

Psalm 21

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Date: 31 January 2018

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[0 : 00] Now we look at this Psalm 21 described as a Psalm of David and it is one of undoubted praise and thanksgiving to God for the displays of his grace and favour that he has given to his people.

And the faithful are urged to celebrate God's favour to the king for bounties already received and for anticipated victories to come in the future.

God's people enjoy this blessing largely because of the favour shown to their head. I'll say that again. God's people enjoy this favour largely because of the favour shown to their head.

It is because God delights in the king that his people are thereby blessed. The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation. How greatly shall he rejoice.

God's thou hast given him his heart's desire and is not withholding the request of his lips. So far it's all about him. But his people enjoy the blessings God gives because their head, their king, is a delight to the Lord.

[1 : 09] Now, who is this king in the first instance, obviously, in the immediate context, of course, it is David. This is a Psalm of David. David is on the throne of Israel. David is singing of God's goodness to him.

He is composing this, what I call him, of praise. This Psalm of glory to the Lord for what he has done in the first instance. But, of course, that is simply the immediate context.

The greater, wider context is its application, ultimately, to the king of kings. And, ultimately, of course, as we know, that applies to his greatest and last successor, the king of the Jews.

Of course, ultimately, the king of kings. So, in verse 1, The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation. How greatly shall he rejoice.

In that which is supplied by the Lord. In thy strength. It's not the king will rejoice in his own strength. And because he's so great, he'll have a good time.

[2 : 08] The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord. That which is supplied by thee. He's not just saying, Oh, look at the strength you've got, Lord. Aren't you wonderful? Aren't you fantastic? But the idea is that the king enjoys this strength himself.

He is given this victory. He is given this power. He is given the control of his enemies and of his own kingdom because the Lord supplies that strength.

Just as a field is irrigated by, perhaps, the diverting of a river or its flow into the channels already dug in place for it. But it is the water of the river that irrigates the field.

It's not the field itself. So, likewise, although the king may prepare himself to seek the Lord, he may ask the Lord's blessing on his battles or in his problems. It is the Lord's strength which gives him the victories.

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord. And in thy salvation, how greatly shall he rejoice. Now, as we said, the king in the first instance obviously is David.

[3 : 12] But ultimately, this king is Christ, as we know. Pilate himself asked Jesus at his trial. He can call it a trial. Pilate therefore said unto him, John 18, verse 37, Art thou a king then?

Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Thou sayest that I am a king. In other words, you said it. Indeed, he is not simply a king, but of course, as Revelation tells us, chapter 19, verse 16, When the armies that in heaven appear, the one sitting upon a white horse and clothed with a vesture of lifted blood, we read, he hath on his vesture of his thigh, a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

He is a king, not merely of territories, but also of minds and arts, ruling and reigning with a dominion, a dominion of love ultimately, but a dominion of love against which all other supposed dominion or power is, is mere brute force and doesn't really have the power to change things. And we think, well, that's silly, because surely brute force does have the power to change things. Only up to a limited point. When revolutions take place in countries, why is it that when the regime that is trying to hold down control, when it sends troops onto the streets and tanks and so on, still it may end up being overthrown, because ultimately the will, the minds, the hearts of the people eventually tip.

[5 : 00] They turn. And when the hearts, the minds, the loves of the people finally turn against a regime or a ruler that perhaps they have served happily for decades, but finally they turn against them because their hearts have been changed.

Their minds have been altered. Their love is no longer what it once was. And when that happens, your brute force can only keep control for a very, very limited amount of time. And then the wave sweeps it away. So they think, oh, well, you know, kingdom of love, kingdom of hearts and minds, that doesn't amount to much. No, that is what changes history. That is what changes the world. It changes countries. It changes empires. As we mentioned many times in the past, for the first three centuries of the Christian gospel, the Roman Empire was seeking to stamp it out.

It was seeking to burn Christians, to throw them to the lions, to persecute them, to destroy them by every possible means, but they just kept on growing. People just kept on and on becoming Christians.

[6 : 06] Some people say Constantine, the Roman Emperor, that finally made the empire a Christian empire, officially, at least at public and superficial level, that he was a Christian himself.

Others are a bit more cynical thing. Nah. He just knew which way the wind was blowing. He could see that the number of Christians in his empire was getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and he didn't want to be out of line with the way things were flowing.

He didn't want to alienate such a growing, new, vital religion within his empire. So he just went with the flow. Well, we don't know for sure what was in his heart. We don't know for sure what the ultimate answer was.

