

August 23, 2015 by Steve Brandon



He Delivers!

Psalm 34

1. Rejoice with Me (verses 1-10).

2. Learn from Me (verses 11-22).

A group of us at church are working to memorize the Fighter Verses that are put out by Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These verses are intended to help you in your fight for sanctification. Thus, the name, "Fighter Verses." The idea is that putting God's word in your heart, His words that direct you to God, that speak of the gospel, that comfort you in God's love, that call you to holiness. All these things will help turn you away from sin and draw you into a closer walk with God.

The idea of memorizing these verses is what Psalm 119:11 speaks about. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." If you are interested in finding out more about these verses, you can go to fighterverses.com. They have done a great job in thinking through some key verses to help you in your sanctification.

Well, about two months ago, the schedule of verses encouraged the systematic memorization of Psalm 34, with two or three verses each week. And as I did a bit of calculating, I saw that the last week of the memorization would end today, on the first Sunday after our vacation. So, I put forth the challenge to all of you to work on memorizing this Psalm with me so that you might be helped to absorb today's message, as the text would be familiar to you.

Two months ago, I was unfamiliar with Psalm 34. But, for the past two months, I have been living with it, as that's what you need to do to memorize anything. You need to think and meditate and go over the words. Over and over and over again.

Now, I don't know how many of you made attempts at memorizing the Psalm. If you did, that's great! If you didn't, that's fine. If you only got through part of it, that's fine as well. But, whatever you have memorized, I want to give you the opportunity to say it out loud with me.

Psalm 34

I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!
The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.

The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
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.
He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.
Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

These words were written by David at some point after his encounter with Abimelech. The story is told in 1 Samuel 21. From the superscript, we know that David found himself in a very difficult situation. He was fleeing from Saul, the king of Israel, who was trying to kill him. He found himself in Philistine territory, where he was trying to lay low. But, the boys there brought his presence to the attention of the king.

They said, ...

1 Samuel 21:11
"Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances,
'Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

Here was David, deep in enemy territory, exposed and in danger of losing his life! And David knew full well of the danger.

1 Samuel 21:12
And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

Achish was his name, Abimelech was his title. This is much like "Pharaoh" was the title of the Egyptian kings. David was totally at the mercy of this man. Had Abimelech given his permission, the Philistine servants would have been all too happy to kill David, just as he had killed Goliath, their hero, a few years before.

To save his life, David became an actor. He pretended to be a madman. In 1 Samuel 21, we read, ...

1 Samuel 21:13
So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

Now, I'm not sure exactly what is meant here by the "marks on the doors." Perhaps he made them with his fingernails or with his teeth or with a sharp object, like a rock or potshard or a metal scrap that he found on the ground somewhere. But, I know what it means that he "let spittle run down his beard."

I have never had a beard before. Sometimes, it might come in handy. For the first time in my life, I'm able to demonstrate what David did. On second thought, I think it wiser not. I will leave it to your imagination. At any rate, it's not the sort of behavior that one would usually expect from a king.

Anyway, when David was presented to the king, He said to his servants, ...

1 Samuel 21:14-15
... "Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

And with that, David was set free. He fled to the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1), where he was joined by 400 of his friends (1 Samuel 22:2).

Perhaps it was there in the cave that he wrote this Psalm. Perhaps he wrote it for those who joined him. I can imagine it easily, because Psalm 34 is all about David's deliverance. I can easily picture him around his friends, telling them of what took place when he was in Gath, in the hands of the Philistines, standing before the king, himself. I can picture him telling them how he was delivered from their hands.

Verses like verse 4 would have been appropriate words to say to his friends.

Psalm 34:4

I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

The language of 1 Samuel 21 is very clear. We read that David "was much afraid" of the king (1 Samuel 21:11). In fact, if there is one emotion that comes through in this Psalm, it's fear. He feared for his life, but lived to tell about it. And Psalm 34 is the telling.

