

Psalm 34 - A Psalm of Thanksgiving and Wisdom PT.4

February 2022

A lot of ground has been covered in Psalm 34 through the Psalm 34: A Psalm of Thanksgiving and Wisdom series and a Deeper Dive Into the Psalm series, including the history behind the psalm. However, today we will look at the last section of Psalm 34 verses 19-22.

Psalm 34:19-22

**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.**

While verses 8-9 in Psalm 34 contain wisdom, it is verse 11 that starts what most theologians consider the wisdom section most like Proverbs. Verse 19 continues into the wisdom portion of the psalm.

As the late James Boice said of this section, “Its theme is the theme of Proverbs, namely, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding’ (Proverbs 9:10).”

While verses 11-14 of Psalm 34 are instructive, verses 15-22 begin a contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous. Verse 19 reveals a profound truth that is perhaps one of the most attacked truths related to the Christian life in and out of the church.

Psalm 34:19a “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,”

Although the bible contains many accounts of God’s people suffering and enduring afflictions, including David the writer of this psalm, there are still many ministries teaching that to endure suffering and afflictions is unbiblical and not the will of God for the lives of his children. That is far from the truth, and such false teaching can place additional stress on a believer even as they endure suffering.

For anyone who has strived to live a life pleasing to the Lord, afflictions are not only many, but understood to be a way in which sanctification and spiritual growth to the glory of God happen.

James 1:2-4

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

For unbelievers, the idea that Christians suffer many afflictions just as they do causes them to question why a Christian continues to have faith and desires to live according to biblical truth. However, the B portion of verse 19 begins to bring light to this seeming quandary.

Psalm 34:19b “...the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

The unbeliever may not understand why Christians must endure suffering and afflictions in the first place and often use the suffering of God’s people as evidence that God has no power, i.e. is not omnipotent, or does not exist. However, the Christian must understand, as pointed out in James, and in Psalm 34 itself, that there is **always purpose** to Christian suffering.

1 Peter 1:3-7

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 “6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Just as the saints of old were instructed to understand that their suffering and afflictions were for their spiritual good, aimed at them being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ and for the glory of God, saints today should understand the same. The deliverance of the Lord may come as physical deliverance out of a dangerous situation, like it was for David, but deliverance may also come as a spiritual deliverance. The situation externally is the same but the saint is changed internally by the Holy Spirit and empowered to bring God glory by enduring the difficulty or affliction with joy (a confirmed faith in the goodness, sovereignty, and plan of God and in the ultimate outcome of their faith).

As James Boice wrote, “David himself had troubles; the psalm is a hymn of praise to God for delivering him out of them. So becoming a Christian does not mean a trouble-free existence. P.C. Craigie writes, ‘The fear of the Lord is indeed the foundation of life, the key to joy in life and long and happy days. But it is not a guarantee that life will always be easy...It may mend the broken heart, but it does not stop the heart from being broken.; it may restore the spiritually crushed, but it does not crush the forces that may create oppression.’ Deliverance is one thing. Exemption from trouble is another.”

Psalm 34:20

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

Of this verse, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “He [David] sustains no real injury. He gets flesh-wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.” In this way, we can also understand that God will not allow our spiritual selves to be lastingly broken, though as mentioned earlier we may suffer for a season. The suffering and afflictions endured will yield spiritual growth for the Christian and glory for God.

We can also understand the verse as having been a prophetic utterance concerning the Messiah Jesus Christ. We know from the Gospel of John chapter 19 that the Roman soldiers who supervised the crucifixion of Jesus came to His body on the cross, expecting to hasten and guarantee His death in the traditional way – breaking the legs of the crucified victim. However, when they looked carefully, they learned that Jesus was already dead and they pierced His side to confirm it. John wrote, “for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones shall be broken’” (**John 19:36**).

Psalm 34:21

**21 Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.**

The Scripture tells Christians that they are not to avenge themselves. In fact, in contrast they are instructed to bless and care for their enemies despite blatant animosity and persecution.

Romans 12:14

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Proverbs 24:29

**Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to me;
I will pay the man back for what he has done.”**

Romans 12:17

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

Romans 12:20-21

20 To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

For many, this conscious blessing and doing good in the face of evil makes the Christian look weak and many Christian men have either endured derision and accusations of weakness or they have chosen to ignore this direct command of the Lord to their detriment. However, the Christian's choice to glorify God and do good to those that do them evil and harm, is actually a further indictment against the unbeliever, the wicked in the eyes of God.

On the surface to the wicked, it seems that they are only scoffing and/or bringing evil upon a human person. Yet, the scripture is very clear that the evil they put upon a Christian is evil that they have tried to heap upon Christ himself.

Acts 9:1-5

9 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

Since Jesus had ascended and remained in Heaven, how could Saul have been persecuting him? Clearly, Jesus took Saul's persecution of the early Christian saints as a direct attack upon himself. And from Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus makes it plain that what was done or not done to each individual Christian was done or not done to Christ himself.

Romans 10:40

40 Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.

Romans 10:42

42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Christ identifies so intimately with His people, that anything done to them is done to him.

But it is not only God the Son who identifies in a personal way with believers, it is also the God the Father, who tells believers that while they are not to take vengeance themselves, He will do it for them, because they are His.

Romans 12:18-19

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 32:35-36

**Vengeance is mine, and recompense,[f]
for the time when their foot shall slip;
for the day of their calamity is at hand,
and their doom comes swiftly.’**

**36 For the Lord will vindicate[g] his people
and have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone
and there is none remaining, bond or free.**

To oppose God’s people is to oppose God himself and God has promised to execute His wrathful judgment.

Psalm 34:21

**21 Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.**

If we logically consider that nothing can be done directly to God but only to His law and/or His creation, including those created in His image (human beings) and those that are His elect (Christians), we begin to understand why wrath is incurred by the wicked. The wicked in opposition to God, His law, and His creation, does evil in relation to one or more of these things and so brings judgment upon himself. But the believer, who refrains from avenging, is called to be holy and perfect as their God is holy and perfect and extend grace, unmerited favor, on those that oppose them just as they have received grace in salvation.

Matthew 5:43-48

**43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and**

on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers,[i] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Who knows? Through the prayer of the righteous for the unrighteous, one who was once an enemy may very well become a brother or sister in Christ, just as Saul became the Apostle Paul.

Psalm 34:22

**The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.**

Physically and spiritually, David experienced the forgiveness and safety of the Lord. With confidence, he makes this statement, for despite him being let down by others and himself, God had never forsake him nor condemned him. This is a truth for all believers.

Hebrews 13:5-6

5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we can confidently say,

**“The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?”**

Isaiah 41:10

**fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

Matthew 28:19-20

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

As Romans 8:38-39 reminds us, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor

things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.