



# Call To Action: Why, What, How?

## [Psalm 34](#)

Pastor Thom Rittichier

There are some things that call for action. Last Sunday evening Aleta and I had an appointment in Marion. We were going down W. 100, the road that runs by Miller's Merry Manor and the golf course, coming to the intersection at West Water Street which is also St. Rt. 26, and there was an SUV, parked mostly on the road, by a house. And as we were approaching this SUV, there was another car just ahead of us, and we had to stop because of where this SUV was parked. There was also a car turning off West Waters Streets onto that same road, and there was truck behind them. So the traffic was getting backed up. And I said, This isn't working out very well, what's going on here. And so we got stopped, and we were waiting and the lady who had the SUV saw that the traffic was kind of backing up on her. So she ran around, got in her SUV and pulled it off the road a little bit and stopped again. And it was such that a car or two could creep by and wait for the ones coming the other way. And I was thinking, What's up with this?! What's going on here?! Especially because there were cars being affected on St. Rt. 26. And as we crept by, I noticed something. There was a toddler running around in the front yard of that house and she was running around there, right out by the road. And as I crept by, I saw a five year old or so trying to run after her but not accomplishing very much. You see, there were some things that call for action. And that lady needed to stop her SUV in that traffic. Well, you know, I changed my opinion, really, really quickly. As a matter of fact, I felt a little sheepish about me being detained for such a thing as that. There are some things that call for action. Like when brake lights come on, right in front of you, on the highway, as you're moving along. It calls for an action. And it's a correct response, a quick action, you put on the brakes, to make sure things don't start colliding. When someone makes the choking sign, the universal choking sign, it calls for an action. I remember one week in our house, we had that happen twice in a very short period of time, like two days apart. And so the Heimlich maneuver goes into place. Some things call for action to be done immediately. And with a correct response.

This morning we have a call to action. It's a call to action that comes to us from Psalm number 34. And I'm going to ask you to turn there with me. Now as you're turning to Psalm 34, I want you to know that this call of action has an incident that's behind it. And Psalm 34 records for us that incident that is behind it. There is a heading at the top of this psalm which is in the Hebrew Bible. And that heading puts this in an incident where David is on the run, literally, for his life. He's got no provisions, that's very evident from the context of this incident. He's got no one whose for him, it seems that everyone is against him. And he's on the run. This is the incident, if you're with me in Psalm 34. Notice, it's of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he, Abimelech, drove him out, and he went away. Now that incident is recorded for us in 1 Samuel chapter 21. So I'm going to ask you to keep your finger here and turn with me back to 1 Samuel chapter 21. The incident in 1 Samuel is this. David was on the run for his life from King Saul. Saul was jealous and threatened by David. Saul had behaved in such a way that God had removed him from being king of Israel. David had already been anointed king.

As a matter of fact, if you're here with me now in 1 Samuel 21, I'm going to ask you to just go back a couple of chapters and we're going to go over the headings, which are not in the Hebrew Bible, but were put in by the publisher. I'm going to use the ESV headings. And I'm going to have you pick up the flow of what's happening here, what this call to action is. If you're with me, in 1 Samuel, I'm going to start at chapter 16. David's anointed king, that's the heading in the ESV. David goes into service to the king, the heading over verse 14. The heading over chapter 17, David faces Goliath. He does this in the service of Israel and the king. You know what happened there. Then the heading of chapter 18, David and Jonathan have a friendship. I'm going to read a couple verses here just to pick up the nature of this friendship. "As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would not let him," this is David, "returned to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him", the robe of royalty, "and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." There is this deep friendship that exists between Jonathan and David. Saul, going on in chapter 18, verse six heading, develops this jealousy. Chapter 19, Saul tries to kill David. Chapter 20, Jonathan, his close friend, warns him that Saul is attempting to kill him and David goes on the run. He has nothing, not even Jonathan's armor at this point. He has no friends with him. He has no food. He has no weapons. Chapter 21, David goes to Nob, to the priest, Ahimelech. And he talks this priest into giving him the bread that's dedicated here to the service of the Lord. And the priest also gives him this. Notice verse eight of chapter 21. "Then David said to Ahimelech, 'Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.' And the priests said, 'The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.' And David said, 'There is none like that. Give it to me.' And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, 'Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?' And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the

doors of the gates and let his saliva or spittle run down his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, 'Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?' Chapter 22, "David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam."

