

The Blessed Protector

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Psalm 41, let me just start by saying this: I think we all know something at some point or another what it's like to feel a little bit vulnerable in life, perhaps abandoned, perhaps lonely, perhaps separated from those that you trust, and maybe even seeing people kind of let you down or go against you in a way that you didn't expect and you know something about the sick feeling in your gut that that can create; that people that you thought were your friends have somehow turned against you, maybe people who have always been opposed to you have created problems for you and whisper against you, Psalm 41 is going to be a wonderful encouragement to you to see how the Lord views you in the midst of those times, how the Lord comes to the aid and gives a blessed protection to those who trust him. And in Psalm 41, we've come to the final Psalm of the first book of the Psalms. There are five books, five sections to the Psalms. We talked about that in our jet tour of the Psalms some time ago. Psalm 41 is the end of the first section of the Psalms that are predominated by Psalms written by David and what I want to do is to just remind you of things that we first said a couple of years ago actually, about the way the whole Psalter begins.

Go back to Psalm 1, if you would. This is going to help us understand and set a context for Psalm 41. The longer that I'm going through and teaching these Psalms, the more delighted I am that we embarked on this because you start to see that there is a continuity across the Psalms. The tendency often is to treat one Psalm in isolation and that's okay as far as it goes, I've done that a number of times, and that's a legitimate and an appropriate way to teach, but when you go through the Psalms sequentially and you study it in a big picture sense, you start to see that there was some very serious thought given in the compilation of the Psalms in the way that they were set up. What I'm eager to review for you is that when you start with the Psalms and you read from the beginning to the end of the Psalms, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 stand like twin pillars to the rest of the Psalms and provide an introduction to everything else that follows and what you find is Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 setting the context for everything else that follows in the whole Psalter. It's really a magnificent thing to see. And those two Psalms do something for us, they contrast the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, the way of the saved from the way of the unsaved, so they lay out these two different paths that life will take depending on your response to Christ, your response to God's word, and that either ends up in disaster or it ends up in blessing.

Look at Psalm 1 as the first pillar that is designed to be the gateway into the rest of the Psalms. You should never really think about any individual Psalm without going through the entrance way of Psalm 1 and 2 first. Psalm 1, you know it well.

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his
delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and
night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which
yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever
he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff
which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the LORD
knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Now notice that Psalm 1 opens up with a beatitude, with a blessing pronounced on a man of a certain kind of character. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked." Right from the very start, the Psalms are calling you and inviting you even to enter into the blessing of God. God graciously lays before you how your life can be under the hand of his blessing; how life can go well for you. It invites you to experience the protection and the blessing of God and it says that the key to that blessing is to engage your mind, to open your heart up to the word of God, to the law of God, and to receive it and make that what you drink in, what you meditate on, what you love and what you respond to. It's amazing to think that the power of life and death, of eternal blessing versus eternal judgment, it almost makes you kind of tremble at holding a Bible in your hands, quite frankly, to realize that the power of blessing or cursing, that which would give your life purpose and give your life direction from God and ensure to you the blessing of God, is contained in this book that I have open in my hands and that most of you have on your lap. A book has that kind of power to bring that kind of blessing and so Psalm 1 teaches us, it says, "Here's how you can know the blessing of God, draw your mind into this word that he has given to us."

Notice there at the end of verse 6, I've pointed this out so many times and having taught through 41 Psalms after tonight, I have not found this principle violated yet. You couldn't state it in an absolute term probably but so much of the entire book of Psalms is simply an exposition and an application of Psalm 1:6, "the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." If you are a sincere Christian, if you are seeking after Christ and not walking in perfection but walking in a blameless way confessing your sins and devoting yourself over to the ways of Christ, you can come to Psalm 1:6 and no matter what transpires in your life, the one who has a humble, tender heart toward God's word, the one that has bent his knee to Christ, can always come to this one verse and say, "Whatever else I'm going through, the Lord knows my way. This faithful God who was faithful to Israel and now is faithful to his people who have come to him through Christ, that God who reigns over all knows my way and that's enough for me." You always can come and find a realm of protection and comfort and security there. And if you're here tonight and you're feeling stranded, you're feeling isolated, you're stressed out, beloved, I invite you to come back to what Scripture promises you here.

