

PSALMS

Chapter 41

Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; ² the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. ³ The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health. ⁴ As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!” ⁵ My enemies say of me in malice, “When will he die, and his name perish?” ⁶ And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. ⁷ All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. ⁸ They say, “A deadly thing is poured out^l on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.” ⁹ Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. ¹⁰ But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! ¹¹ By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. ¹² But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever. ¹³ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

Ps. 41 David’s prayer for mercy when seriously ill. He acknowledges that his illness is related to his sin (v. 4). His enemies greet the prospect of his death with malicious glee, and even his “close friend” (v. 9) betrays his friendship. This psalm concludes a collection of four psalms connected by common themes, and also forms the conclusion to Book I. (Book I begins and ends with a “Blessed” psalm.) In its structure, the psalm is very symmetrical, composed of four stanzas of three verses each. The first and fourth stanzas frame the prayer with a note of confidence; stanzas two and three elaborate the prayer. Verse 13 is actually not part of the psalm but the doxology that closes Book I. (CSB)

David is sick, and his enemies are vengeful. The psalm can be placed within the time of Absalom’s rebellion (cf 2Sm 14–15). (TLSB)

This psalm contains a Messianic prophecy. The psalmist speaks of betrayal by a close friend who shared his bread. This was fulfilled by Judas when he betrayed Jesus. This prophecy seems to be typical, rather than direct, because all of the circumstances and statements of the psalm are appropriate to the life of David, and there is nothing in the psalm which uniquely Messianic. (PBC)

David experienced this sort of betrayal twice in his life. The first was when his advisor Ahitophel betrayed him and went over to Absalom (2 Sam. 16:17). Like Judas, Ahitophel committed suicide when his plans fell apart. (PBC)

David experienced a second betrayal when his closest supporter, Joab, who shared his many battles and campaigns, betrayed by supporting Adonijah against Solomon (1 Kings 1). Most commentators connect this psalm with Ahithopel, but the reference to sickness and the special closeness of Joab to David may indicate that this psalm belongs to the time of Adonijah’s plot, rather than Absalom’s. Ahithophel’s suicide makes him a more appropriate type of Judas than Joab, but this point is not reflected in this psalm. (PBC)

41:1–3 Confidence that the Lord will restore. (CSB)

Because David has confessed his sins and entrusted his life to the Lord, he is confident of delivery from death and from the conspirators. (PBC)

Chem: “[The] turning away of punishments, that is to say, in the midst of their troubles they will feel the reward for their kindnesses” (*LTh* 2:644). (TLSB)

41:1 *Blessed is he who considers the poor* – Especially if he is king, whose duty it is to defend the powerless (see 72:2, 4, 12–14; 82:3–4; Pr 29:14; 31:8–9; Isa 11:4; Jer 22:16). (CSB)

Blessed – The happy condition of those who revere the Lord and do his will (see 94:12; 112:1; 119:1–2; 128:1; Pr 29:18; cf. Ps 41:1; 106:3; Pr 14:21; Isa 56:2), who put their trust in him (see 40:4; 84:5, 12; 144:15; 146:5; Pr 16:20; Isa 30:18; Jer 17:7; cf. Ps 2:12; 34:8), and so are blessed by God (see especially 41:1–3; 144:12–14; see also Mt 5:3–12). The Psalter begins by proclaiming the blessedness of the godly and ends by calling all living things to praise God in his earthly and heavenly sanctuaries (Ps 150). (CSB)

considers the poor – As king, David is to defend the powerless. He expects reward from the Lord (cf Mt 5:7). Luth: “O how often Christ speaks about a lowly heart and person, and nobody pays attention. But when a great and rich man speaks, all are filled with admiration” (AE 10:190). (TLSB)

41:2 *Lord protects* – The Lord ensures that trouble does not overwhelm the believer who extends grace to others. (A Commentary of the Psalms - Ross)

blessed in the land – The line indicates that people will acknowledge his happy estate under God’s care. (A Commentary of the Psalms - Ross)

41:3 *the Lord sustains him* – David depended on healing for past illnesses and for the illness he now experiences. Sometimes people view health as equaling God’s blessing and illness as equaling God’s curse. Following God’s Word can deliver one from calamity, disease, and misfortune, but believers will still suffer the effects of sin. Sin can be confessed and absolved, but its effects may have lifelong, widespread consequences. (TLSB)

you restore him to health – This positive statement is in the perfect tense. The reason for the change of tense could well be that the writer here drops the purely objective statement and speaks of his own experience: he has experienced a complete recovery. (Leupold)

41:4–6 Prayer for God to show mercy and to heal. (CSB)

41:4 *heal* – Hbr *rapha*’. David literally prays for the healing of his soul. (TLSB)

sinned – Testimony to a personal experience of God’s pardon. God’s heavy hand, brought down “day and night” on the stubborn silence of unacknowledged sin, filled life with groaning, but full confession brought blessed relief. Neither the sin nor the form of suffering is identified, other than that the latter was physically and psychologically devastating. But it would be uncharacteristic of the Psalms to speak of mere emotional disturbance brought on by suppressed guilt. Some affliction, perhaps illness, was the instrument of God’s chastisement.). (CSB)

