

Why Is God in a Cave (Psalm 34)

by Gary Wilkerson

This sermon explores the transformative work that God does in the lives of individuals when they find themselves in a place of despair, such as a cave. It emphasizes the importance of praising God, seeking Him in prayer, developing a fear of the Lord, pursuing holiness, and experiencing healing for broken hearts and crushed spirits. The message encourages individuals not to give up in the midst of challenges but to trust in God's nearness and the work He is doing in their lives.

Scripture: Psalms 34:1, Psalms 34:4, Psalms 34:8, Psalms 34:13, Psalms 34:18

Topics: "Transformation in Despair", "Trusting God's Presence"

Description

This sermon explores the transformative work that God does in the lives of individuals when they find themselves in a place of despair, such as a cave. It emphasizes the importance of praising God, seeking Him in prayer, developing a fear of the Lord, pursuing holiness, and experiencing healing for broken hearts and crushed spirits. The message encourages individuals not to give up in the midst of challenges but to trust in God's nearness and the work He is doing in their lives.

Transcript

How do you feel when something you've longed for is now lost? How do you feel when there's desired promise, a desire you have it in your heart and it doesn't seem to be panning out or coming to a reality in your life? When a dream you've had for life turns into a dreadful experience of life, where is God when you're troubled, when you're suffering, when you're broken hearted, when you're hurting, when you're crushed in spirit, when there are unforeseen circumstances affecting your life? Welcome to the time we have together to study once again, the book of Psalms 34th chapter. Today is what we'll be looking at. The title of this message is what's God doing in a cave? What's God doing in a cave? It starts in verse, excuse me, not before verse one, even in the introduction, it says of David, if you turn there, if you have your Bibles of David, when he changed his behavior before ambivalent so that he drove him out, speaking of ambivalent, driving him out and he went away, David had been fleeing from Saul.

He had been hurt that this man that he loved and honored now disrespected and dishonored him and actually tried to take his life. David is fleeing now and he flees to the city called Gath and there ambivalent is the name of a king, the king of Gath, his name is actually Asic. And David is seeing personally that he's suffering loss.

He's hurt, he's wounded. And that's the question we're asking here today. What do you do when what you hope for in life doesn't seem to be coming to a reality? What's God is up to when you are at your lowest, when it seems like his promises have not come to fruition? And David has experienced this.

He has been promised to be the king. He's been promised to be a leader. He's been promised to have God's presence.

And now he's cast out. And even to go to a foreign king that was once his enemy, he comes to that king. And if you take a moment to look at 1 Samuel chapter 21 verses 10 through 15, you see there, David arose and fled that day from Saul, went to Achish, the king of Gath.

And the servants of Achish said to him, is not this David the king of the land? They not sing to him and to one another of his dances. Saul has struck down his thousands and David, his tens of thousands. It's interesting when kind of life goes sour and you find yourself in a difficult place, that a song that was once a glory to you, David has killed his tens of thousands.

Maybe it's the song of your great leadership style or your great parenting capacity or the marriage that you have that's working so well. And it's as if a song is sung over that, maybe you're in the ministry and people give accolades to the sermons that you preach, or maybe you have the opportunity to be very tenderhearted and loving towards others and people constantly patting you on the back saying, great job. It's a song being sung about you.

But when things go south, when things turn sour, when you're now being hurt, when you're now being falsely accused, when you're now being chased away, when you're now finding yourself under this place of loss, that same song now becomes sour to you. David, could you listen to this song? Saul struck down his thousands and David, his tens of thousands. And now David's saying, I once rejoiced over that song and now it's become a shame to me.

Now they're using this song to accuse me of being their enemy. Now this song has become a danger to me. The very thing that was your highlight has now become the lowest part of your life.

And so it says here in verse 13, David changed his behavior. He pretended to be insane. He made marks on the doors, spit running down his beard.

And the king says to his men, why did you bring me this madman? Don't I have enough madman in my culture here, in my city here, in my nation? Do I need you to bring this fellow to me? And again, back to Psalm 34, it says that he basically drove him out. And so now there's a double wound in David's heart. Saul has rejected him.

And now even somebody that he was less concerned about has drove him out as well. And so you've got to imagine David's at a low point. Can you relate to that? Is there times where you've had a low point, a double barrel difficulty, and you're seeing yourself now twice as hurt, twice as wounded? You thought maybe somebody could help you, and they don't.