Remember who your Lord is. Remember his faithful ways and remember that in his fidelity and loyalty to his people, he always knows your way and he's always directing you to blessing in the end. No exceptions.

This is who God is. He is faithful to his people. He knows their way and likewise he knows the way of the wicked and so there is blessing and security and warning packed into this one verse. Those who reject Christ, those who are hard against God's word, those who shut their ears and shut their minds away from God's word and want only what this world has to offer them, let the things of God go their way, what confronts them is the end of verse 6, "the way of the wicked will perish." You are choosing your own road to destruction when you live that way and the question becomes: why would anyone do that? Why would you do that when God has told you in advance, "Here's a way to blessing that I gladly and freely give. Come to my Son the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into blessing. I will forgive all of your sins. I'll protect you through life and secure you for all of eternity." Why would anyone turn away from that? Why would you do that? I don't understand how someone could harden their heart against that, especially when God says, "On the other hand, the way of the wicked is going to perish. Be warned. I'm giving you time after time, I'm giving you year after year, decade after decade to hear my call and respond to it." There it is, it's all laid out in verse 6. So Psalm 1 stands as one of the pillars that bring us into the overall Psalter.

Now the question is: what does the defining attitude, the defining attribute of the righteous life look like? If the Lord knows the way of the righteous, well, what would mark them? What would be the distinguishing characteristic of them? Psalm 2 gives us the answer at the end of it. In verse 11, it says,

11 Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Do you see just as a matter of structure in the way that these two Psalms are knit together, Psalm 1:1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked," by contrast in a positive state at the end of Psalm 2:12, "How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" So on the negative side, you don't walk in the wicked, you find blessedness there. The positive counterpart to that is someone who gives their life to the Son, who trusts in the God of the Bible, and who worships him with reverence and rejoices with trembling in his presence. A responding to God. And I realize that you probably have never seen those two things put together but that's what's intended. This is kind of, again, this is the bookends. These are the pillars through which we enter into the rest of the Psalms, an invitation to God's blessing: seek him in his word, worship his person, submit to his Son, rejoice in him and take refuge in him. This is the way to blessing. Trust the God of this book. It doesn't have to be any more complicated than that. So as you finish those first two Psalms, you're left with this very simple thought: God blesses the righteous. God blesses those who are faithful to him and he protects those who trust him.

Now, go to Psalm 41 now with that little bit of background in mind and Psalm 41 which is closing off this first section of the Psalms if you look in most of your Bibles, if you look just above Psalm 42, you'll see a, "Book II" there just above that indicating that a new section is beginning. So Psalm 41 is closing off this first section and what does Psalm 41 start off with? Oh, it's just remarkable to see how these things have been put together. It returns to that theme of blessing. We have come full circle from Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. Psalm 41:1,

1 How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.

So what you have here, my friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, what you have here is this: Psalms 1 and 2 have set forth the general principles and we worked our way through all lot of application, now Psalm 41 comes and gives us a final illustration of the blessing of God on the life of the faithful in this closing Psalm of the first section of the Psalms. It's an illustration of that blessing and then it calls us to praise this God in response. So here's the thing, here you are, you're in here, you're gathered together around God's word with God's people and you love this God, you recognize what Scripture says about him is true, you love the way that God is and who God is and so you just want to respond to him with worship, with praise. That's what Psalm 41 is going to do. It's an illustration that leads you to that final act of praise that the first two Psalms called you to.

So we're going to break this Psalm down into three sections as we often do. The first thing that we're going to see in the first three verses of Psalm 41 is this: you're going to see the blessing recited. The blessing recited. In other words, David rehearses the blessing of God that are on those who belong to him. The blessing recited. David states it plainly.