What we do know is, as more and more people were converted, despite the levels of persecution, which the then pagan Roman Empire was unleashing on them, and they could not hold back the tide of change in people's hearts.

Eventually, it changed the rulers themselves. It changed the face of the very empire that had put our Lord to death. Jesus is a king not merely of territories, but of minds and hearts, and he rules with a dominion of love that causes people to love him, and in loving him to love one another.

[7 : 30] That changes their heart. It changes their lives, and those lives touch the lives of those around them, and they in turn continue outward and outward, like ripples in a pond where you drop a stone into it, and this changes people's hearts, lives, communities, countries, nations.

The king joys in the strength he's given for his work, the work that he has to do. He is receiving the strength from his father.

Now, Jesus, we know, received strength from his father. He spent all night out on the hillside praying. He'd be up early when it was still dark, before anybody else was up, so that he would have time and opportunity to draw strength from his father, the king, the king of kings joys, in the strength he has given to exercise his ministry, to do the work the father has given him to do.

Strength for his ministry. Strength to heal and to raise the dead. A costly thing in terms of his strength. Jesus did not, like you see in fiction, your way of a magic wand, a pronuncia spell, and he pressed with that was it done.

We read, remember, of the woman with the issue of blood, he said, virtue has gone out of me. And I said, that means that he could feel the strength, the healing power, draining out of him.

[8 : 51] When he said to the disciples, who touched me? He didn't just mean, who's jostling against me in the crowd? They said, look, you see how everybody's been pushing against you. How can you say, who touched me? But he knew someone had touched him with a view to receiving his healing power.

Virtue hath gone out of me. And that's how he knew. He could feel the healing strength draining away. It was costly to him. He required the strength that his father gave.

He had to keep replenishing it at the throne of grace. Now, obviously, just as an aside, in brackets, if Jesus needed to do that, how much more do we, likewise, need to keep going to the source and the fountain and the supply of all our needs?

He had to keep replenishing his supply at the throne of grace. But he received more strength as he required it. In the fullness of time, of course, he received strength to endure the cross.

Strength for all that he needed and such that he could rejoice in it. The source and spring of this joy is God's strength.

[10:06] And the stream that flows from the spring of joy is God's salvation. The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.

No, this is not, oh, he'll be mildly happy about it, but how greatly shall he rejoice if, as is the case, Christ's sorrow and agony was deeper and darker and more intense than any other human agony before or since, which it was.

You know, even if we read Lamentations, you know, chapter 1, verse 12, you know, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

You know, we think of the sufferings of the cross, we think of his hands and feet being pierced with nails, we think of him perhaps having been scourged, we think of the crown of thorns, we think of the raging, dying thirst of our Lord and all that he suffered physically.

We probably don't always grasp the spiritual depths to which he was compelled to descend even in the midst of his physical agony and torment.

[11:30] He had to plumb the depths of hell. When you consider that if he had been paying the price of sin for one soul to be redeemed, then the cost would have been significant enough.

it would have been yes to endure hell for that redeemed soul. And then when you consider that he is in fact paying a price for every redeemed soul that will have ever lived from Adam all the way through to the last saved elect person whenever they are gathered in and whoever they may be, an innumerable host to us but a number known and fixed by the Lord from all eternity.

he is bearing all their sins all their unrighteousness. He is bearing it down as it were to the very depths of Satan's kingdom.

He is enduring all that hell and death can throw at him so that they won't have to and he is enduring all that for an not an infinite number but a particular number of souls.

Now, bear in mind that if we were to pay for our own sins we would be doing that we would be expiating those sins for all of eternity without the limit of time all eternity would take us.

[12:54] Jesus is paying for the sins of every redeemed soul not only in the space of a day but in the space of that six hours that he hung up on the cross.

So, think in terms of how all this that has to be endured is being telescoped not only from all these elect souls into one man who admittedly is God but even so into one man and then consider how this one man is bearing effectively an eternity of punishment for their sins telescoped into the space of six hours and you get a little glimpse of just how intense just how deep and beyond really our description the darkness of his suffering the spiritual toll upon the king of kings must have been if then as is the case Christ's sorrow and agony was deeper darker more intense than any other human agony before or since if that was true the unparalleled depth of his sorrow and suffering does it not then follow that his joy in the fullness of time shall be infinitely unbounded if the depths of his sorrow and suffering was unlike any other so likewise the joy of his salvation and glory and crowning and all the glory of the father that's given to him and all the worship and adoration of the holy angels and all those redeemed for whom he suffered in the depths of hell spiritually speaking all this joy is likewise telescoped into this one man who is God of course and the glory that he now enjoys his joy in the fruits of time shall be infinitely unbounded far beyond any mere human rejoicing just as it was divine suffering this will be divine rejoicing