And things just seem to be getting worse and worse. The song that was once sung is now sour. And David is finding himself here with apparently his future hopes dashed, that the promise is not coming true.

And he could be simply asking the question, what is God up to? But if you continue looking in the first Samuel at the end of 21, now turning to 22, it says, and David departed there and escaped to the cave of

Abdullam. David escaped to the cave. And that's where I get my title of this message from.

What is God doing in a cave? What's he going to do in your life when you're seemingly cast off from all the hopes and dreams and aspirations that he once had and even the promises that God had given to you? And I can picture David, I picture this almost as if I was right there myself in this dark, cold, damp cave alone, broken hearted, maybe tears rolling down the sides of his cheeks. And he's wondering, God, why do you have me in this cave? Why aren't I on the throne? Why aren't I with my friends? Why aren't I with my family? He's all alone, broken hearted. And he walks into this cave.

And I ask you a question now, does he shake an angry fist at God? Does he say, God, I doubt the experience of you being a reality. God, your promises don't come true. And I see him in this cold cave with tears running down his face and his voice cracking.

But the Bible tells us that he's singing. Look at this. In the introduction to verse 30, chapter 34, it says, and Ephabolik drove him out and he went away.

So he goes into this cave. 22 of 1 Samuel says he went into this cave and he goes in this cave alone, tears in his eyes, and he begins to sing. And what is this song? The song is verse one.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continuously be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord.

Let the humble, he's humble now, let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. You picture him walking into this cave, and I've seen pictures of this actual cave of Abdullam, and it's a huge cave.

Later on, we'll see that 400 men gather around him in this cave, but right now he's alone. So 400 can gather in this cave. It has to be a large cave.

So he's walking in this cave alone, and he begins to sing this song, I will bless the Lord at all times. And here's where my imagination goes. If I could paint this as a, if I was writing a cave struck with terror of being alone and suffering so much loss, and he goes into this cave and he starts singing out, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise, and all of a sudden, the echo comes back. I will bless the Lord. I will bless the Lord, returns to his ears.

I will bless the Lord. I will bless the Lord. I will bless the Lord.

I will bless the Lord. It's like a choir develops with just this one voice singing out, I will bless the Lord at all times, at all times. The song reverberating through the halls of this dark cave, and he is encouraged maybe even by his own voice.

He's singing away here. Oftentimes, caves make for great worship services. Oftentimes, when you find yourself rejected, hurt, wounded, at loss, suffering, and you find yourself in the cave, if you will do what David did, say, I will not complain.

I will not grope. I will not murmur. I will not shake an angry fist to God.

You see, throughout this whole chapter, as we dig into it, you're going to see not one complaint. You're going to see not him talking about, he doesn't sing of, why God are you allowing me to be in this cave? Why did ambivalent reject me? Why has Saul tried to kill me? He doesn't remunerate any of those things. He just begins to praise, to worship, to pray, to seek God's face, to seek the holiness of God, and to be healed of the brokenness of heart.

We'll be looking at all those things today. And as I'm saying here today, caves often make for great worship services, and a hurting heart should never hinder our praise. We should never wait till our heart is healed and then begin to praise.

We should praise even when we are broken, wounded, hurting in heart. How does he praise at all time? Because he has a rich history with God. He knows that God is a God who destroys his enemies.

He knows that God breaks the teeth of lions that roar against him. He knows that God, through small stones, can slay giants that come against him and his whole nation. And so with this kind of history with God, he's able to praise in a cave.

And I want to suggest to you today that when you're in that cave and you're ready to give up and you're feeling hopeless, may I suggest to you today that you remember all God has done for you. He saved you. He's washed you.

He's cleansed you. Maybe he gave you a spouse. Maybe he gave you children.

He's given you a house to live in. He's given you friends and fellowship. He's given you a church to be a part of it.

He gives you breath every morning. You wake up. You begin to remember these things, and you'll find you can worship him, praise him, honor him at all times in any circumstance because of your memory, remembering all that God has done for him.

So he's saying, I'll bless the Lord at all times, not just good times, not just when I'm receiving all the promises as realities, but even when I don't see them coming true. Praising the Lord at all times, when I'm on the mountaintop or when I'm in a cave, seeing our heart, being able to rejoice in God, no matter what expressions we find ourself around him. And it's in this place in the cave.

