

Psalm 41 • O LORD, Be Gracious to Me

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Psalm chapter 41. This is an interesting chapter because David opens up this Psalm by saying,

“Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble, the LORD delivers him;” (ESV)

And I want to stop you right there to tell you that that's the theme basically. That's the essence. That's the theme of this Psalm, that David wants you to know, and he's going to go into detail about how the Lord takes care of those who take care of others. But he basically just wants you to know that when a man or a woman cares for the weak and the poor, it's something the Lord notices.

That's the basic essence of what he wants you to know, and furthermore, the law of sowing and reaping comes into play here in such a way that when we care for people, we find ourselves cared for. The law of sowing and reaping is something that often people only think of in the negative sense. Usually when you talk about sowing and reaping, somebody immediately says, yeah, you know, if I'm jealous, or if I'm angry, I'm going to reap jealousy and angry or anger.

And if I'm greedy, I'm going to reap greed and all the other things that we think of kind of in a negative vein. But how many times have you stopped to think about the wonderful things that God gives you and I the opportunity to do that are positive, that we can then reap back a harvest from those things as well?

What are some examples of this, what David is saying here in verse 1, *“Blessed is the one who considers the poor.”* Well, we know that in the Book of Acts there was a man by the name of Cornelius, you'll remember, who was actually visited by an angel. What did the angel say to him? The angel said, *“Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before the Lord.”*

Remember? In other words, God took note. God took note of the things that you did. He takes note of the acts of those who belong to him. Okay, now David is going to go on here in verse 2. And he's going to begin to speak of the kind of care that the Lord gives to those who care for others. Verse 2,

“the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.”

Furthermore, verse 3, *“The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.”*

Now, I want to stop for just a moment here and tell you, these are some of the promises that God included in the Mosaic Covenant. These are part of the Old Testament covenant that God had with Israel. God told the people of Israel that if they obeyed His Law, followed His Word, He would bless them in the land. He blessed them with long life. He would bless them by removing sickness from them. He would bless them by giving them dominion over their enemies.

David is simply recounting the things that God spoke through Moses when He gave the Law to Israel here, and they're just some of the promises that were given to Israel. Verse 4,

“As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!”

Now this is interesting. Earlier, David talks about the man who's going to be blessed by the Lord because he's been obedient. But now, as he starts verse 4, he calls out to the graciousness of God because he hasn't been obedient.

Look what David admits there again in verse 4. He says, Lord, I need your healing because I've actually sinned. I have not kept Your Word. I have not done what I was supposed to do, and I'm calling out to you. I'm crying out for forgiveness and your grace for breaking your Law.

Look what he says in verse 5,

*“My enemies say of me in malice, “When will he die, and his name perish?”
⁶ And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. ⁷ All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, “A deadly thing is poured out on him;...”*

He won't, he's not going to get up from this one. He'll never rise from where he lies.

And then verse 9 is important. He says, *“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”*

To lift your heel is an Old Testament sort of a statement regarding betrayal, and obviously, of all the things that can happen to a person there's probably nothing more painful and distressing than being betrayed by a close friend or someone who's close to you, whether they're a close friend or not. David experienced it.

Jesus experienced it in the betrayal of Judas. Jesus quoted this verse when He spoke of Judas, and it's interesting, however, that he left out some of the words. When Jesus quoted this passage in Psalm 41, he left out a couple of the words. Let me show you, first of all, what Jesus said in John chapter 3. Jesus said,

John 13:18 (NIV)

I'm not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: He who shares my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

I'm not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: He who shares my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

What did Jesus leave out? He left out that portion about my close friend in whom I trusted. He left that out, and he left it out personally because Judas was not a close friend, and he was not someone Jesus trusted. The Bible says that Jesus knew men and he knew what was in the heart of men therefore he did not entrust himself to any man. Did you ever read that in the Word? Jesus never entrusted Himself to men.

Why? Because He knew what was in their hearts. He clearly knew what was in their hearts, and Jeremiah tells us what's in the heart of man. It's deceitful. It's wicked, and it's beyond cure. Jesus knew that, so He entrusted Himself to no man, but He still felt the sting of someone close to Him who had betrayed Him.

Now, David goes on in verse 10. He says,

*“But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them!
¹¹ By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. ¹² But you have upheld me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever.”*

Alright. David is talking to the Lord here. Asking the Lord to be gracious to him, asking the Lord to raise him up, asking the Lord to take care of him, so that his enemy doesn't win, in a sense, or delight in David's downfall. Look at verse 12 again with me. This is important, *“But you have upheld me because of my integrity.”* That's an interesting statement for a man who just a couple of verses ago said, essentially, I have sinned.

He said, he clearly admitted in verse 4 that he had sinned against the Lord. When you admit your sin before the Lord, do you ever talk to the Lord then in that same prayer about your integrity? I usually don't. I don't usually bring it up. Because that's not something I feel like is probably appropriate. But David did! Verse 4, *“I have sinned against you!, ”* Lord.

Now, he says in verse 12,

“But you have upheld me because of my integrity...”

What is he talking about? That's really interesting, isn't it? Listen, the usage of the word integrity is not referring to sinlessness by any stretch, obviously. David is talking about the integrity that moved him to confess his sins. For you and I that might be a regular thing. I mean, you and I might be pretty used to it. There's a whole world out there that will not confess their sin. They will not do it.

They may even recognize that what they're doing is a sin. They will not confess it to God, and they will not ask for forgiveness. You know what it takes to do that? It takes integrity, and it's a kind of integrity that God loves and appreciates. You and I are far from perfect. We mess up on a fairly regular basis. You think God doesn't know? Of course He's obviously aware.

What does He care most about related to that? He cares about the attitude that comes out of that sin where we come to Him, confess it. Say, Lord, please forgive me. I've messed up. Please forgive me for what I've done.

And that is an attitude of integrity that David said, because of that, you uphold me. Which means you support me. You sustain me because when I sin, I'm willing to admit it, and I come to you and I say, Forgive me, Lord, for I have sinned.

What an amazing insight we gained from this. God loves the heart of the one who comes to Him in brokenness, right? In brokenness, he says, Lord, I'm sorry. I've messed up again. I think some people stand a distance from the Lord and

won't say those kinds of words because, I don't know, they're afraid that they're going to be such a disappointment to God or it's just such a difficult thing to address their sin, but God loves it.

God loves it when we come to Him and just say, I am so sorry. And that's not to say that we use that attitude as a license to sin more. When your heart really cares, you don't want to displease your Father, your Heavenly Father. You don't want to do things that you shouldn't do. But when you do them, and you will, be quick.

Be quick to go to Him. He will forgive you. As we already quoted 1 John 1:9. *“If you confess your sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

And because David felt that support and that sustenance from the Lord, he was moved to write that very last verse. Verse 13,

*“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen.”*

And with that statement we conclude this first division of the Book of Psalms.