

Thanks for a Great Victory

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Tonight we have a real privilege to study Psalm 21 together. I really delight in the fact that we're able to go through the Psalms systematically like this and read texts and study texts that otherwise you wouldn't do if you weren't approaching it in a systematic way. That's one of the beauties of systematic Bible study is that it forces you to go through texts and derive benefit from them that you would otherwise miss because the immediate benefit may not be so evident to you compared to Psalm 23 or Psalm 51 or things that are more familiar to us. I love going to unfamiliar texts of the Bible and studying them and then being able to teach them.

Here in Psalm 21, we're going to, I'm quite confident tonight that we're going to benefit together from what this Psalm has to say because it teaches us so much about the spirit of thanksgiving that should animate the spiritual life. As we study this Psalm, as we go into it, we should remember that it is an ongoing central feature of Christianity, of being a true convert, that there is a spirit of thanksgiving that animates the life of the true believer. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." It's always fascinating to me to think about that verse. People expend a lot of money and a lot of effort and read a lot of books, "What's God's will for me?" Well, do you know what? Let's start here. Before you start trying to discern what your career should be or anything like that, let's just start with the fact that today God wants you to be thankful right where you're at and, in fact, Romans 1, on the reverse side, says that one of the reasons that God will judge the world in his wrath is because they refuse to honor him and give thanks. Well, I think almost every one of you here and I know that you're gathered together here as people that do give thanks to the Lord. You love him and you gladly sing his praises and this Psalm is going to strengthen us and reinforce us in that and the fact that it will convict us over the fact that we lack thanksgiving at times in our lives, let that just be the motivation to make you more thankful in the days to come and to follow the pattern that's laid out for us in this Psalm.

Last time, if you weren't with us, we said that Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 are kind of paired together Psalms. They go together. There is a reason why the compiler put them back-to-back in the Psalter. In Psalm 20, we saw the people praying for the king's victory as he went out into battle and we won't review all of the reasons that we said that but if you just glance at Psalm 20:4, you'll see that they're looking forward and they pray, "May God

grant you your heart's desire And fulfill all your counsel! We will sing for joy over your victory, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners." So the king is in the temple. He is about ready to go out into battle or in the presence of God. David wouldn't have had the temple yet because that came later but they're in the presence of God. They are anticipating a military conflict and the king is about to lead the troops out into battle and they have gathered together and they are praying and they are petitioning on behalf of the king that God would grant him success on the battlefield.

Well, as you come to Psalm 21, the battle is over and the king is victorious and now they are giving thanks for the victory that God has given. We saw in verse 4 of Psalm 20, "May He grant you your heart's desire," well, now in Psalm 21:2, they are looking at the king's heart's desire in a past tense sense and speaking to the Lord, they say, "You have given him his heart's desire, And You have not withheld the request of his lips." So there is a sequence that goes on. Psalm 20, "Lord, grant his desires." Then the battle takes place and the Lord grants his desire. Now in Psalm 21, they're looking back over the sweep of that and saying, "God, we thank you. We praise the Lord. We praise the Almighty that you have done what we've asked. You were good to the king. Our king has come back victorious and now we rejoice in the power that you have displayed." There's this element of gratitude and thanksgiving that is being manifested in Psalm 21.

Now, before we think about this as something that applied 3,000 years ago and what's the relevance to this today, well, beloved, let's remember what we think and the way that we live our Christian lives and the way that we pray and all of that and just think about things from a very simple, basic perspective. When you pray and when God grants your petition and God manifests his strength, what God has done when he has answered your prayer is that he has put himself on display. He has manifested the fact that he is a prayer hearing God, he is a prayer answering God and the answered prayer is a manifestation of the fact that he is strong and powerful to do what we ask him to do when it is in accord with his will. So even the smallest of answers of prayer should grab our attention and say, "Not only have I gotten my heart's desire and gotten what I asked for," it should remind us that we have just seen again a manifestation of the power of God and you start to think about life from a spiritual perspective, from a theological perspective. You see, we're intended to walk through life interpreting it and seeing what happens as a manifestation of the providence and the power of God. We're not to think about life as a series of random chance events. We understand that all of life is under the power of God and that when we are submitted to him and when we are praying to him and he is displaying answers, that is an occasion for us to recognize his power and give thanks to him in response and I'm sure that we all fall short in doing this.

