

May 31, 2026

Psalm 34

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. ³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! ⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵ Those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ⁸ Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! ⁹ Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. ¹² What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. ¹⁵ The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. ¹⁶ The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸ The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. ²⁰ He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. ²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. ²² The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Scriptures for further study:
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

2 Corinthians 3:18

Romans 8:1, 34

1 Corinthians 10:31

“The first ten verses are a hymn and the last twelve a sermon.”

-Charles Spurgeon

“Just as the fish was built for water and the bird for air, so you were built for God—and you will not find true life and freedom anywhere else.”

-Tim Keller

“Biblical obedience is not about keeping an arbitrary set of rules; it’s about living in accordance with our design, in harmony with our Maker.

Because he wants us to flourish, he restricts us in order to truly free us. He prohibits us to drive us to what is good. He lays boundaries with hands of love.”

-Tim Keller



A Hymn and A Sermon Psalm 34

BIG IDEA: When our lives are marked by the praise and honor of our Triune God, then our lives will also be marked by faithfulness and holiness.

OUTLINE

1. A Hymn: A Praise-filled Life (verses 1-10)

2. A Sermon: A Righteous Life (verse 11-22)

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Does it surprise you that both praise of God and the obedience to God are together in a psalm? Why or why not?
2. How did David describe his praise for God in verses 1-10?
3. What does it mean to “boast in the LORD” (v.2)?
4. What was the reason David gave in verse 4 for this praise?
5. What reasons do you have to praise God this week?
6. How did David describe the righteous life in verses 11-22?
7. What does it mean to “fear the Lord” (v.11)?
8. How is the LORD described in verse 18? How does this encourage you? Have you experienced this from God?

“Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? (What is man’s primary purpose?)

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

-Westminster Shorter Catechism

“The Bible is not an arbitrary list of prohibitions; it’s an epic story of a Creator more committed to your joy than you could imagine. Entrusting each sphere of your life to him, therefore, is not something you do instead of enjoying him; it’s the way you enjoy him. Following him is not an alternative to your joy; it’s the secret to it.”

-Tim Keller

“The positive side of this humility is selfless enthusiasm: pure joy in another’s triumph.”

-Derek Kidner

“We do not gain entry to heaven by obeying the law, but those who are citizens of God’s kingdom seek to live according to the law of that realm. If we do not endeavor to follow God’s law, we show no evidence of saving faith, and without saving faith, we do not have eternal life (James 2:14-26).”

-RC Sproul

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Psalm 34 is an expression of thanksgiving for God's protection and care for those who trust in him. Embedded within the thanksgiving is a "wisdom" section (vv. 11–14), which is fitting — it is the wise, those who live out their trust in God, who have occasion to give such thanks. Like other Davidic acrostics, the psalm follows an imperfect acrostic pattern: the "w" verse is missing (between vv. 5–6), and the last verse begins with "p" (cf. Ps. 25:22).

The title connects the psalm to 1 Samuel 21:10–15, where David is delivered from danger by feigning madness before King Achish of Gath. The name "Abimelech" in the psalm title is likely a royal title or alternate name for the king of Gath. This was a narrow escape, and David neither takes credit for it nor dismisses the importance of the faithful using their wits in desperate situations.

-adapted from the ESV Study Bible

Praise to Jesus – We bless the LORD at all times; may his praise continually be in our mouths. We boast in the LORD — let the humble hear and be glad! Oh, magnify the LORD with us, and let us exalt his name together. Praise the LORD who answers our prayers and delivers us from all our fears. Praise the One who saves us from all our troubles, who encamps around us through Jesus Christ and delivers us. He is good — blessed are those who take refuge in him. Give thanks for Jesus Christ, who has imputed his righteousness to us, making all these blessings and ten thousand more fully and forever ours.

Repent through Jesus – Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and lead you to confess and repent for the times you have listened to dread and fear rather than trusting the LORD. Confess the moments when you believed you were alone — giving in to self-pity and doubt — and lost sight of the reality that the LORD of heaven's armies is always with those who are in Christ. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Confess also the times you turned to anyone or anything else first for wisdom and help, rather than seeking the LORD.

