

# Avoid Abimelech Look to the Lord

Psalm 34

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**FOCAL Read Responsively** **Psalms 34:1-5** A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. (2) My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. (3) **O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.** (4) **I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.** (5) **They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.**

I heard the story of a farmer who had several bad years, and, as a result, his family was in "dire straits". The farmer decided he'd rob a bank and use that money to get back on his feet. He practiced what he's say over and over. "Don't mess with me, this is a stick up. Don't mess with me, this is a stick up." Finally he was ready. He nervously went into the bank with his sack and pistol. He handed the pistol to the bank teller, pointed the bag at him, and said "Don't stick with me, this is a mess up".

Too often when trials come our way we try to *fix things* ourselves. I heard someone "quote" the Bible the other day, saying "**God helps those who help themselves**". You might be interested to know that this so called "Scripture" is found no where in the Christian Bible. It might be in the devil's bible, but it's not in God's. The Bible tells us that the Lord helps the helpless. We look to Him to be blessed. We look to God to be lightened. When bad times come look to God. Ask yourself, "Why am I cast down? Why am I worried? I will hope in God my Savior. I will praise Him, and seek His

strengthening."

**Charles Cooper**, a Bible Teacher with the Moody Bible Institute, tells this story. He said that he had been married for just a few months, and his wife had to leave town on a business trip. He went to the airport to meet her flight. When the plane landed police cars and ambulances rushed to the back of the plane, and a stretcher was removed from the back of the plane. Charles' wife had suffered a massive and unprecedented heart attack just ten minutes before the plane landed at Chicago. Charles Cooper said to a large crowd he addressed, "Ladies and gentlemen, I received cards, letters, and encouragement during this time of my life. Those things helped. But nothing helped as much as *to know and to depend on the character of God.*"

This is our hope. Is God Who He claims to be? Yes, He is. He lightens those who look unto Him. He has lightened those who have looked to Him for many years. Where else will you look? Will you look to *naturalism*? Naturalism cruelly says when a loved one dies, "He's dead, and gone, and you will never see him again. Get over it. Learn to live with it. Move on and forget him." Evolution says "You came from nothing but an ape anyway. You were dirt, you are now dirt, and you will be dirt. Get over it. Move on - learn to live with it." Only in Christ do you hear, "**Come unto Me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I am the Bread that cometh down from Heaven. Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Whosoever shall call upon My Name shall be saved.**" Look unto Jesus and be ye lightened and enlightened!

## 1. I Will Avoid Abimelech

The two worst things you can do when you're in trouble is to try and save yourself. When we try to save ourselves we often choose the *absolute worst path*. We pick the worst methods. We choose the *worst friends*. That's what this Psalm is all about. The Psalmist wrote:

**FOCAL** **Psalms 34:1** A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before **Abimelech**;

What is the difference between **Pharaoh, Caesar, and Abimelech**?

Before we talk about **David** let's talk about **Abimelech**. Abimelech (אֲבִימֶלֶךְ pronounced *ab-ee-mel'-ek*) is not a name but it's a title. The Gentiles all had specialized names for their kings. For instance, the **Ruler of Egypt was called Pharaoh, or Paroh** which meant "**a Great House**". Pharaoh was considered the god who *built Egypt*, so his title reflected that. The **Ruler of Rome was called Caesar** after **Julius Caesar**, who conquered most of the known world. The title **Abimelech** was taken by many of the **Philistine Kings**, and perhaps means "**Melek or Moloch is my father**" (see Amos 5:26, where **Moloch is the Hebrew מֶלֶךְ pronounced meh'-lek**). The Kings called "Abimelech" were pagan followers of the false God **Moloch**, and they believed themselves to be **sons of god, sons of Moloch**.

Though the Abimelechs were not believers in the

Lord Jesus, our God can still use a crooked stick to draw a straight line.

