

Psalm 41

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Date: 09 February 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Why don't you pray with me before we spend some time looking at this part of God's word. Our Father in heaven, thank you for giving us your life-giving word. And this morning as we plumb the depths of your grace, please help us to be cut to the heart and grown in the likeness of our saviour, the Lord Jesus.

We pray it in his name. Amen. Judas is remembered for one thing. The betrayal of Jesus with a kiss.

In fact, the word Judas is synonymous with betrayal. I don't know anyone who would name their son Judas. I don't think you would.

To be a Judas is to be utterly wicked. And as we move into Psalm 41, we move deep into the heart of God. I don't know if you've ever been betrayed.

I haven't as far as I know. I'm sure I would if I had been. But I have been deceived. And that was bad enough.

[1 : 1 0] Integrity, on the other hand, is a noble character trait to have. And when we believe what we say and what we do all lines up, that's integrity.

At one level, to have integrity requires that we're not a Judas. And as David writes this psalm, he himself is particularly the case study, I think.

Blessed is the one who considers the poor. Now, the idea of the poor here is those that are weak, those who are at a low ebb of life. The helpless, the dependent one, the one who needs others to help them for life itself.

That's the idea of the poor here. And as we've read in Psalm 37 to Psalm 39, David has been in the pit of despair, wondering whether life is worth living almost, whether it's worth being righteous, wondering whether he can endure the discipline of God, wondering whether he can cope with being and feeling forsaken by God.

See, it's easy to ignore the poor and despise the weak, to have little time for the oppressed and certainly look down upon them. I mean, that's the way of Hinduism.

[2 : 3 2] They will say, you're getting what you deserve. From sins in a past life. But biblical Christianity is really different.

It's one of grace. We know that our present situation in life is not simply a matter of karma, right? And we shouldn't jump to conclusions about why someone is poor, someone is weak or oppressed.

There's not a straight line connection between sin and sickness or blessing and righteousness. Those lines are... They wobble all over the place.

The scriptures paint a tapestry of reasons why people are needy and poor and in distress. David often says it's because of his sin. Like Job, the faithful might be tried by difficulties because the very fact is that they are righteous.

In other circumstances, God might be training someone to be patient. Sometimes it's to make an example and to explain the power of God that sin and sickness comes.

- [3 : 46] It's all too easy to look on the downcast. I mean, when Paul was bitten by a snake, some concluded that he had been a murderer, right?
- And then when he survived, they said, well, he must be a god. You know, you just can't work it out, really. Speaking rashly and indiscriminately concerning others, making statements of fact about why they're in a situation they are in is really not our call to make.
- We're simply not in the position to do so. And yet the principle of Psalm 41 is this. The one who considers the needy, the humble, the humble situation is indeed blessed.
- Which is why we want to encourage what we do here, the food gives program at church. Which is why we want to encourage prayer for the persecuted church. Which is why we want to encourage support for the Barnum's Aid.
- We need to consider to look at and care for the poor and the weak. For one day, that may be me.
- [4 : 55] At one level, that's what God considers true religion. James chapter 1, 27. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this. To visit orphans and widows in their affliction.
- And to keep oneself unstained from the world. Don't forget the last paragraph, the last phrase. But yes, care for the poor and the oppressed is true religion.
- And David understands that as he considers the weak, right, the Lord will protect him from the plans of the wicked, the will of his enemies. And the Lord will look after him when he too is sick.
- But it does seem a little odd, doesn't it? That if David does what is good, and that will result in God protecting him, what do we conclude when trouble comes his way?
- When he is afflicted. Is it right to think that trouble came because he didn't consider the poor the weak?
- [6 : 06] It's complicated, isn't it? So let's have a look at the weak king, verses 4 to 5. Straight away we come to the tables being turned.
- We see David as the weak one in distress. And instead of people being gracious to him and considering him and caring for him, we see people actually oppressing him.
- David's in need of grace, but instead his enemies, and not only his enemies, his close friends despise and reject him. Look, as for me, I said, O Lord, be gracious to me.
- Heal me, for I've sinned against you. My enemies saved me in malice. When will he die and his name perish? They don't want him to recover.
- They want him dead. They want him forgotten. They're certainly not going to care for the weak, are they? When will he die?
- [7 : 08] When will his name perish? See, not only is David despised, but he's also demonised. Have a look at verses 6 to 7, where he's demonised.
- How would you like these guys to visit you on your sickbed in hospital? Look at verse 6 and 7. And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity.
- When he goes out, he tells it abroad, all who hate me whisper together about me. They imagine the worst for me. You know how they have advanced medical directives for when you go into hospital and you might not sort of do so well?
- Like, do not resuscitate. Someone wise once mentioned to me, once, that they should have, they would like, an advanced spiritual directive.
- And that is instructions on what book of the Bible to read to me when I'm encompassmentus, right? And what kind of prayers to pray for me when I'm encompassmentus.

