

# Caleb Evans (18)

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Preacher: Fr. Caleb Evans

[0:00] I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. So, my brothers and my sisters, praise the Lord today.

What a wonderful week it's been here at Church of the Holy Trinity. We had our second annual vacation Bible school, and I think that those of us who were there can attest to the fact that God blessed us mightily and that the Spirit was at work.

And here we are on Sunday morning. No doubt, our VBS workers are tired. I just want you to know that if I catch you sleeping during the sermon, I promise not to tell anyone. In return, I ask that you bear with me this morning. I'll try not to fall asleep.

My sermon will be a little bit shorter than usual. The VBS workers probably aren't feeling too disappointed by that. But I want us to turn our attention to Psalm 34.

[1:21] Please look there with me in your Bibles. It is, as you will have noticed in your Bibles, a Psalm of David written in response to specific events in David's life. I don't want to focus too much on the specifics of those events for the simple reason that David's experience of glorifying the Lord, his experience of being delivered from troubles, is one that every believer can relate to. Like all of the Psalms, this Psalm has been used in public worship through centuries upon centuries. We, after all, don't call the Psalms the prayer book of the Bible without good reason. Part of the reason for that is that all of us can relate to what we find here. So what is it that we can relate to? I think it's this. The joy of glorifying the Lord, acknowledging his great worth, the struggles that we all face, and the awesome and eternal truth that the true and living God is mighty to save.

Have you seen those great themes at work in your own lives? Have in mind. Let's look at this morning's Psalm with those themes in mind.

Just a quick caveat here, though. This Psalm is 22 verses, so I won't be doing my frequent practice of preaching verse by verse. That said, I am sure that our VBS volunteers in particular do appreciate that this morning. But I want us to start this morning by beginning where our Psalm begins, and that is with praise and adoration. We read, I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. My brothers and my sisters, will you exalt and praise the name of the Lord with me this morning?

Will you boast in the Lord with me this morning? Will you hear the word of the Lord and be glad this morning? Let us exalt His name together. Praise the Lord.

[3:46] It's no surprise that David begins here, talking about God's goodness to him, because in doing that, David is beginning with the deepest need and deepest desires of the human heart.

I'm reminded of what the Westminster Shorter Catechism says. The chief end of man, which means our reason for existing, our source of deepest joy, the most profound desire of our hearts, and what we were created for, our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Are you enjoying God today? I hope you are, because that is the greatest joy that you could ever know. We were created by God, for God, and our hearts are restless until we see His glory and pull down in worship and in adoration.

Exalt His name and praise Him, because He is worthy, and He is all that you could ever need or desire. So this day, if your attention is on something else, if you're distracted, if you're chasing after other things, if that's where you're placing your hope today, let me be clear.

None of that stuff compares to the beauty of the Lord. Take it from me. I've chased after all kinds of things that I thought were beautiful, but nothing compares to the beauty of the Lord.

[5:15] Even if everything else fails, He never does. And nothing or no one else can save us from all our troubles. David goes on in verse 4.

I sought the Lord and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Who else can deliver us from all of our fears, big or small?

Is anyone else on the throne? Is anyone else the King who rules over everything? And to kick it up a notch, who else can save us from our sins, and save us from our fear of death, and give us victory over the grave?

Can anyone but the true and living God do that? Of course not. And that's awesome enough, but it's about to get even more awesome.

He will do just that for everyone who seeks Him, and puts their trust in Him. Have you done that, and are you doing that now? Our psalm is calling us to do that this morning.

[6:25] He'll taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

See His beauty. Worship Him. Call on His name. Receive His love for you. Receive His amazing grace. Because the person who takes refuge in Him.

The person who trusts in Him is blessed. Blessed beyond all imagining, because the greatest treasure of all is yours, if you were that person who takes refuge in Him.

Knowing the grace of God in Jesus Christ is the most amazing thing we could ever experience, and it is the only thing that can transform our hearts from seeking after lesser things that will never satisfy us.

The only thing that can transform our hearts from hearts that pursue sin and selfishness above all else to hearts that seek to glorify the One who loved us and died for us.