The first time we see Abimelech in the Scripture is in the **life of Abraham**. The Lord called Abraham to salvation and led him out of Ur of the Chaldees, or *ancient Babylon*. **Abraham believed God, and this faith was counted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23)**. Abraham began to follow the Lord (as told in **Genesis 12**), but as a new believer in Christ he had to learn to trust in God and God alone. At one point in the journey Abraham was going to pass near to **Egypt**. He told his wife **Sarah** to pretend to be his *sister* so that he could gain safe passage (**Genesis 12:11-14**). Sarah obeyed her husband, and God plagued **Pharaoh** because of Abraham's cowardice and Sarah's lie. Taking Sarah back to Abraham Pharaoh asked:

**Genesis 12:18** “**What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?**”

God showed Abraham that He would protect him as long as he obeyed the Lord his God. God always protects His people. The Scripture says:

**Psalms 31:23-24** **O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. [24] Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.**

What does it look like to the unbeliever when an alleged believer runs to Abimelech?

God looks after His people. Yet we find Abraham doing the same *faithless* thing that he did with Pharaoh once more with **Abimelech**. **We who are humans - believing or non-believing - are often as dense as molasses on a winter morning!**

**ILLUSTRATE** In **Genesis 20** Abraham once more asks Sarah to lie, and lets the **Abimelech (king) of Gerar** take his wife. I can't help but remember a cute cartoon I saw once where a **robber pulled over a carriage. The robber said, “Your money or your wife”. In the next panel you saw the wife tossed out of the carriage, and the horses running off into the distance. The robber shouted after the departing carriage, “Come back here, you willy wivered wouse!”**

Abraham was a prophet of God, but he was also a “willy wivered wouse” at this point of his spiritual growth. Those who will not learn to trust in the Lord and believe on Him and Him alone are often willy wivered wouses. Praise Him, however, for God is still in control. The Lord told Abimelech to release Sarah back to her husband, and he complied with all haste.

## **2. I Will Look To The Lord**

When Abimelech brought Sarah back to Abraham he asked Abraham:

Genesis 20:10-11 .... **What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? (11) And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.**

Did you notice Abraham's twofold reply? He said "**Surely the fear of God is not in this place**". Was that true? Absolutely! The Abimelechs were supposed to be the sons of Moloch, a god that required *human sacrifice*. Their cities were based on godless behavior. It is true that **the fear of God is not in this place**. However Abraham made a false assumption.

Whether people believe in God or not He is nonetheless God! He is powerful and all knowing. He does not depend on us for His strength. This is the mistake that the philosopher Nietzsche made. He believed that - since man had stopped believing in God and started believing in Science - that God was dead. That is stupid! **In Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28)**. The Bible says ...

Is the power of God dependent on what the children of men think? Is God only powerful when He is *believed* to be powerful or, as **Nietzsche** believed, does God die when people stop believing in Him?

**2 Chronicles 20:6-7 ... O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? [7] Art not thou our God, who didst**

**drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever?**

God is able. Say that with me. **God is able!** Abraham, look to God, for God is able!

Now let's go back to our Psalms text. We read:

**FOCAL Psalms 34:1-5 A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. ..**

**What God teaches one believer He must teach to another. I often wonder if God doesn't sit up in Heaven shaking His head, saying, "Why won't they listen?" Abraham should have focused on God. So should David!**

David the Shepherd had been anointed King by the Prophet Samuel. Though Saul still sat on the Throne of Israel the Lord has promised David that he would one day be King of Israel. The first time Saul meets David was when the **Philistine Goliath** challenges Israel to a duel. David - filled with faith in the promise of God - steps out on to the battlefield carrying only a sling and five smooth stones (**1 Samuel 17:40**). You all know how that ended. Goliath ends up laying on the ground, and to turn injury to insult **David cuts off Goliath's head with his own sword.**

**Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

**1 Corinthians 1:9** God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

A tiny David with a big faith in God can defeat a giant. A big David with a tiny faith in God is defeated by his own fear.

**ILLUSTRATE** King Saul threatened David's life, and David - driven with fear - began to run. He ran first of all to the Tabernacle of God where a hungry and shaking David begged for bread (**1 Samuel 21**). The only bread that was there was the *shew bread*, holy bread dedicated to the House of God. This should have been a sign to David that God was looking after him. God always provides bread to His people. The Lord had promised David that he would be the next King of Israel. The Lord's Prophet had anointed him. David was as safe in the midst of his enemies as he was in the Tabernacle before the High Priest. God's people are as safe in the midst of a storm as they are in their bed at night. If Jesus is in the boat - RELAX! The Lord protects those who are His.