That's the incident. And David writes Psalm 34 about that incident. It's a call to action. David was called to action. He acted like an idiot, like he was insane. He thought, It'll get me out of here. A lot of commentators say that at this point in his life, David lost trust in God, in that God had appointed him king. And David is here, acting like a madman. Yet I want you to know what was going on inside of David when he did this. That's what Psalm 34 is about. And from that, David issues a call. This morning we're going to talk about 1) why, 2) what, and 3) how, concerning this call. First, a call to praise and why. Next, a call to participate in what and why. And finally, a call to practice how, what God is calling us to through David in this incident, and why. David, literally on the run, has to act quickly, like brake lights coming on, like choking and the correct response, like stopping the other vehicles on the road if you have to for someone who is in a very dangerous spot and doesn't know it. This morning, we have a call to action. And I want you to pick up with me that David isn't saying this is for me alone. This is a call to action for you and I as well. We're going to start here with this call.

You will notice that Abimelech is mentioned in the opening of this psalm. The term of Abimelech is a title for the Philistine ruler, like Pharaoh is the title for the Egyptian ruler and Caesar is the title for the ruler of Rome. So Abimelech was the title of a ruler. And this was when David changed his behavior before that Philistine ruler. Which, by the way, where he went in Gath of the Philistines, that's where Goliath was from and he was slain in that very place. And David shows up at that place, with guess what? The sword of Goliath that he's carrying. These are interesting circumstances here, under the providence of God. He shows up there, where Goliath, the champion of the Philistines was slain by David, carrying Goliath sword. And David used, what did he use? The stones in a sling. Yeah. Interesting. David is desperate here. David looks at his life as being toast. That's why he runs from Israel to the coast land of the Philistines. And that's why he goes to this king, this Abimelech of Gath. And when he does, David sees that he's in a dangerous spot here that he didn't even know. So he reacts quickly, and begins to act insane. Now in this psalm, David doesn't boast about his wise maneuver, to act insane...saliva running down his beard, jotting things on the door posts that mean nothing. He's not talking about how wise he is that he got himself out of a jam through his quick maneuvering, his fast actions. It's not what goes on in him. It's not what happens here.

Notice what he says Psalm 34. David starts this way. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord." David starts here doing this himself, going into praise, to blessing God, to expression and appropriate appreciation and adoration, a thanksgiving to God. You know, we do a lot of things with our mouth. We talk. Anyone here not talk today? You know the number of words that we say in one day is absolutely amazing. And of course, we know that our talk is directly connected to the heart, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. So our talk is directly connected to what's going on in our thoughts and our feelings and our

choices, what's going on in our heart. We use our mouth a lot. We use it to eat, of course. And that's directly connected to our stomach. Jesus, let that be known. We use our mouth a lot, to express a smile of approval. How much more encouraging it is when somebody smiles and kind of lifts you up. But we also have this thing where we curl our lip, and express disapproval. We use our mouth a lot, a lot. But this is what it's made for. I will bless the Lord, I will express to him appropriate appreciation and honor, adoration, thanks at all times. That's what David said, His praise will continually be in my mouth. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Is that what flows out of your mind, right out of your mouth and mind in your talking? David starts here, doing what he calls us to himself, giving praise to God, lifting him up, raising the opinion of God up, intentionally with our mouth. That's what it was made for. We use it for a lot of things. This is what it was made for. I will do this continually, giving praise with my mouth from my soul. Look at verse two, where he says here, "My soul makes its boast in the Lord." This is a correct response. This is a call to action that has a correct response. In a dangerous situation, indeed. When you need to slam on the brakes, absolutely. To save someone from choking, for sure. A correct response with the mouth, from the soul, from the inner person. Now David is calling us to this. That's why I'm making such a big deal of this. This is a call to lift God up in those situations of life that is a correct response. One that our mouth is made for and David starts here doing it himself. And he calls us to join him. Notice what he says to us now in verse three, "Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together!" Let's do this together. Come on and join me. And his point is, verse two, "let all the humble hear and be glad." Humble is putting yourself in the appropriate place with God, which is lower, and you recognize and place your yourself, in your heart, in that place. That's when this call to praise with the mouth comes from the soul.

