



Psalm 21 Rejoicing In God's Provision

We mentioned last week that Psalm 20 and 21 are bookends, part one and part two, a before and after shot wrapped around a time of difficulty and trial that is referred to as “the day of trouble.” Psalm 20 looks forward to the day, it sees it coming and deals with how we can respond when we see bad things on the horizon. Psalm 21, which we will look at this morning deals with how we should respond after the event has passed, after God has brought us through our season of difficulty and pain.

I know some of us are going through very difficult and painful times right now – which is all the more reason to be studying this Psalm – you need to be prepared for what to do after this season is over. God is going to continue leading you through it, it will end, and when it does, you want to know how to react.

You need to find hope and encouragement in seeing how other people's situations turned out. You need to see the joyful response that others had to what God did and all the blessings He has poured out on those who love Him, as well as the terror He has poured out on those who resist Him. Psalm 21 is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving, but also a psalm of confidence and strength – a love song and a fight song rolled into one celebrating the kindness of God and the horror of God depending on how you relate to Him.

Let's read the whole thing to get a sense of its message and then we'll pull out a few important observations.

1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD;
And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
2 You have given him his heart's desire,
And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

3 For You meet him with the blessings of goodness;
You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.
4 He asked life from You, *and* You gave *it* to him—
Length of days forever and ever.
5 His glory *is* great in Your salvation;
Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.
6 For You have made him most blessed forever;
You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.
7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

8 Your hand will find all Your enemies;
Your right hand will find those who hate You.

9 You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger;
The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
10 Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.
11 For they intended evil against You;
They devised a plot *which* they are not able *to perform*.
12 Therefore You will make them turn their back;
You will make ready *Your arrows* on Your string toward their faces.

13 Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength!
We will sing and praise Your power.

I want us to start our observations in verse three because it helps us note that there are two outcomes after “the day of trouble.” There are two sides to the conflict and the experience different outcomes. One is rewarded for faithfulness to God, the other faces His wrath and judgment. First, let’s consider the reward. As God is being praised for so many other things, it says:

3 For You [God] meet him [David] with the blessings of goodness;
You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

Can you picture this? In the original context, the idea was that David was returning from facing “the day of trouble” and as a triumphant general he’s returning to the city, returning to the palace, where God is there to meet him and crown him with a reward for what he has just accomplished.

We just had the Olympics occurring down in Rio and after the events were complete, after a victory had been won and a champion determined, they would climb up on the platform and be presented with a medal of bronze, silver, or gold by some Olympic Committee representative. The medal is a symbol, a reminder, of what was accomplished. That’s the idea here, with David receiving a crown, only on a much grander scale.

And that’s very cool and all. But stop and think about it for a moment, don’t skip over something very important: who is giving him the crown? God, the LORD, YHWH, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is meeting David with blessings of goodness and setting a crown upon his head.

The weary warrior returns to the safety and cheers of home, and he is greeted by God. Greeted. Embraced. Perhaps He hears the words, “well done, good and faithful servant.” Now of course, this didn’t really happen – the enemy was real, facing the enemy was real, but being met by God on the soil of Jerusalem is just kind of pictured and imagined – it’s as if this is the way God was greeting him.

But it looks forward to the day when it will all play out literally as we stand before God in heaven.

And when that happens, do you really think this is how God will meet you? With a smile on His face and a crown in His hand?

It's easy to picture the scene happening for someone else, but could it ever be you? How do you think the scene would change if it was you meeting God face to face? What would be the look on His face? What would be the look on yours? What would the scene look like? Would it be loud and triumphant, full of cheers and whoops, or quiet and hushed and tense? What would He give to you, or take from you? When you think of yourself meeting God, face to face, what do you think will happen?

Well, if you are redeemed by the blood of Christ, you know the answer. Like David, you are chosen by God. You bring Him joy as you serve and obey Him – the “day of trouble” comes and in God’s name and in His strength you face it, you stand firm with your feet upon the rock of Christ. You’ve stopped resisting God and by His grace and with His strength you’re seeking to faithfully follow Him day by day, step by step. And if that is you, you know, as frail as you are, as many times as you’ve fallen, there is a reward in store for you, crowns that you will cast down at the feet of Jesus in worship.

But that’s not the guaranteed answer for everyone. The last half of the Psalm reminds us that David faced opposition on “the day of trouble” and those people, the ones who troubled him, the ones who opposed what God was doing, don’t have such a great story to tell.

The Psalm tells us God’s hand will find them. They’ll face His anger like an oven. He will swallow them up and devour them. He will draw His bow and aim His arrows at their faces.

