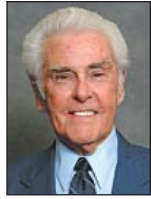


# God's promise of provision

The English word “provision” usually refers to food or physical needs, but in our text it would be more appropriate to speak of God’s providence, which covers the protective care of God or nature, equipping persons to face all sorts of difficulties and needs, not simply food.



**John Howell**

The psalmist in Psalm 34 praises the Lord for his deliverance of those who fear and trust in him. Biblical scholars identify the references in vv. 4 and 6 with David, who has undergone some crisis in his life. While the psalm does not name the crisis, it is often related to David’s escape from King Saul when he went to the Philistine King Achish of Gath for protection.

Unfortunately, David’s prior slaying of Philistines had preceded him, and when David feared for his life, he feigned insanity to escape from Achish (1 Samuel 2:10-14). This was his crisis that issued into the psalm.

The psalm divides nicely into two sections, 4-10 and 11-22. John Stott quotes Charles Spurgeon’s naming of verses 4-10 as a hymn and verses 11-22 as a sermon (Favorite Psalms, Growing Close to God, p. 41).

**Introduction (vv. 1-3).** The psalm is placed within the psalms of thanksgiving in the Hebrew psalter. A key phrase is “my soul will boast on the Lord” (v. 2), and when the needy hear the psalm read aloud, they will accept Jehovah and will give glory to him. This is the psalmist’s intent, to witness to God’s providential care in the community of believers that invites the afflicted to glorify the Lord with the psalmist (v. 3). Later he will tell them that they can “look to Him and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed” (v. 5).

The familiar hymn, “Turn Your

Eyes Upon Jesus,” encourages all who will do so to look to Jesus and become radiant. “O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There’s light for a look at the Savior, and life more abundant and free! Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

**God responds when we call to him (Ps. 34:4-7).** In this section of the psalm, the psalmist “sought the Lord,” and he “called and the Lord heard him,” and “the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him.” This last phrase identifying God’s protection of David uses a military term concerning an army encircling a city to protect and deliver it from danger. The angel of the Lord does this for the persons who fear God.

It is clear that fearing the Lord does not mean being frightened of him. Instead, it carries the meaning of respecting God’s providence and offering oneself to God in worship.

**Happiness, refuge, and satisfaction come to those who fear the Lord (Ps. 34:8-10).** Countless conferences are convened each year to help people find satisfaction in life through what the conference leaders call “happy” or “good.” Psalm 34 does this also but focuses on finding fulfillment by tasting the things of God rather than depending on the pleasures and social rewards that the world offers daily.

The psalmist uses for illustration the reality that even the lions, who are considered the strongest animals in the wilds, “suffer from want and hunger but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

When we read this last phrase, it is likely you realize that many who “fear the Lord” in contemporary culture do suffer hunger and want, especially children. Dozens of requests for contributions of money to feed the

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children, the Southwest Indian tribes and the homeless cross my desk regularly. Fortunately, Christians who are in better circumstances are challenged to help these persons in response to God’s call for ministry.

**Those who respond to human need with love can be blessed of God (Ps. 34:11-18).** The psalmist’s sermon points out that “if they desire many good days (v. 12), their fear of God must express itself not just in faith, but in works,” which includes moral behavior and care for the needy” (Stott, p. 42).

The moral imperative is outlined: “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit, depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (vv. 13-14).

The ministry imperative is helping the needy in fulfillment of God’s providence: “The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit (v. 18).

When the righteous suffer and cry out for help, “the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.” (v. 17). The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that we have the treasures of Christ “in earthen vessels to show the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken” (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).

As the psalmist declares, “The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of them who take refuge in him will be condemned (v. 22). This is God’s providential care for His people.

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