[7:38] It's the only thing that can change our hearts to hearts that seek to obey Him. It is the only thing that can change our hearts to hearts that seek to please the One who loves us so much.

So David says, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. How do we do that?

We can't do that without looking to the cross and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it is impossible. I ran across this quote earlier in the week from Michael Horton, who says, we have to keep our eyes on the Gospel, the reality of Christ dying for His Church, if we're going to, in any way, shape, or form, obey these commands that we were given by God.

So it might seem that David has taken an unexpected digression in the psalm, as if he went from talking about the glory of the Lord to telling us not to be bad. But there's a connection there if we're looking at it in the right way.

What is it that motivates Christian obedience to God? What is it that drives us to strive after holiness? Is it living in a constant state of terror?

[9:06] I mean, the psalmist talks about the fear of the Lord, but that is not what fear means in this context. Or is it trying really hard to do better? Or, is it looking to the cross, seeing the blood of Jesus shed for us, seeing God's great love for us, and giving His only Son, and seeking by the power of the Holy Spirit, out of gratitude for the new life we have in Jesus, to live for God's glory?

To seek to glorify God by living to please Him. So we need to be careful not to read this psalm in the wrong way.

It's not this sort of works righteousness thing where if you're good, God will bless you. It's not about being good so that God will give you all the stuff you want, in other words.

It's not a prosperity gospel kind of thing where if you're good enough or you have enough faith, you're going to get all that bling that you've been wanting. Now the point is this.

God is worthy of all glory. God is worthy of all praise. God is worthy of all obedience. And He is always faithful to those who call on Him.

[10:27] To those who take refuge in Him. To those who desire to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. So in other words, we should remember that He is always faithful to those who have been redeemed by the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Question. Does that mean that life is always going to be easy and go perfectly according to plan? What do you think? No.

Christians suffer, don't they? I've suffered. Have you? We are never promised that we won't suffer. We are never promised that we won't have afflictions. We are never promised that we won't have trials. But what we are promised is this.

Verse 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all. The promise isn't that as Christians we won't have afflictions.

[11:42] The promise, on the other hand, is that the Lord will give us victory. Now it can be really hard to keep that in mind when we're in the trenches, can't it?

On a personal note, for example, my mother, who loves the Lord, is getting ready to undergo her second open heart surgery, and her first one was only two years ago.

Now I can't say I know exactly why this is happening, but I do know this, that the Lord will deliver her out of her afflictions. What about our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering persecution?

What does this verse mean for them? Speaking of the situation that he and other Nigerian Christians are dealing with, Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi says this, If I die, I will go to be with the Lord, but before I die, I will train many more people to do good, not to render evil for evil, but to invest their lives in the gospel, to lay down their lives for the gospel, to save even one life.

The fear of persecution and the tyranny of death has been defeated by the cross of Jesus Christ. Amen. Those are the words of a man who is afflicted, but knows that the Lord will deliver him from his afflictions.

[13:25] We don't always know why God allows these afflictions in our lives, but we do know if we are believers that in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, all things must work together for our salvation.

Why? Because Jesus has fully paid for all of our sins with His precious blood and has set us free from the tyranny of the devil, and He also watches over us in such a way that not a hair can fall from our heads without the will of our Father in Heaven.

Or, to get a little more contemporary, in the words of that great modern hymn, O Church Arise, when faced with trials on every side, we know the outcome is secure, and Christ will have the prize for which He died, an inheritance of nations.

So, Christian brothers and sisters, glorify God this morning because the outcome is secure. It's already decided. Glorify God this morning because the debt for your sins has been paid in full. Glorify God this morning because all things must work together for your salvation. Glorify God this morning because even if your afflictions are many, the Lord God will deliver you from them, and even our worst enemies, even death and the devil, cannot stand in the way.

[15:10] This morning's psalm ends with this promise. The Lord redeems the life of His servants. None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

If you belong to Jesus, if He is your Lord and Savior, then the Lord has saved your life.

You have forgiveness. You have eternal life. You will never be condemned. He is your refuge, and He is a mighty fortress that will never fail.

And you have His promise that He will grant you what you so desire. To glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. So friends in Christ, this day magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.