Well, Psalm is going to help us. Just be mindful that answered prayer shows forth the strength of God, that spiritual victories are a manifestation of the power of God and we are to recognize that and consciously respond with praise and worship when it takes place and not simply take for granted the fact that these things have occurred. You know, our recognition of the work of God should promote a spiritual response within us and Psalm 21 shows us that. Psalm 21 praises God for his strength as he displayed it in the victory that he gave to the king. Look at the opening and the closing verses here of Psalm 21 and

just recognize, again, this literary device called an inclusio, the beginning and the end of the Psalm are on the same theme and so everything within it, in between those bookends, is reinforcing the same theme. Psalm 21:1, "O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad, And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!" That's how it opens. There's your theme for the Psalm. Verse 13, the Psalm ends right where it begins and says, "Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength; We will sing and praise Your power." So they call upon the covenant-keeping name of God, the faithful, promise-keeping name of God and say, "O LORD, we recognize your strength." Then he expounds on that and then at the end, he comes right back to the same thing. "Having said all that I have to say about this, O LORD, let me just again repeat, In your strength we exalt you. We will sing and praise and give thanks to your name." So this is a Psalm about exalting God for his power and his power was seen in the fact that he gave victory to the king.

Now, how can we break this down and find spiritual use for it here today in our own lives? Look, you guys suffer from the same problem that I do in that you are prone to spiritual amnesia and we're alike like this and so I'm talking about us collectively and me in the middle of it and the worst offender of it. We forget. We forget the blessings of God that he has bestowed upon us. We're too often like the lepers who were healed, ten of them and only one came back to give thanks to the Lord and the Lord said, "Where are the other nine? Was it just this Samaritan who could come back and give thanks to me after I bestowed the same blessing upon all of them?" Again, I just want to be clear and direct and helpful and constructive here for you to understand that I'm including myself in what I'm saying here. We run off and we forget. Once we get the blessing that we asked for, once the struggle is over, once the trial has been removed, we just go on and it's like we forget and it never happened. Well, it shouldn't be that way, beloved. We should be so tender to the working of God and the faithfulness of God and the power of God that we're just continually adding to our bank account, as it were, these deposits upon which we will draw as reasons to give gratitude to him as our lives go on and everyone of you, as you go further along in life whether you're recognizing it or not, the blessing of God is being faithfully poured out on your life in a way that you should be ever finding more and more reasons to express gratitude to him.

Well, that's what this Psalm is showing us and in the first part of it here, in the first seven verses, we're going to see that the Psalmist is giving thanks for past victories. If you're taking notes and I hope that you do, there is extra credit for those who take notes. I don't know if you were aware of that but those who take notes get extra credits and their kids get extra stickers at the end of the service. So kids, if you're only getting one sheet of stickers, you talk to your dad or mom about that. You say, "What were you guys doing here?" and you stimulate them to love and good deeds. Good for you.

Point 1: thanks for past victories. The Psalmist here is giving thanks for past victories. Now, the first thing that we want to decide here as we look at this Psalm is who exactly it is that's speaking. Believe it or not, this is one of the things that commentators don't agree on. There is a split down the middle and they'll, quite frankly, say, "We don't know who is saying what here." It's interesting that something that basic and fundamental could be so difficult to ascertain. Some people believe and some of my favorite commentators

believe that David the king here is speaking and they say that David is speaking in this Psalm and is giving thanks and praise to God and if those men believe that, then it must be a reasonable view. I question that. I believe that David wrote this Psalm but I don't think that he's actually the one speaking in it but rather he's giving the congregation of people that which they should say and how they should be led in thanksgiving to God. The reason that I say that is that it's not natural the way that this is written for this to be an expression of what David himself is saying first person singular from his own mouth. He never uses the word "I" in this Psalm like he does in other Psalms. This Psalm consistently refers to the king in the third person. Look at verse 1, "O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad. How greatly he will rejoice. You have given him his heart's desire. You meet him with the blessings of good things," in verse 3.

