**Psalm 34 – God who rescues** Clint Le Page

Main point – Praise and trust the God who rescues

If I ask you, ‘What has God rescued you from?’ **(SLIDE)** What comes to mind?-------

Maybe he’s rescued you from what could have been a horrible accident on your bike, or fatal accident in your car?----------

Maybe you’ve been rescued from that illness, from being killed by covid or cancer?

Maybe God has rescued you from the exhaustion of sleep deprivation and carried you through a difficult parenting season?----------

Or maybe you’re forever grateful for God has rescued you from your sin, and the judgement you deserve?-------------------------------------------------

Whatever things God has rescued you from, it’s good to reflect on that, and it ought to result in praise.---------

I hope we are thankful when by God’s grace we recover from covid, a sore back, tiredness, a migraine, or whatever.

But when our good God rescues us from a potential death, or eternal death, it moves us to praise.--------

As it does for David here.

**Our first point is,(SLIDE) Praise the Lord for he rescues.**

David begins Ps 34 with multiple words describing his emotions n’ responses to God.

And remember a feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, so words and phrases get paired up with one another.

They can be describing the same thing, or add emphasis.

So in **v1** ‘bless’ and ‘praise’ the Lord are paired.

And boasting and gladness in v2, and proclaiming and exulting in v3.

If we draw all these together David is saying he gladly and continually wants to praise God, with his words.

He piles up the words to express his deep and overflowing thankfulness.

Why?-----------

Because God’s greatness was seen in him answering David’s prayer, **v3**, and rescuing him from all his fears.-----

God answered his prayer and rescued him.-----------------------------------------

Often we don’t know the specific circumstances that led to a psalm, but here we do.

And remember the **psalm titles** are part of God’s inspired word.--------

The title strongly suggests that David wrote it after the events we read in **1 Samuel 21**.

For several chapters King Saul had been trying to kill David, driven by his jealousy of David’s military successes.

David had already been delivered from Saul multiple times.

Helped by his best friend Jonathan, David has now fled for his life from Saul.----

It seems David is thinking he has no other option, or the enemy of my enemy is my friend; for David flees to the Philistine King, Achish.

‘Abimelech’ means ‘my father is king’, and may have been a title for Philistine kings, like ‘Pharoah’ was for Egyptians.----------------------------------------

So the Israelite women had been singing about the Philistines(**SLIDE**):

 ‘Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands’ (1Sam18.7;21.11).

Now David rocks up to this Philistine king, hoping that, without his armour n’ army, he won’t be recognized. But he was.

And David became ‘very afraid, so he pretended to be insane’, acting like a madman.

And it worked. The King, thinking he was someone else, sent him away.

David then hides in a cave.

So the danger hasn’t passed. His life is still threatened.

But he is saved from that near death experience, and he writes Psalm 34.-------

The point is, David’s prayer for rescue was answered by God, his life was preserved.

And in his words, the Lord ‘rescued me from all my fears’.----(**SLIDE**)--------------------

And in **v5** David is convinced that his experience is also true for other believers, who look to, n’ rely on the Lord.

That’s those who in **v7** ‘fear the Lord’ – remember that’s those who have genuine awe-filled trust in God.------------------------------------

And God’s people, when they are poor, needy and in trouble, as David was then, they will find that God turns their shame into joy.

God will save and rescue them, so that there’s a Joy that’s seen on your face.😊---

David was physically and immediately rescued from the clutches of the Philistine King Achish.

But if you keep reading 1 Samuel you’ll see David still hiding in a cave, on the run from murderous Saul, still fleeing for his life, always in danger.------

And time after time the Lord did preserve David’s life & protect him.---------------

**What about us?**

As you considered at the start, maybe you can remember how God has rescued you from illness or cancer, danger or death, given you more time on this earth.

