

# Psalms 34:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

## Analysis

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**The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.** David reveals God's particular nearness to brokenhearted and His saving of contrite. This demonstrates God's compassion for humble sufferers and His commitment to save those recognizing their spiritual poverty.

The LORD is nigh unto declares divine proximity. Nigh (qarob) means near, close, at hand. God isn't distant from suffering but close to sufferers. This nearness is personal, intentional, compassionate. Them that are of a broken heart identifies those experiencing nearness. Broken heart (shabar leb) means crushed, shattered heart. Hebrew shabar describes violent breaking—smashing pottery, fracturing bones. These aren't slightly sad but devastated, crushed by circumstances or conviction of sin. God draws near specifically to these brokenhearted ones.

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit provides parallel promise. Saveth (yasha') means delivers, rescues, saves. Contrite spirit (daka ruach) means crushed, bruised, beaten down spirit. Daka means to crush, be broken to pieces. Spirit (ruach) represents inner being, life-breath, emotional state. Contrite describes those humbled by sin, broken over their condition, recognizing unworthiness and need. God saves not the proud self-sufficient but the humble broken ones acknowledging need.

Isaiah 57:15 echoes this: Thus says High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in high and holy place, with him also who is of contrite

and humble spirit, to revive spirit of humble and to revive heart of contrite ones. Isaiah 66:2: But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of contrite spirit, and trembles at My word. God particularly attends to broken, humble, contrite people. His salvation comes to those recognizing their spiritual bankruptcy, not those trusting their righteousness.

This is gospel. We must be broken over sin before being saved from sin. Must recognize spiritual poverty before receiving spiritual riches. Blessed are poor in spirit, for theirs is kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:3-4). God saves contrite, not complacent; broken, not self-sufficient.

## Historical Context

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Brokenhearted appears throughout Psalms as description of those God specially helps. Psalm 51:17 declares: Sacrifices of God are broken spirit; broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Psalm 147:3: He heals brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. This reveals God's character—He opposes proud but draws near to humble.

Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1 regarding His ministry: Spirit of Lord is upon Me...to heal brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives (Luke 4:18). His ministry targeted broken, outcast, sinful people who recognized their need. Pharisees (self-righteous) rejected Him; tax collectors and sinners (broken, contrite) received Him. Luke 15 celebrates God's joy over finding lost sheep, lost coin, lost son. God seeks and saves those broken enough to recognize their lostness.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean to have broken heart and contrite spirit—how does this differ from mere sadness?
2. Why is God particularly near to brokenhearted rather than to strong, successful, self-sufficient?
3. How does brokenness over sin prepare heart to receive gospel and experience God's salvation?
4. In what ways have you experienced God's nearness during times of crushing circumstances or deep conviction?
5. How can you maintain contrite spirit without sliding into paralyzing despair or self-focused wallowing?

## Interlinear Text

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קָר וּב	! הָיָה	לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי	וְאֵת לֵב	
is nigh	The LORD	unto them that are of a broken	heart	H853
H7138	H3068	H7665	H3820	
וְכַיֵּי	רוּחַ	וְיִשְׁעֵי:		
such as be of a contrite	spirit	and saveth		
H1793	H7307	H3467		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 147:3** (Parallel theme): He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

**Psalms 145:18** (References Lord): The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

**Isaiah 57:15** (Spirit): For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

**Isaiah 61:1** (Spirit): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

**Psalms 51:17** (Spirit): The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

**Ezekiel 36:26** (Spirit): A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

**Isaiah 66:2** (Spirit): For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

**Psalms 85:9** (Salvation): Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

**Isaiah 55:6** (References Lord): Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

**Luke 4:18** (Spirit): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,