

Encounter- Week 3

BARAK

- Asking Rachel Out
 - I can remember the whole conversation...
 - In my mind I'm thinking, "no way this is gonna work. Did you just say, I don't mean to be forward? Who are you?!"
 - But she said, "Sure" I thought, "That worked?"
 - "How about tomorrow?" "Cool!"
 - I'm pretty sure I forgot to get her number, and had to go back for it...
- Have you ever had those moments, where you acted in the moment, thinking there's no way think can end well for me...but afterwards, you're left thinking, "How in the world did that work??"
- This is kinda what happened to David whenever he wrote this Psalm.

- And if you read this, David is pretty jazzed up, because he found himself in an impossible, life or death situation, and some way, some how... IT WORKED OUT!
- It's really an interesting story, if you look in your bibles, most of them will have a little intro to the Psalm, right above verse 1. In my ESV it says, "**Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech** (common name for the King of the Philistines like Caesar or Pharaoh), **so that he drove him out, and he went away.**"
- Now "Changed his behavior," is downplaying it a bit. In fact, David literally pretended to be INSANE in front of this king.
- For a little bit of background, if you're not familiar with the story of David, at this time Saul is the king of Israel and he is the first king that Israel had. They picked Saul because he was tall and handsome and just had that kingly look about him.

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- However Saul wasn't working out, he was feeling himself a little too much stopped listening to God and God tells the prophet Samuel that he is going to appoint a new king.
- So the Lord leads Samuel to this man named Jesse's house.
 - Samuel tells Jesse that God has chosen one of his sons to be the next king, so Jesse calls his sons together and Samuel sees one of his sons and thinks, "Surely this is the guy!"
 - But God tells him in 1 Samuel 16, ***"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*** -1 Samuel 16:7
 - So after looking at 7 of Jesse's sons, God tells Samuel that none of them are the guy
 - So Samuel is confused, and he has to ask if Jesse has any other sons
- Jesse says, "Yea I have one more, but he's just the runt of the family, he's out with the sheep." Samuel says go get him
- So David comes in before Samuel, and he is about 10 years old at this time
- And God tells Samuel to anoint him as the next king of Israel. Now, he doesn't actually reign as king for another 20 years or so
 - And Ironically, 7 years after David is anointed as the next king, David goes to work for Saul as his personal musician
 - Saul doesn't know that this kid is going to replace him one day, but Saul loves the guy. Until David kills Goliath
 - Now all of Israel is #TeamDavid
- The people create this jingle that says, "Saul has struck down his Thousands, and David his ten thousands"
 - Saul being the insecure man that he is, is stricken with jealousy and then hates David

- He tries 3 times to kill David with his spear while David was playing music for him
- Then just to get rid of him, Saul sends David out to command part of the army hoping that he dies in battle, but it gets worse because David's success just grows more and more
- He then develops a new plan, and tells David that he can marry his daughter, but first he has to go out and kill 100 Philistines by himself...thinking that the philistines would kill him
 - But then David goes out and kills 200 of them
- So that didn't work, and as he tries to develop another plan to kill David, David's best friend Jonathan, who was Saul's son, warns him
 - So David escapes and has to live on the run from Saul who is trying everything he can to kill him
- In Chapter 21, of 1 Samuel, David for some reason thinks he might be safe among the

Philistines. Even after he just killed 200 of their soldiers, not to mention their champion Goliath in dramatic fashion. In verse 10 it says, ***“So David escaped from Saul and went to King Achish of Gath. But the officers of Achish were unhappy about his being there. “Isn't this David, the king of the land?” they asked. “Isn't he the one the people honor with dances, singing, ‘Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” David heard these comments and was very afraid of what King Achish of Gath might do to him. So he pretended to be insane, scratching on doors and drooling down his beard. Finally, King Achish said to his men, “Must you bring me a madman? We already have enough of them around here! Why should I let someone like this be my guest?”***
- 1 Samuel 21: 10-15 (NLT)

- So David, for some reason, thinks that he could go to the Land of Gath and that no one would recognize him after he killed their

champion, Goliath, and was actually wearing Goliath's sword at the time!