Let's back up for just a moment and talk in general about things that you see when you're in pastoral ministry over a period of time. The truth of the matter is that most of you probably need this more than you would care to admit because when things start to go wrong in your life, you're tempted to get discouraged and you're tempted to start to think, some of you, perhaps many of you, "I wonder if God is upset with me or if God is angry with me. What have I done wrong?" That's a mark of spiritual immaturity that needs to be changed and you need to start thinking better and higher thoughts about God so that when you are in those times of trouble, you don't start to question God but they actually draw you closer to God all the more because – boy, that's one long complicated sentence – you draw closer to God because you understand how he responds to his people in their weakness. This is so very important for you in your spiritual life. We are giving you a key this evening that would unlock the door to open up the blessing and comfort of God in your heart rather than those feelings of isolation and questions that so often come.

Here's the thing: what the Psalms have told us over and over and over again is this: is that God is gracious toward his people when they are down and when they are betrayed. That is who your God is, Christian. He is a God who knows the way of the righteous, Psalm 1:6. That means that he knows when people have betrayed you, when people have

wronged you, when you are suffering under the weight of a fallen world and people who delight in your hurt, people who aim to cause you difficulty, people who have betrayed you, the question is: how does God look at you and view you in that time? The blessed nature of our God is this, is that he looks on his people with sympathy and care in those times.

Psalm 40. Here's what's going to happen, we'll finish the Psalms, Lord willing in about three years or so, and at the end of that, I'm going to want to go back and preach them all again. You know, why don't we finish the next 110 before we worry about what we're going to do with the next 150. That would be smart. My mind goes a lot of different ways when I'm preaching. Sometimes you just have to bear with me as I articulate those things. What I'm thinking about here is this is, again, just the wonderful way that these Psalms lead naturally into one another.

Look at Psalm 40 and I want you to see these things and see how the Psalms are put together and to fall in love with the book even more than you did before we started doing this together. Psalm 40:17 ends on this note of affliction, it sends you off on this note, David is trusting God but he is still in the midst of his suffering. Look at Psalm 40:17, "Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God." Do you see it? Psalm 40 ends and he is still under the weight of his affliction, just like some of you are in here tonight under the weight of an affliction that you've been carrying for quite a long time. You know what it's like. You're going through life and you seek out the Lord and you say amen and you get up off of your knees but the weight of the problem is still there. You are still afflicted, still needy; the circumstantial relief has not come yet. You know what that's like. Well here, at the end of Psalm 40, now we come into Psalm 41 and it's as if God is answering that cry at the end of Psalm 40 with a promise of his own renewed blessing and help to those that are in that situation. You see, we read the Psalms consecutively and we start to see a whole other dimension to them; they start to feed off of one another instead of what we do so often before we started doing this, we read one randomly; you go to Psalm 23, Psalm 100 and you kind of hopscotch around, never seeing the greater unity that ties all of these together.

Now, having seen the end of Psalm 40, look at how Psalm 41 begins. It picks up on that theme of affliction with what? With a promise of God's help. Psalm 41:1. Imagine this, just kind of bring the two together. Psalm 40 ends and David says, "I'm afflicted and needy." In Psalm 41, you're meant to see the answer of God to that affliction when he says,

1 How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.

Oh, is that sweet? Is that cool refreshing water on a parched and thirsty soul, to come in affliction and see God responding to that affliction with a promise, "I will be with you to deliver you in your day of trouble." How blessed is he who considers the helpless? Simply a mark, one of the many traits of the truly redeemed, that they are thoughtful to

those who are in need; that the love of Christ that fills a heart flows over and spills out in the way that you deal with others in their suffering.

So the Lord says, "Those that belong to me, I promise you, here's what I am to them, I'm the Lord that will deliver them in the day of trouble." God rewards the horizontal love of his people that they give to those that are in affliction, he rewards them by protecting them in their trouble. Remember, we've said the Lord knows the way of the righteous and so the Lord sees as we are living out this life and as we as a course, as a pattern of life, are giving ourselves over to ministering to those that are in need, ministering especially to the people of God, this says that the promise of the blessing of God is on a life like that, and that God is so faithful, so loyal in his love, that he'll deliver that one like that when his own time of trouble comes. It's sweet. Precious. Precious to know that we serve a God who does not abandon his people in their time of need. Precious to know that we have an ear in heaven that is always open to bend down and condescend to what we have to say what's on our heart, and as David goes on in this Psalm, he expands on the nature of God's gracious care.