As David prepared to leave the Tabernacle – his belly filled with holy bread – he asked the High Priest if he had any weapon that David could use to protect himself. The High Priest said:

**1 Samuel 21:9** “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt

take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me. ”

David should have remembered the faithfulness of God as he looked at Goliath's Sword. When David - in faith - went to fight Goliath, he refused to wear Saul's armor because it was over-sized and unusable. The David who forgot God and feared man now wants an oversized, impossible to use sword to protect himself. “**There is none like that; give it to me**”. All this sword will do is slow David down. It's huge, and useless. But David takes it anyway and continues running. Error of errors, comedy of errors! Now David decides to run to the **Abimelech of Gath**, a man called **Achish**. The Bible says:

**Jeremiah 17:5-6** .... **Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. (6) For he shall be like the {tumbleweed} in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.**

When you FOCUS on Abimelech and not on the FAITHFULNESS of God you bring a curse on yourself.

**ILLUSTRATE** David has cursed himself by his actions. He's been running scared instead of running to God. You can imagine what he looks like. He hasn't had a bath in days. He's been hiding in caves and in holes in the ground. His hair is probably matted. He has scratches all over his body. He probably stinks. And he is

probably jumpy, shaky, wide eyed and frightened. When Abimelech's guards see David they say:

**1 Samuel 21:11 .... Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?**

Suddenly David was frightened. Kings of that day were subject to assassination, so they maintained their reign by maintaining their appearance. If you looked weak, you could be easily overthrown. No one wants to follow a mamby-pamby froo froo king! Abimelech's guards had heard through the grapevine of that day that King David was the next great warrior, a man who was greater than the great King Saul. They heard that David had overthrown Saul. Who was this filthy, ragged, scared looking man who was dragging a sword too big for him behind him? Surely this couldn't be David!

Why was David now frightened before Abimelech?

David realized he had made a serious mistake. What did he do? We now see an explanation of the *superscription* on **Psalm 34**:

**1 Samuel 21:13-15 {David} changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. (14) Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? (15)**

**Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?**

David learned a lesson that day, a lesson that we all need to learn. You will never truly live until you learn to live in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **3. Let Go Of Your Life And Let God Live For And Through You**

Warren Wiersbe once said "**We live by God's promises, not by God's explanations**". This is very true. A Child of God must learn to trust the **promises** of God. He must learn to trust God and God alone. After David shamefacedly wrote the superscription "**A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.**", he followed that statement with ...

**FOCAL Psalms 34:1 .... I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

When fear or fearful situations come David tells us that the *first* lesson he learned was to *avoid Abimelech* and **bless the LORD at all times**.

**Word Study** The word translated "bless" is the *Piel Imperfect* of the Hebrew word בָּרַךְ BARAK (pronounced: baw-rak'). The Piel stem means that this is a *deliberate and intensive action*.

When the dark times come in your life the first thing David said to do is *worship the Lord. Intentionally and with all deliberateness kneel before Him, and praise Him for what is going on in your life.* Too many people try to *fix the problem* then, when they've messed it all up, they go to God with a desperate prayer. While in the dark – stop and praise the Lord! If you belong to God He has promised **to never leave you nor forsake you.** God has said to those who believe in Him:

**CONTEXT** **Psalms 34:7-8** The **angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. (8) O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.**

Taste means to **intimately experience.** To **put something on the tongue and swallow it.** God takes care of His people! Remember what the Scripture says:

**Romans 5:8-10** But **God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.**

You who are believers are **saved by the promise and preciousness of the Blood of Jesus Christ.** Do you honestly think that God saved you to throw you away?

