

Psalm 34:17–19

Sermon Manuscript

**Suffering, Prayer, Deliverance,
and Divine Presence**

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Waupaca Church of Christ
2025

I. Introduction: The King Drooling in the Dirt

Let's be honest with each other. We like our Bible heroes polished. We like them standing over fallen giants with a sling in hand, or dancing before the Ark, or sitting on a throne of cedar. We don't like them desperate.

But the background of Psalm 34 is anything but polished. If you turn your Bibles to 1 Samuel 21, you find David—the anointed King of Israel—running for his life from Saul. He flees to Gath, the hometown of Goliath. Think about the desperation required to run into the arms of your enemy because your own father-in-law wants you dead. When the servants of Achish, the king of Gath, recognize him, David is terrified. So, what does the "man after God's own heart" do? He doesn't give a speech. He doesn't fight. 1 Samuel 21:13 says, *"So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard."*

He feigned madness. He clawed at the doors and let spittle run down his face. He humiliated himself to survive. And Achish kicked him out, saying, "Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence?" It is from *that* cave of Adullam, having just wiped the spittle from his beard, having escaped death by the skin of his teeth, that David picks up his lyre and writes Psalm 34.

Thesis: God does not promise a life free from the cave, the crisis, or the crushing weight of this world; He promises that when the righteous cry out from the dust, He hears, He draws near, and He delivers—not always *from* the fire, but *through* it.

We are going to dissect this text exegetically, moving from simple knowledge to deep theological evaluation, to understand the Promise of Divine Auditory Attention.

II. The Identity of the Crier

Look at the text: *"The righteous cry, and the LORD hears..."* (v. 17). We must first establish the identity of the subject. Who is this promise for? The modern world wants to claim the promises of God while rejecting the premises of God. They want the comfort of verse 18 without the condition of verse 17.

The text specifies: **"The Righteous."**

In the Hebrew context, *tsaddiq* (righteous) does not imply sinless perfection. If it did, David couldn't have written this. David was a man of blood, and later, a man of adultery. Biblical righteousness, particularly in the Psalms and affirmed in the New Testament, refers to a relational standing. It speaks of those who are in a covenant relationship with Jehovah and are striving to walk in His ways.

Cross-Reference:

- **1 John 1:7:** *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*
- **1 Peter 3:12:** *"For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."*

Theological Note:

We do not believe in a "faith only" that requires no change of life. We do not believe God is obligated to hear the prayers of the rebellious. Proverbs 28:9 tells us, *"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."*

The promise of being heard is exclusive to those who have submitted to the King. If you are outside of Christ, if you have not been washed in the waters of baptism to enter that covenant, or if you are a Christian living in willful, unrepentant rebellion, you have no guarantee that God is listening to your cry for help. This promise is for the faithful child of God.

III. The Anatomy of the Cry

The text says, *"The righteous cry..."*

The Hebrew word here is *tsoaq*. This isn't a polite request. It isn't a whispered "now I lay me down to sleep." *Tsoaq* implies a shriek. It is a primal scream for help. It is used in Exodus when the Israelites groaned under slavery. It is the sound of someone who has come to the end of their own resources.

Application:

Too many of us play the stoic. We think faith means keeping a stiff upper lip. We think that if we admit we are hurting, we are somehow failing God. That is bad theology. The Bible is filled with men and women of God screaming in agony.

- **Job** cursed the day he was born.
- **Jeremiah** lamented that God had deceived him.
- **Jesus**, in the Garden, offered up prayers with *"vehement cries and tears"* (Hebrews 5:7).

To access this promise, we must stop pretending we have it all together. God cannot heal the wound you refuse to expose. He cannot answer the cry you refuse to scream. The "cry" is an act of humility. It is the admission that "I cannot fix this."

Thought Question:

When was the last time you got honest with God? Not "church honest" where you use fancy words, but "cave honest" where you let the spittle run down your beard and told Him you were broken?

IV. The Mechanics of Deliverance

Now we hit the friction point of the text:

"...And delivers them out of all their troubles." (v. 17b)

"...But the LORD delivers him out of them all." (v. 19b)

We need to analyze the definition of "Deliverance" (*natsal*). If I tell you God delivers you from *all* troubles, and then you get cancer, or you lose your job, or your spouse walks out, your immediate reaction might be: "God lied." Or, "I must not be righteous enough."

