



## HG223: God's Promise Of: **Deliverance**

Psalm 34:1-22

Home Group Study Notes

13 June 2021 - James Van Cleeef



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and other  
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



### **Welcome** (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

Name any situation where you don't want to break ice.



### **Looking Upwards** (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Psalm 34:1-22

Home Group Sermon

13 June 2021 - James Van Cleef

David could only have written Psalm 34 as he learned to trust God despite the disorientation surrounding him. It is a psalm after the valley of death, one that gives voice to his praise as he reflected on his journey of trust. We are invited to make that same journey: through despair and pain, and into God's transforming faithfulness.

In Psalm 34, David is looking back into a moment of his life when he was mired in darkness, chaos, and disorientation on two fronts. On one front, he is fleeing from Saul, who, because of jealous rage, is trying to kill him. On the other front, he flees to Gath, the hometown of Goliath, whom recently he killed; he is the enemy of the Philistines, of whom he had slain tens of thousands, and he is before their king. David is actually between a rock and a hard place! Either Saul is going to get him, or Achish will!

What would you do in David's position? It is a no win situation. David is surrounded by the very real threat of death. So David, according to 1 Samuel 21.13, did what any sane person would do: he pretended to be insane before the king, scratching at doors, and dribbling down his beard. The pretence worked, and David is delivered...

### **Don't Look Back In Anger**

This home group sermon is titled, 'The Promise of Deliverance,' and from Psalm 34 we read these verses:

'I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears' (4).  
'When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles' (17) 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all' (19)

Thankfully, there is no advice for us about dribbling down our beards and acting insane in order to be delivered! But these verses are a looking back, a trying-to-make-sense-of-what-on-earth-was-happening, dealing with disorienting thoughts:

- Saul was disobedient; David was a man after God's heart
- God regretted making Saul king; God anointed David king in his place
- The Spirit departed Saul; the Spirit filled David
- God had rejected Saul; God was with David

Further, we can imagine David saying, ‘Why should I flee? God has anointed me king, so why am I not enthroned in Jerusalem? Is that what happens when you are faithful? Where is God in this mess? It’s not fair!’ We can imagine, because we’ve been there!

Walter Brueggemann, an OT scholar, suggests that the Psalms can be classed as psalms of orientation, or seasons of well-being; of disorientation, or seasons of hurt, alienation, or suffering; and of new orientation, or seasons of experiencing God’s new gifts. John Calvin said that Psalms are an ‘anatomy of the soul’. Both speak of the truth that our lives are not static, and are marked by victories and defeats. Faith, likewise, is always moving, learning and experiencing God in transformative ways. And David, looking back at his particular pit, outlines how he moved from disorientation into a new dynamic of life with God.

### **We’ve come a long, long way together, through the hard times and the good ...**

David’s new orientation is marked by praise. As he recalls his deliverance, he says he will continually bless and praise the Lord. He will make known the worthiness of God through his words and character, and the whole of his being will boast in God. What’s more, he wants all to hear, giving their undivided attention as he exalts the name of the Lord (vv1-3).

David’s testimony, his basis for praise, is that when he was captive to his fears, he sought the Lord, who heard and answered him. He encourages others to look to God so they know they have nothing of which to be ashamed. God is the one who delivers, so it is right to be reverent, and right that lives are marked by praise (vv4-7).

This new orientation is expressed in confident trust, in overflowing praise, and drives David’s evangel heart to invite others to share in this revelation.

### **Present to the Presence**

David shifts his reflection, and now he starts giving instruction about growing in faith. Change is integral to life (vv8-22). The journey from ‘A’ to ‘B’ will take us through what we feel to be chaos at worst, or slight unease at best. How do we survive in the ‘in-between’ place? David had to move from ‘orientation’ to ‘new orientation’, but could only do so by surviving the ‘in-between’ place, the disorientation.

So, how do you make it through the ‘in-between’ place? How do you move from disorientation to new orientation? David’s answer: wisdom. And wisdom is ... Not an accumulation of spiritual knowledge, but the continual practice/exercise of living in the presence of God, of being ‘present to the Presence.’ It is about learning to let go of self in order to encounter God. When Jesus called Peter out on the water, Peter was present to the Presence. As soon as he disconnected from the Presence, allowing the rational mind to tell him humans cannot walk on water, he started to sink.

The invitation to ‘taste and see that the LORD is good!’ (v8) marks a shift from giving thanksgiving and praise to God (vv1-7) to an exhortation for people to walk in the way of wisdom, being present to the Presence (vv8-22). David wants others to be strong in their trust, and so encourages them to seek wisdom. Further, he demonstrates the rewards of wisdom. He points back to his disorientation as an example of how wisdom grounded him so that he could know God’s deliverance and find a new orientation.