Verse 6 would have been an appropriate testimony.

Psalm 34:6
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.

David was in great trouble, but God saved him out of his troubles. The truth of verses 17 and 18 would have been very appropriate to tell his friends.

Psalm 34:17-18
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.

This was David's situation. He was in trouble (verse 6). He feared for his life (verse 4). He was brokenhearted (verse 18). He was crushed in spirit (verse 18). And God delivered him.

And this is the lesson of the Psalm. God delivers. In fact, this is the title to my message this morning, "God Delivers!" He delivered David from all of his troubles (verse 6) and fears (verse 4). And the greater promise comes in verse 19, ...

Psalm 34:19
Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Notice here how clearly it states that the life of a believer is a hard life. It's a difficult life. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yet, it comes with a promise. The promise is that "the LORD delivers him out of them all." This is the same promise as verses 17 and 18.

Psalm 34:17-18
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.

Are you afflicted today? Know that God delivers. Have you any fears today? Know that God delivers. Have you troubles, worries, problems in life today? Know that God delivers. Do you feel crushed and humbled by life today? Know that God delivers.

This was David's experience. And Psalm 34 is his teaching about that experience. And our ultimate deliverance, of course, is our deliverance from sin. As we believe in Jesus, God delivers us from our sin.

My outline this morning has two points: And I take these points from Derek Kidner's excellent commentary. The first is found in verses 1-10.

1. Rejoice with Me (verses 1-10).

This is the call of David in verse 3, ...

Psalm 34:3
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

He says, "I'm exalting the LORD," and I want for you to join in! This is how God built us. We are built to share our praise.

On vacation this summer, my wife and I and our three oldest children went on a 3-day back-packing trip this summer through the Great Basin State Park in California. It was beautiful and, at times, breath-taking, to see these gigantic trees. Some were as big as 16 feet in diameter and 250 feet tall! Often on the trail, we would bend around a corner to a wonderful view and say, "Oh wow!" As if to say, "Look at that!" As if to say, "Share my wonder!" And that's exactly what David is doing here.

In verses 1 and 2, David puts forth how he is praising the LORD, Himself. We see David's praise of God in verses 1 and 2.

Psalm 34:1-2

I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.

Rejoicing and praising the LORD is how the child of God will respond to his deliverances from his troubles. In fact, this is why many of us come here each Sunday. Because we know that God has delivered us from our sin. And we are filled with praise! And we want to express that in the corporate assembly.

This is David's heart as well. He doesn't simply leave this praise to himself. He desires that others join in!

Psalm 34:3

Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

May this be the heartbeat of our church! That we stimulate others to the praise and exaltation of God! So, share your victories. Share the way that God has been your help and shield. This is what David wrote in verses 4-6, ...

Psalm 34:4-6

I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.

In these verses, we see David giving all credit for his deliverance to the LORD.

Now, when you look at the background to this Psalm (in 1 Samuel 21), it appears that David was responsible for his own freedom. He is the one who pretended to be mad. And there is no mention of God's supernatural intervention in the situation. There were no thunderbolts, no visions, no miracles. And yet, when David looks back upon his encounter with the king of Gath, he gave all credit to God for his deliverance.

David fully understood Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever he will." And so, he fully understood that his deliverance was due to the working of God in the king's heart. Rather than killing him on the spot, the LORD turned his heart to let David go.

And would the truth be known, God's fingers are at work in our lives far more than we will ever know. We simply need to be more aware. Look at the promise of verse 7.

Psalm 34:7

The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Do you fear the LORD? Then, you have the promise that surrounding you is the angel of the LORD.

Do you remember the story of Elisha, told in 2 Kings 6? The king of Syria found out that he was in Dothan and sent his army to surround the city. When Elisha's servant rose in the morning, he saw the city surrounded by "an army with horses and chariots." He said to Elisha, "Alas my master! What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15). Elisha calmly replied, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16). Then, he prayed, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17). And the LORD answered his prayer and he saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:18). Certainly, this was a part of the angelic army sent to protect Elisha.