He's saying to God, I can praise you in the cave because I've seen you. I've seen you close the mouth of lions. I've seen you conquer giants.

I've seen you take the shepherd boy and make him part of a kingdom. And I'm not going to give up now. I won't stop believing your goodness now.

You've gone before me. You will always go before me. And you are faithful.

You are a faithful God. And this verse one is so precious. His praise shall continue to be in my mouth.

Praise is not an impulse, says a writer, William Forsythe. Praise is not an impulse or an outbreak of enthusiasm soon to die out, but it is an expression of the heart and the exercise of your life. You see what he's saying here? It's not just based on emotions.

It's not just based on circumstances or experiences that you face, but it's more than an impulse that you feel at a particular time, but it is the expression of your heart. And in the cave, you'll really find out what's in your heart. If you find yourself in a cave of lost suffering, and all you do is complain and groan and moan and bicker and accuse God and begin to stop praying and begin to stop studying your scripture and say, I'm going to quit church.

I'm going to go back to my old life. It's showing what's in your heart. And I am pleading with you today to let the Holy Spirit change your heart, to wash your heart, to cleanse your heart, to give you a new heart and a new mind that has this understanding that God is the most important thing in my life.

And I want him more than I want anything else. It's at all times, not just when you're on the throne wearing a crown, but when you're in a cave without a kingdom, under any trial, under any circumstances, when you're out of resources, when things are happening beyond your ability to fix, before you ever have a breakthrough, or even after your answered prayers come to a reality, even when your spirit is heavy, let your praise be lofty. Even when you're hurting, let your praise be high.

And then, if you would allow me to go back to this movie script that I'm writing here, allow me some room in my imagination, if you will today, without criticizing me. Allow me to say, I see David in this cave, and the echoes are resounding, and all of a sudden, there's an echo. That's strange, because it's another voice.

It's not just his voice. And what's happening, the Bible makes it clear in 1 Samuel 22, that at this cave of Abdullam, where he's alone, his father, his mother, his brothers, and those who he had fought these valiant victories with, hear that he's in a cave, and they begin to come to him. Now, if you understand this, he enters the cave.

Somehow, people hear he's in a cave. They are miles away, probably in Jerusalem, and they have to travel there. So, we're talking days, David is in this cave.

I just picture him waking up every morning, just singing, and the echo goes through the cave. But on this particular day, he hears another voice. And it's one of his closest friends that all of a sudden is joining him in song.

David is saying, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall—and all of a sudden, here's another—shall continuously be in my mouth. I will bless the Lord. My soul makes its boast in the Lord, and that echoes back to David.

And then, all of a sudden, another voice comes singing, and my boast as well will praise the Lord. I will boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, says David. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, now a third friend coming into the cave. And all of a sudden, his brothers and sisters come, and his mother and father, the Bible tells us, come.

And I'm just picturing this. Now there's a choir in a cave. God has not allowed him yet to escape from the cave back to his crown or his throne.

But in the cave, he's given him some companionship. In the cave, he's given them a song to sing with others. He's given people to rejoice together.

He's still in the cave, and there's some things that God is going to do in that cave. But God is gracious to him, and he's not alone. He has these men with him.

Second Samuel 23 gives us a—I think it's an incredible list. If you'll bear with me, I want to go through a good portion of this list of the 30 mighty men of David, because it just shows how God filled that cave with praise. How do I know he filled that cave with praise? Because verse 3, as we're studying Psalm 34, says, oh, magnify the Lord with me.

So now David's becoming a preacher. The crowd's gathered around 400 strong, and he's telling them, let's magnify the Lord again. Let us exalt his name together.

Come on, guys. Let's sing a song of praise. We're not defeated.

We're not overcome. We're not overwhelmed. The enemies won't triumph against us.

Let's sing a song of praise together. Let us exalt his name together. And so Joseph Beheshabaheth, who, in the Bible says, a man who killed 800 men in one battle with one spear.

Eliezer, the son of Dodo, the last man on a battlefield, when all his own soldiers fled, and he fought so hard. He defeated the enemy, and at the end of the day, he couldn't even open up his hand that was clinging to his sword. Shammai, the son of Abishar, the leader of the 30 mighty men.