So I believe that it's best to see this as something that David wrote for the congregation to somehow speak on behalf of the king. It's the people who were speaking in the first part of Psalm 20, we saw that last time, that the people were saying, "May the LORD bless you, O king, as you go out into battle." Well, if that interpretation of Psalm 20 is right and these two Psalms are connected, then it's reasonable to think that, "Okay, the congregation is still speaking here giving thanks that God answered their request from Psalm 20."

Now, there is more reason than that. The closing verse, if you look at the last verse again, verse 13 here, the closing verse is a plural reference, Psalm 21:13 where it says, "Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength; We will sing and praise Your power." There is a plurality. There is a congregational element there. James Boice, if I recall correctly, titles his chapter on this Psalm in his very helpful commentary, "A Day of National Thanksgiving," or words to that effect. There is a national, corporate dimension to what's being said here and so they are giving thanks, the congregation is giving thanks to God for answered prayer from Psalm 20 and we're going to interpret the Psalm in light of that assumption, recognizing that other men might see it a little bit differently and that's up to them.

So look at the first two verses here of Psalm 21 in light of all of this background and understanding that we're going to mine some spiritual gold for ourselves as we go through this message. The people pray,

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

Look, there is something really fascinating going on here. There's a recognition going on that's implied in these two verses that give us some deep insight into what the godly, faithful people in Israel, how they viewed their king and what they understood about his position. In this Psalm, the people are recognizing that the king has a particular relationship with God and his victories on the battlefield are a reflection of that relationship and God has honored the king's prayers and that is why the king had victory on the battlefield.

Look at it there again with me. He says there in verse 2, "You have given him his heart's desire, And You have not withheld the request of his lips." So the king came and asked for help in battle. Now the battle is over and he's victorious and the people say, "Ah-ha! I get the connection here! I see what's going on! Our king went into battle and God was with him and he was victorious and so his victory shows forth the fact that God is with him." So they are praising God and giving thanks to God for the reality that the military success was indicating more than just a human conquest, it was an illustration, it was a manifestation of the power of God resting on his anointed king who was leading his chosen people and the nation. It's very significant. People are saying, "There's something spiritual that's going on here and, Lord, we realize that military victory is a display of your strength. We settled that beforehand in Psalm 20 because we asked for your help in winning the battle. Well, now that we've won, we're not going to steal the glory to ourselves, we're going to give the glory back to you and acknowledge that you're the one who brought this success to pass. You gave our king what he asked for. We praise you and we honor you and we thank you for it."

Then they go on in the verses that follow and they give thanks, watch this, watch this, this is so simple, so instructive. This is so helpful for you to cultivate your own spirit of thanksgiving and the way that you give thanks to God in your own personal life. This is unmistakable. Look at what they say in verse 3. They give thanks. Let me give you a little overview here. What they do is they give thanks, watch this, by listing the ways that God has blessed the king and they just recite back to God what he had done with a spirit that says, "I realize that your power accomplished this." From gratitude, "O God, I extol you and I recognize and I call to mind and I recite in your presence what it is that you have done."

Verse 3. It says, "You have not withheld the request of his lips. For," let me expand on what I was just saying, O God,

3 For You meet him with the blessings of good things; You set a crown of fine gold on his head.

Now they are moving from the general to the more specific as they move along here. The crown symbolizes the conquest of the enemy. The crown recognizes the divine right of the king to rule. The military victory that God blessed the king with was symptomatic of the fact that God had appointed this king to rule over them and his success was a sign that God was with him and so this idea of a crown, God meeting him and giving him a crown is indicating that this king enjoys the favor of God. Charles Spurgeon says, "It is a crown indicating royal nature, imperial power, deserved honor, glorious conquest and divine government." That this king was a royal man. That this king with his crown being displayed that God had given to him. God here is showing that, "This king has the power and the authority and the right by my hand to rule and lead." The crown bestows honor on the one who wears it, manifesting conquest and so the people are saying, "God, we recognize that our king," and remember last time we said that the people in God's nation were more identified with their king than we are with our president. They were identified,

