

**I was a nobody but I prayed and the Lord**  
**Saved me from all my troubles**

**Psalm 34**

This title is taken from Psalm 34. It is the Message translation but as we read it in the NIV you can see that the meaning is pretty much the same. I just sense this morning that there are some of you out there who need to hear the message that you may consider yourselves to be “nobodies” in the eyes of the world. However, in God’s eyes you are His precious children and He cares and loves and delights in YOU as much as He does all of His other children.

God has no favourites, He has no class system, He is not sexist, He is not ageist. It was Philip Yancey in his book “What’s so amazing about grace?” who wrote those much quoted words: “There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make him love us less.” And they are true! God loves each one of us with an unconditional love that He will not withhold from us.

So let’s have a look at Psalm 34 and see what it tells us about God’s love for us, whoever we are and however we feel about ourselves:

**Psalm 34.**

I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me: let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

**These first five verses are an unashamed praise of and call to praise God and to let others know the goodness of God. And the reason for this exuberant praise?**

**Answered prayer! We have heard it preached many times about the importance of prayer and how it is our communication link with God. Indeed Keith was, only a few weeks ago, reminding us of the importance of prayer in the church. How it is the bedrock of our relationship with God; and how we can be sure that God is listening and that He will answer our prayers in His way, His time, and perfectly according to His will because He is God the author and sustainer of our faith. I am sure each of us could give testimony about answered prayer and how it has lifted our faith and how as we see answered prayer in our fellowship here it lifts our spirits, draws us closer together as a fellowship and builds us up both in our relationships with each other and with God.**

**Also, perhaps a hint of what non-Christians see in Christians that makes them want to know more – “Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”**

**This poor man (this nobody) called and the Lord heard him; He saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them.**

**This poor man (this nobody as the ‘Message puts it.) Is that you this morning? Is that how you feel? Just because we are Christians does not mean that we are always on the mountain top. Far from it. There are times in our lives when we can and do feel just like the psalmist here, a poor man (or woman), a nobody, that no one least of all God wants to have anything to do with. If that is you this morning I want to say as I did at the beginning that God loves you with an everlasting and unconditional love.**

**It is not dependent on how you feel or how far away from Him you are or how close. It does not depend on how many good things you have done this week or this month or this year. It does not depend on whether or not you are mad with God, and we can be sometimes. It does not depend on anything of you.**

**Because God in His infinite grace and mercy sent Jesus to take your sin upon His shoulders, to die in your place on the cross and to rise again on the third day. And He is even now sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for YOU, each one of you. If you have truly acknowledged Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour then God can do nothing but lavish his love upon you for two reasons;**

- 1. He does not see you as you see yourself, he sees you as perfect because you are in Christ through your salvation. Therefore, God sees you as He sees His Son Jesus and wants to lavish His love on to His child, which is what you have become through adoption into His family. As I’ve mentioned in previous sermons this adoption is not just the signing of a piece of paper, it is an intimate adoption where you take on the same rights as Jesus, the same Father, the same inheritance rights, it is just as if you had been born as a Son of God and you are His child.**
- 2. Love isn’t something that God invented one day in the same way as He created the heavens and the earth. God did not decide one day to lavish love on His people because He thought it was the right thing to do. God’s very essence is love, it is His nature and being, He can do nothing other than love you because He is love.**

**So if you feel as the psalmist that you are a nobody, a poor man that no-one cares about or wants anything to do with, and we can do even in the midst of a loving, caring Christian family because we are very good, some of us expert, at putting on a mask which says we’re fine to the outside world, even those closest to us, whilst inwardly we are desperate. If that’s you THEN as the psalmist call out to God. I suspect that it was a desperate plea from the psalmist who wasn’t really expecting God to answer him. The first thing that seems to go when we descend into these darker periods of our lives is our prayer life. We don’t believe God is interested in us anymore or perhaps that we are praying into thin air and no one is listening!**

**But I would urge you to hang on in there and call out to God. It may be in desperation, it may be in anguish, it may be in anger, but call out to him and you will find as the psalmist that God will answer in his time and in his way.**

**Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. Fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.**

**Come my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.**

**The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.**

**The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

**A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.**

**Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems his servants; no-one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him. In this last part of the psalm there is an exhortation from the psalmist to “taste and see that the Lord is good”**

**The psalmist has seen God answer his prayers and now wants to exhort those around him to put their trust in God. There is nothing quite like testimony to answered prayer or God acting in someone’s life to encourage and build up the saints. We often encourage you to share testimony with us on a Sunday morning, not to embarrass you but to hear some of the great things God is doing in people’s lives, both the amazing miracles of life changing events and the small day to day miracles that God performs. Both are amazing in their own right and are so encouraging to the rest of us of how God’s hand is at work in our lives.**

**Here the psalmist is encouraging those around him concerning the fear of the Lord, something which perhaps we don’t do often enough nowadays and we end up with a gospel of accommodation trying to please everyone but God.**

**And his instructions re the fear of the Lord are those that we as Christians should be aspiring to anyway:**

**Keep your tongue from evil  
Your lips from telling lies  
Turn from evil and do good  
Seek peace and pursue it.**

Note that they are all actions that we need to take. This is not a passive relationship we have with God but a partnership where each of us plays our part to develop the relationship, to journey together along the path of righteousness. As we have heard many times we are all at different stages of that walk. The amazing thing is that God knows us so intimately that this morning He knows where each one of you are on that walk and perhaps more amazingly what it is that you, individually, need to receive from the choruses, the prayers and the word that I am bringing.

We are all singing and hearing the same choruses and prayers and I am preaching the same message to each of us. But God will be ministering to each of you differently through those three things because He knows what YOU need and will emphasise different things to you, because He is a great God and He cares passionately about each and every one of us; and our needs.

Finally I want you to notice that there is recognition within the psalm that our paths will not be smooth and carefree because we have a relationship with God. Quite the contrary, it says:

“He delivers them from all their troubles”

“The Lord is close to the broken hearted”

“The Lord saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

“A righteous man may have many troubles”

Note also that it does NOT say the Lord answered their prayers just as they wanted.

As we cry out to God in our problems and troubles we need to trust Him to know what is best for us as He answers our cry. It may be that sometimes the answer we want and the answer God has are one and the same, which is brilliant and is obviously God’s good and perfect will for us. But sometimes the answer God gives is not the one we are expecting and it is then difficult to accept. We try to say it is not of God even though we know it is, we continue to look for an answer even though we know we’ve got it, and God because He has given us free will allows us to do that.

But at the end of the day we are only deceiving ourselves and it is only when we accept God’s answer, even if we don’t like it that we will find peace.

So to summarise;

God loves you in every circumstance and however you feel because He can do no other to a child of God.

If you cry out to Him He will answer you, He promises it in His word.

**We may not always like the answer that God gives but we need to trust Him that it is His good and perfect will for us.**

**Finally,**

**God loves each one of us so much that He is walking our individual journey of faith with us, feeding us at every stage of the way with the milk, bread or meat that we need at that particular time. He will never leave us until that journey is concluded.**

**John 10:**

**27-30 says,**

**“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”**

**And**

**Philippians 1:6 says:**

**“ being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

**So if you are feeling like a poor man today, a nobody, remember God loves you and will always love you and wants the very best for you. Cry out to him, and He will hear the cry of your heart and deliver you.**