And you have, or can still praise him.------------------

Or maybe you’re thinking God didn’t rescue my loved one from harm, or illness; they died. Or God didn’t answer my prayers.--------------------------

I certainly can’t explain why God wills what he does. Yet it’s important to remember that there’s different forms of rescue, different types of deliverance.------------

I think most of us will know people who have seen their loved one suffer terribly from illness or cancer or it’s treatment, and die after a long period of suffering. And if that person knew the Lord Jesus by faith, then their death is deliverance.

For God rescues his people from this life of suffering sin and sorrow, by ending their lives in this world, and bringing them home to himself in heaven.-------------------

For to go and be with the Lord is better by far.--------------------------

I share a true story I just heard at the Men’s Convention recently.

**Perpetua and Felicity** were two young north-African women.(**SLIDE**)

In 203 AD, they were imprisoned for being Christian, and refusing to offer sacrifices to the Roman Emperor.

22yo Perpetua had an infant son, and one day her father brought him in, and pleaded with his daughter to denounce her faith.

Perpetua’s separation from her baby caused her great pain.

But Perpetua said, ‘I am a Christian and I cannot’.

The penalty for professing the name of Christ was the death penalty.----

Her believing brother had been praying for her release.

But one night Perpetua has a vision of a golden ladder leading to heaven with a dragon at the bottom.

But the ladder was covered with sharp iron weapons, which would cut you.

In her vision the two women climbed that painful ladder to heaven.--------------

So they decided their imprisonment would lead to martyrdom not release.---

Perpetua and Felicity were thrown into the games arena to be gored and killed by wild animals.

And Perpetua’s diary, one of the earliest diaries in existence and earliest writings by a Christian woman, has an editor’s note at the end which says:

The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the amphitheatre joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with calm faces, trembling, if at all, with joy rather than fear. Perpetua went along with shining countenance and calm step, as the beloved of God, as a wife of Christ, putting down everyone’s stare by her own intense gaze.-------------

Perpetua and Felicity were thrown into an arena of wild animals, where they were injured but not killed. Tragically, the emperor Severus then commanded that they be put to death by the sword.---------------------------------------------------

Were they rescued?---------

Yes indeed!! Taken home to glory and out of this life of suffering, sin and pain.

A Christian going to glory, to be with the Lord, is a mighty and wonderful rescue.------

Believe it! And look forward to that?------------------------------

As Christians we can die well; with joy, hope and expectation, and the praise of God on our lips.------------------------------------

We can and we should, praise the Lord for he rescues, if not from our temporary trials by answering our prayers, then through death, bringing us to glory.--------

How will your praise of the God who rescues, be seen and expressed?---------

Could you praise God more in your prayers, or with heartfelt singing, whether with your earbuds, or in your car, or at church with God’s redeemed people?----------------

Or maybe you know your praise of God is not like v1 – it’s too half-hearted, or infrequent.-----

How do you want to respond?---------------------------------------------

But as well as praising God for he rescues, Psalm 34 also wants us to know God is good.

**We’re invited to Know that God is good, Point 2.(SLIDE)**

Look at v8, ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’.

That describes experiencing God and his goodness; his generous kindness.-----

God’s goodness can be expressed in many ways.

God’s people find Him to be a refuge, a safe place – and we’ll look at that more next week when Chris Craig preaches on Ps 46.---------

But also, because God is good it means his people lack nothing.

They do not want – as Psalm 23 says.------------

God provides what his people need.

**V10**, ‘those who seek the Lord lack no good thing’.

This requires a bit of interpretation to understand. For we can think, ‘Lord I have cheap sausages or rice for dinner again, but I want steak, and I’m lacking that good thing.’

Or I want healing, I want a bigger house; I want marriage, I want a boyfriend, a friend - I lack that good thing.------

The challenge is then, and I know it’s not easy, to trust that God is good and he does good.

He promises to work good in your life, Christian.

