

Prayers

Opening prayer

O Lord, I submit my life to you, with all its weaknesses and failings. Hear my confessions and turn my life around, I pray. Thank You for graciously saving me from my sins and from all the power of all evil in the world. Help me to understand the full extent of this saving grace, and do all I can to share it with others. Create in me a heart ready to do what is right, and fill me with a desire to do Your will, O Lord. ALLELUIA

Prayer Suggestions

1. For yourself

Pray out loud: speak to the Lord as someone present in a room with you, and tell Him what is on your mind

2. For your friends and family

Tell the Lord today your feelings about the lives of each of those close to you, and ask Him to bless them

3. For the church and its work

Tell the Lord your thoughts about the good things happening in your church, and ask Him to be present with His people as they do His work in the world

4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)

Tell the Lord what you think about what is happening in the world today, and ask Him to guide your thoughts and prayers

Meditation

Have you seen the sufferers of this world?

Do you look?

Have you heard the cry of the oppressed?

Do you hear?

Have you feasted off the backs of the poor?

Do you eat?

Does your spirit cry for justice?

Will you act?

Does your soul long for peace?

Will you forgive?

Does your mind seek for truth?

Will you learn?

Will you start to put your faith into practice?

Why not now?

Will you read God's Word to find all truth?

Why delay?

Will you turn your heart to fervent prayer

Why hold back?

The clock is set ticking

And all of life will fade away ... so

Do what is set before you by to do

And make sure that you don't delay.

Bible Study

Bible passage – Psalm 21: 7-13

- ⁷ For the king trusts in the LORD;
and he will not be shaken
from the faithful love of the Most High.
- ⁸ Your hand will reach all Your enemies;
Your right hand will take hold of Your foes.
- ⁹ When You come, You will set them
in a fiery furnace.
The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
and His fire will consume them.
- ¹⁰ You will purge the earth of their inheritance,
and their descendents from the human race.
- ¹¹ If they plan evil against You and devise mischief,
they will not succeed;
- ¹² for You will put them to flight
and shoot them with a straight bow.
- ¹³ Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;
we will sing and praise Your power!

Review

The first 6 verses of Psalm 21 are a poem of thanks to God for the blessings given to a leader of God's people. Of course, it refers originally to King David, but in our last study, we discovered that Psalm 21 points forward not back, and speaks prophetically to us today about Jesus Christ. The same is true for the rest of the Psalm as we have read today. It describes the victory of God's people over their enemies when led by a faithful King, and although the Psalm was doubtless inspired by King David, it speaks to us now of Christ's victory over all the powers of evil through His death and resurrection.

Before we study this, however, it is worth looking carefully at verse 7 and what it meant for King David and the Jewish people. The most notable thing about the stories of King David in Scripture are his absolute loyalty and trust in God throughout his turbulent life, and his faith in his covenant relationship with God. All of this is reflected in verse 7, which speaks of the king's 'trust' in the Lord that will 'not be shaken', and the covenant, 'faithful love' of God. It is a verse which confirms a great truth of history, which is that God is able to do great things in this world through those who faithfully put their trust in Him and His steadfast love. In the Old Testament, the two words 'trust' and 'faithful love' come about as close as it is possible to get to what is meant by 'faith' in the New Testament. Because of this, verse 7 of Psalm 21 provides a preacher with a good Old Testament text from which to speak about the things of faith.

Verses 8 to 12 of Psalm 21 now speak about victory over an enemy, but whose victory is it and against what enemy? Again, it helps us to understand this passage if we think of the battles fought by King David, and those fought by Jesus on our behalf. David was a leader of God's people who, when anointed, was able to win battles against Israel's enemies in order to secure the kingdom of Israel. Nevertheless, he did not take any personal honour for these victories. He ascribed them all to God, and Psalm 21 reflects this here. Verse eight says confidently of God, 'Your hand will reach all your enemies', and every following verse speaks of God as the one who gains victory over David's and Israel's enemies.

In addition to this, Psalm 21 speaks of Christ's victory over all the powers of evil through His death and resurrection. Jesus placed His trust firmly in the love of His Father, and as a result of this, he defeated all the powers of evil that took Him to the cross, by being raised up on the third day. Although His victory is something we have yet to fully grasp, Jesus' victory was comprehensive (21:8) and set in motion God's eternal plan to rid the universe of His enemies and all evil (21:10). Satan cannot withstand against this plan of God (21:11), and the victory of Christ is the beginning of the victory that will one day be complete (21:12). The language of Psalm 21 is echoed in countless Scriptures which speak of God's eventual defeat of all evil, whether in the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 13:3f.), or speak about the end times, for example, in the Revelation of John (e.g. 20:10-12).

Now in the midst of everyday life, most of us know very well that we do not easily see God's complete victory over all evil, at least in our own day. However, the assurance that Christ has already won this victory means

a great deal to us. It tells us that in God's due time, Christ's victory will be complete even in this world. We need not despair within the battles of life we experience day by day, for ultimate victory is assured. God will deal with every single one of His enemies (20:8); they will not be merely brushed aside, they will be annihilated (21:9), moreover, this victory will be completed on earth before it is, finally, spiritually complete in heaven (21:10-12).

The last verse of our Psalm completes the picture; it uses the language of complete surrender and praise to God, as the only One who has ultimate power in this world. The words, '*Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength*' (21:13) are words of pure praise to God, whose love is trustworthy and whose work on our behalf will never let us down. In this, we are united with David who placed his trust in the One true God. We are also united with Christ who also placed His trust in God the Father, and who also fulfilled the prophetic words of this passage of Scripture.

Discipleship

Questions for groups

1. Does the word 'trust' express adequately what you mean by 'faith'? What might you add to the characteristics of 'trust' to make what we mean by 'faith'?
2. What does this passage say to us about spiritual warfare as we might understand it today?
3. What battles need to be fought in order that the church of God might fulfil its God given mission in the world today?

Discipleship challenges

- *Look carefully at verse 7, and consider what it says about trust and faith. Pray and ask the Lord to help you grow in faith, especially through the particular battles of life you face at the moment.*
 - *Discuss with a friend what you believe to be the real evils of the day, whether in people's personal lives or in the world at large. Submit your feelings about these things to the Lord and ask Him to help you gain a godly perspective on spiritual warfare.*
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Final Prayer

Bring us peace, good Lord, and enable us to complete the tasks and battles that will bring us that peace. Bring us love, good Lord, and open our eyes to Your steadfast love so that we might know what true love is. Bring hope, good Lord, for in You, all things are possible. AMEN