And indeed, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Please strike this people with blindness" (2 Kings 6:18). And it was so. And Elisha and his servant escaped the Syrian army. And what was true of Elisha is true of every God-fearing man or woman today.

Psalm 34:7

The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

If you look through the Old Testament, you will realize that this is a special angel: the angel of the LORD. He can do what God can do. He speaks as God speaks. He is often identified as "the LORD" (Gen. 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2-6). He is distinct from the LORD. Most theologians agree that this is the pre-incarnate Christ.

The promise of verse 7 is that Jesus will encamp around those who fear the LORD. This is the same promise that Jesus made at the end of Matthew's gospel, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Oh, church family, let us believe this. With Elisha's servant, it was a matter of faith. And with us as well, it is a matter of faith and understanding. May the LORD open our eyes to his involvement. So that when we think of our troubles, and when we think of how we got through them, please realize that the hand of the LORD was with us the entire time. If you doubt this, I encourage you to take up the challenge of verse 8.

Psalm 34:8

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

In our house, we still have a youngster who is taste-challenged. There are many foods that David simply doesn't like. He struggles with vegetables. He struggles with mashed potatoes. He struggles with anything green. And as parents, surely you know our response. We tell him that he needs to taste everything. Because, we know that one day, things will change. He will taste his vegetables and realize that they aren't so bad. He will come to like salad. But, we need to encourage him (almost daily) to taste.

Well, that's the challenge that David brings to the table here. He says, ...

Psalm 34:8

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

He says, "Try him out." And you will see that he is good! He is the one who surrounds us. He is the one who protects us. He is the one who delivers us. Indeed, the one who takes refuge in him will know the blessing of God in his life. The blessing extends to verses 9 and 10.

Psalm 34:9-10

Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!

The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

This sounds like Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." Indeed, the Hebrew verb is the same. Those who take refuge in the LORD, and fear Him, and submit to his shepherding care, will lack no good thing.

This is in contrast to the wild animals, like lions, who often go hungry because they must hunt down their prey. And sometimes, the hunting is difficult. But, not so with those who fear the LORD. Listen to the promises of Scripture.

Psalm 103:13

As a father shows compassion to his children,
So the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Psalm 115:11, 13

You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!

He is their help and their shield.

... he will bless those who fear the LORD,

Both the small and the great.

Psalm 84:11

The LORD God is a sun and shield,
The LORD bestows favor and honor.

No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

Think about that. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. Now, it's not that we will have everything. It's that all of our needs will be met. It's that we find ourselves to be content in God, and what he provides. And we know that what he provides is good.

And with David, we will turn our praise to the LORD. Rejoice with Me (verses 1-10).

But, David has another point. Not only does he say, Rejoice with Me (verses 1-10). He also says, ...

2. Learn from Me (verses 11-22).

We see this clearly in verse 11, ...

Psalm 34:11

Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

The blessings of God come upon those who fear him! And David desperately wants for his friends (and for us) to know what it means to fear the LORD. Because, fearing the LORD will lead to a blessed life. That's what he's getting at in verse 12, ...

Psalm 34:12
What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?

I do believe that this is the desire of almost everyone. Now certainly, there are those who end their lives early. And there are those who don't want to live into their old age. But, in general, such is not the case. The vast majority of people want to live a long, healthy life. And how do you do this? How do you see this happen? It's through righteous living. Verses 13-14, ...

Psalm 34:13-14
Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

David is talking about our talk and our walk. Righteous words must come from our mouths. Righteous deeds must come from our actions. We must be peace-pursuers.

These things are characteristic of those who fear the LORD. Proverbs says that the "fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." And a righteous life is a life of wisdom. And why do such things lead to a long and happy life? Well, it's because of God's favor. Verse 15, ...

Psalm 34:15
The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.