Look at verse 2,

2 The LORD will protect him and keep him alive, And he shall be called
blessed upon the earth; And do not give him over to the desire of his
enemies.

Why are the righteous blessed? Psalm 41, David says, the righteous are blessed. Psalm 1 said the righteous are blessed. Well, why are they so blessed? Why are they in a position of privilege? How is it, what is David saying, what is the Scripture saying about our lives that we should consider ourselves to be blessed if we're Christians? Well, here it is: Yahweh, the God of the Bible, now in New Testament times, our Lord Jesus Christ is our strength in our weakness. He protects us in our trouble. He does not let our enemies have the final victory over us. He is a God to us, a God of deliverances. He is a God who knows how to orchestrate circumstances. He knows how to providentially intervened at just the right time and to relieve us from the stress, from the opposition, from the enemies that confound us and weigh on us and bring us low. He never abandons his people to their enemies, and not only that, he's a strength to us even in our physical weakness.

Look at verse 3,

3 The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed; In his illness, You restore
him to health.

So picture the breadth of the various kinds of difficulties that are described in this book and in this section, I should say, of Psalm 41. There is the spiritual dimension of the inner nature of trouble that weighs us down. There is the external affliction of people who oppose us, whether it be people in high places or simply people in personal relationships. There is the physical dimension of sickness. Beloved, here's what I want you to see, here's what I want you to learn to love more and more about your God: in those times of

multifaceted, multicolored weakness when you are most prone to the discouragement and most feeling the weight of the affliction, what you need to realize, what you need to remember is that God, your God, your Lord Jesus Christ, is to you in that time a strength in your trouble. He is a comfort in your sorrow. He is a blessing in the midst of the barrenness of earthly life. That is who your God is and so rather than getting irritated with God, perhaps feeling a sense of abandonment by him, what you do is you take refuge in him instead. Psalm 2:11 and 12, "How blessed are those who take refuge in Him!" So that in your weakness, in your sorrow, in the difficulties, you come to reflexively respond and say, "Oh, this is the time where I draw closer to my sympathetic God. This is where I draw near to him and I affirm and I proclaim to him that, God, I know that you know my way. I know that you have not abandoned me. Lord, I trust you for the blessed protection that you have promised me in your word. Even though I don't see it coming right now, I know that your invisible hand is on me, your eye sees me and that you have not abandoned to me to this distress. I take refuge in you and I trust you completely even though I am here afflicted and needy." That's the blessing of God that we are able to come to him like that and so sometimes we just need to think really big thoughts about life as well as thinking big thought about God.

This is such a fundamental principle, beloved, such a fundamental principle, my friends. It is the nature of life that we are going to have spiritual and physical distress. That's going to come sooner or later regardless of how good a Christian you are. There will be storms that come and shower down upon you. Those things humble you. They threaten you. They pain you. Here's what you need to do in that time when that comes, here's what I want you to do, here's what God invites and welcomes you to do: go to Psalm 41 and look up. Simply go to Psalm 41 and look up. In all of your weakness and that sense of abandonment that I know, you know, I've felt that myself over the years, you go back and you look at this and you let David recite the blessing to you again. "The Lord will deliver you in a day of trouble. The Lord will protect you and keep you alive. You will be called blessed upon the earth. He won't give you over to the desire of your enemies. He'll sustain you even on your sickbed. He'll go one step further, he'll sustain you on your deathbed. And those who belong to him, he will provide an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom." You see, when the distress hits, don't turn away. Don't sink into despair, come here and look up and say, "God, here I am in my affliction and here you are in all of the glory of this protecting blessedness that you pour out on your people because that's what you do for them."

