

Boasting About God

Psalm 34: 1 – 8

October 25, 2009

I. Introduction

- A. Rod Cooper grew up on a family farm where they raised lots of pigs
 - 1. He recalls the day when he was out in the field feeding the mama sows
 - a. And one curious little baby pig came up and started nibbling on his shoe
- A. Rod picked up the little critter and began to pet him. Soon he wanted down.
 - 1. I said, "No, I'll let you down when I'm ready."
- A. At that moment, he let out a squeal such as I had never heard.
 - 1. In about two seconds, thirty mama pigs weighing five to six hundred pounds each were headed my way. I put him down and headed for the fence.
- A. I barely made it over, and all the mama pigs were snorting and walking back and forth, daring me to come back over and bother one of their kids.
 - 1. Now let me ask you something, Rod says
 - a. If one of God's creatures is that sensitive to the cry of its own
 - (1) How much more sensitive is the heavenly Father to the cry of his own?
- A. The writer of our scripture text for today says – I sought the Lord
 - 1. Or – I cried out to the Lord, and [wonder of wonders] he answered me!
 - a. And delivered me from all my fears
 - 2. And because of that experience, the Psalmist could also say –
 - a. My soul makes its boast in the Lord, let the humble hear of it and be glad
- A. I've always liked the many portions of scripture that talk about God's greatness
 - 1. And God's ability to protect and provide for his children
 - a. "Seek first the kingdom of God," and all these other things that we need
 - (1) Will be provided for as well
 - b. Dottie and I have been leaning on that promise a good bit this summer
- A. Many of us can probably remember being told from the time we were little on up
 - 1. That we should always be thankful for God's blessings
 - a. And remember to tell him so
- A. There may also have been times when we were invited to tell others
 - 1. About specific ways that God has cared for us – perhaps in the sharing time
 - a. But I never thought about it in terms of boasting about God – have you?

- A. Boasting has this connotation of being something that we shouldn't do
 - 1. Especially among we Mennonites who sometimes take pride in our humbleness
 - a. But there's a good reason to avoid boasting in general
 - 2. Because our tendency is to boast about things we've done or things we've experienced - I think men are especially good at this
- A. Phil Donahue once said - If you're in a social situation, and women are talking to each other, and one woman says, "I was hit by a car today," all the other women will say, "You're kidding! What happened? Where? Are you all right?"
- A. In the same situation with a group of men, and one guy says, "I was hit by a car today"
 - 1. There's sure to be some other guy in the group who will say, "Well, just wait till I tell you what happened to me."
- A. We do it to get attention, to make ourselves look more important
 - 1. Even though we know the biblical warning about pride going before a fall
 - a. We're just reporting the facts, right?
- A. But what does it mean to "boast" about what someone else has done?
 - 1. We could have an ulterior motive when it comes to boasting about family/friends
 - a. After all, it is my family, or my friends
 - 2. But, for the most part, telling about the good that someone else has done
 - a. Is doing what the Bible calls – giving them the glory
- A. For example, when I'm with a group of pastors, I like to boast about this congregation
 - 1. Talk about the really neat things that are happening here
 - a. And what's being planned for the future
- A. That makes me feel good about being here, and being a part of what's happening
 - 1. But what I really want to boast about is what God is doing here
 - a. And how I can see the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and lives
- A. And when David, the Psalmist, says that his soul is boasting in the Lord
 - 1. I believe that is what he is talking about
 - a. Telling about an experience, not to take any credit for himself
 - (1) But to give all the credit and recognition to God for what God has done
- A. It still seems a little strange to think of that as boasting
 - 1. But if we're going to do any boasting, I can't think of a better way to do it
 - a. Than to tell about the ways we have seen God at work in our lives/world
 - (1) And to give God the glory and recognition for his power and grace

- II. And David certainly had seen God's providence and power many times in his life
 - A. If your Bible has an introductory note at the beginning of our text in Psalm 34
 - 1. It probably says something like – A psalm of David
 - a. When he pretended to be mad before King Abimelech
 - (1) So that he drove David out and he went away
 - A. You would have to know your OT history very well to know the story that is referred to
 - 1. It's found in 1 Samuel 21; we're not going to take time to look at it this morning
 - a. You can look it up and read it on your own
 - A. I'll just tell you that it took place before the shepherd boy, David, became king
 - 1. And for a while he was hunted by King Saul, who was still on the throne in Israel
 - a. And didn't like the idea of giving it up to this brave young man
 - (1) Who had become a public hero by killing the giant, Goliath
 - (a) And leading the Israelite army to victory over the Philistines
 - A. In his flight from King Saul, David sought refuge for a time in a neighboring Philistine city
 - 1. Only to find his life in danger there too, when King Abimelech discovered who he was
 - a. So, in order to escape, David pretended to be crazy
 - 2. Crawling around on the floor, scratching at the doors, slobbering in his beard
 - a. The whole nine yards, and King Abimelech is disgusted
 - 3. Tells his officers to get rid of David, throw him out of the city
 - a. He doesn't need any more mad men in his kingdom
 - (1) I guess he figured there were plenty of crazies out there already
 - A. And so David escapes, and goes on hiding from Saul, until the time came
 - 1. When Saul was killed in battle and David took his place on the throne
 - a. According to God's calling and anointing by the prophet Samuel
 - A. According to the introduction, Psalm 34 was written as David's response
 - 1. To his escape from the palace of the Philistine king
 - a. Perhaps as he was recalling and thinking about it sometime later
 - A. Notice that he doesn't boast about his smart way of getting himself out of trouble
 - 1. Rather, David gives God all the credit for saving his life
 - a. My soul makes its boast in the Lord, he says
 - 2. For I sought the Lord and he answered me, and delivered me
 - a. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him
 - A. I was in trouble, I cried out to the Lord - God heard the cry of my soul