Benini, who went into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. Ashdod, Shammai, Elikai, Halazad, Ira, Ispah, Zelmon, Haba, Elibah, Etiah, Ben-Nayev, Hirothah, Eliehabah, the sons of Jasen, Jonathan, Shamia, the Hara, Amah, Eliath, Eliam, Hezro, Peligai, Eli, Bani, Zelech, Nanihah, Ira, the Irithite, Gerab, the Irihite, and last on this list, interestingly enough, it says Uriah, the Hittite. I won't go there today, but man, that would preach a whole other sermon, a very different message on how you treat those who have honored you.

Because if you know the story of Uriah, the Hittite, he was the husband of Bathsheba, David ends up killing him. Treat those around you well. Treat those who care for you.

Don't ever despise what they've done for you. Honor them, esteem them highly, and never turn against them. But that's a whole other sermon that we're not going to have time to get in today.

Psalm 34, and getting back to the text, Psalm 34 in many ways is a sermon that David preaches to the mighty man, to his family, to the 400 strong now gathered. And now the 400 strong that gathered, the Bible says that they were despised, they were brokenhearted, they were in debt, they were despairing, they were in trouble. And so they fled to the cave.

In other words, they were experiencing many of the same thing that David experienced. This is a good picture of the church, brokenhearted people gathered together to bring healing to one another, to bring hope to one another, to worship the Lord together, to commiserate, if you will, and say, God is still with us. He's not abandoned us.

That's why church is so important, gathering and fellowship together. And in the time I have remaining here, would you be willing to share with me five glorious elements that David preaches to these people who had that same spirit in them of potentially being, not potentially, I'm going to skip ahead because this is not a potential, but this is a reality here. And verse 18, it says, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and

he saves the crushed in spirit.

David is saying to himself, to his own heart and to the people's hearts that are listening now to this sermon that he's preaching in the cave. And what he's saying to them is, I know you're brokenhearted. And I know you're crushed in spirit.

I know people have said bad things about you. I know economically you've been crushed. I know you've lost your job.

I know the medical report is coming negatively. I know you have dreams and aspirations that were so high and the reality now is so low, but the Lord is near to you. The Lord is near to us today and he saves us.

And later on, we'll see that he heals us. But the first thing that God does in the cave is, number one, the first thing God does in the cave is give you a heart of praise. The first thing God does in the cave is give you a heart of praise.

We've already read that praise is proper at all time and true praise is contagious, especially from someone you might not think should be praising. When you see somebody who's just lost a child and they're praising the Lord. I met a man just a few weeks ago, a minister, and I was preaching a message about how God had saved my children from a lifestyle of addiction.

And I was just thanking God and God answers prayer. But I did mention in that message that sometimes we suffer irreversible loss and that we are still to praise God, we're still to honor him, still to revere him. And afterwards, he caught me in the hallway and said, Gary, I'm so glad you added that second part because we do rejoice when God answers the prayer in the way we would desire him to affirm that prayer.

But sometimes God has different agenda, a different sovereign will for our lives. And he said in his life, he had lost his wife. I think maybe it was a year or so.

I'm not sure exactly the time, but maybe a year or so he lost his wife to cancer, even though they'd been praying and fasting and believing. And then not long after that, his daughter and son-in-law were in a car and they picked somebody up and showing to be compassion on them. And apparently his daughter must have been driving the car and maybe the son-in-law was somewhere seated in the car as well.

And the man pulled out a gun and shot the son-in-law, shot his daughter's husband. And then forced her to drive around in the car for an extended amount of time and ended up then killing her as well and just setting the car on fire, burning her to death. And I don't think I've ever heard a story like that.

I can't picture a man who would be more crushed in spirit. I could not picture a man who could tell a story that would far outdo anyone that most of us could tell our stories. Most of our stories are nowhere near that and yet they are painful to us.

I'm not diminishing that at all. But to see this man with the joy of the Lord, to see him there at that conference, worshiping Christ, honoring God, revering God, humble-hearted, but being, yes, hurt over these circumstances, but knowing this verse 18 is a reality, the Lord is near. He's near to me as I'm brokenhearted.

He saved me from having a crushed spirit. And I know my wife and my son-in-law and my daughter are rejoicing in heaven with me now. It's like I'm in this cave, but I hear their voices echoing with me.

I will worship the Lord at all times. I will praise him. His praise shall continuously be in my mouth.

