



Psalm 34

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. I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. . . . Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD rescues them from them all. He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken. Evil brings death to the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

It is a psalm of jubilant, unrestrained joy. God had heard his plea and delivered him from looming disaster. God has reached to retrieve him from the depths; God had saved his life. I've seen that joy in only a few faces. One was when a not-guilty verdict was rendered by a jury in a trial where the defendant, a nineteen-year-old student, stood firmly by his innocence even when doing so seemed foolhardy. His life hung in the balance. "Strike a deal," he had been encouraged, but he stood by the truth and was acquitted. The other was a single mother who had been accused of neglecting her child and was in danger of losing him to the state's foster system. I had been asked to testify on her behalf, but the case was heard early and as I pulled into the parking lot, she and her supporters were bounding out of the court building, her face radiant with joy and her shouts of "hallelujah!" echoing in the air. Upon seeing me she exclaimed: "Oh, Dr. Weaver, we won. Thank you, Jesus. We *won!*" She had stood up to the system, to the "man," and, much to her surprise and deep gratitude, she had won! She would be taking her little boy home with her that day.

Joy, such joy as this—the joy of healing at the brink of death, of unexpected deliverance from danger, in the long-awaited achievement of a significant goal, in the birth of a healthy child—cannot be contained. Even for the most reticent among us, it has to find expression in words, in song, in shouts of victory, in embracing and being embraced, somehow. Such joy as this and the gratitude from which it springs are meant to be shared. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.* "Thank you, Jesus, we won." It is he who gives us the victory and it is he who deserves our praise.