[8 : 16] There you go. There's an advanced spiritual directive you might want to consider, writing up and giving to people, as well as medical directives. David didn't have one, by the sound of things, an advanced spiritual directive.

And as David lies in his sickbed, the visitors he has speak words that are not comforting. They are false. They are empty. They are vain. They are worthless. They're not there to help. And when they leave, they slander him.

They say what's not true about him when he's not present. His character is assassinated in the public forum. And not only that, they start whispering about him, making statements about him, saying things which are not necessarily true.

And the more that is said and the more that it's believed, what is said about someone in secret is delicious to hear, you know. The scandal, the intrigue, it draws us in. I want to know more.

What are you saying? Let me say my danger is to entertain those who would whisper things about others. And my danger is to entertain the murmurings of those who would speak negatively about others, which then fuels character assassination of others.

[9 : 25] It's not fair. It's not godly. It is not wholesome. It's actually wicked to spread rumours and drag people down with second-hand and third-hand reports against another.

And they imagine the worst for me, you see there in verse 7. Notice this imagine. They start putting two and two together and get 25. And instead of thinking graciously, instead of trying to rightly understand the situation, they end up making statements of fact out of fiction, which is called confirmation bias.

That is, to search for and interpret and favour and recall information in a way that confirms and supports one's prior beliefs or values. It's all too easy.

It's all too wicked. Not only is he demonised, he's deceived. Verses 8 to 9. They conclude that he's cursed by God.

Wickedness or a deadly thing has been poured out on him. And when will he die where he lies? Which is not what David thought about himself, by the way.

[10 : 38] And David is deceived by his closest friend. Which brings us to one of the worst character traits someone can have. Duplicity and, in the end, betrayal.

Pretending to be a loyal friend when, in actual fact, you are the exact opposite. The one you trusted proves to be your enemy.

The one you let into your confidence sells you out. The one you shared meals with, life, with family, with tears, with turns on you. They say the person most likely to actually abuse your child is the friend that you invite into your family.

That's what lifting up the heel means. David may be reflecting on the occasion when his own son conspired against him with his counsellor, Ahithophel, turning against him to join in the conspiracy in 2 Samuel chapter 15, which led to him becoming a fugitive as he fled Jerusalem and those who tried to kill him.

Deception is the art of the devil. Lies are his native tongue. And far to be the character of a Christian. So David is utterly alone.

[12 : 12] Not even his supposedly closest friend is for him. In fact, is betraying him. However, David's hope is in the Lord in verse 10 to 13.

The one who is who he is. The one who will be who he will be. Slow to anger. Abounding in steadfast love.

And so David cries out for deliverance again. Something we heard God answer last week in Psalm 40. Finally, God heard his cry and lifted him up and put him on a rock, standing firm.

And what he says is honest and at the same time shocking here in verse 10. Have a look at it within verse 10. But you, our Lord, be gracious to me and raise me up.

Gracious to me. Fair enough. Yeah. He pleads with the Lord himself to give him what he doesn't deserve. Something that he will need constantly. Raise me up.

[13 : 19] Fair enough. Raise me up off my sickbed. Restore me to health and vitality. A totally reasonable plea. Yeah. But why? And here's what shocked me.