Did you know that kind of stuff is in the Bible? You should. You need to. You need to know that God is not just gentle and fluffy and permissive and clueless. The LORD is a warrior, the Lord is mighty in battle (Ps 24:8; Ex 15:3) and those who oppose Him won’t just pass by and go do their own thing, they will pay for their rebellion with their eternal souls.

Now that can strike you two ways, depending on how you have lived most of your life.

If you’ve been comfortable and safe most of the time, and never been the victim of violence or true aggression, this might trouble you and you might think that God seems too harsh and mean. But if you’ve been wronged, or been a victim, if you’ve suffered at the hands of those you could not defeat or fight against, then verses like these comfort you and assure you that there is justice in the world and that eventually, even those who harm in secret will be brought to justice and have to answer for what they’ve done.

We’ve generally lost sight of the idea of the wrath of God and the fear of God in the church and culture today. We focus so much on the love of God and the acceptance of God that we forget that our Savior actually saves us from something: judgment and punishment. So, I

understand if the last half of this Psalm offends you, if this unsettles you. But I would remind you of two things.

First, it's not just the mean old God of the Old Testament.

The New Testament speaks of the day

2 Thes 1:7 ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Now notice, it says Jesus is going to be the one who does that.

And in the book of Revelation we're told

Rev 6:15 the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

In Psalm 21 we see David returning from facing his enemies, Revelation 19 tells us what happens when Jesus, the ultimate King faces down his enemies once and for all:

Rev 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great." 19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with

brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Friends, there is a judgment coming. An irresistible judgment, when every man, woman, boy and girl, will meet God and be judged. And you will either be given a crown of gold like David and welcomed into God's kingdom, or you will be seen as His enemy and you will be destroyed.

But, you have been warned, if you are hearing this, you have been warned. And you are offered the chance to switch teams.

And here is the second thing I would offer to you if this picture of the judgment of God unsettles you, and that is to remember that God Himself will be the judge. He doesn't have any political bias or agenda, He doesn't lean one way or the other, He is perfectly just and can be trusted to make the best decision in light of all the factors. He sees all and knows all in a greater way than we could ever understand.

He knows that we are all sinners, that we are all worthy of judgment and destruction and yet, at great cost to Himself, He has sent His Son to redeem us and restore us and He is calling out to us to repent, to turn from our sins, to stop challenging and resisting Him, and trust in Him instead.

The second half of the psalm is only for those who resist and oppose God. We started off by seeing God meeting David and placing a crown on his head. That's what God wants. That's hopefully what we want as well.

So let's circle back around to the first half of the Psalm and notice how David responds to all that God has done for him.

Look with me at

Psalm 21:1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD;
And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

In fact, some Bibles translate this in the present tense – the king does rejoice, right now, in Your strength, O LORD.

Friends, I'll tell you, this has been one of two verses that have deeply ministered to me personally while preparing for this study this week. I have chewed on this line time and time again. **"The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD."**

And you know why that's grabbed my attention so much? Because it reminds me that I don't have to do everything in my own strength. We face a lot of trials and difficulties and they take different forms. Some of us are facing one big issue, a life changing, life altering, thing has plopped itself right down in our lives in the form of a deadline or a diagnosis or a delivery of news and it demands our attention.

But some of us, especially the moms of little ones, are just pestered by an unending flow of tiny tasks. None of them are such a big deal that you couldn't easily handle each one on it's own, but the conveyor belt of life is turned up just a wee bit faster than you can respond and you feel like there's never a time to rest.

And because of that, we suffer from a loss of joy. Joy. It's a simple little word right? But it even sounds happy. It triggers dusty memories of something we'd like to experience. It's something many of us would struggle to define – what is joy? What would bring you joy? We're not quite sure immediately, but we know we want it. If it was offered, we would take it because most of us feel like it's missing from our lives.

Now, is that true? Are you experiencing a characteristic and habitual shortage of joy?

I know that I am at times. When I allow my mind and my sight to be filled with all the problems of life, all the messes that need to be cleaned up, all the to-dos that need to be done, all the things that need attention and maintenance and repair at home and work, on top of the slow deterioration that comes with age and the depression that comes with reading the daily news and the awareness of all the suffering being experienced in the world, I find myself trudging through a desert of dust and dryness, with my shoulders drooping, my gaze slipping down to my own feet and I find myself withdrawing further and further into my own shell with a 'let's bunker down and get through it' mentality. Life becomes something to be endured, not enjoyed.

