does not decrease when the size of the problem increases. There is nothing too hard for the LORD.

Reminders are the remedy for fear. But you have to remember the right thing. Remember what God has done in the past. Remember what God has promised for the future. Remember who God is in the present. We do not need to fear because the LORD our God is in our midst.

The description of the children of Israel entering into the Promised Land is described two different ways that seem to be in conflict with each other. Exodus 34:11 states, "Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Numbers 33:50-53 reads, Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.

God does the heavy lifting, yet He wants us to be active participants in our victory. God fights for you, but He doesn't fight instead of you. God's deliverance is often coupled with human responsibility. God parted the Red Sea, but He still told Moses to stretch out his hand.

In verse 20 God promises to send a hornet against the people that has Israel afraid. God tells Israel, "The very people you are afraid of will run and hide themselves from you." God does more for us than He asks of us. Fear comes when we forget that the LORD our God is in our midst. If you say in your heart, "I can't do it", remember that you are not doing this alone. The presence of

God makes all the difference. God does the heavy lifting. Whenever God commands anything which exceeds our power, we must still obey and boldly break through any obstacles that try to block us, knowing that God is with us.¹

In verses 22-23 we see that God did not give them the land all at once. He did not clear out the enemy nations all at once. He did it little by little. God promised deliverance, but it would be progressive deliverance. God did it that way because if he removed the other nations too quickly, the wild animals would grow in number and take over the land.

We want instant healing; instant change; instant victory. However, there are times in our lives when our deliverance is progressive. God is going to give you all that He promised you, but He is not going to give you more than you can handle right now. Otherwise, the blessing would become a burden. If you get it all now, you will be overwhelmed. If you get it all now, you won't be able to enjoy it because you will be too busy trying to manage it. If you get it all now, you won't really appreciate it. God says, "I want you to be able to keep what I give you, so I am only going to give you as much as I know you can handle right now."

Even when the blessing is little by little, God is still in your midst as a great and awesome God. The enemy is still present in the land, but so is God. And God is greater. Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.

If we have been baptized into Christ, we have the assurance that God is not just with us; He is in us. Ephesians 3:20 still says, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us..." When your heart wants to fear, remember that there is divine power at work within us. The Holy Spirit has made His home

¹ John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, [*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*](#), vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 397.

within us. The Spirit is not a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. Get out of your head. With God all things are possible, even what seems impossible.

Reflection Questions

When you face something bigger than your ability, what does your self-talk typically sound like?

How can we challenge negative thoughts without simply replacing them with unrealistic positive thinking?

What are some practical ways you can create reminders of God's faithfulness so that you don't forget what He has done?

What might God be developing in you while you are waiting for Him to deliver you?

How does the belief that God's Spirit lives within you change the way you understand your own ability and limitations?

Lesson 5

God Is Near

Lesson Text: Psalm 34:15-19

Have you ever been in a place where your life doesn't look like God's promise? Instead of joy, you are experiencing sorrow. Instead of peace, you are experiencing chaos. Instead of abundance, you are experiencing scarcity. Instead of comfort, you are experiencing distress.

There are times when, though the promise of God is clear, the fulfillment of that promise seems uncertain. Psalm 34 is written out of one of those times in David's life. David writes this Psalm after he pretended to be insane before the king of the Philistines, as recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

David is on the run from Saul, who is attempting to kill him. Samuel has already anointed David as the next king of Israel. But Saul is still the king. And Saul is doing everything in his power to make sure that David never takes the throne. To escape from Saul, David goes into enemy territory to the king of the Philistines knowing that Saul will not go after him there (read 1 Samuel 21:10-22:1).

It is in the context of reflecting on running for his life, going into enemy territory, and hiding in a cave that David writes Psalm 34. It was in David's reflection when his life was in this holding pattern between being anointed king, yet waiting to be appointed king that he writes, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

When we know who God is, we are able to praise Him even when life has us between the anointing and the appointing! Based on his experience, David invites us to worship God with him and experience the goodness of God for ourselves. He then shares a theology for trials, troubles, and tough times. What can you hold on to when your present looks different from God's promise? Psalm 34:15-19 provides an answer. The text reveals some time-tested truths that provide us with a theology for trials, troubles, and tough times.

Truth #1: You have God's attention (v. 15)

A righteous person is one who is in Christ, having the righteousness of Christ placed on our account. A righteous person has a pattern of life that pleases God.