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2 looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God now as we've mentioned on previous occasions I think it's you know some people have said what's the joy set before him what was heaven he was going back to heaven that doesn't cut it as I think I've mentioned in the past there's not that much really to enthuse you about the fact that having all that you've endured coming from heaven's glory becoming confined within a human body first of an infant all that humans are exposed to the hunger the thirst the ordinary human needs and appetites and limitations and sufferings and sorrows and cold and heat and hunger and

thirst and all these things you're exposed to all that and you've got the agony of death in order to in order to just go back to the way where it was at the start in order to just go back to square one you'd be better off never leaving heaven in the first place you could just have stayed there and enjoyed it all without interruption so why go through all this just for the joy of oh finally getting back home no that doesn't make sense theologically what does make sense however is that the joy set before him is the bringing to himself of all those for whom he has suffered and died upon the cross it is not merely the return to what he had when known and previously left the glory of reigning as God the son but rather it must have been the redeeming the fulfilling the payment of redemption for all his glorified saints it is for them that he descended into hell and it is for them likewise that he rejoices when they are gathered to him now obviously as a male person

I have never experienced childbirth or the carrying of a child prior to that but I would imagine that the bond between a mother and child is in a certain way different from even that the most loving father and child because it has been part of her she has borne it inside all the aches and pains and difficulties and so on that she endures and then she brings forth in the midst of no doubt considerable pain brings forth this human being who is then laid in her arms and all that she has carried and suffered and struggled with suddenly there is in her arms this little person and there is nothing like this little person it is a miracle of life it is a miracle of joy and it makes the Bible tells us the anguish all seem worthwhile all that she went through to bring this human being into the world is suddenly rewarded beyond description beyond belief in a way that humanly speaking the most loving physical human father can't really enter into there is a bond there is a relationship between mother and child which father and child isn't quite the same thing and this is

I would suggest to you one reason why the Lord although he describes himself as our father we would call him father he likewise at various times in scripture also likened some of his characteristics to those of motherhood as well you know can a woman forget her sucking child yes she may forget but the Lord will never forget his people you know he talks about bearing them he talks about you know travailing in pain that's a childbirth metaphor he talks about bringing them into the world there's all these motherhood elements that he includes in the description of himself and his love for his people which shouldn't surprise us because when God made man he made him male and female in other words both the masculine and the feminine reflect characteristics of the complete Godhead so what he enters into the depths of suffering and the heights of joy are if I can use the word reverently extremes which we mere humans and mortals will never in a sense completely comprehend but this is the joy that the king has the prospect of gathering all these his children for whom he has suffered it is the prospect of spending eternity with unbelievable to say it the likes of you and me justified glorified sinners made saints which so rejoiced the heart and soul of our

[20 : 18] Lord and Saviour Jesus that he endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy that was set before him can you believe that obviously we do have to believe that we must believe it because the Bible tells us it but it almost seems in a sense again if we can say it reverently unbelievable that he actually looks and looks forward with joyous anticipation to those who will share eternity with him such love again is beyond our comprehension but this is his delight his heart's desire and we read in verse 2 thou hast given him his heart's desire he shall have it he will have the thing he has most greatly desired the father will give it to us not withhold in the request of his lips he will have this greatest joy of all for which he has laboured as none have ever laboured and suffered as none have ever suffered and indeed how could his father perfect righteousness ever deny him then we have at the end of verse 2 selah pause pause indeed

Jesus said to his disciples in Luke chapter 9 verse 44 let these sayings sink down into your ears for the son of man shall be delivered into the hands of man for the suffering and agony of our lord on the one hand and for the exaltation of his joy on the other hand these are things that we can't just describe with a few trite words we have to pause we have to stop and we have to recognise the depth and solemnity of these things pause what happens after he is delivered into the hands of men there is this pause he's laid in the tomb there is this pause and then he rises victorious over the grave thou preventest them with the blessings of goodness now we think of the word prevent as meaning stopping from happening it doesn't mean stopping from happening in the language of the authorised version it means go before in a sense that if you're about to head out the door and somebody prevented you this doesn't mean that they dragged you back it means literally they stood in front of you they went in your way they prevented you they went ahead of you and that's what