the king was their leader, was their representative and so as they see their king exalted, they realize that they enjoy the reflected glory of that as well. They rejoice in the honoring of the king because they love the king themselves. So they are looking at this and they say, "God, we see the success that you have given the king. You know, God, it's like you came out and met him as he was returning from battle. It's like that you went out to meet him with gifts and just poured all of this upon him. You've been generous and gracious and you have recognized and blessed our king, God, and we give you thanks for that." So they are reciting what God has done as a means of giving thanks to him.

They go on in verses 4 and 5. The king had asked God for mercy to preserve his life in battle and God gave that request and more beside. Look at verses 4 and 5. They say,

4 He asked life of You, You gave it to him, Length of days forever and ever. 5 His glory is great through Your salvation [or your deliverance, not thinking so much of salvation as we often talk about it here in the forgiveness of our sins but God delivered him in the battlefield.], Splendor and majesty You place upon him.

So what happens when someone wins a big conquest? When an athlete wins in the championship? When they win a gold medal at the Olympics, what happens? Honor is bestowed upon them. They are given that which distinguishes them from other men and they are given a token that shows that, "You have accomplished something extraordinary." Well, the blessing of God on the king was that splendor and glory that is manifested and David was recognized as a man distinct and strong among men because of the conquest that he had in battle. Remember, they had a song about David that Saul had killed his thousands but David had killed his tens of thousands. They recognized the uniqueness and the glory and the strength of David. What the people are saying here is, "God, we recognize that this wasn't a human accomplishment in the final analysis. What we're seeing is the hand of our God upon our king and, Lord, we thank you and honor you for it." The king's victory gave him prominence among men. God had conferred glory and honor upon him as an honored king.

Now, let's step back for a moment and recognize in a way that, frankly, I wish I could explain better to you just as an interpreter but you see as you read this and you enter into the flow of the Psalm, you realize that what Paul is saying underneath the surface here is something more than just about David. That there are aspects of this particularly in the light of the cross, of the coming of Christ and what we now know as God's revelation has been completed that there are aspects of this Psalm that point us beyond David and realize that David was simply prefiguring Christ himself in this. That the ultimate victor in battle was the Lord Jesus Christ in multiple ways. First of all, in his battle against sin and death and hell and Satan at the cross. His resurrection showed him coming forth with unique glory and splendor upon him in a way that far transcends anything that David knew. In a time still future to us, our Lord Jesus Christ is going to ride back to earth with the holy angels and destroy his enemies and put them under his feet and the glory and the splendor of his conquering reign is going to be on display in a way that far transcends anything that was true in David's life. Our Lord Jesus Christ now dwells in resurrected

immortality in a raised human body that once was dead but now is alive. He reigns in glory and splendor at the right hand of God.

Now listen: for us as Christians, we need to enter into the mindset of the Israelites who saw in their human defective king, they gloried in the reflected glory of their king. Well, how much more then should you and I as we contemplate the glory of the resurrected Christ and the greater glory still to come, to recognize that as those who belong to him, we have been brought into union with him in our salvation, that his glory is that which we rejoice in. The fact that Christ reigns at the right hand of the Father and that he is our Lord and he is our brother, we give thanks to God for that. "O God, thank you that you have honored your Son like that because, dear God, when I see Christ glorified and honored and I realize that I belong to him, nothing makes me more glad than to reflect on the glory of my King and, God, I thank you that you have honored Christ in that way."

David had authority. David was unarguably the best king that Israel ever had despite his failures. David was honored in a great way. But beloved, do you understand that David's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, exponentially, infinitely, geometrically surpasses him in glory, nature and honor and we belong to that greater King? Wow. What do we say? "God, thank you. Thank you that I can belong to this King. Thank you that I can share in his victory by faith. Thank you that he's going to share his rewards with me in the future. Thank you that this King blesses me now. O God, thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I see so much reason for gratitude in the glory given to my King. As the appointed one of God, he has resurrected and he possesses immortality forever and ever and ever. Amen."