At times it can feel like you are losing because you are doing the right thing. Understand and trust that you have not escaped God's notice.

The Lord is described in anthropomorphic or human like terms, as having eyes and ears. His eyes are focused on the righteous and His ears are attuned to their cry. God sees you! You have God's attention. God is not too busy to notice you. God has the ability to hear all of our cries, and respond to each one of us in a way that is uniquely suited to our individual cry.

There is no cry that is too insignificant for God to notice. He even hears the silent cries of your heart. He sees what you are carrying that no one else can see. People may not notice you, but God sees you. You have God's attention!

You have God's protection (v.16)

Just like God sees the righteous, He also sees evildoers. He opposes them. He makes people forget that they existed. And if they are remembered, they are remembered with disgrace and disdain.

The blessing for the people of God is that God defends you against those who want to harm you. God knows when evildoers are plotting against you and He is able to bring their plans to nothing.

David could testify that God can keep you safe from those who are out to get you. It doesn't matter what position or title those seeking to harm you may hold; God's divine protection covers you.

Often God's protection doesn't mean prevention, it means preservation. God didn't keep Saul from taking his shots at David. But God made sure that the shots missed David. David ran and hid, but he was still protected. While he was in the land of the Philistines, the home of Goliath, whom he had killed, he was still protected.

Even if God doesn't keep you out of it, He will keep you while you are in it! God may not keep you out of the fire, but He is keeping you from being burned and smelling like smoke while you are in the fire. When God protects you, even the people who were out to get you will know that it was the hand of God that kept you. You have God's protection.

You have God's compassion (v. 17-18).

Deliverance is connected to prayer. The Lord responds to the cries of the righteous. We may not be getting the deliverance that we seek because we have not sought the Lord in our crises. We may want deliverance, but do we ask God for it? Prayer often precedes deliverance.

The LORD will deliver us out of every situation that causes anguish and emotional distress. There are some cases where the deliverance will come on the other side of death when we are raised to experience the new heavens and the new earth. But know that deliverance will come.

The Lord is near the brokenhearted. The word "near" carries the idea of being in close relationship with someone. God is a friend to the brokenhearted. God is close to those who are low and so hurt that they feel like they are about to die. The LORD identifies with you in ways that you may not realize. Jesus knows what it is like to be crushed, in agony, and in distress. He knows the comfort that is needed in that moment and provides it. He rescues those who are crushed in spirit.

When life is at its worst, that's when we best experience the presence and power of God. Read that sentence again. For real. Read the first sentence of this paragraph again. It is not that when life is at its worst God is at His best. God does not have a best because He is perpetually perfect and you cannot improve on perfection. However, our experiences in life can bring us to a place where we are better able to realize and embrace the perfect presence and power of God.

The Lord saves those who are crushed in spirit. He lifts you up, He brings you out, and puts you back together again. When

others abandon you, the LORD will stay with you. You have God's compassion.

You have God's salvation or deliverance (v. 19)

The help of God does not exempt us from adversity. The help of God strengthens us in adversity. Everyone will experience adversity. If it's not one thing, it's another. But in everything, God comes through for the righteous. There are some afflictions that come because you are righteous.

Deliverance doesn't always mean immediate escape—it sometimes means sustained strength, and ultimately eternal rescue. For every affliction there is deliverance. What is your deepest affliction? There is even deliverance from that one. For every burden there is a blessing. For every trial, there is triumph. For every struggle, there is success. Deliverance is found in Jesus.

Reflection Questions

How do you typically respond when God's promise feels delayed (e.g. do you withdraw, worship, complain, try to fix things yourself)?

How does believing that God's eyes were on you and His ears were tuned to your voice change your prayer life?

When life was at its worst, how did you experience God's presence more clearly?

How do you respond when God's deliverance looks like strength to endure rather than escape?

Lesson 6

God Is Love

Lesson Text: 1 John 4:7-10

For centuries humanity has attempted to define God. Who is God? What is He like? How do you describe God? We can never fully define God. We cannot completely describe God. We will never totally understand God. Yet, God has made Himself known to us.