God is doing something in this cave. He's not abandoning you in the cave. He's not punishing you in the cave.

Now there are times where God brings his discipline on us, and it may feel like a cave, but the cave I'm talking about here today is not one of your own fault or of your own doing. God is bringing you in that cave for his own purposes. He's doing—God is doing something in the cave.

It's powerful. It's profound. If you weren't in that cave, these processes that God is bringing you through would not be accomplished in your life.

There's a purpose and a plan for the cave, not just for the throne. Secondly, we see what God is doing in the cave is deepening your dependency. The first one is the praise, which we've read through verses one through three.

The deepening our dependency in prayer and intercession is found in verse four through seven. I sought the Lord and he answered me, delivered me from—and here's this word all again. Verse one says he blessed the Lord at all times, and now David says he delivered from all my fears.

I wonder if there's a connection there, that if I wallow in my fears, I'm going to just continue to be a fearful person. But if I praise the Lord, maybe that praise has power to break those fears. All praise breaks all fears.

Powerful thought here, what David is bringing to the Lord. And it's born out of him saying, I sought the Lord. He answered me.

He delivered me. And then as a result of that, those who look to him—that's Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith—those who look to him are radiant. It's a shining face.

It's a glory. It's, again, going back to those praise being contagious. Those who most likely should not praise, like the man I just shared his testimony, his praise to me makes me radiant.

That a man like that could do that, and those who look to him. And so when you're in the cave, if you look to your own pain, if you look to your own sorrow, if you look to circumstances, if you look for ways of escape without seeing what God is doing, you may miss out on this radiance that God is wanting to work in your life. Their faces shall never be ashamed.

David is saying this in context of going before King Isaac and having spittle on his face and scratching the doors like a madman, and the shame that might have been over my—I was meant to be a king, and now I'm acting like a madman, and he still gets rejected, and he's walking away. What am I doing? How idiotic. I'm trying everything just to get some help, and nothing's working.

He could have been put to shame, but he says those who look to the Lord are radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. Verse 6 says, this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of the word again. All, not just some, all of his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. David is honestly saying, man, here's what I do when I'm in a cave. I'm not afraid to cry.

I'm not afraid to get on my face before the Lord and say, this is too hard. How long, O Lord? How long will you come, Lord? Will you fix this? And God's response to that cry is getting saved out of all these troubles. And the angel of the Lord, if you know what's happening in the Old Testament, there's these pre-incarnate, incarnate meaning Jesus being born in the flesh in the manger, the virgin birth through Mary, that's the incarnation, but pre-incarnation, there's a pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament, and oftentimes, not always, but oftentimes, it's described as the angel of the Lord.

Man, is this precious to you or not, that David is really saying, Jesus, I don't know him in the fullness like they might know after he comes in the flesh and on the cross and in his resurrection, but I know him. I foresee him. Hebrews 11 talks about that, how some of these men, Moses and others, they saw Christ, not just in the angelic kind of angel of the Lord, but foreseeing that God was going to do something.

In our caves, there's going to be a kingdom coming that is going to wipe away all of our tears. And this angel of the Lord, Jesus, encamps around those who fear. Remember, David, I believe, is preaching this message to his men.

You see here, he's saying, together, these are things we're going to do together, and one of those is to know that the Lord is encamping around us. Can you picture that, these men sleeping on a hard stone floor in a cold, damp cave, and just to know, Jesus is encamping around me. Take that picture and put it in your own mind, your own heart, your own understanding, your own prayer life.

Jesus, you're encamping around me. I'm in a tough place. I'm in a hurting place.

I'm in a broken place, I'm in a crushed-in-spirit place, but I'm worshiping, I'm praising, and now I'm going to enter into number two. I'm going to pray. I'm going to intercede.

I'm going to be desperate for you. I'm going to cry day and night out to you, and you're going to camp around me. I mean, you're just going to surround me with your love, with your protection, with your power, with your grace, to be able to go through this cave experience and get all I can out of this experience rather than diminishing it by my rejection of it, by my running from it, by my hiding from it, by quitting in the middle of the caves experience.

Let the Lord encamp around you and those who fear him. And that leads us to the next thing we see in here is that thirdly, what God is doing in the cave is calling forth the fear of the Lord. This is found in verses eight through ten.