Consecration for Jesus – Because the LORD of heaven's armies is always with us in Christ, let us go forth rejoicing — making much of his great name and of his Son, Jesus Christ. Go and share the great news of the One who delivers the hopeless, helpless, and hurting from dread and sin, with your families, your neighbors, and your co-workers.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What does it mean to praise God? (It means that we worship God and proclaim the worth that is due to Him. We can praise God in our prayers, songs, offerings, service, and in all aspects of life.)
2. How does David describe his praise of God in verses 1-10? (He calls it blessing the Lord, boasting in the Lord, magnifying God, and exalting in Him.)
3. What reason does he give in verse 4 for his praise? Have you ever prayed to God as David did in verse 4? Has God ever done this for you? (He says that he prayed to God for help with a fear, and the LORD delivered him from this fear.)
4. What does it mean to fear the Lord (verses 7,9,11)? (It means we are in awe of Him or that we show Him reverence as we would if we met a king or queen or a president. When we fear God, we realize that He is holy, almighty, sovereign, and we are not. It also carries with it that we trust Him and have faith in Him.)
5. What does it mean to be righteous? (It means we have been declared right before God. We can only do this by trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. After this, then we are filled with God the Holy Spirit, who gives us the strength and desire to obey God and to seek to be more like Jesus.)

Scriptures for further study:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1 Corinthians 10:31

Philippians 4:6-7

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1 Corinthians 10:31

Philippians 4:6-7

Romans 8:1

James 2:14-26

2 Corinthians 3:18

1. David resolves to praise God at all times, not just when life is good, not just on Sundays, not just when he feels like it. That is a strong claim. What does praise look like as a daily posture rather than an occasional feeling? What makes that hard for you personally?
2. David prayed, and God delivered him from his fears. Think about a fear you have been carrying recently, something you have not fully handed over. What would it look like to actually bring it to God the way David does here, rather than managing it on your own?
3. Taste and see that the Lord is good (v. 8). Tasting implies personal experience, not just hearing about it or agreeing with it in theory. Where have you actually experienced God's goodness firsthand? What makes it hard to trust that goodness in seasons when you cannot feel it?
4. In verses 11-14, the Psalm shifts from praise to instruction. David says fearing the Lord shows up in your mouth first: keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit. Where is the gap between what you say and who you actually want to be? How does fearing God change the way you use your words?
5. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (v.18). This is one of the most direct promises in the Psalms. Is that actually where you expect to find God - in the broken places? Or does brokenness feel more like distance from him? Where do you need to believe this verse right now?
6. Psalm 34 holds two things together: God delivers his people and life will still have real trouble (vv. 17-19). That is not a contradiction - it is the shape of faithful life. Where in your own life do you need to hold both of those things at the same time, rather than letting hard circumstances become an argument against God's goodness?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Psalm 34 does not promise us that as God's people we will not have troubles in this life. (Verses 4, 6, 17-19 make this clear.) But these same verses also assure us that the Lord does deliver, protect, and save.

QUESTION: Given the inevitable ups and downs of life, why is it good for us at the outset of our journey of faith to be resolved as David was resolved (verse 1): "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips."?

2. Verse 2 literally states: "Let all who are discouraged hear and rejoice." In other words, David desires to encourage others with the personal testimony he is about to offer in the following verses.

QUESTION: Can you think of a time when someone who had gone through the same difficult circumstances as you gave their testimony and it made you feel encouraged and feel like rejoicing?

QUESTION: Likewise, is there someone you can encourage right now as you share your own personal story of God's deliverance? His deliverance in terms of salvation (i.e., deliverance from sin) or his deliverance from a particular circumstance.

3. How could verse 3 serve as a simple but powerful purpose statement for your life, your church, your family, your marriage?

4. In verse 8, David famously says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." He is referring to the unusual ways in which he experienced the Lord's goodness during the time that David feigned insanity.

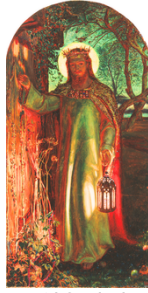
QUESTION: What are some of the more common and usual ways that we taste and experience God's goodness and grace to us?

5. In verses 9-11, David calls upon his readers to "fear the Lord," and explains how such fear results in great blessing.

QUESTION: What does it mean to "fear the Lord"?

QUESTION: If fearing the Lord results in blessing, in what ways is it also incumbent upon us to exercise faith, obedience, and responsibility? (See verses 13-17)

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.