Remember **Romans 8.28**,(**SLIDE**) ‘We know that all things work together[[k](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rom+8&version=CSB#fen-CSB-28129k)] for the good[[l](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rom+8&version=CSB#fen-CSB-28129l)] of those who love God’.

But what does **v29** go on to say?

We’re ‘predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son’.-----

What our good God gives us may not always feel good, and it wont always seem good to us, with our sinful hearts and limited knowledge.

But God says, trust me that it is good; good for making you like Christ.----------

When I rescue you from that danger or suffering, it is good, and when I let you experience it longer, and you have to wait, it is good.----------------------------------------

That may mean we experience many bad days, with suffering and pain.

But God is accomplishing his spiritual good in us, and what is good eternally.----------

A woman called **Brianna McClean wrote** in a Gospel Coalition article in 2018, that

Our understanding of suffering gets sticky when we try to hold together God’s goodness and his sovereignty. We hear that ‘in all things God works for the good of those who love him’ ([Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.28)) but what is ‘good’ when we are left bruised?------

If we understand that God is good and cannot do anything that is not good, then even in the depths of suffering—he is still good. God weeps over the state of this world, and walks with us in our suffering, but he is still in control. The goodness of God does not undermine our pain... Two months ago, in an instant, everything crumbled. My future, my home and my greatest earthly desire were taken by the God who gives and takes away. My theology of suffering was put to the test as I encountered the God who wounds. Here God has taught me: **My definition of ‘good’ is wrong.(SLIDE)**

In the Bible, good isn’t a longed-for marriage. It isn’t a comfortable home, a great job or even a faithful church family. Good is God’s name being glorified and his Kingdom advancing. Good is God’s people being made holy and learning to trust in him more. God’s ultimate purpose is to glorify himself and he will not be thwarted.(**SLIDE**)

So, when pain seems pointless, the God who wounds shows me that it is good. The God who wounds has done this for his glory, to grow my reliance on him, to make me more like Jesus and to have his name proclaimed. That is good.-----------(End quote)-----------------

**Dr John Dunlop** cares for people with dementia, and he’s written a great book,**(SLIDE)** ‘Finding Grace in the face of Dementia’.

And he writes that Growth in our relationships and character, both with others and with God, often occurs in the valley of dementia.-----

Five years after Dave was stricken, **Denise** got talking about how her life changed through the course of Dave’s decline. She said that she had known how difficult life would be, she would never in a thousand years wanted to face dementia. Yet as she looked back, there were many things she was grateful for. She mentioned that she had learned to love Dave in a more unselfish way – more like God loves her. She had come to better understand the extent of God’s love for her. She had learned to depend more on God for daily strength and emotional support. Her prayers had grown into cries for God for help rather than just telling him what she wanted.---- Denise went on to say God was making her more patient and kind, and her hope of heaven had become so meaningful.--------------

 Dunlop explains that caregiving is a calling, but many Christians are not able to trust God so fully. They may never have learned that part of God’s plan for their lives is to mould their character to be more like the Lord Jesus by leading them through difficult experiences.------------------------------

Psalm 34 is a poem structured around the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

And **v11** is at the centre, so it’s important.-----

David is wanting to use his experience and this Psalm to teach people.

To teach people a fear of the Lord – that deep awe-filled trust & obedience.------

David, is still hiding in a cave, without stability and security.--------------

Yet he wants people to trust that God will give his people good things.-----------------

However, we can’t expect a long life with good things, if we don’t do what is good.(**v14**, **SLIDE**)-------------------------------------

It’s not saying that we’re saved by our good deeds, or we earn blessing; but that God’s saved people, will live for their Lord.---------

These verses are quoted in **1 Peter 3**, where Peter is calling Christians to love one another; not take revenge, but bless others.(**SLIDE**)

And Peter says, if you want to inherit the blessing of heaven, then live God’s way.---

We’re not saved by our good works, by the person saved by grace will do good works.-----

Those who are righteous by faith act rightly, faith always shows itself through love, and good works.

