

# PSALMS

## Chapter 34

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. <sup>2</sup> My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. <sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. <sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. <sup>6</sup> This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. <sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. <sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. <sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. <sup>11</sup> Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. <sup>12</sup> Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, <sup>13</sup> keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. <sup>14</sup> Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. <sup>15</sup> The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; <sup>16</sup> the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. <sup>17</sup> The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. <sup>18</sup> The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. <sup>19</sup> A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; <sup>20</sup> he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. <sup>21</sup> Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. <sup>22</sup> The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

**Ps 34** Praise of the Lord for deliverance in answer to prayer, and instruction in godliness. In the Psalms, praise commonly leads to a call to praise, as in v. 3 (see note on 9:1). Here, uniquely (but see also Ps 92), praise (vv. 1–7) leads into godly instruction (vv. 8–22) in the manner of the wisdom teachers (see Introduction to Proverbs: Wisdom Literature). Structurally, the psalm is a somewhat irregular alphabetic acrostic (it lacks a verse for one Hebrew letter and adds a verse at the end). Its eight stanzas develop four major themes, with two stanzas devoted to each (see following notes). (CSB)

**Ps 34** *he changed his behavior.* Cf 1Sm 21:10–15.

Format: Vv 1–3, bless the Lord; vv 4–7, the Lord answers; vv 8–10, the Lord is good; vv 11–14, teaching the fear of the Lord; vv 15–18, the Lord hears and delivers; vv 19–22, the Lord redeems His servants. (TLSB)

David invites us to learn from his experience so that we always place our Trust in the Lord for deliverance from trouble. (PBC)

In moment of weakness of faith David, king-elect of God's people, lost his confidence in the Lord's protection against Saul and fled to Israel's enemies, the Philistines. When David realized that he had foolishly put himself in danger by going to the Philistines for help, he faked insanity to escape from them. Through this experience David learned the truth of this psalm. (PBC)

**34 title**† The superscription assigns this psalm to the occasion in David's life (see note on Ps 3 title) narrated in 1Sa 21:10–15—but note “Abimelech” rather than “Achish” (perhaps Abimelech was a traditional dynastic name or title for Philistine kings; see Ge 20; 21:22–34; 26). (CSB)

**34:1–7** Praise for the Lord's deliverance in answer to prayer. (CSB)

**34:1–3** Commitment to continual praise—to the encouragement of the godly who are afflicted (v. 2; see the instruction in vv. 8–22). (CSB)

I WILL EXTOL THE LORD – ESV has BLESS THE LORD – *bless*. Hbr *barak*, “To bestow ability for success” (from the greater person to the lesser) or “to praise a person's ability for success” (from the lesser person to the greater). Refers to bending the knees, perhaps to kneel and receive a pronouncement of inheritance with all its wealth (cf Gn 27). “Bless the Lord” has the sense of “greet” and is common in the Psalms, expressing thanks and praise (34:1; 145:1, 10). In faith, praise is the greatest gift we can offer to our Lord. The blessing that came from the temple at Jerusalem now resonates through the Church, brought by pastors, missionaries, teachers, and other Christians who proclaim the Gospel of Christ's sacrifice. (TLSB p. 842)

Augustine: “When He gives them, bless; and when He takes them away, bless. For it is He who gives, it is He that takes away” (*NPNF* 1 8:73). (TLSB)

Restated, there is no time in life when his praises cannot or should not be on our lips. (Leupold)

PBC Commentary on Romans 12:1 “Since men are never without their bodies, worship is constant. Since bodies are visible, all worship becomes a witness and a proclamation, a lived doxology.

**34:2** *soul*. See note on 6:3 (In this verse refers to the psalmist's entire being, equivalent to the personal pronoun “I.”). (CSB)

BOAST IN THE LORD – Boasting and humility are contrasted. The former is praise and rejoicing that outwardly proclaims God's gracious love and deeds toward His children. The psalmist emboldens the lowly. (TLSB)

**34:3** GLORIFY – Lit, “make great” by praising. (TLSB)

*name*. See note on 5:11 (the name of the Lord is the manifestation of his character (see notes on Ex 3:14–15; 34:6–7). It has no separate existence apart from the Lord, but is synonymous with the Lord himself in his gracious manifestation and accessibility to his people.). (CSB)

TOGATHER – Praise and worship in the congregation is much deeper and more meaningful than individual worship. (TLSB)

**34:4–7** The occasion: God’s saving answer to prayer. (CSB)

**34:4** SOUGHT THE LORD – Deliverance was sought from the Lord in prayer, and He answered that prayer. Augustine: “Seek not from the Lord anything [else], but seek the Lord Himself, and He will hear you, and while you yet speak, He will say, ‘Lo, here I am’ ” (NPNF 1 8:74). (TLSB)