Let me read this to you. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in the Lord.

And what is this tasting and seeing of the goodness of God? It's found in verse nine. Oh, fear the Lord, you saints, and those who fear him, for those who fear him shall have no lack. Man, that's powerful.

You're in a cave. You would think you're lacking everything. David's saying, I'm lacking my kingdom.

I'm lacking my army. I'm lacking the comfort. I'm lacking my wife and my bed and my delicate meals.

I'm lacking all this. But no, he's not. It seems to me what he's saying, I've got you, Lord.

I've got Jesus encamping around me. What do I have to fear? I'm not lacking anything. I have everything that I want.

Oh, fear the Lord, you saints, for those who fear him have no lack. Young lions might suffer and want and be hungry, but those who seek the Lord will lack no good thing. Come, oh, you children, and listen to me.

See, he's teaching here, and I will teach you. He's teaching them. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

David understands that in the cave, you have to have the fear of the Lord. What is he saying there? In the cave, we learn that God sovereignly gives, and he says this so clearly in Job, he gives and he takes away. And in the cave, we learn that.

In the cave, we understand that we don't deserve by our own merits. We don't deserve by our own goodness, the throne or the kingdom or the pleasure of all good things or all promises coming true. It's not God is, we twist his arm because he promised to us he's going to be faithful, all his promises will come true, but not because we deserve it because of something we've done.

And in the cave, we learn this. In the cave, we humble ourselves. In the cave, we learn that humility is part and parcel to having a fear of the Lord, and the fear of the Lord is what works humility in our life.

We learn to revere God, to esteem him, to see him as no one to be trifled with or to be diminished as his power is exalted above all others. He raises up, the Bible says, and he brings down. And in the midst of that, the Bible tells us while he's raising up and bringing down as we simply say, blessed be the name of the Lord.

In the cave, we learn verse 9, oh, fear of the Lord is saints and those who fear him have no lack. In the cave, we learn to be taught the fear of the Lord. In the cave, we realize we don't really lack anything when we have him encamping around us.

Listen to the words of William Dunlap, an early 16th, 17th century writer. Should the whole frame of nature be unhinged and all the outward friends and supports prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed and possessions torn from us and floods of sickness and poverty and disgrace overwhelm our souls with an impetuous tide of trouble. The sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affect his portion and object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God, his refuge and hiding place.

And there feels his Savior is comparably better and more than equivalent to the whole of the universe can ever offer him or rob him of his tender mercies of God's unexhausted faithfulness, of God's great faithfulness. Yield to him in consolation and rest. Enable him what in time he be afraid to put his trust in him.

When you're afraid, put your trust in him is what he's saying. And there's consolation and rest in that is what he's saying. Because if everything is taken away from you, if you're in the cave and you've suffered loss, you can still rejoice.

You can still have the fear of the Lord. Fourthly, what God is doing in the cave is perfecting holiness, not only calling forth the fear of the Lord, not only teaching us to be desperately in intercessory prayer, not only to worship the Lord, but in the cave what God is doing is perfecting holiness. This is found in verse 13 through 17.

Let me read these to you. Keep your tongue from evil. You see, now there's an instruction from the preacher in the cave about how to live a holy life.

This is born out of the fear of the Lord. It's one thing to have a worship service. It's one thing to pray and intercede for your needs.

But now you're fearing the Lord and the Lord is instructing you. See, as verse 11, you're taught the fear of the Lord. Now in verse 13, what you're being taught is how to live a holy life.

Holiness is both imputed to you. Christ, when he's washed you, has made you holy, but then it's the sanctification process could be considered part of holiness as well. And that's really what David is talking about.

Keep, in other words, protect your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.

Why? Verse 15, for the eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of their troubles.

This is very interesting to me, that those who are walking in holiness will be delivered from their troubles. Sometimes their circumstances are unchanged, but there's a deliverance still, a deliverance of their heart. There's a purity, there's a righteousness, there's a fear of the Lord, there's a walking in faithfulness, there's living a godly lifestyle, no matter what's going around you.

In other words, don't be godly when just things are going good, but be godly when you're in the cave, when you're in a difficult circumstances. Verse 19 tells us many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all. But if you compare that to verse 21, it says afflictions will slay the wicked.

I don't know if you catch that. Do you see a significant difference here? Many are the afflictions. In other words, you're going to be under affliction, but it's going to affect you in a different way.