It's very clever how he does this: At the start of the Psalm David writes: 'Of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.' In Hebrew, the same root word is behind the words 'behaviour', 'discernment', 'test', and 'taste'. So David uses a play on words - very common in Hebrew scripture - to grab the reader/listener/worshipper:

- **Discern** that the LORD is good!
- **Test** that the LORD is good!
- **Taste** that the LORD is good!

How did David know the LORD is good? WISDOM - BEING PRESENT TO THE PRESENCE!

When he was fleeing from Saul and before Achish, he discerned his only deliverance was in God. As far as the world is concerned it is madness not to trust in political diplomacy. It is madness not to fight violence with violence. It is madness to trust wholly in God whose ways are not the way this world thinks, or behaves. Or tastes. But David knew God, so he knew that this world leaves a bad taste in your mouth...

### **What's Your 'Storm'?**

The Psalms are subversive and a corrective for self-centered living. A naive Christianity would have you believe that everything is sunshine and roses 24-7, and if it's not, something is terribly wrong. And when there is trouble, it is not uncommon to cherry-pick from the Psalms or other favourite bits of Scripture that promise sunshine and roses. The result is an atrophied faith, faith with no muscle, no stamina. Yet we know that we face hardships: sickness, joblessness, breakdowns, loss of family, and God does not answer our prayers how we think he should. We also hold on to our own shame, or guilt, and find we withdraw from others because we do not want to be exposed. But the only way we find our way through life's storms, those dark days is to stick it out with God, even though everything around us is falling to bits. We need to remember that trust in God isn't about getting to heaven in the future, for it is about living in the Kingdom now.

Today we are in God's hands. Today we have life in Jesus. So, regardless of what happens, we are God's! To live the victorious life is to know that God is faithful which gives us the confidence to stand and endure in the midst of chaos! His grace is sufficient!

Here's a powerful story. An acquaintance of mine has a daughter who suffers from multiple debilitating medical conditions. When she was eight-years-old, the children in her church were responsible for leading worship. She had asked if she could do the sermon, based on the healing of the paraplegic. Given that she longed to be healed, with many praying for a miracle, this is what she shared. 'There are three kinds of healing. One is a miracle. The second is the kind that comes from doctors and medicine. And the third kind of healing is God giving people the strength to endure. The healing God has given me is the strength to endure.' This is wisdom. This is knowing that God delivers—even if the external circumstances have not changed! This is the trust that sings:

*'And through it all, my eyes are on you, and it is well with me....So let go my soul and trust in him, the waves and wind still know his name...'* (Kristene DiMarco)

## He keeps all their bones...

Wisdom is keeping present to the Presence regardless. We often pray to be delivered out of our circumstances, but get so focused on the problem we lose sight of God. David was delivered from Achish, but he still faced threats and trouble. He wasn't lifted out of his circumstances; he was held in the arms of God so that David could hold on to him. God delivers, he lifts us out of the 'pit' that would otherwise draw our eyes from him. He rescues us from all that robs us of our life in him.

Verse 20 refers to the righteous (see v19). We read them in connection with Jesus, who did not have his legs broken when crucified. We still should read them with Jesus in mind: He keeps all your bones, that is, your essence, your substance, your self. We allow our self to be broken by lies: you are not (not loved, not worthy, not wanted, not redeemable...). We're thrown into a chaos out of which we can see no escape.

All the while, Jesus puts a hedge around us—he keeps us. He says, 'You are mine! I have entered your humanity, in its disarray and faithlessness, and have redeemed it, transformed it, and brought deliverance. I have pulled you out of the lie. In me, you are included. In me, the I AM, you are!'

God gives us all the strength to endure. He gives healing. And in the midst of our disorientation, he gives his Presence so that we will be renewed, so that we find a new orientation. So that we live in the promise of deliverance. *Amen.*

Emmanuel Text 2021

WE HAVE  
*this* HOPE  
as an anchor  
for the  
SOUL  
firm and secure.  
Hebrews 6:19

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## **Looking Upwards** (40 mins)

### *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Read the story of Saul and David (1 Samuel 18-24, or for the full account, 1 Samuel 8-31). What insights do you have? What do you find confusing, or encouraging?

2. 'I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth' (v1). Jesus said that what comes out of our mouths is what make us unclean. What is the connection between worship and our discipleship?

3. 'I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears' (v4). How do you think our 'instant' society affects our patience with God, and consequently our faith?

4. What images or ideas come to our minds when we hear the word ‘deliverance’?

5. ‘When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles’ (v17). Honesty compels us all to acknowledge that there have been times when we’re disappointed in God. Sometimes, in our mind, he didn’t hear. He didn’t deliver. How do we hold on to God when everything seems wrong? (Recommended reading: *Disappointment with God* by Philip Yancey, or *How Can It Be All Right When Everything Is All Wrong?* by Lewis Smedes.)

6. Wisdom is ‘being present to the Presence.’ What are some of the reasons we give for not giving time to be still with God? How can we improve?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## **Looking Inwards** (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## **Looking Outwards** (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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