- Then once he realizes that he HAS been recognized, he panics and pretends to be a complete lunatic.
 - He's scratching at the doors and foaming at the mouth. My first thought was, well this isn't a good idea, they're gonna think you have rabies and put you down! But instead he pretty much says, "Get this guy away from me" and send David on his way
- Now these guys reconnect a few chapters later, so that had to be an awkward encounter (how do you come back from that??) But here in chapter 22, it says, ***"David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And***

there were with him about four hundred men." -1 Samuel 22:1-2 (ESV)

- So this is the context in which David writes, "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together!"
 - Exalt Him for what David?? Because you had the wherewithal to pretend to be insane! You got lucky back there dude! And now, you're still on the run for your life, hiding out in a cave with a bunch of rejects!
- What do you mean, "You sought the Lord and He answered you? What do you mean He delivered you from all of your fears??"
- You talk about never being ashamed...you just completely shamed yourself in front of a king!
- You say the Lord heard you, saved you from your troubles, you talk about Him delivering you...delivering you from what....David?
- But you see David had a completely different perspective that we desperately need today.

- David somehow had the ability to look at his life as if he had everything going for him, when we would look at it as if he had everything going against him.
- How does he do that? Well I think a good starting point is in the way he starts off this Psalm by saying:
 - ***“I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth” -Psalm 34:1a (ESV)***
 - That word bless is our next Hebrew word for Praise which is the word **BARAK: TO PRAISE, TO BLESS GOD (AS AN ACT OF ADORATION), TO KNEEL, TO SALUTE**
 - So **Barak is Giving God Your Deepest Love, and Utmost Respect**
 - The word Barak appears in the bible 330 times
 - And the majority of the time, it is translated as “Bless”
- And this is a word that we still throw around a lot, but do we really know what it means?
- I read one commentator that said, **“Statements of blessing are a wish for God to restore His favor on others or a declaration of His inherent goodness.”**
 - A common explanation is that the word blessed, means happy, and in many contexts that is true. But that is the Hebrew word Esher that is translated in that way, and that is not our word for today.
 - In this context we are talking about more of a gift from God, or, from us, an adoration for God
 - I love the part of the definition that says, To Salute, like it’s a recognition that He is our commanding officer
 - Now, when it comes to blessings, this is something we typically asked for ourselves on a regular basis, but we are not nearly as

quick to give a blessing as we are to ask for a blessing

- Especially when it comes to God.
- Now, you could be thinking, as I have thought, “If God is perfect and holy and complete all on His own, if there’s nothing we could ever do or give to God that could possibly add to His value, why would we need to bless Him?”
 - Now, its true that God doesn’t need us to bless Him, but WE need us to bless Him
- And for a number of reasons
- 1: **We Bless God Because He Deserves It**
 - David, throughout the Psalms makes blessing God a regular occurrence. And I love the verses in which he attaches various reasons why He deserves to be blessed.
 - Like in Psalm 104...
 - ***“Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty.” -Psalm 104:1***

- ***“Blessed be the Lord, Who daily bears our burden; The God Who is our salvation.” -Psalm 68:19***
- ***“Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel; Who alone works wonders.” -Psalm 72:18***
- It’s not the word Barak, but Psalm 145 says, ***“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.” -Psalm 145 (NKJV)***
- There are no combination words that you could possibly think up in your life time that could fully describe how great He is
- It is impossible to exaggerate His Power, and Glory, and Love
- He deserves to be appreciated, He deserves our best attempt, He deserve are utmost devotion, love and respect.

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- And we can become so complacent in the grace that we have received that we can take that greatness for granted. That is why:
- 2: **We Bless God Because We Need To Be Reminded**
 - I got to experience a powerful moment of worship this past Monday night
 - I went to The Gathering House, Momma Kay's college ministry, and if I'm honest when I got there, I had very little energy, I was tired, exhausted, stressed, feeling very defeated overall.
 - And I had talked to a few of the students who were feeling the same way
 - And my first thought was, oh you're tired and stressed? What you got a midterm? Try taking care of a teething 1 year old by yourself for 4 days while leading a portable church service...
 - But I know that was a wrong way to think...
- But then Hailey got up to lead worship, and she expressed as well about feeling the struggle and encouraged us to focus on our identities in Christ
- And we began to sing, and at one point she began to sing a song that I hadn't heard yet and the lyrics broke something in me. Hearing 60 or so college students all belting out and blessing God together singing
 - *Such an awesome God*
 - *So mighty, So holy, So wonderful, Such an awesome God, So selfless, So generous, So faithful, You are*
 - *"Nothing compares to the Lord Almighty, Nothing as sweet as His love and mercy"*
- And I didn't even realize until that moment how desperately I needed to be reminded of those truths.
- How badly I needed to join in and bless God for who He is