*seek*. Translates two terms: Hbr *baqash*, “look for”; Hbr *darash*, “care about, examine, inquire.” The Lord is sought in three ways: (1) through calling on His name in prayer, (2) by consulting Him through Urim and Thummim administered by the high priest, and (3) through the study of His Word. A visit to the tabernacle or temple is frequently implied. Unbelievers do not seek God. Believers seek Him in an attitude of repentance, not selfishness. (TLSB p. 843)

Urim and Thurmim are objects placed in the breastpiece of the high priest, Their exact nature is unknown. They were used, however, to determine the will of the Lord (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

**34:5** *radiant*. With joy (see Isa 60:5). (CSB)

Their faces will not be red with shame and embarrassment. God’s children will have peaceful faces because they know that when they speak, God will listen and answer. (TLSB)

**34:6** *poor*. Here, as often in the Psalms, “poor” characterizes not necessarily one who has no possessions, but one who is (and recognizes that he is) without resources to effect his own deliverance (or secure his own life, safety or well-being)—and so is dependent on God. (CSB)

David could not secure his salvation from Achish (cf 1Sm 21:10–12) but called upon the Lord, who delivered him from all his trouble. Like David, we depend on God for salvation from sin and death, both temporal and eternal. (TLSB)

**34:7** *angel of the LORD*. God’s heavenly representative, his “messenger,” sent to effect his will on earth (see 35:5–6; see also note on Ge 16:7). (CSB)

Hbr *mal’ak yahweh*, God’s messenger sent to protect those who fear the Lord and to carry out His divine will on earth, namely, salvation (cf 35:5–6). Augustine: “Our Lord

Jesus Christ Himself is called in Prophecy, the Angel of the great Counsel, the Messenger of the great Counsel; so the Prophets called Him” (NPNF 1 8:75) (TLSB)

*encamps around.*† The line speaks of the security with which the Lord surrounds his people, individually and collectively; the reference here is not necessarily to individual “guardian angels.” (CSB)

*those who fear him.* Those described in vv. 8–14. (CSB)

**34:8–14** Instruction in “the fear of the LORD.” The two stanzas really belong together, with the title line (v. 11) at the center—Hebrew authors often centered key lines (see note on 6:6). Note the pattern of the imperatives: “Taste” (v. 8), “Fear” (v. 9), “Come” (v. 11), “keep” (v. 13), “Turn” (v. 14). A symmetrical development of the theme “good” dominates the stanza: Because the Lord is good (v. 8), those who trust in him will lack nothing good (v. 10); but in order to experience good days (v. 12), they must shun evil and do good (v. 14). To trust and obey—that is “the fear of the LORD.” On the instruction of this stanza see Ps 37. For Peter’s use of vv. 12–16 see 1Pe 3:8–12. (CSB)

Note the series of 10 imperatives in this stanza, which invites the hearer to believe and trust in the Lord for salvation and all good things (referenced four times; vv 8, 10, 12, 14). A similar gracious exhortation is provided through the prophet Isaiah (55:1–3). The imperatives and promises combine to evoke faith, confidence, and good works. Cf Rm 10:8–13; 1Pt 3:8–12. (TLSB)

**34:8** TASTE AND SEE – Perceive. Invitation for the saints to experience the Lord’s trustworthiness. If you do not taste, you will not see. (TLSB)

This reminds us that God’s goodness is something which must be experienced before it can be truly appreciated. (PBC)

This is an invitation to put God to the test in any similar situation. (Leupold)

*blessed.* See note on 1:1. (CSB)

**34:9** *Fear the LORD.* See v. 11; see also note on 15:4 (Those who honor God and order their lives in accordance with his will (see note on Ge 20:11) because of their reverence for him.). (CSB)

You can lay it down as a general principle, “those that fear him suffer no want.” Those who naturally strong and self-sufficient like “young lions” do not have the guaranty of safety that is characteristic of those who “seek the Lord.” (Leupold)

*saints.* See note on 4:3 (It is one of several Hebrew words for God’s people, referring to them as people who are or should be devoted to God and faithful to him.). (CSB)

*saints*. Translates two terms: Hbr *qedoshim*, those “set apart, holy,” God’s chosen people who serve Him; Hbr *chasidim*, those “loyal, devout, faithful” (see *steadfast love*). Nearly always with possessive pronoun (e.g., “His saints”). God’s people are declared holy because of God’s work, not their own. (TLSB p. 843)

LACK NOTHING – There will always be poverty, but in the grand scheme of God’s creation and redemption, He allows none of His children to suffer want. (TLSB)