Now with that said, the question is: how do you appropriate that? Okay, so the blessing is clearly defined that this is what God does for his people, well the question is: how do you access that? How do you go to, as it were, forgive the really crass illustration here, but how do you take your spiritual debit card and insert that into the ATM and withdraw those blessings so that you access them? How do you access those riches that already belong to you? What's the spiritual demeanor? What's the condition of heart that would be your response to this? Well, here's our second section in the Psalm for this evening: it's the blessing requested. The blessing requested and what you find, this next section is really verses 4 through 10 as I understand the passage, and let's look at verse 4. Notice

the humility and the plea that is made at the beginning and at the end of this section. Verse 4, David says,

4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."

We'll come back to that drop down to verse 10, if you would, and see how he says the same words again, "But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up." This is bracketed by a plea for grace. This is David praying from a position of humility, confessing his sin not with a sense of entitlement or impatience but rather simply going to this God who provides blessed protection to his people, humbling himself and saying, "O God, you who are the blessed Protector of your people, God, I ask you to be gracious to me here in my weakness. Heal my soul. I know that I have sinned against you. God, I ask you to bless me in the midst of it." It's possible to read this whole section, verses 4 through 10, as a past prayer and David is just saying, "This is how I prayed in the past," and then he comes back to the present in verse 11; there's a lot to say for that view. It's also possible that this is simply his present request, in the midst of his affliction, this is how he prays. Either way you come out the same. He's calling for the protection of God, asking and appealing for grace, not in anger, not in impatience, knowing who God is and just trustingly praying, "God, be gracious to me here."

Now, I know that you have been conditioned over the years and in other places, hopefully not here, especially in some more extreme teaching on prayer, somehow people get it in their mind that they have to figure out what it is they want God to do and then ask him to do that, and so whatever you think the solution is, you ask God to do what your version of the solution is to the problem. You know, that's really not a very good way to pray. You know, look, you and I don't know what the best solution is. We don't know what God is doing in the midst of any particular difficulties that we are facing. We don't know what the outcome of our difficulties and trials are going to be. We don't know how he is sanctifying us. And so if we don't know that little basic stuff, how are we going to know what the solution is if providentially we're in the midst of a cloudy storm and we can't determine left from right? How are you going to know what to ask for if you think you're supposed to ask for a specific result in circumstantial outcome to your problems? How are you going to know what to ask? You don't have that wisdom. You don't know the big picture. You don't know the hidden purposes of God.

There is a much better way to pray, beloved, a much simpler way to pray and that's what David teaches us here in verse 4, "Just ask God to be gracious to you." Isn't that incredible how simple that is? Rather than trying to think through all the myriad of circumstances which, frankly, just sinks you deeper into them. "God, here is Step A for the answer to this problem. I ask you to do that." Oh, I am so glad that the Lord has delivered my soul from praying that way. That's a miserable way to pray. It's a miserable way to live. Far better to let circumstances recede into the background and simply rely on the character of God who has promised to be the blessed protector of his people and say, "Oh, you who deliver your people from trouble, be gracious to me here. Whatever that means, O God, be gracious to me here. I just hand my weak and suffering soul over to

you and I ask you to be gracious; to be kind to me in the outworking of these circumstances; to refresh my soul; to ease this physical suffering, whatever the case may be." And as you're doing that, to humble your soul even further.

Look at verse 4 and just refresh again your confession of sin. You know, it's appropriate for us to say and to view ourselves with such self-denial to say, "Lord, no matter how difficult this current circumstance I'm in, and I am suffering, but Lord, I have sinned in my life against you. I don't deserve your blessing. I have sinned against you." So many times our problems are a result of our own sins and so rather than having a sense of entitlement, you just come and say, "O God, be gracious to me," and just humble yourself completely and say, "Lord, I have sinned against you in ways that I know and in ways that I don't know. I just humble myself before you." Contrast that with the sense of entitlement that major sections of the world are conditioned to think under the influence of the health and wealth prosperity Gospel. "God, you owe me this. God, you have to honor my faith by giving me what I want." This is the exact opposite of that and this – here's the thing, beloved, here's why you have to purge that sense of entitlement out of your soul – the blessing of God is reserved for those who appeal to him like this, God says, "Here's the blessing," and he says, "Here's how you access it, come to me humbly, ask for my grace, confess your sins," and he is delighted to pour out that blessing upon you. But there's a humble condition of your soul that he brings you to to prepare you to receive the blessing. "God, be gracious to me, the sinner."