Of all the qualities we have studied, the most assuring and personally impactful quality is that God is love. Throughout the pages of scripture God's love is on display. In the creation of Adam we see God's love. In making Adam a helper in Eve, we see God's love. God's love is evident in how He still cared for Adam and Eve after they disobeyed Him. God showed love for Cain after Cain killed his brother Abel by protecting Cain from those who would try to kill him. And that's just in the first four chapters of Genesis. The love of God is the thread that is woven throughout scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

In Ephesians 3:19 Paul prays that we may know that love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. God's love runs deep and wide. We will never be able to fully know the depths of the love of God or comprehend the breadth of the love of God. Like a scuba diver attempting to reach the deepest part of the ocean, we will never reach the bottom of the depths of the love of God, but we can continue to go deeper into the vastness that is God's love.

As children of God, we cannot be who we are called to be if we don't understand the love of God. We cannot have an accurate view of God without the knowledge of His love. God is love. And the greatest demonstration of God's love is the sacrifice of Jesus for us.

God loves because His nature is to love. When we hear "God is love" that does not equal "love is God." When we say that "grass is green" that does not mean that "green is grass." To say that love is God makes love the end all be all. Just because you

have love, that does not mean that you have God. To say that love is God idolizes love. To say that God is love personalizes God. The almighty is also the all caring.

Love does not define God, but God does define love. God is love, but that is not all that He is. Love is not the definition of God. Love is a characteristic of God.

Love in this text is the Greek word *agape*. God sets the standard for the love that sacrifices and wants what's best for the object of its affection.

God is love. We are not the standard for what love is. God is the standard. God made His love for us abundantly clear by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. God loved us so much that He sent His Son to this world knowing what the world would do to His Son. God loved humanity so much that He chose to disrupt the nature of the relationship that He has had with Himself throughout all of eternity in order to repair the relationship with us that our sins broke.

The Father, Son, and Spirit enjoyed eternal fellowship. That relationship was altered when God the Son, the eternal Word, put on flesh in order to live among humanity and die for the sins of the world. God the Father sent God the Son to give us life. The only way to truly live is through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Christ is abundant life: a life that is rich in quality. In Christ is eternal life: a life that is rich in quantity. God shows that He is love by giving us life.

It is impossible to know God apart from His love. We cannot truly know God if we do not understand that God is love. And the quintessential display of God's love is Jesus. We live through Christ. Being born again, unites the spiritually dead,

selfish hearts of people with the living, loving heart of God so that His life becomes our life and His love becomes our love.²

First John 4:10 states, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Christ is the means by which our sins are forgiven. He is the sacrifice that removes the guilt of our sins.

Hilasmós (*e-las-MOS*) is the Greek word that is translated as propitiation is rendered in some translations as expiation. Scholars debate on which word is the better word to use. Expiation focuses on the means for the forgiveness of the sin: Jesus is the sacrifice for our sins. Propitiation focuses on satisfying God’s demands for justice.³ Both renderings help us appreciate what God has done in Christ. God is love. And though He is love, He is also holy. God cannot compromise His holiness so that He can love us. God’s love does not supersede His holiness. His holiness does not take a backseat to His love. However, God loves us so much that He wants us in His presence. Yet He is too holy allow that which is unholy to come before Him.

God is love. God is also holy. So in order to demonstrate His love toward us, He took the holiness of God the Son and said to us, if you will get in Christ, My Son, then His holiness will be ascribed to you so that you can come into My presence. The sacrifice of Jesus allows the love of a holy God to be shown to an unholy people. God met our sins with His love so that His love could erase our sins. If you would get into Christ through baptism (Galatians 3:27), God’s love will cover your sins.

² Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 102.

³ James Swanson, [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

Why does God love us? Because of who He is. God's love for us is not about our worthiness, but about His nature as God. We are not worthy, but God thought that we were worth it. God decided to extend love though we did not deserve love because that is just who He is.

God loves us even if that love is not reciprocated. God does not take away His love even when people don't love Him.

Romans 5:6-11 ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ⁴

God took the initiative in salvation. God decided to make known His love to those who do not love Him and who do not want to love him. God has loved a world full of lost sinners. If it were not for the fact that God is love, we would have no expectation of mercy or forgiveness. There would be no grace, no hope and no future. The initiative in the work of humanity's salvation belongs entirely to the God of love. God seeks our best, even when it comes at a great cost to Himself. That's love.

Revelation 1:4-7 - Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2025), Ro 5:6–11.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.⁵

Reflection Questions

How has your view of God changed as you've grown in your understanding of His love?

How does knowing that God defines love challenge the way you express love to others?

In what ways does the incarnation – God the Son putting on flesh – reshape your understanding of divine love?

What are your reactions to the idea that God's love does not cancel His holiness?

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2025), Re 1:5–7.



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