This is where the prosperity gospel heretics destroy people's faith. They treat God like a vending machine: Put in a prayer, get out a pain-free life. Let's look at the Biblical examples:

- **Stephen (Acts 7)** — stoned to death.
- **James (Acts 12)** — executed with the sword.
- **Paul (2 Corinthians 11)** — beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned.

If "deliverance" means "escape from physical harm," then God failed all these men. But we know God is faithful. Therefore, our definition of deliverance must be wrong.

The Paradox of Deliverance:

Deliverance in the biblical sense is not always the *removal* of the circumstance; it is the *preservation* of the soul through the circumstance. In Psalm 34, David wasn't instantly transported back to the throne. He spent years in the wilderness. He was hunted like a dog. But God delivered him *out* of them—meaning, none of those troubles destroyed his relationship with God, none of them thwarted God's ultimate plan for him, and none of them had the final word.

Cross-Reference:

- **2 Timothy 4:17–18:** Paul writes that the Lord will "deliver" him into His heavenly kingdom—right before Nero takes his head.

V. The Theology of Brokenness

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit." (v. 18)

This is one of the most tender verses in all of Scripture.

Brokenhearted (*shabar*): shattered like a clay vessel.

Crushed (*daka*): beaten to powder.

Why is God near the broken? Because the unbroken man is self-sufficient. The unbroken woman feels no need for a Savior. It is only when we are shattered that we are open.

The Doctrine of Divine Proximity:

When you are happy, God can feel distant. When you are crushed, He becomes the breath in your lungs.

Illustration:

The olive must be crushed for the oil to flow.

The uncrushed olive rots.

The crushed olive becomes useful.

VI. The Christ-Centric Fulfillment

We cannot preach the Old Testament without seeing the shadow of the Cross.

1. **The Ultimate Righteous One** — Christ alone.
2. **The Ultimate Cry** — "My God, My God..."
3. **The Ultimate Brokenness** — bruised/crushed for our iniquities.
4. **The Ultimate Deliverance** — God did *not* deliver Him *from* death; He delivered Him *out of* death.

Because Christ walked the path of Psalm 34, we now have access to the Father. We suffer with Him, not alone.

VII. Practical Application & Conclusion

1. Validate the Pain

It is okay to hurt. God is near the broken.

2. Direct the Cry

Cry *to* the Lord—not to social media.

3. Redefine Deliverance

Deliverance is not escape; it is endurance.

4. Trust the Future

God redeems the soul. Death becomes a doorway, not a defeat.

Conclusion:

You may be in a cave. You may be crushed.

But the righteous cry.

The Lord hears.

And He delivers.

VIII. Study Guide Questions

Remember (Knowledge)

1. What is the historical context of Psalm 34?
2. According to verses 15 and 17, whose prayers does the Lord hear?

Understand (Comprehension)

3. Define the Hebrew word for "brokenhearted."
4. Explain the difference between being delivered "from" trouble and "out of" trouble.

Apply (Application)

5. How did Paul apply God's strength in weakness (2 Cor 12:7–10)?
6. Identify a current "trouble." What would deliverance look like if the problem remains?

Analyze (Analysis)

7. Compare the righteous cry to the Pharisee's prayer in Luke 18.
8. Why are the righteous afflicted? Shouldn't righteousness protect us?

Evaluate (Evaluation)

9. Where does the prosperity gospel contradict Psalm 34:19?
10. Is God near the brokenhearted even when you don't feel it?

Create (Synthesis)

11. Compose a prayer for a crushed brother or sister, using Psalm 34:17–19.

IX. Hebrew/Greek Word Study Table

English	Hebrew (OT)	Meaning/Usage	Greek (NT)	Meaning/Usage
Righteous	(tsaddiq)	Covenant-keeping, upright	δίκαιος (dikaios)	Just, approved by God
Cry	(tsaaq)	Shriek, plea for help	κράζω (krazo)	Cry aloud, shout
Deliver	(natsal)	Rescue, snatch away	ῥύομαι (ruo-mai)	Rescue, deliver from danger
Brokenhearted	(shabar)	Shatter, break	συντετριμμένος (syntetrim-menos)	Crushed, broken
Crushed	(daka)	Pulverized, beaten fine	θλάω (thlao)	Crush, bruise
Near	(qarov)	Close, intimate presence	γγύς (engys)	Near, at hand