- Did I still feel the weight, the struggle, and the stress? Yes, but it wasn't the most important or powerful thing I felt anymore. I felt His presence, I felt encouraged, I felt like I wasn't alone
- After the worship I couldn't do anything but go give Hailey a hug and tell her how much I needed that
 - Sometimes we forget how much we need to be reminded of who God is by Himself and to us...so that's why we need to regularly bless Him and just declare who He is. Because we need Him..and also,
- 3: **We Bless God Because Other's Need Us**
 - We are at our best, when God is most blessed in our lives.
 - Whenever God is most blessed in our lives our perspectives and priorities become more aligned with His, and then and only then will we be the best we can be for the people around us.
- Now David was going through some things, he was experiencing real hardship. And what was his response? Again in 1 Samuel it says, ***“And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.” -1 Samuel 22:1-2 (ESV)***
- Now for most people in our generation, in our day and age, there is no way we would have the same response that David had here.
 - He just lost his job, his reputation is being falsely slandered, everyone seems out to get him, he can't catch a break.
 - And then 400 people come to him for help?
 - Almost every person today, if we were to find ourselves in any similar type of situation, we would say, “No, no, y'all have to find someone else. I'm dealing with my own problems right now. I need to focus on me...”

- Can you imagine if David was a typical millennial?? I bet the psalms would read A LOT different!
 - *He'd probably write songs about, "My dad never believed in me...he just kept me out with the sheep and thought one of my brothers should be king instead."*
 - *"My brothers were mean to me whenever I said I wanted to fight Goliath...they just laughed at me, made fun of me, and told me to go home."*
 - *"Then when I did kill Goliath, King Saul wasn't happy for me, he started throwing spears at me when all I wanted to do is play music...ya know? I just want to play music..."*
- David refused to have a victim mentality he refused to throw a pity party...
- He didn't have time to be caught up pitying himself because he had 400 people around him who had it just as hard or even harder than he did.
 - It helped him put his troubles into perspective
- He has all of these people, who are going through the darkest times of their lives and he leads them in saying, **"Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together!" -Psalm 34:3 (ESV)**
 - Within these next few verses, David gives himself, all the distressed that were with him, and all of us today, some practical ways to Bless the Lord.
 - First he says:
 - **WAYS TO BLESS GOD: MAGNIFY HIM.** The Word **Magnify**, means: **To Make Great, To Make Important, To Make Powerful.**
 - He's telling the people, we are going to make sure that we make God the greatest, the most important, the most powerful thing in our lives!
 - *The distress is not greater than Him*

- *The debt is not more important than Him*
- *The bitterness will never be more powerful than Him!*
- So we will Magnify the Lord, and
- **WAYS TO BLESS GOD: EXALT HIM!**
- **Exalt** or Extol, is also an interesting word. It means **To Lift High/To Raise**, but also give the connotation of raising a child. The literal definition is "**To Cause to Grow Up**"
 - It's as if David is telling himself and everyone with him, we need to discipline ourselves to lift Him up. The best way for us to grow, is to stop focusing so much on what we have going on, and focus more on Him and His Goodness!
- One of the greatest example of this was when David talked to himself in Psalm 42:5, when he said, "***Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation***"
- David had to talk to his soul!
- Now, he was honest in what he was feeling. He was feeling downcast, he was feeling all kinds of turmoil within himself, so he had a choice. He could either give in to, or he could preach to it.
 - And he starts preaching to himself, saying "NO! Hope in God! I'm Gonna Praise Him, why Because HE is my salvation!"
 - That is exalting...it's making yourself praise through the pain and allowing your mind to be set on Him who is so much greater than anything this world could throw at us.
- And he clarifies at the end of this verse 3 of our passage, we have to do this:
 - **WAYS TO BLESS GOD: TOGETHER.**
 - None of us are strong enough on our own to magnify Him and disciplined enough to Exalt Him as consistently as we need to!
 - That's why we need each other, that's why we need church, that's why we need

community because we need to constantly be surrounding ourselves with other believers to help us have the right perspective and push us to Him when we would rather focus on ourselves.

- You see David was a really emotional guy. He was a musician, a creative type, his personality had a lot of feelings.
 - And the time in his life when he got himself in the most trouble was when he isolated himself, and allowed his feelings and emotions to drive him.
 - Even David, the greatest king in Israel's history, the man after God's own heart was not strong enough to do life on his own.
 - And neither am I, and neither are you, we need to do it together.
 - So in verse 3 he tells us how we bless God, and in verse 4 he tells us why he personally blessed God.