**34:10** LIONS – The strong and independent of a pride and cubs. Yet even they suffer hunger. (TLSB)

LACK NO GOOD THING – Chemnitz: “God is daily at work in His world and embracing with His fatherly care especially those to whom He has given His Word” (*LTh* 1:158). (TLSB)

**34:11** *Come, my children*. Conventional language of the wisdom teachers (see Introduction to Proverbs: Purpose and Teaching). (CSB)

Psalmist engages in teaching. (TLSB)

David invites us to learn from his experience so that we always place our trust in the Lord for deliverance from trouble. (PBC)

**34:12** DESIRES TO SEE MANY GOOD DAYS – Life is meant to be full and rich and viewed as God’s gift. (TLSB)

**34:13** See 15:2–3; Jas 3:5–10. For the tongue as a weapon see note on 5:9 (The psalmists experienced that the tongue is as deadly as the sword.). (CSB)

Augustine: “Such are those men who would both do evil, and swear falsely, and speak blasphemy against God, and murmur, and defraud” (*NPNF* 1 8:76). (TLSB)

**34:14** *seek peace*. See 37:37; 120:7; Pr 12:20; Zec 8:19 (also Zec 8:16–17); Mt 5:9; Ro 12:18; 1Co 7:15; 2Co 13:11; 1Th 5:13; Heb 12:14; Jas 3:17–18. (CSB)

Not peace in the heart that he should seek from God, but as our Lord taught: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt 5:9; cf Ps 37:37; 120:7; Pr 12:20; Zec 8:16–17, 19). (TLSB)

This indicates that all such virtues must be cultivated, not halfheartedly, but with certain assiduousness. (Leupold)

**34:15–18** Assurance that the Lord hears the prayers of the righteous. He so thoroughly thwarts those who do evil that they are forgotten (v. 16). (CSB)

**34:15** *righteous*. See vv. 8–14; see also note on 1:5. (CSB)

**34:16** *face of the LORD*. See note on 13:1. (CSB)

Turned with focused intention, in this case, to punish. When Jesus became sin in our stead on the cross, His heavenly Father turned His face away from Him so that He might bear our punishment and be our Savior. (TLSB)

**34:17–18** See especially 51:17. (CSB)

**34:17** Augustine: “Fear not: only do what He commands; and if He delivers you not bodily, He will deliver you spiritually” (*NPNF* 1 8:77). (TLSB)

**34:18** BROKENHEARTED – Christians are not excluded from disappointments, temptations to sin, and other experiences that can test one’s faith or crush it. Yet the Lord is near, and He saves! Augustine: “A great mystery, Brethren. God is above all: you raise yourself, and touch Him not: you humble yourself, and He descends to you” (*NPNF* 1 8:77). (TLSB)

**34:19–22** Assurance that the Lord is the unfailing deliverer of the righteous—and condemns the wicked for their hostility toward the righteous (see v. 21). (CSB)

**34:19** RIGHTEOUS MAY HAVE MANY TROUBLES – This reminds us that believers are not without troubles, but that God delivers them – either by giving them relief, or by giving them patience to endure, or by calling them to himself in heaven. (PBC)

Hbr *ra’oth*, “evils.” That evil befalls the ungodly is understood, and yet God’s children suffer the same troubles. We are not isolated from the evils of sin in this broken world, but we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. The righteous, after many tribulations, shall come to everlasting peace, where they will suffer no evil. (TLSB)

**34:20** *all his bones*. His whole being (see note on 6:2). (CSB)

Specific example of God’s care. See treatment of bones during the Passover meal and Jesus’ crucifixion (Ex 12:46; Jn 19:36). (TLSB)

*not one of them will be broken*. Perhaps John’s Gospel applies this word to Jesus (see NIV text note on Jn 19:36)—as the one above all others who could be called a “righteous man” (v. 19). (CSB)

**34:21–22** *condemned*. Dealt with as guilty. (CSB)

Sin brings punishment and death as surely as gravity brings broken bones. If you defy God’s created order, afflictions will follow. (TLSB)

**34:22** *redeems*. See note on 25:22. (CSB)

Christ came to free us from the prison of sin, death, and the devil by means of His incarnation, sinless life, preaching, brutal cross, and glorious resurrection. (TLSB)

CONDEMNED – People are conceived and born into sin and, as such, stand condemned at the moment of conception. (TLSB)

The Lord turns His countenance of favor toward His children, saves them, and blesses them. The Lord turns His countenance away from the wicked and condemns them to eternal death, though His will is to save all people by grace through faith in Christ. • Dear heavenly Father, blessed are those who hear Your Word and fear You, for they seek Your grace and righteousness. Move us to praise and worship You with joyful hearts because of Your Word, Jesus, that we might inherit life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)