Troubles come as a result of sin, and we fully merit God’s corrective hand, which at times is difficult to bear. (TLSB)

41:5 *enemies* – Unprincipled and godless men plot against David in a time of weakness. (TLSB)

his name perish – As if from a register of mankind written on a papyrus scroll. (CSB)

For the name (s.v. Ps. 20:1) to perish would be for him to cease to exist and all memory of him be forgotten. (A Commentary of the Psalms - Ross)

41:6 *see me* – Visit him in his sickness. (CSB)

Picture of court intrigue. A false friend spies on David's condition so he may report to David's enemies. (TLSB)

empty words – Speaks as if he were a friend. (CSB)

False comfort. (TLSB)

41:7–9 His enemies and his friend. (CSB)

The treachery of the conspirators and their opposition to the Messianic line of Solomon form a further basis for David's confidence that God will deliver him. (PBC)

41:7 *who hate me whisper* – This may well explain how the plotting of Absalom was possible. (Leupold)

Enemies engage in this threefold scheme to destroy David. Perhaps this refers to Absalom's scheme to take his father's kingdom. (TLSB)

41:8 *A deadly thing* – Physical disability. (TLSB)

41:9 *close friend ... who ate my bread* – One who shared the king's table—i.e., was an honored, as well as trusted, friend. Reference may be to one who had sealed his friendship by a covenant. For Jesus' use of this verse in application to himself see Jn 13:18. In fulfilling the role of his royal ancestor as God's anointed king over Israel, the great Son of David also experienced the hostility of men and the betrayal of a trusted associate, and thus fulfilled his forefather's lament. (CSB)

Lit, "the man of my peace," one in whom David had full confidence (2Sm 16:23), who ate at his royal table and attended his court. A common meal was a strong expression of hospitality and trust. (TLSB)

lifted his heel against me. Preparing for a hard blow as one would stomp an insect or a snake. The "close friend" is probably Ahithophel (2Sm 15:12; 17:1–4). Jesus quotes part of v 9 in Jn 13:18, referring to Judas's imminent betrayal. The psalm is messianic, because it foreshadows in the person of David our Lord's ministry, betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection. As great David's greater Son, Jesus would experience betrayal like David did. Judas sat with Jesus at the Last Supper and even received bread from Jesus' hand. Could there be a more bitter betrayal? Augustine: "Who is this man of His peace? Judas" (NPNF 1 8:131). (TLSB)

41:10–12 Prayer, with confidence. (CSB)

In these verses David repeats his prayer and reaffirms his confidence in the Lord. This confidence extends not only to the preservation and lengthening of his life on earth, but to an eternal presence with the Lord after death. (PBC)

41:10 *that I may repay them* – That I (as king) may call them to account. (CSB)

Request for healing and vengeance. This is David’s duty, because God appointed him as king (cf 1Sm 25:33; 2Sm 3:39). (TLSB)

41:11 *my enemy will not shout in triumph* – God will not leave David dead on the ground. (TLSB)

If the enemy is not permitted to overthrow him, the writer will see in that fact a token of God’s approval of him. This is virtually a prayer that the outcome desired might become a reality. (Leupold)

41:12 *my integrity* – Virtuous conduct before God. (TLSB)

The last part of the prayer is by far not as self-righteous as may appear on the surface. Koenig says very properly that “integrity is merely a comparatively high measure of virtuous conduct.” It is the least that could be expected of any faithful follower of the Lord. (Leupold)

set – Establish. (CSB)

in your presence – As the royal servant of Israel’s heavenly King. (For the idiom see 101:7; 1Sa 16:22, “in my service”; 1Ki 10:8, “before you”; 17:1, “whom I serve.”) (CSB)

David is the divinely appointed royal servant of Israel’s heavenly King (cf 101:7; 1Sm 16:22). (TLSB)

forever – Never to be rejected (see 2Sa 7:15–16). (CSB)

41:13 The doxology with which the worshiping community is to respond to the contents of Book I (see 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48; 150). (CSB)

The doxology that closes Book One of Psalms. (TLSB)

This doxology apparently applies not just to this psalm, but to the entire first book of psalms (Psalms 1-41). This forms a fitting conclusion to the whole, which is concerned with the glorious future of the Davidic kingship, which found its fulfillment in Christ. (PBC)

Ps 41 Two experiences afflict David: he is sick, and he suffers at the hands of enemies (traitors) who want his throne and his life. The Lord allows suffering in our lives, that our sins might be punished in the temporal sense, though we often cannot tell why we are suffering. Whatever the case, repent of your sins and pray for the Lord’s mercy and guidance according to His Word. The Lord is gracious and merciful toward His precious children. Though His discipline may never seem to end, we know His love and mercy still abound for us. • Dear Father, thank You for Your infinite love and goodness toward us, Your dear children. Even when we are disciplined, we know You love us. Keep us in Your Word, in faith and in prayer. Amen. (TLSB)