Now, as David goes on in verse 5, he recites the sorrows that he is under and in verse 5 you see that his enemies are exploiting his weakness; they are hoping that he will die, apparently he's in a major illness of some kind here. Look at verse 5, he says,

5 My enemies speak evil against me, "When will he die, and his name perish?"

He is in the face of severe wickedness from those who hate him. They are rejoicing in the fact that he is near death and they're rubbing their hands in anticipation, "When is he going to die? When will he be off the scene? When will he no longer be an interference to what we want to do?" Saying that about the king of the nation. Wow. David pours that out to God and says, "God, here's what my enemies are saying about me, they are gloating in my distress." And again, again and again and again and again, go back to Psalm 1:6, what's the ground of the appeal here? "Lord, you know the way of the righteous. You know that I am suffering. You know that I am appealing to your grace. You know that I am confessing my sin as I come to you. And Lord, you also know the way of the wicked. You know how unjust and how unrighteous it is for them to be gloating over me in the midst of my sorrow. They are gloating. They are enjoying it, Lord, and they are reveling in my sorrow when you say you're the one who will protect me in my trouble. They are opposing the way that you deal with your people with this attitude, O God." And he calls it to God's attention. He pours his heart out like that and it's not just that they're gloating, there's an element of hypocrisy in their response to David that is just appalling.

Look at verse 6, he says,

6 And when he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood; His heart gathers wickedness to itself; When he goes outside, he tells it.

What is David saying here? They show up at his sickbed and pretend to show sympathy to him. "How are you doing, David? Let us know if we can do anything, David?" But what's in their heart is this desire already stated to see him dead, and when they go out from his presence, they renew their wickedness. They go outside and they tell and they whisper to others the wicked things that they're saying about David and the evil that they hope come upon him.

Look at verse 7, he says,

7 All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt, saying, 8 "A wicked thing is poured out upon him, That when he lies down, he will not rise up again."

They're saying, "God is punishing him for his sin." What an awful thing to say and what a discouraging thing on a horizontal level for a righteous man to go through. Job went through something similar, that in the midst of his suffering when he has lived a blameless life, not a sinless life but a blameless life, and now the time of suffering has come, and those who are in physical strength come and gloat over him in his sorrow; come and gloat over him and wish ill upon him and say, "Not only is he sick, his sickness is a sign of God's judgment against him. This evil thing has come upon him because God himself is opposed to him." Now look, the righteous heart cries out against that. He says, "God, no. No, God, you know the way of the righteous. You know that I'm a man after your own heart. You know that I have humbled myself. You know that I have prayed for my friends and enemies alike. You know these things. You know I'm a man of your word. You know that I'm trusting you in the midst of it and yet, God, listen to what they're saying as I lay here in fever on my sickbed." He's crying out for God to help him. They are speaking badly about David and plotting against him when he is sick and even unable to defend himself or to fend for himself. In utter weakness, they circle around him like vultures going in for the dead meat. Wicked people, and David cries out against them.

If that's all that it was it would be bad enough but David goes to the very depth of it. It's even worse than that. Bad enough for your enemies to be like that, look at verse 9, what he says,

9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

Eating a meal together in that culture was a sign of communion and fellowship more so than it is in our own culture. David says, "This is my close friend. We shared meals together and what has he done? He has lifted up his heel against me." It's the idea, "Even

he is kicking me when I'm down." And betrayal is a great wickedness when somebody from a position of trust and intimacy turns and inflicts harm against you, and if you've been betrayed like that, Scripture here gives voice to it. Our Lord Jesus in John 13:18 referred to Judas Iscariot in this same way. Scripture applies this verse to Judas Iscariot, so even Christ knows the pain of this betrayal by an intimate close associate. Those of you maybe over the live stream where you've had a spouse betray you like this, here is the echo of the throb of your painful heart, "O God, the one closest to me who has shared all of my secrets, God, look at what they've done." And in the raw, bare pain of that searing moment for you to realize that God is your blessed Protector in that time and that he hears when you call out of that kind of betrayal.

