

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 21 — The King Who Trusts in the Lord

“A holy confidence in Jehovah is the true mother of victories.”
(Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*)

1.0 Introducing Psalm 21

- Psalm 21 is sometimes referred to as one of the “royal psalms” because its subject matter involves the king of Israel and his military activities.
- Some commentators think that the setting for this psalm might have been the events recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. See Psalm 20 notes.
- Both Psalms 20 and 21 emphasize salvation/victory (20:5, 6, 9; 21:1, 5). Both psalms
 - ◆ refer to the “king” (20:9; 21:1, 7)
 - ◆ speak of the king’s “heart’s desire” (20:4; 21:2) and request (“petition,” 20:5; “request,” 21:2)
 - ◆ identify the right hand of the LORD as accomplishing the king’s deliverance (20:6; 21:8)
 - ◆ celebrate the LORD’s strength/power (20:6; 21:1, 13)
 - ◆ highlight trust in the LORD (20:7; 21:7)
- Psalm 21 is the prayer of thanksgiving for the victory granted by God in answer to the prayer in Psalm 20 for the king’s victory in battle.

2.0 Reading Psalm 21 (NAU)

21:1 A Psalm of David.

O LORD, **in Your strength** the king will be glad,
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!

- 21:2** You have given him his heart's desire,
And You have not withheld the request of his lips.
- 21:3** For You meet him with the **blessings** of good things;
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.
- 21:4** He asked **life** of You,
You gave **it** to him,
Length of days forever and ever.
- 21:5** His glory is great through Your salvation,
Splendor and majesty You place upon him.
- 21:6** For You make him most **blessed** forever;
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.

Selah.



- 21:7** **For the king trusts in the LORD,**
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.
- 21:8** Your hand will find out all your enemies;
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
- 21:9** 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.
- 21:10** Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men..
- 21:11** Though they intended evil against You
And devised a plot,
They will not succeed.
- 21:12** For You will make them turn their back;
You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.
- 21:13** Be exalted, O LORD, **in Your strength;**
We will sing and praise **Your power.**

For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar.*

*Perhaps a tune name: "According to the Hind of the Dawn." Or, "On the help [or, strength] at daybreak" drawing attention to the deliverance described in the psalm.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 21

3.1 Outline

- I. Introductory Praise (v. 1)
- II. Divine Blessings on the King (vv. 2-6)
- III. Royal Trust in the LORD (v. 7)
- IV. Divine Judgment on the Enemies (vv. 8-12)
- V. Concluding Praise (v. 13)



3.2 Notes

- **vv. 1, 13**
 - Compare Psalm 20:1, 9 — the psalm ends as it began (inclusio).
- **v. 2** “his heart’s desire”—see notes on Psalm 20:4.
- **v. 2** “Selah”—see notes on Psalm 3. Compare Psalm 20:3.
 - Why is it used here? Compare Psalm 20:3.
- **v. 3** “a crown of fine gold”
 - “Unfortunately, we cannot imagine the appearance of this royal crown in detail. Very likely we should think of a diadem encased in a golden circlet (... Ps. 132:18; 2 Sam. 1:10; 2 Chron. 12:30; 2 Kings 11:12) that was fastened to a headband.” — Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, trans. by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 286.
 - “The ‘crown [... perhaps better, ‘wreath’] of pure gold’ that the king receives is to be distinguished from the coronation crown ... The crown or wreath (of flowers, leaves, or sometimes gold) ... is a gift of honor given to visiting dignitaries or guests at banquets.” — Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 399.
- **v. 4** “life”
 - Is this a reference to eternal life?
 - Some (like Peter Craigie) take the reference as an extension of the king’s life into the unforeseeable future.
 - Others (like Spurgeon) conclude that “the length of days for ever and ever can only refer to the King Messiah” (*Treasury of David*, 1:314). J. J. Stewart Perowne and James Montgomery Boice point to the fact that the ancient Aramaic translation (the Targum) rendered “king” in verse 1 as “King Messiah.”
 - Rabbi Solomon Ishaaki, known as Rashi (1040 A.D.) wrote: “Our old doctors interpreted this Psalm of King Messiah, but in order to meet the Schismatics [*i.e.* the Christians] it is better to understand it of David himself.”—J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1966 reprint of 1878 ed.), 1:232.
- **vv. 6-7** “You make him most blessed forever ... lovingkindness”
 - “Lovingkindness” is the word *hesed*, “steadfast, loyal love.” See note on Psalm 5:7 in class handout for Psalm 5.
 - This is a reference to God’s covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).
 - See Psalms 72:17; 89:24, 28, 33-37.

- **v. 8** “your enemies”
 - How does this picture compare with Matthew 5:43-48?
 - The ultimate Davidic King is Christ Himself. See note on v. 4, above.
 - “We pity the lost for they are men, but we cannot pity them as enemies of Christ. None can escape from the wrath of the victorious King, nor is it desirable that they should.”—C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 1:315.

- **v. 9** “a fiery oven ... fire will devour”
 - See Malachi 4:1 and Hebrews 12:29.

- **v. 13** “We will sing and praise”
 - Vocal (“sing”) and instrumental (“praise”) music is involved in this praise.
 - “We” brings the psalm to a close and sets it within corporate worship.

4.0 Singing Psalm 21

How Firm a Foundation

- 1 How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
- 2 “Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
- 4 “The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake!”



Tune: “He Hideth My Soul”

Now the king in Thy strength shall be joyful, O Lord,
Thy salvation shall make him rejoice;
For the wish of his heart Thou didst freely accord,
The request of his suppliant voice.

*All the blessings of goodness Thou freely didst give;
With the purest of gold he is crowned;
When he asked of Thee life, Thou hast made Him to live
While the ages shall circle around.
While the ages shall circle around.*



Through salvation from Thee has his fame spread abroad
Thou didst glory and honor impart;
Thou hast made him most blessed forever, O God,
And Thy presence has gladdened his heart.

*For the king in the strength of Jehovah most high
Did unwavering confidence place;
On the Name of Jehovah he still will rely,
And shall stand evermore in His grace.
And shall stand evermore in His grace.*

By the hand of Thy might and the dread of Thy Name
All Thy foes Thou wilt burn in Thy fire;
Thou wilt swallow them up in the vengeance of flame,
And their race shall succumb to Thine ire.

*Be Thou then high exalted, Jehovah our God,
And arise in the weight of Thy might;
We shall sing of Thy strength and omnipotent rod;
In Thy praises shall be our delight.
In Thy praises shall be our delight.*

— Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 21

- Thank You, Lord, for Your salvation. [v. 1]
- Lord, give us life everlasting. [v. 4]
- We trust You, Father. [v. 7]
- Be exalted, O Lord. [v. 13]
- We praise You with song. [v. 13]
- You are our strength and our song! [v. 13]

6.0 Applying Psalm 21

- Leaders fail who trust in the arm of flesh rather than in the God of all flesh.
- We must each choose between self-reliance and relying upon the Lord alone.
- “Joy should always flow in the channel of praise.” (C. H. Spurgeon)