God will look down upon the righteous and will grant them favor. He will see their affliction. He will hear their cries for help. He will come and help them (verse 17). But, such is not the case with the wicked. Look at verse 16, ...

Psalm 34:16
The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Those who spit at God. Those who refuse to believe in him will face his opposition. In general, the righteous will live a long and happy life. In general, the wicked will see their lives cut short.

I remember Mike, a friend of mine who went to college with me, whose life was cut short. I didn't really associate with him too much because he went with a different crowd than I did. But, we played basketball together on the Junior Varsity team as freshman.

Well, Christmas break of our sophomore year Mike was killed by a truck. Apparently, he had been to a New Year's Eve party and was drunk (and perhaps high on drugs), and pulled out right in front of a semi-truck. He was killed instantly.

Years later I had the opportunity to work with one of Mike's high school friends. This friend told me that Mike had told him once that he never expected to live past 25 years old, because he was so wild. Indeed, such was the case.

I do believe that the face of the LORD was against him, as he was accustomed to doing evil. But, the one who fears the LORD will seek a righteous life. And he will know the blessings of such a life. God will look down upon him with favor. That's the point of verses 17 and 18.

Psalm 34:17-18
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.

The longer you live, the more you know of how troubles and hardships are around every corner. You can't avoid them. They will come. But, the key to overcoming these hardships isn't by looking at yourself and to your own resources. The key isn't trying to solve your problem by yourself. The key is to look to the LORD. Only he can save. Only he can deliver.

And he does. He saves the humble. He saves the brokenhearted. He saves the crushed in spirit.

It's no accident that the humble are the ones who will hear David boasting in the LORD and be glad as a result (verse 2). Because the humble look to God for help! And, it is the humble to whom God looks. Isaiah 66:2 says, "This is the one to whom I will look: He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

These are the ones upon which God's favor rests. God doesn't help those who help themselves. Rather, God helps those who know they need his help and cry to him for help.

And there was one who God delivered in a spectacular way. He is hinted at in verse 19, ...

Psalm 34:19
Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Did you notice the change in grammar? This entire Psalm has been addressed to the people of God! It has been addressed to those who would delight to magnify the LORD's name together with David (verse 3). It has been addressed to the congregation, in the plural. But, things change right here in verse 19. Suddenly, we see the singular pop up.

I checked the major translations (ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, NIV), and they all bring out this distinction which is there in the Hebrew text. Verse 19 is speaking about one man.

Psalm 34:19
Many are the afflictions of the righteous (singular),
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Now, certainly, this is applicable to all of us. And there is a bit of stylistic freedom here. But, I do believe that the Spirit of God had something greater in mind. Especially in light of verse 20, ...

Psalm 34:20
He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.

In John 19:36, we read of how this was fulfilled in Jesus. Let me read the context:

John 19:31-37
Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

And I have to believe that the Spirit of God knew of the one who faced the greatest affliction ever, Jesus Christ. "The promise to the righteous man found an unexpectedly literal realization in the passion of the perfectly righteous one." [\[1\]](#)

He was perfectly righteous. Yet, he knew much pain and affliction. He was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief. His afflictions were many (verse 19). But, God delivered them out of them all (verse 19).

Notice how it was that God delivered Jesus. Not in this life. He delivered him out of them all in the life to come through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And so, we too, as we look to the mighty promises of this Psalm (verses 17-18), let us realize that their greatest fulfillment might only be in eternity. In other words, yes, the righteous will cry to the LORD and will be delivered out of all of their troubles (verse 17). But that may not come until eternity.

The summary comes in verses 20-21.

Psalm 34:20-21
Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

This is the ultimate reality of this Psalm. We all will face troubles in this life. They will slay the wicked, even to eternity. But, the LORD will rescue and deliver his servants. Ultimately, of course, this redemption came through Jesus Christ to all who believe. Do you believe in him?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 23, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Kirkpatrick, as quoted by Kidner, p. 141.