This is what David calls us to, to join him in this. You know, funny thing about giving thanks and praise. It just never seems to be appropriate. Even on Thanksgiving Day, a lot of times we'll go right through the day, maybe say a prayer around the food time for the food. But a lot of things that we talk about, most of it, the thanksgiving part just hardly ever seems to be appropriate. Have you ever noticed that about Thanksgiving? You kind of feel like this is weird, this giving thanks. That's why we need a call to it. Even if it comes from dangerous and dire circumstances and places. We need to call to it. Because David goes there, when he did an action. And he doesn't think about his brilliance because actually it was really quite foolish, what he was doing, mimicking a fool. But he does go here which for some reason, hardly ever seems to flow out of us. It just seldom feels that way, even on Thanksgiving Day.

David states, why, why looking at experience, his and yours. He says first of all, his experience, verse four, "I sought the Lord and He answered me and he delivered me from all my fears." This was David. He was afraid. And he was crying out to God. He was crying out to God in this dangerous situation that he got into, he didn't even know it was going to be dangerous like this. He cries out to God. As he said, The Lord delivered me from all my fears. Now your experience, verse five, "Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed." Those who, like David in dire circumstances, look to the Lord and seek him, crying out, even if motivated by fear, will have a shining face that beams This is David's promise, there will be generated from the Lord, a reason to shine here. Radiant in your appearance. Radiant, he says, and their faces shall not be ashamed. Notice again, David's experience, verse six, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all of his troubles." His

experience, all of his fears were managed in the Lord. He's experienced, all of his troubles, he was rescued from all. What does all mean in the Bible? It means ALL! And your experience, your possible experience. Verse seven, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them." That is a promise. And he delivers them—the fears, the troubles—he delivers from them all, he delivers.

This is a call to praise. This is a call to praise, even when the circumstances don't look like it. Where was David at? He's fearing for his life from his avowed enemies, whom he took out their champion. And now he's here in their hands. This is about as difficult a circumstances you can imagine. He's got no friends, he's got no food, except what he just got from the priest of the sacred bread. And he's got nowhere to go. It's a dire circumstance. Praise is appropriate here? Yes! It's not because of what you do or what you are going through, but because of who the Lord is promised to be in your life. He will deliver, he will save, he will rescue, in all of the troubles.

Now, I remember working with a university student who wanted to go into the ministry. And he was talking about an event that had taken place in the university where he was at, where these people were in a vehicle crash, believers from the university that he was at, and some of them died, and others were injured. And he questioned how did the Lord prove true and his promises here? Did the Lord? He did. Because even though they didn't have the space that they needed to survive in that crash, God delivered them. He delivered them. He rescued them. Because I tell you a truth. All of our life, the most of it, isn't here. It's not here. Most of our life is after our time here. And I assure you, whether in this life, or in the next, God delivers those who fear, those who trust, those who look, he delivers, he made space for them. Even if his plan for them here on the earth, in which he does work everything after the council of his own will, is not that they be here. So it's a call to praise that he gives to us, even in circumstances which are tough.

And I want you to know that our participation in this is the next call. Notice what he says here to us. He says, verse eight, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" David appeals for us to participate in this, to taste, to check this out, to take a sample of this and see if it doesn't prove true, that the Lord is good. It's a call to participate. And the call goes like this, verse nine, "Oh, fear of the Lord." And this fear thing is an apprehension about dealing with him that isn't according to His way, there's apprehension here. I'm reminded of the account in the Old Testament where somebody grabbed the ark of the covenant, which was not accord to God's direction. There is an apprehension here about dealing with him, not in his way. And yet this fear thing goes deeper, because it goes to the heart, where there is such a respect for him and his way that we just realized this is really foolish not to do it. Lord to give up, I'd be a fool, I'd be a fool, I'd be a fool. I act like a fool, I'd be a fool. That's what it would be. That's what it would be. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints," who are interested and committed in going his way.

