

“How Blessed are the Righteous”  
Psalm 41  
(Preached at Trinity, September 26, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Remember, the Psalter contains five books. With **Psalm 41** we come to the end of Book I of the Psalter. One of the common threads we've noticed in the Davidic psalms was David's coping with adversity. How a man deals with adversity truly testifies to his spiritual condition. The unbeliever complains and struggles with impatience. The believer looks to God as the source of his strength. God brings adversity upon His people in order to strengthen their faith and make them more like Christ.  
**NAU 1 Peter 1:6** – “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”
  2. In **Psalm 41** David describes three different types of affliction. He had personally experienced all three.  
**Verse 3** – David describes sickness  
**Verses 5-8** – David describes being surrounded by enemies who were seeking his death  
**Verse 9** – David describes being betrayed by a close friend.
  3. Many are the afflictions of the righteous (Psalm 34), but many also are the blessings. Psalm 41 begins with a benediction. It is one of three psalms in the first book of the Psalter that begins with a benediction – Psalms 1, 32, & 41. Thus Book One of the Psalter begins and ends with a benediction.
  4. In this psalm David describes some of the ways the righteous are blessed of God. He describes the blessings in three ways:
    - I. God blesses the righteous with protection – **Verses 1-3**
    - II. God blesses the righteous with mercy and grace – **Verses 4-10**
    - III. God blesses the righteous with boldness and confidence – **Verses 11-13**
- I. God blesses the righteous with protection – **Verses 1-3**
- A. Notice David doesn't say, “How blessed are the righteous” Instead he describes the nature of the righteous
    1. David describes them as those who care for the poor  
NAS **Proverbs 14:21** – “He who despises his neighbor sins, But happy is he who is gracious to the poor.”
    2. NAS **Proverbs 19:17** – “He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.”
    3. NAS **Proverbs 21:13** – “He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.”

2. The “poor” speaks of those who are lacking in material substance but it also includes those who are weak and helpless in other ways.  
The righteous look upon the weak with pity and mercy – and they shall obtain mercy.  
**Matthew 5:7** – “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”
  3. The Bible instructs us concerning the poor. We are to establish a priority.
    - a. We need to care for our earthly family  
**1 Timothy 5:8** – “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”
    - b. We have a duty to provide for those who are in Christ – our brethren in the faith.  
**Galatians 6:10** – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”  
Even among those in the church we establish a priority. Paul speaks of the special care we owe to those who have been faithful.  
**1 Timothy 5:9-10** – “Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, <sup>10</sup> Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”
    - c. Finally, we have a duty to show compassion to those outside the faith. But we must be wise here and not give indiscriminately.
  4. The righteous look beyond themselves to the needs of others  
This was the great description of the righteous given by Christ in the parable of the sheep and the goats.  
**Matthew 25:34-36** – “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: <sup>36</sup> Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”
  5. It demands trusting the Lord who owns all things  
Spurgeon in *Treasury of David* – “How foolish are they that fear to lose their wealth by giving it, and fear not to lose themselves by keeping it!” Jim Elliot had this in mind when he wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.”
- B. God will bless the righteous with His Divine protection
1. David gives us a wonderful list describing God’s great protection upon the righteous
 

Verse 1 – “the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.”  
Verse 2 – “LORD will preserve him” (NASB – “protect”)  
“and keep him alive”  
“and he shall be blessed upon the earth”  
“and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies”

Verse 3 – “The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”

2. David knew what it meant to live in great affliction. But he found God always mighty to come to his aid.
  - a. David says in **Verse 3** that he found this particularly true during times of sickness. As he laid upon his sickbed he found God most sufficient.
  - b. Matthew Henry – “God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy, under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue. The soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease when the body lies in pain.”

## II. God blesses the righteous with mercy and grace – **Verses 4-10**

- A. David sends forth a plea for God’s grace
  1. The word translated “mercy” in **verse 4** is חֲנָן (chanan) - to be gracious, show favour, pity
    - a. <sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 41:4** – “As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me"
    - b. He repeats it in **Verse 10**
  2. Often in the Psalms David pleads for justice but not this time – he pleads for mercy
    - a. David once again makes a direct connection between his trial and his sin  
**Psalm 41:4** - "O LORD, be gracious to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."
    - b. It’s been said that sin and suffering are inevitable companions.
    - c. Since sin is sickness of the soul David asks for healing of the soul.  
Listen to **Psalm 51**  
**Psalm 51:10-12** – “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy free spirit.*”
  3. This verse is linked to the previous verses – David had showed graciousness and mercy to others and is now pleading for God’s grace in his own life.
  4. God shows mercy to those who show mercy but mercy cannot be separated from grace.
    - a. Yes it is true that God shows mercy upon the merciful but this is not to say that we have a *right* to mercy because we are merciful.
    - b. God’s mercy is bestowed by His grace – it is undeserved. It cannot be earned.
    - c. God cannot be made a debtor

5. We pray for mercy but we pray knowing God will grant us mercy according to His Word
- B. David speaks of the afflictions for which he seeks God's mercy
1. He had already mentioned his sickness  
**Psalm 41:3** – “The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”
  2. On top of this his enemies were taking advantage of his weakness by mocking and discouraging him
  3. They were hoping for his demise  
**Psalm 41:5** – “Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?”
  4. They were accusing him of getting what he deserved  
**Psalm 41:7-8** – “All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.”
- The word for “evil” is בֵּלֵעַ – Belial - literally a thing of Belial
5. Even his friends had forsaken him  
**Psalm 41:9** – “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.”
- a. History has revealed innumerable examples of such treachery
  - b. David was betrayed by his son Absalom and his own counselor Ahithophel betrayed him
  - c. In John’s Gospel Jesus quoted this verse as a fulfillment of the betrayal of Judas.
  - d. We all know the famous words “*Et tu Brute?*” spoken by Julius Caesar to his good friend Brutus.
- C. In **Verse 10** David again seeks the mercy of God
1. That I may requite them – David is speaking as king. He is asking for strength that he might judge those who rose up against God’s king.
  2. David pleads for God’s mercy and as a child of God he receives God’s mercy.
- III. God blesses the righteous with boldness and confidence – **Verses 11-13**
- A. “By this I know”
1. David is sick upon his bed. He pleads with God for mercy. But he stands in confidence of God’s care.
  2. David exclaims with confidence, “I know.”  
 Paul used this expression of boldness and confidence  
**2 Timothy 1:12** – “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”
  3. In essence David is saying, “I know you favor me and not my enemy.”  
 “I know you show mercy to the merciful.”  
 “I know you will show mercy to me.”

4. Notice, David's confidence of God's favor upon him was not based upon his outward condition. David was languishing on his sick bed. His confidence was based upon God's promises and David's relationship with God. His past experience with God demonstrated God's faithfulness. He knew that God loved him.
  5. The righteous man may go through terrible trials but he will never be forsaken. He can march through this world with boldness and confidence knowing that the favor of his Father is upon him.
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-10** – “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”
- B. David's confidence was everlasting  
**Psalm 41:12-13** And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. <sup>13</sup> Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting.  
If our calling and election is sure, then our redemption is sure. God will sustain us now and forever.
  - C. David closes the psalm with the words, “Amen and amen.” This is a fitting end to the psalm and a fitting end to Book One of the Psalter.  
It means “verily, truly, so be it”

#### Conclusion:

1. Psalm 41 serves as a great encouragement to us.  
First, to seek more and more to dispense mercy. As those who have received great mercy we need to be merciful.  
Second, it gives us great confidence that God will continue to show mercy unto us. We are His beloved, His treasure.
2. To this we say Amen and Amen.