- ***"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4 (ESV)***

- This word **Sought** means: **To Seek, and TO BE Sought**
 - You see, seeking God and being sought by Him— go hand in hand
 - Now we can only seek God in the first place because He sought us out
- Jesus was the physical embodiment of God seeking us, there was nothing we could ever do to get to Him, so He came to us. In the person of Jesus Christ, and he paid the penalty for our sin so we could in turn seek Him back.
 - You didn't find God, God found you. I once was lost but now I'm found.
- However there is no such thing as a one way relationship, God is always the initiator and He is constantly pursuing each and every one of us, however there will be no relationship there if we do not pursue Him back.

- You see, we don't only seek God and Bless him because of our circumstances, we bless Him and Seek Him in spite of our circumstances because His is the relationship we need when we are distressed, in debt, and bitter in soul.
- Because there will be times in our lives when we do suffer. Jesus promised us that in this world we would have trouble. He said that people would hate us, the poor would always be with us, that many would die for their faith.
- Even David was not pretending that his troubles did not exist!
- ***“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Psalm 34:17-19 (ESV)***
- He's saying that no matter how close we are to God, no matter if we are doing all of the right

things, there will still be times when we have to cry out to God. There are going to be times in our lives where we will be completely brokenhearted and our spirits will be crushed. MANY, he says, are the afflictions of the righteous

- BUT the Lord delivers them.
- This word “**Delivered**” means to be: **Liberated (from the Power of)**
- Delivered doesn't mean that He'll make all of the afflictions stop happening, but with Him those afflictions don't have power over our lives.
- You can see the contrast in verses 19-21, ***“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked...”***
-Psalm 34:19-21 (ESV)
- Now, to be clear, when reading throughout the Psalms, there are only two types of people...

those who know God, and those who do not know God. David uses Righteous and Wicked, we wouldn't use those semantics today, but that's what he means.

- So if I was going to rewrite this for today's generation, I would change Righteous and Wicked to: Those who have Hope, and Those who do not have Hope.
 - So the Lord delivers Those Who Have Hope from the power of afflictions, but afflictions destroy those who do not have hope.
- You see, apart from Jesus, apart from the Hope of Eternal life...this world, this life, this body, this is it!
 - So therefore, if this is it...that means afflictions are catastrophic.
- But if we have Hope, that this world and this life is just a spec in the context of eternity... then afflictions to us are just a bump in the road

- Now they may not feel like it! They may feel catastrophic, the pain is real, the hurt is real, but it's power is fake.
 - The real power is found in the one who proved His power over death.
 - And whenever we take the time to intentionally Bless God, we are reminded of the Hope that we have and where the real power is.
- I feel like what David is trying to get across is the same message that Jesus was giving whenever He said, ***"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** -John 16:33 (ESV)
 - HE is why the righteous are delivered from the power of their troubles
 - You see David wasn't just an overly optimistic young guy when talking about this. Because a few chapters later, David is now much much older, but the truth hadn't changed, he said, ***"I have been young, and now am old, yet I***

have not seen the righteous forsaken.”

-Psalm 37:25 (ESV)

- Now David would go through much more difficult things throughout his life than just running for his life and pretending to be insane.
 - He would make huge mistakes, He would lose children, his kingdom would go through civil war.. yet he is adamant that through it all, God never forsakes but always sustains the Righteous.
- Back to our passage, David goes on to say in verse 22 says, ***“The Lord redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.” -Psalm 34:22 (ESV)***
- The Word **Refuge** means: **To Put Trust in, Confide or Hope in**
- Those who are righteous, those who are His servants, are those who have put there trust and hope in God

- That’s the criteria to become a member of the Family of God, to put your faith, hope, and trust in Him.
- That’s why Paul says, ***“For everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved.” -Romans 10:13 (ESV)***
- And that word call, means “to invoke, adore, worship the Lord”
- Very similar to the definition of our word Barak or to Bless the Lord
- So salvation and deliverance is found whenever we declare and believe God is who He says He is
- So we worship Him, we adore Him, we appeal to Him to be our stronghold in the time of trouble. And when we do, He answers, and He delivers, because He’s good.
- And David so desperately wants others to understand this, that’s why he wrote in verse 8:

- ***“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”
-Psalm 34:8 (ESV)***

- This means Try and Experience
- He says, taste and see! Not just believe and know.
 - We struggle with this because we want to see and THEN taste
 - We want to know, before we go.
 - But it doesn't work that way.
 - I could stand here and tell you till I'm blue in the face all of the ways that God delivers, but it'll never actually sink in until you experience it for yourself and have your own relationship with Him
- Now, David loved to talk about His relationship with God, and all the ways the God has delivered Him from the power of His troubles. He loved to talk about His faith, but he wanted everyone to know and experience God for themselves.