**ILLUSTRATE** When God had Samuel anoint David as he came from the fields smelling of sheep, David was safe and secure. No man could take David. Certainly Saul had no power over David. But David, through fear, allowed a dead man to rule over him. Dear Christian, you have not been anointed by Samuel, but a Greater One has anointed you. Doesn't the Scripture say that we who believe in Christ are loved? You who have believed in Christ are **washed and anointed by God the Holy Spirit ....**

**Revelation 1:5-6** ... **Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

A dead man has no hold over you. Saul had no hold over David, and Satan has no hold over you.

You are **kings and priests unto God, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, precious and holy because of what God paid for you.**

**Bless the Lord, Oh My Soul,  
With All that is within me,  
Bless His Holy Name!**

Next David said:

**FOCAL** **Psalms 34:2** My soul shall make her **boast** in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be

glad.

Do not just **bless the Lord** in the midst of the trial, but **boast in the Lord**. If you have been saved by the Blood of Jesus, then brag on your Lord.

**Word Study** The word for “**boast**” is the Hebrew word הלל HALLEL (pronounced haw-lal'). The word means to “**shine forth, to brag on, to boast**”. David tells his soul **boast in the Lord**. That word LORD is the most holy Name of God, YHWH, which we usually bring into the English as **Yahweh**. Sometimes this Holy Name is blended and presented as YA. Think about that for a moment. David said HALLEL YA. Say that with me HALLEL YA. What does that sound like? **Hallelujah! Praise God! Hallelujah!**

When trials come, when the dark moments come, remember that:

**1 Corinthians 6:20** For **ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**

You belong to God, just as certainly as David and Abraham belonged to God. You have a destiny and a calling. God did not shed the Blood of His Precious Son to purchase you for no reason.

**C.H. Spurgeon** once said, “**When that great black dog of hell chases you, run to the Cross!**”.

**ILLUSTRATE** There was a dear old saint who lay on his deathbed. Someone came to visit him and, trying to calm him, said "I'm so sorry you are dying". The old man replied, "**Dear Friend, I am not dying. I am just gathering up all my good works together and am throwing them all overboard. I am lashing myself to the plank of free Grace, and I plan to swim to glory on it**".

Death is no enemy of the saint of God, and neither is life. If you have believed on Christ you are bought with a price. You are cherished of God. Boast in Him. Praise Him at all times. Shout out **hallelujah**, for your and my God reigns! **Do not fear Abimelech, for there are Abimelechs everywhere – but your God and mine can crush them all!**

**FOCAL** **Psalms 34:3** **O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.**

Finally, when fear comes **bind away that fear by praising God with other believers**. Help your brother or your sister overcome the darkness by shining with them. Help them to look in the direction of Jesus. Help them to look to the Promise of God.

The Church is not a place to be used. It is a people who, loved of God, love and lift up one another!

So many people see the local Church as a thing to be used. I get so many calls from people who have no interest in the Church, other than wanting its food,

money, and clothing. How sad! These users will never experience the joy of joining with other saints in praising the Lord. The local Church gathers together to encourage one another in Jesus! The Psalmist said:

**CONTEXT Psalms 34:22** **The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.**

God looks after His people - and we, in love, look after one another.

#### **4. Have You Looked Unto Jesus And Been "Lightened"?**

**FOCAL Psalms 34:5** **They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.**

**Word Study** The word "lightened" is the Hebrew (נִחַר pronounced *naw-har*), which means "to be cheerful, to bubble like a stream, to be lifted up in spirit, to shine or be radiant".

Those who look unto Jesus and are saved are all of these things. Just the other day I was joking with a fellow preacher when the preacher from First Bitterness Church came and rained our parade. I wish the Lord would teach more preachers to smile!

Can I tell you, I'm happy. I'm not happy because I'm perfect, because I'm not perfect. I'm happy because the Lord loves me. He gave His life on Calvary for me. He

rose from that grave and, because of me and because of all who believe in Him, He sits on the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us.