prevent means here but thou preventest him thou goest before him with the blessings of goodness it is a sense of to meet here in a good sense in a sense of friendship as people might go out to meet and greet and welcome one who is coming and trying you know think of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins of course we tend to focus on the sad plight of the foolish ones that didn't put oil in their lamps but remember rather the reason why they were gathered in the first place if they had all been wise then what were they doing the bridegroom comes they all like the lamps they all go out to meet him they'll go some of the way along the road to bring him in joyfully into the house and that's the sense of it here they come out some of the way they come out in advance to bring him in thou preventest him goest out to meet him that's the sense of it here going ahead to bring him in in the triumph of his father it is a sense of they went before for thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness thou set us the crown of pugil upon his head and we'll come to that in just a minute the father the father is not some tyrannical despot to be grudgingly appeased only with the human sacrifice of his slaughtered son the father's love has gone on ahead of all that takes place in salvation history think of what

Jesus again says to his disciples in John 16 verses 26 and 37 says I say not unto you that I will pray the father for you for the father himself loveth you because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God now let's do that again I say not unto you that I will pray the father for you but the father himself loveth you because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God saints were gathered into glory on a promise before Christ actually died all the old testaments say to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and David and Samuel and all the others they were gathered into heaven they went to heaven their souls were already in glory before Christ ever became flesh they were gathered in on the promise of what would be done and the tokens that God ordained to point to that once and for all sacrifice with the sacrifices of lambs and goats and oxen and so on all of these sacrificial victims pointed to the one ultimate sacrifice in Christ was because of the promise that would be fulfilled they were gathered to glory on a promise before Christ actually died and in place of that once and for all sacrifice upon the cross there were the imperfect sacrifices of animals and blood and so on imperfect sacrifice tokens of faith and obedience they were accepted by the Lord in good faith in the meantime if

Israelites offered up these sacrifices in faith God accepted them although the blood of bulls and goats and so on could never atone for their sin these were the tokens of the ultimate sacrifice that would come Christ's death was the perfecting of justice and righteousness it cost the father and the son dearly and we can't just try to say oh it cost the son what did it cost the father anyone who ever sees their beloved child suffering what parent hasn't witnessed their child suffering some ailment or illness or disease and saying to themselves I wish I could have it for them I wish I could take this pain for them so that they wouldn't have to go through it but we can't do that and if we can say it reverently the father could not come down to the cross and take the pain for the son that would be to violate his position and task and the fulfilment of what was divinely intended this is something the son must go through but let us never think it didn't cost the father it cost a father as it would cost any father only more so that it had been a preparing since before the foundation of the world pre-venting going ahead of history

Isaiah 65 says in verse 24 it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer and while they are yet speaking I will hear if we said that in human terms that wouldn't make sense but in God's eyes it makes perfect sense before they call I will answer while they are yet speaking I will hear and he sets upon a crown of pure gold Christ who was crowned with thorns is now crowned with glory and this crown of pure gold is a figurative term for the highest royal prosperity it is of purity a fineness of gold indicates higher quality in other words a carat you talk about so much 22 carat gold 18 carat gold 9 carat gold whatever it may be a carat deals in I didn't know this before 24ths a carat is a 24th so if you have for example 22 carat gold it means 22 parts of fine gold 2 parts alloy you can't get [28 : 31] I don't suppose you can get 24 carat gold it was absolutely pure elements no it wouldn't be but 22 carat would mean 22 parts fine gold and 2 parts alloy 9 carat means 9 carats 9 parts fine gold and you know the rest I can't do the maths in my head sorry number of carats that would be alloy so the amount of alloy to the amount of fine gold is a more or higher carat regardless heavenly gold is so pure it is see through think of revelation where it says chapter 21 verse 18 the city was pure gold like unto clear glass we don't think of gold as clear glass we think gold as a yellowish metal you can't see through it but the city was pure gold like unto clear glass heavenly gold is so pure it is see through the symbol of majesty on his royal brow is as pure and perfect as new

Jerusalem itself when we talk of justice or righteousness we talk about things being transparent don't we somebody's squeaky clean in their dealings they've said all their dealings are transparent they can bear any amount of investigation you can rummage through all their files and check through all their emails whatever it may be you won't find your thing because it's transparent it is pure what you see is what you get and so it is with the transparent purity glory of god's glory of the king. He asked life of thee and thou gavest it him. He in length of days forever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation. Honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed forever.

Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance. The glory and blessedness of the king as head of his line exceeded all others. And as this line began in David we might say that the first king mentioned here in the original context and included in the Messiah. The blessedness whilst ultimately indicating Christ is applicable also in the first instance to David which made him most blessed forever.

