

Today I brought a Korean pepper (cucumber chilli) in front of you. What do you think this pepper tastes like? May I take a small bite now? Crispy but not spicy! How do I know it? Because I have tasted it myself. In today's scripture, Psalm chapter 34 verse 8 says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him." Taste and see! One of the best ways to taste God is to live a life of praise.

When I was in high school, my school held mandatory classes on Sundays. But I couldn't miss church, so I attended the 8 o'clock service and then went to school. At that time, I was in the church youth choir, which was precious to me; I received God's grace through the sermons and new strength through praise.

Although I had to go and study after church on Sunday afternoon, I was content and able to concentrate more. The song we sang as the choir was a source of great strength and comfort throughout the whole week. How wonderful it was to reflect on the lyrics and be comforted by the grace of God!

Meanwhile, I experienced a change in my thoughts and attitudes toward praise. I had initially thought that praise was good and helpful because I enjoyed it. But later, I realized that praise is foremost the glory of God and a dutiful calling for God's people. Whether I'm in the mood to praise God or not, I realized that a life that praises God is a Christian's mission. So, the first point about praise today is that we must always praise, in all circumstances. Verse 1 says, "I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise

shall continually be in my mouth.” This is important because when seeking God and living a life of praise for God's glory, we come to realize that things are done with the blessing of God.

In today's text, Psalm 34, David praises God even before great difficulties. It is good to read Psalms and the book of Samuel concurrently. As you may already know, not all Psalms were written by David. However, David still wrote many of the psalms. Through the book of Samuel, we're not only able to read David's life, his circumstances, his emotions, but also to be able to easily connect it with our own life today!

Let's take an example. If you read the book of Samuel closely, the lives of King Saul and King David are very different in faith. We should see in detail how different their lives were before God, learn from David's good points, and learn from Saul's bad points as well in our Christian life.

The biggest difference between Saul and David is that for Saul, God was only an object that was necessary for his position and his interests as king. On the other hand, in David's case, we see that God is the one who can understand every little thing, the one he depends on, the one who gives victory, and the one whom he praises.

In King Saul's life, he wanted God only when there was a war or a major event in the country because he was afraid of people's eyes. In other words, he was looking for God formally because he looked out for others. He is just using God from time to time to protect his authority as a king. But if you look closely at David's life, God was truly the living God throughout David's life!

We usually like to use the expression "Hallelujah". For example, during our "Joys and Concerns", when you share your joy, we respond with hallelujah. As you already know, it means 'to praise God.' The Hebrew word for praise [Hallel] plus [Yeh], which means God (Yahweh), so hallelujah means "praise God," or "praise Yahweh."

But we must be cautious in our praise to truly mean what we sing! There is a similar word that can be confused with the word "praise." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "flattery" is the act of "excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one's own interests." Of course, flattery is not only used with bad intentions. Flattery is particularly common during dating and in new relationships, but usually wears off as relationships settle into commitment and reality. God wants to be with you in your reality.

Therefore, our praise should not be flattery or exaggeration. This is the second point of my sermon. Our lips may sing "great God!" but if it is not truthful, this isn't really praise. It's just flattery. King Saul did not usually seek God, and he did not acknowledge God as the actual living God in his life. Saul appeared to exalt God in front of people, but in fact he was only using God for his position as king. He did not live a life was centered on God. Such a life is not a life of praise but a life of flattery. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"

In David's prayer, David calls out to God, "My God," "O LORD, my strength." But, do you know what Saul called God? You see in the 1

Samuel chapter 15 verse 30, King Saul went to the prophet Samuel and said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." That's the big difference between "my God" and "your God"! Even after a long time, God was still not "my God" to King Saul.

This is an important message for us today. God is not someone to reach out to only when we need something; God is the one we converse with in prayer daily, the one who responds to the prayers of your heart, and the one who deserves all our praise. When we acknowledge this and live like David, we will experience the living God in our reality even in the 21st century!

Next to [Halal], the second most commonly used Hebrew word for praise is [Yada]. This word means "to put out one's hand". To praise the Lord means to put our hands out to the Lord in reliance to the Lord. Whatever David did, always at the beginning and the end, and in the center and throughout David's life, David asked the presence of God. David was man who trusted and relied on the Lord. In fact, in David's psalms, the expression of dependence on God appears frequently.

[Kava] is the Hebrew word for relying on God. This word also means 'to tie', that is, to bind oneself with the Lord. This is the third and final point of my sermon today. Praise is not just humming music; it's tying your life to God. David thoroughly tied himself to God and did not seek help elsewhere. We are not to bind ourselves to the world or its riches, fame or knowledge, but to bind with the Lord, who is our life and salvation. We often have the sinful tendency to leave God and turn away. This is because we in the flesh are always under the influence of sin. However, we believe

that Jesus freed us from the power of sin and death, and that He is still with us and leading us. So, we must keep going to the Lord, trusting and relying! There is no other way!

David praised God in times of trouble and tribulation, not to mention when his life was glad. David said that giving praise and thanksgiving to God is better than giving an ox or a bull with its horns and hoofs. This is to say that David considers a sacrifice of heart and soul better than a religious sacrifice. David was able to sing praise in the midst of suffering because he knew the value of praise.

There were so many hardships and tribulations in David's life, but he did not fall because he lived a life of praise. In Isaiah 43:21 it says, "the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise." Think of all the many praises in those many Psalms. David lived a blessed life by honestly laying his situation before God and gaining new strength through praising and glorifying God.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, I pray that Fairfield Grace will live a life of praising God every day, not just on Sunday. First point was praise is something we believers must do always, in all circumstances. Not just when we want to. Second point was our praise should not be flattery or exaggeration. Praise must contain your sincerity. Third and last point was praise is to bind ourself to God for everything in life. Fairfield Grace, I pray that we, like David, live a life of praise that God delights in. May God's grace and peace be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.