You know, my mind goes to that realm and I pause for just a moment and say, "Lord, maybe the rapture could happen right now and we could just go up to glory right on that note." Apparently not. But here in Psalm 21, you see a people who love their king. They share in his reflected glory and they recognize God as the source of that blessing. Well beloved, if they could do that with their human king, how much more you and I when we know the one true, eternal, surpassing King. We know the final David. We know the Son of God.

Look at verse 6 of Psalm 21. It's hard to separate in some of these Psalms, it's hard to separate Christ from David. Verse 6,

6 For You make him most blessed forever; You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.

David was blessed. David loved the presence of God, that's why we have so many Psalms written by his hand, and yet we quickly accelerate and realize that the most blessed one forever is the Lord Jesus Christ. The one most joyful in the presence of God is the Lord Jesus Christ with his Father, the one who is eager at Gethsemane to be restored to the glory that he shared with his Father before time began. We just see David prefiguring Christ without denying that the Psalm had an initial application to him.

So the people are just thanking God for the way that he has blessed their king. They are glorying in the blessings and in the victories of their king. Well beloved, isn't that what you do when you're thinking rightly about Christ? Aren't you rejoicing in the fact that Christ is a victor over Satan? He's a victor over sin? A victor over death? That he won over hell? Never to be beaten? That he is unconquered and undefeated and will be that way through all of eternity? Isn't the glory of Christ your glory? Isn't the honor of Christ that where you find your greatest satisfaction? It should be. That's the mark of a true Christian, to love him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. To love him more than life itself. To say with the Gospel of John, "He must increase and I must decrease." It's all over the place, isn't it? It's written. For those of you that are Christians, this is stamped in every segment of your heart to love the glory of Christ more than life itself. This is stamped all over the Scripture, "The glory of Christ. The glory of Christ." And his people respond with a loud and hearty, "Amen! Yes, come quickly, Lord!"

You can't blame me for stopping and asking: do you know him? Do you know Christ like this? Do you receive him and welcome him and have you come to him for salvation and the forgiveness of your sins? This is a King unlike any other. This is a King of victorious might who gladly shares his wealth with those who come to him humbly confessing their sins and receiving him and saying, "I want you to be my King. I've been my own king long enough and I cast my filthy crown, my rag around my head, I cast it aside that you might receive the Lordship in my life." Do you know Christ like that, I ask?

Well, here in verse 7...it's hard not to get emotional about this. Here in verse 7, you see the people praising their human king and they say this about him, "You know, God, you've blessed our king this way. He's had all of these victories. You've disposed all of this blessing upon him," and they understand why. They look at verse 7 and they said, "Why have you done this?"

7 For [because], the king trusts in the LORD, And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.

What an incredible display of the two sided coin that is manifested in the relationship of the king to his God. On the one hand, the king, his heart is trusting in the Lord. He's resting his confidence in that. He's seeking the glory of God. Seeking the glory of his God as he goes. The king trusts in the Lord. The king is confident that God will bless him. The king is confident that he can commit himself, commit his cause to God and know that the outcome will be good in the end. He's confident of that. He trusts the Lord that much that he can go into battle with his life on the line and understand that, "There's a good outcome waiting for me on the end because I'm trusting in my God. I'm trusting in the Lord." The king manifesting the human response.