Do you know what I say it about a God like that? I say a God like that is worthy of praise. That when all of men around us have betrayed us, are longing for our destruction, longing to see us fall, just rubbing their hands waiting for us to stumble, to realize that there is a God like that, the righteous God overall, to realize that our Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life at Calvary to save us and to redeem us, to bring us into his own, do you see the blessed comfort of that? That there is someone far greater, far better than all of these human little ants, better stated, these human rats. In the midst of that, to be able to call out to this holy, righteous, loving, faithful, good and loving God and know that he cares and receives you, that is the comfort of a lifetime. And as people pound on you and criticize you and mock you, you take comfort in this Psalm 41 and say, "Here's my God," and let that be the transcendent strength that causes you to rise above it, to say, "I have something far better than human comfort here. I have the divine solace, the divine comfort of a holy righteous God who will never let me go. He knows my way. He loves me. He will keep me. He will one day deliver me. I am secure even in the midst of this storm."

Look at the big picture here. David's conscience is mindful of his own sin. He is physically weak and yet he has this ear to heaven. He has this promise that God protects his own in their trouble and there is this sweet intimate communion that transcends even the greatest of human isolation. "If God would hear my prayer, it doesn't matter what anyone else does to me." That's where the strength of your soul comes from. That's where you turn the corner on depression. That's where you find your greatest strength in life.

Now David complete his prayer here in verse 10, he says,

10 But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up."

"God, they're all sharpening their knives against me but, God, in the midst of this, be gracious to me and raise me up. Lift me up out of this darkness. Lift me up out of of this trial. Why? God, because you can do it and because you're motivated by your grace to do this, because this is how you deal with your people, because you have promised and you always keep your promises." The spiritual intimacy of this is great.

Look at the end of verse 10. Some commentators are critical of David when he says this. I always smack my head when commentators take David on and say he shouldn't have

said this. What are you saying? What are you saying? That the Spirit-inspired writer of Scripture shouldn't have said something that he said? That's not just ridiculous, it's obscene. David says,

10 But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up, That I may repay them.

They say that's too vindictive to be appropriate for a man of God to be saying. Well look, let me just help you understand this particular aspect of it here. David is the king of Israel. David has judicial authority. David has judicial responsibility to deal with those who are traitors to the kingdom. Remember, David is the appointed king by God himself. He is God's anointed king for Israel. To oppose David during David's lifetime was to oppose the kingdom, it was to oppose God himself and God gave David authority to deal with that, to be the one who would enforce and carry out and uphold his rule in the midst of the nation of Israel. Of course, David says, "Lord, strengthen me so that I can repay these traitors with the authority that you have given me to deal with them in." That doesn't mean that you and I pray that way now in the 21st century because we're not a king, we're not a theocratic king. David had every prerogative and responsibility to deal with the enemies of his kingdom because they were enemies of God that he was responsible to protect the people of God from and so he prayed in a different capacity than we do. Those with authority must exercise their authority to fulfill their duty.

So move into the final section: the blessing received. We've seen the blessing recited, the blessing requested, now in this final section of Psalm 41, we're going to see the blessing received. And here you kind of see David's heart brought through the storm and out to the other side where the clouds have broken, the sun is shining, the rainbow is often in the sky on the other side of that dark storm, and now the air is fresh again and you can see beyond the clouds and see the sun once more. Here in verse 11, David describes what it is like to be in the midst of that blessing. He says in verse 11,