And David assures us here, this is why to participate. He says this, he says it very clearly and distinctly, verse eight, "Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" Verse nine, "For those who fear him have no

lack!" Will they have lack of space if they're in an auto accident,? Not according to His plan. They will be perfectly provided for and guaranteed a safe arrival on where he has for them to go. On that day, in his way, according to his time, and it will be blessed, happiness generating, and there will be no lack. He illustrates this with the young lions. This is from life here. This isn't for life in the afterlife. This is us handling life here. He says, verse ten, "The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." There is this benefit, this provision, this blessing, this wealth, this prosperity, this good delivered in him, and there is no lack, not with him, not with his people, not ever, not even if it's a crash, where there's no space for you, will you lack. He will be there and he will deliver! That's our confidence for life. That's what we have here. This is why we are to participate in this. And by the way, just so I can be clear here on what we participate in, this tasting, this seeing, it has to do with living out a life where we take refuge in him. He said that here. He said, "Blessed is the man", verse eight, "who takes refuge in him!" Those who fear him. This is what we taste in, that we run to him. What is a refugee?

What's a refugee? We have some going on in Myanmar. As a matter of fact, there is a tremendous prayer request. And I think we may need to step in here and financially help this children's home and some ministry is going on in Myanmar. Right now, there is a political coup. They're also having COVID. The folks that are in ministry, the pastors there, have to be taken to a clinic where they turned the School of Biblical Theology into a clinic to take care of the pastors and the others. You know what Myanmar is, right? It used to be Burma, old Burma. They're having to take care of them. And they're crying out for a need oxygen generators, to have a way for the sick to breath. The missionary who is there, and it's not a missionary from the US, it's a native missionary who is there, which by the way, is really a wise way to go. Because Americans are not the Savior of the world. Amen. Jesus is the Savior of the world. And if we are blessed to help them, then so be it because there are our brothers. And they are turning the School of Biblical Theology into a clinic, where they can take care of these people in Myanmar, Old Burma, from COVID and many refugees from a political coup, because the nations being torn apart. So what is the refugee?

What's a refugee? People who are seeking refuge, right? They're running some place where they can be safe, secure, provided for, protected. Those who take refuge in him, that's the practice, running to him like a refugee, whatever the circumstances, running to him for the safe, the secure, the provided, the protected. And even if your space here gets really cramped, and he takes you out, you're provided for. The practice is making the Lord your refuge and his praise on your mouth. It's the practice of having such a deep seated respect for him, that you would be really apprehensive about not going with him. That's the practice, the fear of the Lord, the taking of refuge in him, the running to him and being safe. That's what the Scriptures say to us.

Final point here. David invites us to practice. It's a call to practice. And I want you to know this is the heart of the message right here. It's the call to practice. Praise, participating with the Lord as your refuge, whom you respond to with this fear. The call to practice. David invites here, verse 11, "Come, O, children, listen to me. I will teach you." This is for now. Come, I will teach. This is imperative. That's what

David use is here. It's an imperative. And by the way, an RSVP is anticipated. What is an RSVP? It's a response. It means in English, responded please. It's actually French. But I don't speak French. I can sure try if you want me to. I'm not gonna try. There's an anticipated reply to this. It's an RSVP. It comes to us. RSVP. It's a practice, come, listen, I'll teach you. I'll teach you this fear of the Lord. I'll teach you this, making him a refuge, I'll teach you.

