



8/14/24

I think it's so cool that God calls us His body so that we can understand how we can be individual believers who are part of the whole body. We're in this walk with Jesus together. My mind naturally thinks with more of an individual sense than a unified body sense. But if you look for it in scripture, you'll find that so much of scripture is addressing how we treat each other and care for each other...as members of one another. Have you noticed that?

*Blessings from your sister and co-member of God's body,
Jonna*

Psalm 34:1-10 ~

What does Psalm 34 have to do with using our spiritual gifts to serve the Lord and His body? I would like to go through this passage in search of understanding. I have to admit, I love Psalm 34 and have read it a million times...but so often, I have read it thinking of it individually for myself. Filtering it through the lens of the body of Christ, being a member of the whole and not the being whole unto myself...what can I learn?

Vs. 1 ~ If I'm "blessing the Lord at all times", continually and openly praising Him, God will use me to encourage and build up those around me. There's a saying, "If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Well, I think that's true for just about anyone. To walk into a room in anger, frustration, or despair will affect the atmosphere of the room. To walk into a room with genuine joy will also affect the atmosphere of the room. It's not that I ignore what others are going through if they're suffering. It's that I bring the love of Jesus to them in order to love them as He does.

Vs. 2 ~ Boasting in the Lord has to come from my soul in order to be genuine. My prayer is that my love for the Lord will encourage the humble so that they also want to praise Him and boast in Him. And my prayer is that God will use my boasting in the Lord...never in myself...to soften the hearts of the proud.

Vs. 3 ~ I pray that the gifts God has given me will magnify His name, not mine...and that

together with other believers we will use our gifts to glorify Him...because He alone is worthy.

Vs. 4-5 ~ The beautiful thing God does in my life, He can do in others as well. I can use my God given gifts to encourage others that seeking the Lord will never be wasted. He will always answer. He will deliver us from our fears. I can't keep this truth to myself! I have to share it. All who look to Him for help are radiant and unashamed.

Oh, I have felt so much shame in my life. That is my natural default when anything goes wrong. But the Lord is showing me that I don't have to live in shame! How can I not share that with others who struggle with the same thing??? The Lord wants to set us free from shame. How could I know this truth and keep it to myself?

Vs. 6 ~ I was poor and needy...so in need of God's mercy and grace! I cried out to Him...and little by little the Lord has helped me pry my fingers off the lies and hold onto Him. He saved me first from eternal wrath and suffering. He has continued to save me through so many troubles I brought on myself...and suffering I've experienced by troubles placed on me. He sustains. I want to use the gifts He's given me to help others turn to Him as well.

Vs. 7 ~ I want to help others know that "the Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him." This can be speaking of only one Person...Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, He was called "the Angel of the Lord" because He had not yet been born as a baby. This HAS to be Jesus because no "angel" is to be feared...worshipped...only God Himself deserves that honor.

Yes, the Angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ has delivered me...and I could think He only encamps around me individually...but that's not how He works. He gathers His people together and dwells among us as well as hemming us in behind and before (Psalm 139:5). It is a both/and. He dwells with us individually, and He dwells with us as a whole body...His body.

He delivers us! HE delivers us. He DELIVERS us. He delivers US...all who worship Him. My job is never to point to myself as anyone's answer. I am not the fixer or deliverer. I am His servant, given the opportunity to reflect His love.

Vs. 8 ~ I have tasted and seen that the Lord is truly good. He cannot be separated from any of His attributes. If He has been good, He is always good. As I use the gifts He's given me, I get to savor more and more of His goodness...and I get to share that goodness with others.

What is His goodness? He is a refuge for all who turn to Him. As we together turn to the Lord, we will find Him to be a faithful refuge for all of us. What is one of the devil's strategies to get us to avoid the Lord and not turn to Him? Isolation. Isolate us from other believers and make us think we have to be our own hope. It's a lie. The Lord gives us the privilege of using our unique gifts to work together with Him and find that we never have to isolate...but together we find Him to be our refuge.

Vs. 9 ~ This verse says, "Oh fear the Lord, you His SAINTS." It is speaking to us together as

His people. Together, we can encourage each other and remind each other that fearing God...worshiping Him together...is a beautiful gift and promise. "Those who fear Him have no lack." The Lord lavishes us with His grace and mercy. We get to share in that together.

Vs. 10 ~ Even strong, young lions suffer and go hungry, but not those who seek the Lord. When we together seek Him, we find that He provides what we need. He sustains us. It doesn't mean that we're never in a position where we don't know how He'll provide. But even when we don't understand how He's going to provide, He will. What is our job as His people? Seek Him.

What if the gifts God has given me can be used to help others worship Him and seek Him better? What if, rather than judging someone for their anxiety and blindness, God wants to use me to offer them His peace and strength? What if God wants to use me to help open their eyes? What if God wants to use another believer to open my blind eyes? God gives us the privilege of being part of something far greater than ourselves, and doing together what we could never accomplish individually. O Lord, I want to be used by You to serve Your people and encourage them...and I NEED You to use others to encourage me in my faith. Please help us to function the way You created us to function.

You have always been about unity. Help us to bless You and worship You by walking as You call us to walk...with each other...experiencing Your goodness together...seeking You together...worshiping You together.

You are our radiance, our deliverer, our provider, our sustainer. We together take refuge in You. We together savor Your goodness. Amen.