Well, look at what's on the other side of this in verse 7. On the other side of this is the character of God. This is so profound and, you see, we wouldn't find these things if we just hopscotched around them, the Psalms. We would miss all of this blessing because in verse 7 it says, "through the lovingkindness of the Most High he," meaning the king, "will not be shaken." So lovingkindness, a reference to God's loyal, faithful love, his

covenant-keeping love, he's a God who keeps his promises who never betrays his people ever, this God who can be absolutely trusted with the fact that he will carry out what's good for his people. You have the king trusting in him on the one side, the human confidence being reposed in the character of God and you see the character of God on display through God's faithful, loyal love will make it so that this king will never be shaken. He will never be abandoned and you feel the pulsating nature of Scripture and you realize that David did this but isn't this what our Lord did? Isn't this what the Lord Jesus did even on the cross when he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit"? There he is dying on the cross, about to be buried, bearing the wrath of God upon our sins and yet he is still trusting in the lovingkindness of his Father so much so that he says, "As my life ends, O God, I entrust my spirit to you where it will be kept in safe-keeping forever." The King Jesus manifested this most supremely.

Well, let's dial it back a bit. It's hard for me not to get animated on these things. You know, we must trust God in like manner. We're not justified in doubting the character of God. I realize that that's a popular thing for modern writers to want to do and to explore their doubts and display their doubts and talk about their doubts. Well look: in the final analysis, to doubt the character of God is sinful. It's wrong. It's not right to doubt that God would be good to you if you're a Christian. That's inexcusable for us to think such things. After all that he has revealed in Scripture, after the death of Christ on the cross for the sake of our souls, in light of all of the promises of how God will bless us throughout all of eternity forever and ever, ages without end and he has recorded all of this in a majestic, perfect word. To look in that, to have these things deposited in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit and say, "You know, I'm not so sure. I don't know if you can be trusted or not." Look, look: don't let yourself off the hook on that when your heart goes in that direction. Recognize that for the wicked unbelief that it is and repent of it and come back to trusting God like David illustrated and like your Christ illustrated. This is the only thing that is right is for God to see a trust in us that is worthy of all that he has done and all that he has revealed and unless we set the standard high and realize that that is what we are called to do, we'll never aspire after it.

Look at verse 7 with me again. Why did the king enjoy all of these blessings? Because the king trusts in the Lord. He has put his confidence in the character of God and God, motivated by this unwavering, loyal, faithful love of his will certainly keep the king from being shaken. And what do we see? What was the outcome for our Christ when he committed his spirit into the hands of God on the cross? He came out of the grave three days later. His Father received him up into heaven and somehow the indivisible essence of God was reunited. David trusted God and saw battlefield victories. Christ trusted his Father and was resurrected from the dead.

Here's the point, beloved, let's apply this to our lives and I say all these things to encourage you even if some of the things are convicting as they are to me as well. People don't understand that. The preacher comes under the sound and the authority of the word himself even as he's preaching it. Beloved, God displays loyal love to those who trust him. He honors those who honor him. That's what King David did. That's what our Lord Jesus did. Their victories flowed from the fact that God honored their trust and so the

Psalmist, the congregation could say that God's loyal love means that the king will never be shaken. David stayed on his throne to the end and enjoys the affirmation in the book of Acts that he was man after God's own heart.

Here's what I want you to see, beloved, every one of you: God's loyal love is in major part why we persevere in the faith today. You see, we believe, we know, we're confident that God is faithful. We understand. We know by personal experience, some of you as you're sitting here tonight, that we may go through difficult times for a season, maybe an extended season, that there may be buckets of tears that we shed in the process. We understand that we'll be rejected for our faith more and more openly and without abandon as the culture increasingly feels the license to attack the true people of God but what do we do in our struggles? What do we do when we're challenged? What do we do when people accuse us of being judgmental or unkind just simply because we're holding up the word of God? What do we do? We stand firm. We stamp our feet and say, "My feet are planted right here. I am not moving away from my confidence and my trust in my God." Why do we do that? Why did the martyrs of the early church refuse to recant? Why did they prefer to spill their blood or lose their head rather than recant and deny Christ? Why? Why? Do we even need to ask the question? We don't move because God is loyal to those who put their trust in him. We don't compromise. We don't back down. We don't yield before wicked men and deny Scripture or deny Christ because we understand that our God is permeated with a faithful, steadfast, loyal love and he honors everyone who puts their obedient trust in him and if you're like me, you don't want to miss the blessing that's on the other side of trusting him.