That I may repay them. He wanted to be vindicated. He wanted to be vindicated. Restored to health.

Why? So that he can repay them for the evil that they have done to him. Now, what do we make of that?

Is that the kind of thing a righteous person would do? What happens to forgiving those who sin against you?

What happens to turning the other cheek? What happens to letting the Lord be the judge? It is unusual that David looks to do the repaying and not God.

[14 : 18] David plans to do the repaying, the punishing. And yet, as we look at the scriptures, David did have people executed. You can check it out in 2 Samuel chapter 4, verse 1 to 10.

Someone comes with news of what they think is good news to bring to David. And they've done something they shouldn't have done. And David has them executed. David writes a whole psalm about executing judgment on the wicked.

Psalms 101. Kings do have authority and wield the sword for a reason. It is appropriate to fear the king, to fear the wrath and the vengeance of a king.

And when David is raised, when he's repaid the wicked, he knows then that God is pleased with him. He knows then that the enemy has had the tables turned on them.

They are defeated. See there? By this, I know, verse 11, that you delight in me, my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.

[15 : 31] God has done it because of why? Because of his integrity. But you have upheld me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever.

Because of what David believed, what David said, what David did, that they are in agreement, the Lord has raised him up to be with him forever.

Which brings us to the end of the matter and the end of the book one of Psalms. See here? Praise God. From everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen.

This is true. This is truly true. And yet I feel a bit awkward, don't you? Because the David we know from Scripture is a flawed king.

It doesn't quite sit right that this David is the kind of king who lives up to all he proclaims about himself. I mean, in his dealing with Bathsheba and her husband, he himself was found wanting and rebuked by the prophet Nathan.

[16 : 48] And he admits that he's a sinner needing mercy from God. He's far from perfect. His integrity would be questionable, to say the least. Could it be that there's someone who can be the perfect king we need?

And the good news is, yes, there is someone. We look down the family line of David until we come to Jesus, who is the perfect one. Jesus is all the king David foreshadows and more.

For Jesus ratchets up all the things that David was meant to be to another level. I mean, he was despised. Time and time again, Jesus was rejected by his own people.

He was the stone the builders rejected, which becomes the cornerstone. He speaks about being the king of Israel and the elders and chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees will reject him and kill him.

He says that three times. They actually plot for his death. He's despised. He's demonised. Isaiah 53, which points us to the suffering servant, speaks of Jesus, says that we brought a deadly thing, was poured on him and he was smitten by God.

[18 : 09] And when Jesus ate with the lowly, the despised and the outcome, the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled against him. In Luke chapter 5, they called him a Samaritan and actually said he was a demon in John chapter 5.

And they said all kinds of things he did were by the power of the demons, the devil, Luke chapter 11. Oh, he's demonised. He's despised. He's also deceived.

Worse was still to come. For Jesus quotes Psalm 41 in John chapter 13. Please turn to John chapter 13 with me in your Bibles. It's the Feast of the Tabernacle, John chapter 13.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. John chapter 13. His disciples are eating and celebrating with him and those who had been with him for the last three years, seeing all he did, hearing all he did, sleeping in the same kind of taverns he would have slept in if he slept anywhere, even calling them his friends, he said in John chapter 15.

He washes their feet and hints that one of them is an enemy within. He teaches them that no servant's greater than their master, setting them an example for what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and then come to verse 12.

[19 : 27] When he'd washed their feet, John chapter 13, verse 12, and put on his outer garment and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I've done to you? You call me teacher and Lord and you are right, for I am so.

If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I've given you an example that you also do just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Verse 18.

I'm not speaking of all of you. I know whom I've chosen, but the scripture will be fulfilled. He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.

I'm telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

[20 : 41] So here he is, Jesus, talking about Psalm 41. Someone there is going to lift their heel against him.

Verse 21. After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

The disciples looked at one another as uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at the table and sitting at Jesus' side.

So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it?

I wonder what they'd do if they knew who it was. Jesus answered, It's he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I've dipped it.