11 By this I know that You are pleased with me, Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.

Although David had sinned, he still received grace. God had still brought deliverance to him. He stands now on the other side of this. His foes have dissipated as they always do eventually and scattered into the shadows of the night, nowhere to be found. Those of you that have been Christians for any length of time, if you would step back and think about it and just kind of remember your own life, I'm confident that you could remember people who seem to be a major threat to your life and to your well-being and you were in the midst of almost, metaphorically speaking, hand to hand combat with them, and they would have delighted in nothing more than to seeing your harm and destruction. Where are they now? They're gone. They're not around. They did not prevail over you. What is that but it's simply a mark that God over time manifested his delivering hand upon you. He delivered you from the clutches of sinners, those who brought you into sin, those who opposed you. For many of you, oh the blessedness of this, and I know many of you are in exactly this position: God has brought you out of bad and false teaching and has brought

you into a place where you understand his word. I'm not talking about Truth Community Church, I'm talking about what he's done in your heart. He has brought you out of, brought you out from under the influence of men who were not godly and has brought you into a position in life where now you see his word with clarity and now you're out from under the influence of those who were doing spiritual harm to you, confusing you, teaching you wrongly and badly, maybe affirming you in sin. Wow. What a blessing that God delivered you from such an ill as that. Well, you need to just look at that and say, "God, thank you. They didn't prevail over me."

Verse 12, David says,

12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, And You set me in Your presence forever.

The sweetness of this and there should just be within your tender Christian heart a wonderful sense of gratitude toward God with what we're talking about here right now in this verse. "God, you protect me. God, you have protected me. God, you will protect me. God, I am secure," you say to God from the core of your heart, "God, I'm secure in your presence." This, beloved, is the blessing of a life of integrity. This is the blessing that Psalm 1 first introduced us to and as we have gone through, it brings us out to this point at the conclusion of Psalm 41. Beloved, you are on the receiving end of eternal faithful love from the holy God of the universe. You are on the receiving end of redemptive love manifested supremely at the sin-bearing Savior at the cross of Calvary. You are on the receiving end of love that will safely shepherd you into heaven where you will see glories untold forever and ever, amen. Right? This is what God does for his people. Do you understand then why Scripture says that people like you and me are supremely blessed? That we're in a position of great blessing? Of favor? We're in a position of unspeakable privilege that God has dealt with us like that? That a sinner like you has received grace and mercy like that? Can you imagine? You have gotten the exact opposite of what your sins deserved, haven't you?

Well, what can you say in response to that? As the Psalm is compiled, it ends on verse 13. Look at it there with me. In light of everything that God is and the way that he deals with his people and now with the additional benefit of being on this side of New Testament revelation and knowing the glory of Christ at the cross and the keeping power of the Holy Spirit and the certainties of heaven, what can we do except what verse 13 says?

13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

This Psalm started out declaring a blessing on man, men who knew God like this. It ends declaring a blessing on God who deals with men in such grace, "Blessed be God." In other words, "This God, the God who is like this, what we have been talking about for the past 60 minutes, the God who is like this toward his people is worthy of praise. Blessed be his holy name. We ascribe majesty and glory and grandeur to the name of this God."

Eternal praise to eternal praise. Amen and amen gives double affirmation to it. When this God is praised, the response is, "Amen. That is true. That is certain. This is the way that it is. This God deals well with his people. Bless his holy name. Amen and amen."

Let's pray.

God, we would ask you to consider those in our midst, those in the audience over the live stream who are in trouble, sorrow and difficulty of a physical or spiritual sort. God, give them the blessed protection of which this Psalm speaks. Father, when enemies rise up and design deceit and harm against us, O God, protect us and help us in the midst of it. Do that for us which we cannot do by the strength of our own hands. And when even a close friend or a close family member raises up against us in betrayal, Father, let us find in you our comfort. Let us flee to you with that simple prayer, "O God, be gracious to me and raise me up." Father, you're a God like that. You delight in unchanging love. Once we are in the realm of your covenant faithfulness, O God, we never leave it, not because of us but because of who you are. You are the God of blessed protection. You are the God of profound kindness, generosity and favor, and we gladly echo these Spirit-inspired words. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Blessed be our Lord who lay down his life at the cross to redeem us from our sins. Blessed be this Lord who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven on high. Blessed be that Son of God who is coming again. Blessed be the Holy Spirit who indwells us and sanctifies us and keeps us and has sealed us into the family of God. Oh, blessed be the Triune God for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

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