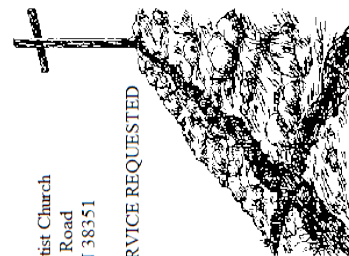
Jesus Christ loves those who are His. God the Father loves those who love the Lord Jesus. God the Holy Spirit lives inside of those who are His. The local Church is not a bunch of self righteous snobs sailing to heaven over a sea of drowning souls. The local Church is a bunch of believers in Jesus who have all been saved by trusting in what He did for us on that Old Rugged Cross.

A man named David had a dream once. He was standing in a long line that led up to a beautiful white gate. Beyond the gate he heard the singing of angels and of people, praises unto God. It was beautiful beyond compare. On the other side of that gate he saw a golden path - a street - that led toward the sounds of happiness. He noticed that some of the people were sent away from the gate, but some were allowed in. As David got closer the man began to hear what was going on at the gate. The third person ahead of him in line was asked, "Why do you want to enter My City?" That person said, "Because, Lord, I've been a good Baptist my whole life. I was born in the Church. I let the preacher baptize me one Sunday, and I attended Church on a regular basis. I believe all the doctrines that the Baptists believe. Yes Sir, I'm a good Baptist." The Voice beyond the gate said, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you that work iniquity!" The man departed down a dark path, a black road that led to a blackly burning lake. The next woman came to the gate and was asked, "Why do you want to enter My City?" . She said, "I've been a good person my whole life. I've never cursed, never drank, and never did

drugs. I raised my children and my grandchildren to be good people, and we all give to charities that help the poor and needy". The Voice beyond the gate said, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you that work iniquity!" The woman departed down a dark path, a black road that led to a blackly burning lake. The Voice beyond the gate asked the next person, "Why do you want to enter My City?" This person said, "Because I was well loved by millions. I preached for You, and cast out devils, and in Your Name did many wonderful works." **(Matthew 7:22-23)**. The Voice beyond the gate said, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you that work iniquity!" The preacher departed down a dark path, a black road that led to a blackly burning lake.

Then it was David's turn. The Voice beyond the gate asked "Why do you want to enter My City?" And David replied, "Because I believed Your Promise. You told me that Jesus Christ shed His Blood for my sins on Calvary. You told me that Jesus bore my hell so I could have His Heaven. He promised me that He would make a place for me, and I believe Him. I stand before You, dear Father, with empty hands clutching nothing but the Blood of Jesus". "Enter in, My son, into the joy of the Lord. I have been waiting for you."

Is the Lord waiting for you?



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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### **1. I Will Avoid Abimelech**

**Psalms 34:1; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23; Genesis 12:11-14; Genesis 12:18; Psalms 31:23-24; Genesis 20**

- What is the difference between **Pharaoh, Caesar, and Abimelech**? \_\_\_\_\_

- What does it look like to the unbeliever when an alleged believer runs to Abimelech? \_\_\_\_\_

### **2. I Will Look To The Lord**

**Genesis 20:10-11; Acts 17:28; 2 Chronicles 20:6-7; Psalms 34:1-5; 1 Samuel 17:40; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Samuel 21; 1 Samuel 21:9; Jeremiah 17:5-6; 1 Samuel 21:11; 1 Samuel 21:13-15**

- Is the power of God dependent on what the children of men think? Is God only powerful when He is *believed* to be powerful or, as **Nietzsche** believed, does God die when people stop believing in Him? \_\_\_\_\_

- A tiny David with a big faith in God can defeat a giant. A big David with a tiny faith in God is defeated by his \_\_\_\_\_.

- Why was David now frightened before Abimelech? \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. Let Go Of Your Life And Let God Live For And Through You**

**Psalms 34:1; Psalms 34:7-8; Romans 5:8-10; Revelation 1:5-6; Psalms 34:2; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Psalms 34:3; Psalms 34:22; Psalms 34:5**

**Word Study** The word translated “**ble**ss” is the Hebrew \_\_\_\_\_

**Word Study** The word for “**bo**ast” is the Hebrew word \_\_\_\_\_

- The Church is not a \_\_\_\_\_ to be used. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ who, loved of God, love and lift up one another!

**Word Study** The word “**light**ened” is the Hebrew \_\_\_\_\_