[21 : 48] They're all going to get some of that bread, aren't they? So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

Then after he'd taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, What are you going to do? Do quickly. Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.

Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, Buy what we need for the feast, or that he should give some to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out.

And here's that ominous note. And it was night. Jesus is betrayed by one of those who was closest to him. Later on, he'll lead the guard to him betraying with a kiss.

Someone who lived with him, someone who walked with him, someone he taught, someone who worked with him, someone who was close with him, someone he shared life with. And not only was Jesus betrayed, he was also abandoned by those who were closest to him when he was eventually tried.

[23 : 03] And yet, he is the one who considered the weak, isn't he? Jesus is the one who considered the poor. When he looked over Jerusalem and saw the people harassed and like sheep without a shepherd, remember what he said to them?

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, a city that kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to it. How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you're not willing. Jesus cares for us, the poor, the weak, the maligned, the ones caught up in sin, living in a world that's hostile to God's people.

And then after the final Passover, Jesus then falsely accused, condemned, crucified, dead, and buried. And the enemy didn't just whisper, did they, about him?

They ended up shouting, away with him! They ended up shouting, demanding that he be crucified. Not understanding him, not recognising who he was, even though he should have been at one level obvious for all to see, he's the king, the Christ, the saviour, the son of God.

And it seems like the wicked win, but no, the wicked did not win. Jesus is ultimately delivered.

[24 : 30] Now, as an aside here, gospel ministry, Jesus taught, is ultimately Jesus-shaped. Jesus taught his disciples that they shouldn't expect anything other than what happened to him, but it's worth it.

For joy comes in Jesus, tasting that the Lord is good. Joy now, and unspeakable joy to come, because in Christ Jesus' death is defeated.

And so on the third day, he's delivered. Jesus, the one who came to rescue the helpless, the lame, the oppressed, the weak, the poor, was vindicated. God did not give him up to the will of his greatest enemy, Satan himself.

God did not betray his son, and the son did not betray the father. He delivered him from death, and Jesus was risen to reign.

Jesus then ascended to the father's right hand to be seated at the father's right hand forever. Jesus never sinned.

[25 : 35] He is the one man in history who could be vindicated because of his integrity. He was delivered from death and risen to reign. And Jesus then now reigns, and we wait for him to return one day.

We do. And on that day, Jesus, great David's greatest son, as shocking as it sounds, right, will repay each one of the wicked, that is the class of people who are rejecting Jesus as king, right, for what they have done.

Revelation chapter 22, verse 12. He will execute just judgment righteously because he has been raised from the dead.

He will repay. And he's the only one qualified righteously to do so. See, there's nothing ambiguous about Jesus.

He is the king we need. The king, the son of God, who delivers forever, seated with God, the father. And just as God raised up and delivered Jesus, so too he will do for all of us who are united to him by faith.

[27 : 16] See, one day we too will be the blessed ones who trust in Jesus, will be vindicated too. Our trust in Jesus will be proven worth, it will be proven right, our integrity will be honoured and will be truly blessed because of our intimate unity with Jesus.

Blessed beyond our wildest imagining. Those of us who are faithful to Jesus, who do not deny him, will be protected and will not be given up to the will of our enemies.

We will know God delights in us ever so clearly because one day too we'll be set in his presence forever. He will not abandon us, he will not deceive us and the twin enemies of sin and death will not have the last word.

The twin enemies of sin and death will not shout in triumph over us because God will uphold us and so we'll sing with David and all God's people, blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.

this is doubly true, absolutely true. Amen and amen. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the great picture of the Lord Jesus we see in King David.

[28 : 45] We thank you there's no ambiguity in Jesus who is the king we need and we pray to help us to stay faithful to him, the one who is faithful to us. Help us never to abandon him, never to deny him, never to betray him and we entrust ourselves to you our faithful father and Jesus our faithful saviour and thank you for the Holy Spirit in bringing us to know Jesus our Lord and our God.

Please help us to continue to remain faithful to you, to love you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.