How are you going at doing what is good?----------------------------------

In your words and deeds are you showing that you follow the Lord?---------------------

Psalm **34.15**, is saying you can’t expect God to be good to you, and hear n’ answer your prayers, when you shut your ears to what he says, n’ do the opposite.-----

Notice the language of God’s eyes, ears, and face, being open to the righteous.

It’s saying God notices and cares for his people, and he delivers them.

God is their rescuer.----------------------------

Those who trust in God and do good, aren’t promised perfect health wealth and happiness in this life, like a prosperity Gospel.

But they are promised God will meet their needs.-------------------------

And God will work what is good for you ultimately, and spiritually.

And shower his goodness upon you eternally 😊

**So our final point is, we need to Pray and Trust that He rescues; v17ff(SLIDE)**

The Psalm repeats again, the Lord hears the cries of the righteous, and he rescues them from all their troubles.

And this wonderful verse **18**, that’s worth memorizing:

‘The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit.’

Maybe you know what it’s like to be broken-hearted and crushed in spirit?----------

So David is not saying in Ps 34, the believer has no pain n’ no worries.

For we can be troubled, and at rock-bottom; with a broken heart, feeling crushed.

In **v19** ‘adversities’ are afflictions and bad things.

But God hears, and he is close to you; and he will rescue you.------

Either in his time by ending the pain or trial; by giving you grace and strength to endure it, while growing more like Christ; and ultimately by rescuing you from this life of suffering and sin, bringing you to himself.--------------------

And we can be sure that he rescues, for he has rescued us from our sin.

Psalm 34 says of the one of who is righteous:

**20**He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken.-------------

It’s helpful for us to know that this is **true of Jesus** firstly and foremostly.

**John’s Gospel ch19** tells us of how Jesus was crucified.

He suffered the wrath of God as he hung on that cross, bearing the penalty for our sin.

Until he said, ‘It is finished’, and gave up his spirit.--------

The Jews wanted those crucified killed faster, so they could avoid having to do the “work” of carrying and burying the bodies on the Sabbath, which started at sunset.

**32**So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with him.(**SLIDE**) **33**When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. **34**But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. **35**He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. **36**For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: **Not one of his bones will be broken.**[ **37**Also, another Scripture says: **They will look at the one they pierced.**[

So Jesus’ crucifixion and bones not being broken fulfilled Psalm 34.20.--------

Jesus was The Righteous one, who alone did what was good, every day.

Only Jesus was innocent, yet he died in our place; for your sin, for my sin.

So that we could be redeemed.

The God who wounds became wounded, so that we never have to suffer the pain we deserve.----------------------

In Christ God took our wounds upon himself.--------

Christ became sin for us, so that we could become righteous.-----------

Ps 34.22 says God’s servant’s are redeemed, and he did it, God set us free from the punishment we deserve for our sin, through Jesus.--------

And all who take refuge in and trust him will not be punished, **v22**.-------------

All who take refuge in The Servant, Jesus, the Redeemer, will not be punished.

Isn’t that wonderful?------------------------------------------

God through Christ rescues us from sin and death and judgement.-------

We can say and shout, There is now no condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus.----[Rom8.1]

And if you know God has rescued you from your sin, from eternal death, from a punishment in hell you deserve, then you can trust him your troubles.------------

You can trust your good God to rescue you from your other trials.

And provide you with what is good in the meantime.-----------------------

So praise God for the rescue from sin & spiritual death Jesus has won for you.-----

Praise God that he is near to the broken-hearted.

Praise God that he is good, and in your troubles will accomplish good, your growth in godliness.----------

Praise God for every good gift you have, for the ways he answers your prayers.-----

And praise God that never ending good days await you in the life to come.--------

What will you do to praise Him?-----------------------------------------------

Brothers and sisters,(**SLIDE**) Taste and see that the Lord is good.

He really is.

Let’s pray