I don't want to miss it, do you? Do you want to compromise and not find out how God would honor the trust? Why would you do that? Why would you abandon that when God's love is loyal and he honors the trust of those who honor him? You see, we understand based on Hebrews 11:6 that God is a rewarder of those who seek him and we want to seek him. He's worthy of it in his own intrinsic being. We love him for saving us. Multiple, multiple motivations to faithfulness but part of it is that we want the reward that comes from faithful trust because God honors those who trust him. Martin Luther said, "The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still." "Take my life away. You want my neck? Here it is. Here is my neck, take it because you'll get my neck before you'll get me to deny my God."

So we are unmoved even in our discouragement, even when opposition comes, even as the evening shade of life is being pulled down on our earthly existence. Through all of that and a thousand things more we say, "No, I trust the loyal love of my God." You say, "You mean you're not a man of the world? You mean you don't care what science has to say about this? You're going to believe in your invisible friend?" "That's what I think of all your mocking," we say to an unbelieving, skeptical world that's under wrath and judgment. "Why would I align myself with you?" You see, the reason that I'm saying this, beloved, pastorally so you understand where I'm coming from, I want to do everything I can to make this as distinct and clear in your mind so that your heart commitments would be purified and would rise to the level that the glory and the lovingkindness and the faithful love of God is worthy of. That these convictions would be

so clear in your mind that an alternative of betrayal or sin or distrust would be unthinkable to you in your right mind.

God is worthy of our trust. The Christ who hung on the cross for your sins is worthy of your devotion no matter what the cost might be and so I ask you again: do you know him? Have you put your faith and trust in him? Have you done as Jesus said, denied the world, taken up your cross and come after him with a sense that carrying your cross, you're singing as you walk along the road, "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love!" Are those convictions crystal clear in your mind because they guide the way you respond to opposition, to trials, to death itself? "I trust him completely, implicitly, unconditionally come what may." You see, as your pastor, why we're dwelling on this is because I want you, more importantly the Lord himself wants you to know the reward that comes from that kind of trust. You could put your own name in this. This speaks about the king in verse 7 but this is how God deals with his people, "through the lovingkindness of the Most High you will not be shaken."

So, we have thought through these things as we work our way through the Psalm. We come to the second point for those of you taking notes. The people in the next section of the Psalm turn from thanking God for past victories to point 2: exercising trust for future victories. Trust for future victories and I realize that when we state things in really dramatic and forceful animated terms, you know, at the end of the day, we still have to go back and live life. We still have to enter back into the conflict and into the battle and it was not different for David in verse 8. The just completed victory has not vanquished all opposition. There would be more trials and enemies to come but look at how they continue in trust. Verse 8,

8 Your hand will find out all your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate you. 9 You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, And fire will devour them.

Without getting into too much detail here, they are looking to the future now and with a realism that is befitting of Scripture, they say, "There are still enemies out there. We just had a great victory and, God, we thank you for it but we realize that there are enemies that still abound. There are troubles still to come. "Well, God, do you know what? We trust you for that too. Just like you gave victory over those enemies just now and at other times in the past, we're confident because you're an immutable, unchanging God, that you are going to give like victory when other enemies arise." So whether it's thanking God for past victories or trusting him for the future, the response and the attitude is still the same. Gratitude and trust, not indifference and fear because the character of God is the anchor that drives our perspective on all of these things. The remaining enemies will meet the same fate that the past ones did. The king will find them and overcome them as well because it's the same God and that's what defines reality.

The victory will be thorough. Look at Psalm 21:10,

10 Their offspring You will destroy from the earth, And their descendants from among the sons of men.

So thorough will be the victory over these next enemies that they won't even have surviving descendants. The memory of them will be vanquished from the face of the earth. May it ever be thus with those who refuse to repent and never bow the knee to God. May their memory be forgotten. If they would be the enemy of Christ, let their name be forgotten so great and so glorious and so worthy is he.