When we think of Christ we think of one of his titles, the son of David. You know Jesus and David they're very much intermingled in references one to the other. You know we think that the glory of David is that the Messiah came of his line. One of the titles, the glories of the Messiah is he's the fulfilment of the promises to David and of David's line.

And the two are sort of interconnected in a sense without ever confusing the two of course. That was made him most blessed forever. This is part of the promise.

[31 : 30] Glad with thy countenance what a sight of thee. Verse 6. You know in Psalm 16 for example in verse 11 the last verse we read Thou would show me the path of life in thy presence is fullness of joy at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

In thy presence is fullness of joy. The presence of the Lord is reason enough for holy joy. And that's also indicated by the light of the Lord's countenance when we think of you know the Aaronic blessing as it's called at the end of Numbers chapter 6 which we often use in baptismal services you know the Lord bless thee and keep thee the Lord make his face shine upon me and be gracious unto thee the Lord lift up his countenance upon me and give thee peace.

The countenance the face of the Lord shining on a child or an adult whoever he is itself peace and joy. In verse 7 we see the reason for his stability and blessing the king trusted in the Lord and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved it's God's blessing that makes him not moved.

Verse 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies this sense denotes the power of the strength the right hand even more so strength and power. Verse 9 Thine shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger.

God's king God's representative is his agent in all of this the fiery oven being insofar as his enemies are put in there and burned up that is they are so totally destroyed if something is burned ash burned up in the oven or in the fire you know you look at ash the next day after a fire it's just grey dust you couldn't tell by looking at it if it had been thoroughly burned you know you can say well I wonder how many different how many cartons or boxes or bits of paper or rubbish went into this how many bits of coal how many bits of wheat you just got dust there's no trace of what was what was burned up in that fire if it's done thoroughly it's completely gone and likewise the enemies of the Lord gone completely and likewise we see in these closing verses you have them 12 and 13 they intended evil against thee they imagined a mischievous device which they were not able to perform thou shalt make them turn their back when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face and their intention is to do evil against the Lord but it's a hopelessly futile intention which they are not able to perform a mischievous device which they are not able to perform now arrows in those days we think of arrows as something you know really kind of old fashioned you know who wants and wants bows and arrows and you've got guns instead but remember that in the time when this is being talked about the arrow was one of the most sophisticated means of warfare whereby you could strike down your enemy before he even got close to you he might not even be able to make contact with you you get him with an arrow then you get him far off good hundreds of yards off you can strike him down before he even gets close that is the sense here of God striking down the king's enemies before they even get close

[34 : 50] God faces down his enemies with such force they turn their backs and run even before they dare face him thou shalt make them turn their back when thou shalt make ready thy arrows upon thy strings against the face of them they don't even dare wait for the arrows to be loosed but

they run put the way they're to run verse 8 again thy hand shall find out all thy enemies thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee there is no running from the Lord you know we can thumb our nose at God all of our lives and we can say well I don't believe there's a God I don't believe in this I don't believe in that and I'm not going to change how I feel at all I'm going to stick by what I am I'm going to be proud of my independence my honesty I'm not like these hypocrites that keep going to church and so on and you can puff up your own heart and head and the blindness of your eyes your whole life but at the end of the day it is before God that you will stand and then there will be nowhere to run then there will be nowhere to turn because you cannot run from God

Adam tried to hide from God right at the outset God said Adam where are thou I didn't mean that he didn't know he knew exactly where he was there is no hiding from God Hebrews tells us chapter 12 verse 29 our God is a consuming fire they cannot look upon the face of God be thou exalted verse 13 Lord in thy own strength so we sing and praise thy power the glory of all the foregoing is to be ascribed to God himself be thou exalted Lord in thine own strength not David's strength not the king's strength but the Lord thine own strength it is to be ascribed to God alone what can we do but praise and rejoice and thank the Lord in thine own strength so will we sing and praise thy power and thank the Lord that this is our

God this is the God who is on our side this is the one who intercedes for us at the throne of grace this is the one who answers our prayers who wants to save us who has gone to the cross that we might be redeemed this greatest power in all the universe is actually on our side if only we would ask for his help if only we would seek his face he is ready to be entreated and all this invincible power and glory is on our side is there for our help for our deliverance for our salvation no wonder the king rejoices in the Lord's strength and we too should likewise rejoice and say and praise his power and that he is our

God thank you