- That's why, He gathers them together and almost begs them to Bless and Magnify the Lord with him!
 - He's is encouraging all of these people who are going through the darkest time of their lives to Bless God, Remember all the good He does and is, and use this time to Experience God in a new way.
 - You know, more often than not, we experience God the most whenever things are the hardest
- I once read a book, not by CS Lewis but about Him. And in one part of the book, the author says, ***“Lewis agrees that in the long run Christianity brings unspeakable comfort but not until the believer has gone through an initial period of dismay.” -CS Lewis: Speaker & Teacher (p.118)***
 - Now to many of us that may seem harsh, and many may think well why would I ever want to be a Christian if I'm going to have to go through dismay??

- But the reality is we are all going to go through dismay at some point in our lives. And it's only through the Hope found in Jesus that we can actually experience unspeakable comfort during those times.
- That's why Peter says, ***"...after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."*** 1 Peter 5:10 (ESV)
- You see God never promised an easy life. Any theology you hear about once you come to God, your problems will go away, your bank account will get full, and you're going to experience nothing but health, wealth, and prosperity....it's complete nonsense.
- And you can see how entitled we can become and how quick we can be to victimize ourselves whenever we expect those things!
- God doesn't promise to keep us from hardship, but He does promise to be there with us through it all. And most of the time we won't really appreciate how Good He is until He's really our only source of strength. Whenever things get so hard that we have no where else to turn. He's there.
- David said He's near to the broken hearted. So I will bless Him at all times.
 - What if we spent less time pitying ourselves, being mad at God and blaming Him for allowing afflictions to happen, and rather spend more time appreciating Him for giving us Hope through it?
 - Blessing Him for giving us the confidence that this world and this life isn't all that there is, but that there will come a day where He will wipe away every tear from every eye, where sorrow will be NO MORE
- That is why, no matter in comfort or in tragedy God deserves our Deepest Love and Utmost Respect

- If you remember, one way that the Word Barak is translated is:
- **BARAK: TO PRAISE, TO BLESS GOD (AS AN ACT OF ADORATION), TO KNEEL, TO SALUTE**
- David uses the word in this context in Psalm 95
- ***“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel [BARAK] before the Lord, our Maker!” -Psalm 95:6 (ESV)***
- Now, most of us when we think of kneeling we think about it in the context of kneeling before a King, an Authority, as a sign of respect and submission
- And rightfully so, but remember this term is being used in the context of adoration. The literal definition of adoration is: Deep Love and Respect
- So it makes me think of a different context of kneeling as well.
- I told y'all about whenever I first asked out Rachel, and then 7 months later I was ready to propose.
 - I will probably use the full proposal story at a later time, but when I went to pop the question, I pulled out the ring, and did what?...I got down on one knee
 - Now why do we do that? It's tradition, but if I'm honest I didn't even really know where the tradition came from
 - So I went on a rabbit hole, studying where this came from and it actually originated in Medieval Times whenever Knights would traditionally get down on their left knee on 3 specific occasions
 - *When they would go before the presence of the king or queen that they served—*
 - *When they would be knighted—*
 - *And when they would request courtship of the female they desired a relationship with*
 - They would do this is intentionally show that they were committed to showing the same

honor, respect, and submission to this woman as they would the king or queen that they served.

- This type of respect shown toward women at this time was so rare and countercultural, and one of the reasons why that women always dreamed of their knight in shining armor.
- I think we all need to be intentionally practicing out Barak in our lives during praise and in our prayer. To show Him the honor and respect He deserves, but also to show Him the Love and Adoration He deserves as well
 - There is something powerful that happens in our soul whenever we go before Him to bless, and posture ourselves before Him
 - Because sometimes how we posture ourselves physically can impact how we connect with Him Spiritually.
 - Just being practical, I don't know about you, but sometimes I have a really hard time staying focused when I'm praying, and I

need to physically posture myself and kneel down to better set my mind and focus on Him.

- So I encourage you today, if you haven't already, begin to practice Barak in your spiritual life. In your prayer, and even in your praise from time to time, be willing to kneel before the Lord, show Him your Deepest Love and Utmost Respect
- Because as the writer of Hebrews says, ***"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" -Hebrews 12:28 (ESV)***
 - He deserves it, we need it, and others need us.