What's more their plots against the king are doomed to failure. Verse 11,

11 Though they intended evil against You And devised a plot, They will not succeed.

They were planning, watch this, watch how this just pulsates and it's just so hard to extricate David from Christ in this. They were thinking about it when this Psalm was originally written. They were thinking in terms primarily of their earthly king and that he would succeed over enemies in the future but as you go through redemptive history, as you look back in the Gospels, as you look back at the life of Christ, what happened to those Jews and Romans who crucified him? What came of their plots to do away with him and banish Christ and to silence him forever? Their plots failed miserably because Christ rose and came out of that grave triumphant and displayed his resurrection for 500 witnesses to see and then ascended up into glory where he reigns at the right hand of God. You plot against Christ, that's the outcome: you fail miserably and so it is ever thus with those who oppose the living God.

Why are we afraid of those who plot things in this life? I don't care if they've got political power. I don't care if they've got the levers of entertainment to pull to support their wickedness. Who cares? Who cares? All of the wickedness that we see building up around us in the lives and the culture and the world around us, it is doomed to failure. Their wicked plots will not succeed. They design to overturn the very order of God in creation and to define and deny him out of existence. It's not going to work. It's not going to work and so, beloved, don't get worked up about that stuff. Understand that all rebellion against God ends in failure. All unrepentant rebellion against God ends in failure and destruction. By contrast, those of us who trust in the Lord will be met with reward and lovingkindness and so we gladly persevere. Our hearts are resolute. We're not shaken by the headlines that we see around us. We're not distracted when people curse us and hurl insults at us, are we? Are you? Hmm? Unmoved.

Why? Verse 12, because they're ultimately going to turn and run. They will flee at the return of Christ. These who present a bold face now are one day going to call for rocks to fall upon them in utter terror at the return of Christ. Verse 12,

12 For You will make them turn their back; You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.

They come bold-faced now but when God arises, when Christ rises up, they will turn and all we'll be able to see is their backs as they flee. That triumph is certain. It is sure. It is absolute. It is more certain than your next breath because God is a God of power. He is a God of sovereignty. He is a God of loyal love. He is a God that will not tolerate wickedness forever. He will triumph in the end. David's triumphs prove that, prefigured the greater triumph of the resurrection of Christ and when Christ returns in glory, it's going to be on even greater public display for all to see and since victory is proven in the past and certain in the future, why should we be afraid? Why should we do anything other than do what they do here at the end of verse 13?

Third and final point here today: praise for God's power. Praise for God's power as we look at verse 13. The Psalm ends where we end. We come full circle with the Psalmist here and say,

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

"God, we recognize your majesty greatness. Your unsearchable omnipotence. Your unfathomable wisdom. O God, we bow before and recognize your profound, faithful love to those who belong to you and what do we do, O God? We sing. We exalt you. We praise you. We use our physical lips to magnify your glory. With glad hearts we sing. With joyful motivations coursing through our spiritual veins we praise your power. God, you have vanquished your enemies in the past. You vanquished sin, death, hell and Satan in Christ at the cross and the resurrection. You'll do it again in the future and one day we will be with you and enjoy and magnify this where you have banished all rebellion against you forever and ever. Amen."

Bow with me in prayer.

Yes, Lord, we exalt you in your strength. Yes, Lord, we sin and praise your power. For our part, O God, we will worship you in song. We will praise you with music in response to your power. You alone have accomplished our deliverance, O God, and you alone will receive our praise. Father, work in the hearts of those who don't know you that are here tonight and will hear this later on subsequent media. God, show mercy to them while there is still time. Take away their stony heart of rebellion and replace it with a tender heart of flesh that submits to you and trusts you and receives Christ for eternal salvation. God, we delight in these things as believers but if it simply stopped with us with no extension of your kingdom through conversion, it wouldn't be enough. We're not satisfied simply to be Christians ourselves, Lord, we want others to join in this hallelujah chorus. O God, surely you haven't exhausted your mercy. Surely you haven't dispensed all of the grace that you're ever going to dispense. Surely there is a little bit more for another sinner in this room. Well, if so, God, then use it tonight, now, on that unbelieving heart that they might turn humbly, repentantly to Christ in faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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