1. And God rescued me – therefore I will give God the credit and glory
 - a. I will tell of all that God has done for me
 - (1) That is boasting about God
 - A. The first three verses of this chapter, as they are paraphrased in Today's Living Bible
 1. Have been put to music - perhaps you have heard the song –
 - A. I will praise the Lord no matter what happens.
 1. I will constantly speak of his glories and grace.
 - a. I will boast of all his kindness to me. Let all who are discouraged take heart.
 2. Let us praise the Lord together, let us praise the Lord together
 - a. Let us praise the Lord together, and exalt his name.
 - A. There's a good reason why I don't try to sing from the pulpit very often
 1. But that song popped into my head the other day, so I decided you should hear it
 - A. Sometimes, hearing the same thoughts in different words, or set to music
 1. Makes them stick in our minds a little bit longer
 - a. So if you find yourself humming this tune later on today
 - (1) Stop for a moment, and think about the words again
 - A. And notice what David says about why he is telling this story
 1. I will boast of all [God's] kindness to me. Let all who are discouraged take heart.
 - a. Let us praise the Lord together
 - A. Boasting about ourselves doesn't usually make other people feel any better
 1. And even boasting about the people close to us, while that may have its place
 - a. Doesn't usually make much of a positive impression on our minds
 - A. But I believe that recalling, telling, boasting about what God has done for us
 1. Can have a powerful impact on everyone who hears
 - A. Taste and see that the Lord is good, David says – here's what I have experienced
 1. Why don't you try putting your hope and faith and confidence in him
 - A. Happy are those who take refuge in him – David knew that for a fact – do we?
 1. Then perhaps we should consider doing a little boasting about it
- III. As I look back over my life, I can't recall a time when I felt that someone was trying to kill me
- A. So I can't say that I know exactly what David's experience was like
 1. I hope none of you have ever had that experience either
 - A. But I can remember several times when I felt like my life was in danger
 1. As in the time when I fell off, and was run over

- a. By a wagon load of hay traveling down the highway
- 2. I am still amazed at how God spared my life in that situation
 - a. And have wondered about what that meant in terms of God's plan for my life
- 3. There's no reason on earth that I should be alive today
 - a. But God was able to deliver me
- A. And there may well have been times throughout these years
 - 1. When God spared me from harm or from danger that I was not aware of
- A. And for certain, there have been many times when God has provided –
 - 1. Strength to do what needed to be done, when I felt so inadequate
 - a. Courage to try new things now and then, when it would have felt safer
 - (1) To stick to the tried and true familiar routine
 - 2. And hope in those times when things didn't always turn out the way I had planned
 - a. Along with David, I can say – my soul will boast in the Lord
 - (1) Because I cried out to God, and he heard my call, and delivered me
- A. You have all experienced times like that in your lives as well
 - 1. And there will certainly be more times of trouble and difficulty ahead
 - a. And God doesn't always respond in a supernatural way
 - 2. Sometimes, God works through the people around us
 - a. To share an encouraging word, or a helpful action
 - (1) We should be thankful to people who are there for us when we need them
 - (a) But we should also remember that it is ultimately God's doing
 - 3. And when we are the one that God taps on the shoulder
 - a. To be a help or encouragement to someone else in need
 - (1) We need to be careful that we don't take all the credit and glory
 - 4. It's fine to be recognized for doing a good thing
 - a. After all, that's what we are about as God's people
 - (1) But it's even better to boast about God's power and strength
 - (a) God's ability to meet the needs of his children
- A. Telling our story, or stories, in terms of what God has done in our lives
 - 1. Takes the focus off of us, and directs the attention to God
 - a. And that is where our faith and hope really lies
- A. And when someone else is in trouble and needing help
 - 1. The encouragement we can offer is not what we have done, or what we can do

- a. But what God has done for us – I've tasted, and I know that God is good
 - (1) That God blesses those who put their trust in him
 - (a) You can trust him, too
- A. Look to him [God], David tells us in our text, and be radiant
 - 1. Not because life is going to be wonderful, with no more troubles ahead
 - a. But because we believe that God cares for us, and will be there for us
 - (1) When we are troubled
 - 2. Boast in the Lord, then we shall never need to be ashamed
- A. Just think, if a mama sow hears the cry of her baby and comes to the rescue
 - 1. How much more will our God!