But David doesn't present it to us here in sentiment, in heart only. He presents it here in action. He gives a question first, verse twelve, "What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Who wants to love life and see good days? Who here would like that? Who would like to have a life that you just love and you have a lot of days and there are good days? Who here would like that? I remember my yearbook from high school. In going through it and looking at what everybody graduating that year said about what they were looking for in the future. And over and over and over the statement was, I want to be happy. And some said, I want to get some money and fame. But the whole reason they wanted that was to be happy. That's what they wanted, to be happy, I want life with good days. That's what I want. Who desires that? That's the beginning of his teaching here. He says it's in what you say, that life with good days, verse 13, "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit." Those things that we use so much, that we talk, it's in what you say, it's in what you say. This fear of the Lord, this taking of refuge in him, and how it plays out, the goodness of the Lord, the goodness that he promised, that we'll have no lack of, how we see it as an experience. It's in what you say, this is where the fear of the Lord lies for you and for me, it's in what you say.

And it's in what you do, verse 14, it's in what you do, "Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." This is where it is for us. And I want you to know there is the perfect balance here. The perfect balance, God's promise of deliverance and provision, but the guarantee that we will have troubles and trials here, but he will always deliver, when we walk with this fear that runs to him is a refuge, in what we do and what we say. This is the balance here. Nobody is good in and of themselves, and who can tame the tongue. It's a relentless evil. Remember in James, he says we set our whole course of life on fire. This is Pastor James, and I feel comfortable quoting the pastor who spoke in the Scriptures, amen. Can I be comfortable with that? You agree, I can be comfortable with that. Well, he said, we set the course of our life on fire from hell. That's what he said. James said that, that you are setting the course of your life on fire of hell, in what we say, and what we do, when it doesn't make him our refuge, where we're running to, when there is no apprehension of not going his way or holding such a respect for him, that you bring your words and your actions in life along with him. Folks, this is an amazing thing. This is the perfect balance. We're saved by grace through faith. But it's to a life that means something forever, in what you say and what you do. Right now, what you say and what you do, means something forever. That's the perfect balance.

That is where we go and here's why we participate. I'm going to just run through these because that's how he presents them here. He just runs through them. Here's why. Here's why to practice life like this. He says it's because the Lord is for, he is for, God is on your side, he is on your team, he's pulling for you and you will win. Verse 15, "The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and he his ears towards their

cry." His eyes are always fixed on them. And he is always glued in on them. He is always for you. And he hears you in those circumstances or here's why, this is the option, verse 16, or "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil," who do what hurts, what harms, outside of God's direction, "to cut off the memory of them from the earth." That's what he does. Then he says it again. Here's why. Because the Lord is for, he is on the side of, notice verses 17-20. "When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and he delivers them out of all their troubles." That's a promise. "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." When they look at what their life has been. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." There's the balance. We've got troubles here, "but the Lord delivers them out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken." God is on it, he takes care of it, you won't have a broken toe, except he works it to his purpose for good. This option or it's life against you. That's what it will be. Verse 21, "Affliction will slay the guilty, the wicked", the one who's not lining up with him. "And those who hate the righteous," what he's calling us to, "will be condemned." They will be, its life against you. Hey, question. Does it ever seem like everything's against you? Does it ever seem like nothing's going right? There's a practice. Run to him, as a refuge. Seek him, he delivers. He answers. His eyes are glued on you, if you belong to him. Otherwise, if you don't, then know this, life is against you. Because the author, the creator, the provider of life, is going a different way. And it will seem that it's against you. And it will be affliction. Believe me, this is what God says.

Bottom line, ready for a bottom line? Bottom line, God, who he is, you are God. You are God. Verse 22, "The Lord redeems the life of his servants." He paid what was required in the death of Jesus Christ, he paid what was required for sin. He rescues our life for himself. For eternity indeed, but for time here too. With all of its troubles, with all of its opportunities to give thanks, with all of its struggles, with all of its rewards, with all of its shortcomings, with all of its challenges, he redeems the life of his servant. The call is to praise him, participate with him in this and bring it into the practice of your words and your actions.

Oh, Lord, You are God. You are the King of everything. And as a result, where our life needs to be is with David, not acting foolishly but taking you as the refuge. Let it be Lord, let it be, let this morning help all of us renew in our inner person the drive to let it be that. In Jesus name. Amen.