And why does all of that happen? Because I forget

**1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD;
And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!**

Even as a pastor, I sometimes forget that I'm not supposed to do things alone. I forget that I'm actually supposed to operate in the strength of my God. I forget that He has chosen me, that He has called me, that He placed me in this time, in this place, in these circumstances, and that He knows everything I am facing. I forget that my life is supposed to look *and feel* different *because* I am in an active and real relationship with Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the son of the Living God and indwelt, presently, by His Holy Spirit. I forget that He is sufficient for every struggle and trial I face.

I am so foolish that having begun in the Spirit, sometimes I try to be made perfect in the flesh.

But God is merciful, and He brings me to passages like this one that wake me up, that slap me out of my stupor, and remind me of the spiritual realities of life.

Christian, if you're not turning to the Scriptures daily, whether reading it yourself, meditating on things you've already memorized, or listening to the Bible in audio form, how can and how does God reset you?

This is one reason why the Psalms are so wonderful. Yes, they were written a long time ago. No, they don't rhyme and we don't know the tunes to sing them today. And yes, they were written as poetry or lyrics and some of you don't like that – you don't normally read that kind of stuff cause it's flowering or dramatic or weird, or whatever, but friends, I'm telling you, this is the Bible, it is the Word of God and it can correct you. It can rebuke you, it can encourage you, it can instruct you, it can train you in righteousness. It can remind you of the things you've known in the past, but maybe you've forgotten recently.

God's Word will help you recalibrate, it will help you reset, it will give you hope and something to cling to.

Now, that doesn't mean things will be easy. The thing about strength is that you never know how great it is until it has been tested. You don't know how fast you can run until you get out there and push. You don't know how much you can lift until you grab the bar and really pull – a heavy deadlift doesn't always come straight off the ground, sometimes you pull and pull and nothing happens at first and then slowly, slowly, the bar starts to raise.

But according to this verse, and many others like it, God offers to be our source of strength, and in remembering that, we should find joy.

And so time and time again this week, when I've been tempted to react to things on my own, when I see something that still needs to be done or I'm reminded of a deadline, I have sought to slow down and remind myself – *“the king shall have joy in Your strength O LORD.”* *OK Lord, this is Your battle, not mine. I'm here, I'm along for the ride, but I look forward to seeing how you're going to handle this, how You're going to deal with it, and how You want me to respond. Where's my joy in this LORD?”*

And then I try and tie that all together with what I see in

6 For You have made him most blessed forever;
You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.
7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

Do you see the abundance here? Some would be tempted to call it hyperbole, exaggeration, but the Bible says that God – the God that has invaded our lives, made David “most blessed forever” and “exceedingly glad.”

Hold that thought and remember the greater context here. This is after facing “the day of trouble” this comes after confronting something enormously difficult in David's life. Something he really felt, something he really worried about, something he really had to wrestle with.

If the Bible is anything, it's real. It's written by real humans living out real lives. The people you read about in the Bible aren't just characters, they're not just roles, they're not just flannelgraph cut outs. They're people. And yet David could look back on what he had just faced and been through and say this: ["You have made me most blessed forever... exceedingly glad with Your presence."](#)

Christian, does that give you hope for what you face today? Does that give you something to consider for your present trial?

Can you, with me, try to really focus on verse 7

[7 For the king trusts in the LORD,](#)

Can we, together, try to make this our response? Can we look at all that God has done for us in the past, can we read and remember the promises of His Scripture, can we notice the clues of His presence in our present, and can we throw ourselves at His feet and pray, *"God, help me to trust in You"*? Can we be like the father who brought his son to Jesus seeking healing and said, "Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief"?

Can we do that? This week, or as early as this afternoon, maybe it's right here, right now, can you look at whatever life is bringing your way, and instead of getting all anxious about it, instead of getting angry, instead of getting pumped up or worked up, can we, together, look at it through the lens of Christ, and pray:

Father God, help me to trust in You, and help me to rejoice in Your strength. Help me see You at work in this situation and help me let You direct my response.

Don't we want to know what it means to be ["most blessed forever"](#) and ["exceedingly glad with His presence"](#)? Don't we want to say that through the mercy of God we have stood fast and not been moved?

"The day of trouble" is never a good thing, it cannot be praised on its own, we can confess that we despise it. But it is not unconquerable. It is always a symptom of the sin of this world, and God has conquered sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, though it almost never comes soon enough for our liking, eventually God always brings us out of the battle and stuns us with His grace.

May He help us to see it and know it's true.

Let's pray.