The affliction that you're under will slay the wicked. In other words, if you're not walking in holiness, if you're not fearing the Lord and wanting to be righteous before Him, when you are afflicted, when you end up in the cave, you're going to be slain by it. It's going to overcome you.

You're going to quit in the cave. You're going to give up. You're going to shake the angry fist of God.

You're going to say, you know, forget all this. I'm leaving it all behind. I'm just going to do whatever it takes to have an easier life.

Affliction, when it happens, it slays the wicked. They lose hope. They lose life.

They lose joy. They lose God. But not so with the righteous, even though they have many afflictions.

In verse 21, it doesn't say many afflictions slay the wicked. It just says singular, but even many afflictions of the righteous, staying righteous, staying pure before the Lord, staying holy in His presence. That's where the deliverance comes from.

Your heart will be set right with God. And so He's perfecting holiness in the cave. Don't try to fix everybody's problems.

I hope you'll catch this point. Sometimes people are in a cave and God is working to perfect the holiness in them, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. This is found in 2 Corinthians 7.1. Here's what God is working in the cave.

2 Corinthians 7.1, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. It's interesting that point three and four of David's message collide together to bring us to this place of this fear of the Lord as perfecting holiness in us. And what I'm suggesting to you in your own life and in your spouse's life and your children and your friends and your church, if you're a pastor, those you're ministering to, don't try to fix all your friends' and congregation's problems.

Here's the way I would say it to you. You might offer a man a cottage, but God wants that man to be in a cave. And then you might be working against God's plans.

And so I want to encourage you not to be too quick to try to fix everything. Paul, when he was told Timothy how to preach the word, he says, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Two out of the three are the works of the cave to reprove us, to rebuke us, to change us, to create holiness in us.

Then the third is the exhortation. So two thirds are harder works. And then one third, but it's the final one.

And this is the glory of what God does. The final word is always exhortation. The final word is, He drew me out of the cave.

The final word is, He set me in a high place. And we see that in David's life. He didn't live the rest of his life in the cave.

God brought him back to the kingdom, set him on a throne, put a crown on his head, and even allowed him to be considered the one who's seed would bear fruit to be the one where Christ would come through. You can't get more glorious than that. You can't get more exalted as a man than that.

The cave is cleansing. And so be not quick to run from it. Be not quick to despise it.

Be not quick to get angry at God when he has you in a cave. Allow yourself and allow your friends to feel the weight and the work of God. Fifth and lastly, what God is doing in the cave is healing our broken hearts and our crushed spirits.

Even though we have many afflictions, and even though the cave may be dark and cold and damp and lonely, it says God is near. And it might be easy to say God is near when you're sitting on the throne in the kingdom, but when you're in a cold cave and yet He's there with you, He shows the reality that He will never leave you or forsake you. Friends may be with you when you're in your kingdom and in your promise and in the high point, and then they may leave you when you're in the cave.

And God is training us here to say, no matter what you go through in life, I will be near to you. The Lord is near to two things. He's near to the brokenhearted, and He's near to those crushed in spirit.

He's not near to the haughty, to the prideful, to the arrogant. He's near to those who are the many afflictions they're going through, but they are righteous and God is near. He's letting us know that we are not necessarily in the cave because we're being punished, but that because He's showing His nearness to us, He's creating intimacy with them.

He's creating a nearness that we would not have had if we had not gone through the cave. Verse 21 and verse 22 says, the affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate righteousness will be condemned. That's condemnation.

Paul talks about that in Romans. Verse 22 concludes this chapter. The Lord redeems the life of His servants.

None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, even when you're in a cave. It's easy to feel uncondemned when you're on the throne, when the crown is on your head, but when you're in that cave, sometimes it's easier to feel condemned.

I must have done something wrong. I'll never make it. I deserve this.

God is distant, and God is showing us something much deeper. The most dangerous thing we're discussing today is that if you don't know what God is doing in the cave, you'll give up in the cave, and that's the warning in this message. I want to, and it may be harsh to talk to people who are in a cave and then give them a warning, but the warning is this, the danger is this, that when you're in a cave, you may feel God is not near to the broken heart of the crushed in spirit, that He's not a God who heals, that He's not a God who delivers, that He's not a God who can set you back in that high place that He has promised for you, and when you feel that, it's easy to give up, and that's why hundreds, if not thousands of pastors are quitting the ministry every month.

That's why people are flocking out of the church. Each decade, more and more, less and less church attendance, more and more people are leaving, affiliating with what they call on the surveys, none. I have no faith.

I have no affiliation with God or any believing body of people, and this is the dangerous thing. When you feel abandoned far from God, you'll hear the voice of the accuser, and then you're being overwhelmed. You'll want to give up and surrender, lose hope, lose your calling, lose your promises, the promises of God that are yet to come.

They're yet to be restored. Hang on. They're on their way.

Do not give up when you're in the difficult place of the cave. If you give up your faith and trust, then you'll give up your praise, and you'll give up your prayers, and you'll give up the fear of the Lord, and you'll give up your healing, and you'll miss out on what God is actually doing in the cave. So in conclusion, here's what I pray you take away from this message.

Know this. I pray this over you, and I'm believing with all my heart this for you. Know that it is often that the darker the cave, the deeper the work that God is doing, that through tough times—excuse me—tough times produce transformative opportunities.

I'm sure David wanted his kingdom back and his crown back, but in the cave, God gave him something much deeper. He encamped around him. In other words, he gave him himself.

In the cave, we may feel like we have lost certain things, but really, we're gaining. We're gaining more than we could have ever had before. And I want to say this to you, too.

In our afflictions, not all of our crowns are restored. Some do lose their marriages. Some do lose the job.

Some have prodigal sons and daughters that run far from God and never return. But even in those horrific circumstances, can I tell you with all my heart, God will provide something of grace, that he's going to do a greater work in your heart than he could ever do. And be it though that it is afflicting you, God will be near to you, and he will save you from this situation.

I pray that you do not despise the cave. I pray that you do not quit in the cave. I pray that you do not despair in the cave, but rather see there are things that God is doing that are not done on the throne or in the place of your promises.

So let me summarize once again, and then we'll pray. What is God doing in the cave? Number one, giving us a worshipping heart. Number two, making us desperate in intercession, and that becomes our very life breath.

Number three is creating fresh awe, wonder, reverence, and fear of the Lord. And number four, birth out of that fear of the Lord is a new stirring, a fresh stirring in our heart of a hunger for holiness, creating in us a clean and refined and purified heart that we had not had before. And lastly, the last stage of the cave work is that God then heals us.

Our wounds, our brokenness, and we come out now healed, holy, reverent, prayerful, and worshipful. I could say with you, and you could say with me, I asked for a crown, but he gave me a cave. But in response to this cave, I will cry.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continuously be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord, and though I be humble, I will hear and be glad.

Oh, magnify. And here's my cry and my prayer that you would join me here today in saying, oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. Father, I thank you that no matter what affliction anyone might be going through in this dark night of the soul, in the desperate place of the cave, in the crushed spirit, and the broken heart, God, I pray that they would not so despair in that hour that they would leave the cave, that they would run from it, or that they would falsely accuse you of not being with them in the cave.

And rather instead, they would embrace the work that you're doing, because it is a good work. You do all things well. We can say even in the coldness and darkness and loneliness of the cave, God, you're going to send us people to encourage us.

You're going to send your own son, Christ Jesus, to encamp around us. And then there's a great work happening in the cave, and we want to embrace it, not run from it. So we close in prayer and say, Lord, do with me as you will.

I surrender all. Lord, this is your heart. Take it.

This is your mind. Take it. This is your body.

Do with it as you will. My agenda, your agenda. My desires, your desires.

My works, your works. My kingdom, not my kingdom. It's your kingdom.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And so, God, today, even in the midst of the cave, we say we praise you. We exalt you.

We worship you. You're good. You're mighty.

You're wonderful. You're worthy of all our praise. Holy is the Lord and worthy to be praised.

And we give thanks. Thank you, God. We right now even declare to you, we say thank you for the cave, for what it's working in our heart.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Thank you for being with us in Psalm 34. Continue with us in our next episode, our next chapter, Psalm chapter 35.

Great things ahead for us. It's taking us a long time to go through this book, but it's worth it all because we are seeing Jesus and what he's doing in our lives. God bless you.

Thanks for being with us today.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/rtiYXH8qXQk.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gary-wilkerson/why-is-god-in-a-cave-psalm-34/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net