

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

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Psalm 41 — Amen and Amen

1.0 Introducing Psalm 41

- Only three psalms open with “Blessed”—Psalms 1, 32, and 41.
- Book 1 of the Psalter opens and closes with psalms beginning with “blessed.”
- Book 1 had a string of psalms by David (Psalms 3-41). Beginning with Psalm 42, a different author is encountered for the first time: “the sons of Korah.”
- Psalm 40:17 closes that psalm with “since I am afflicted and needy” and 41:1 continues with the thought that God “considers the helpless.”
- Psalms 38 and 41 might refer to the same time of illness in David’s life.
 - ◆ Sin was the cause of the illness (38:4-5, 18; 41:4).
 - ◆ False friends and enemies took advantage of his illness (38:11-12, 16, 19; 41:4-9).
 - ◆ Psalm 38 focuses on the illness; Psalm 41 focuses on his abusers.
- Grace is the theme of Psalm 41 (see verses 4 and 10).

2.0 Reading Psalm 41 (NAU)

A Psalm of David.

- 41:1** **How blessed is he who considers the helpless;**
The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.
- 41:2** The LORD will protect him and keep him alive,
And **he shall be called blessed upon the earth;**
And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies.
- 41:3** The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed;
In his illness, You restore him to health.

- 41:4** As for me, I said, “O LORD, be **gracious** to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.”
- 41:5** My enemies speak evil against me,
“When will he die, and his name perish?”
- 41:6** And when he comes to see *me*, he speaks falsehood;
His heart gathers wickedness to itself;
When he goes outside, he tells it.
- 41:7** All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt, *saying*,
- 41:8** “A wicked thing is poured out upon him,
That when he lies down, he will not rise up again.”
- 41:9** Even my close friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.
- 41:10** But You, O LORD, be **gracious** to me and raise me up,
That I may repay them.
- 41:11** By this I know that You are pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.
- 41:12** As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And You set me in Your presence forever.
- 41:13** **Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,**
From everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.
- For the choir director.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 41

3.1 Outline

- I. Benediction for the Godly (vv. 1-3)
- II. Petition for Grace (vv. 4-12)
 - A. In His Enemies’ Presence (vv. 4-9)
 - B. In the LORD’s Presence (vv. 10-12)
- III. Benediction for God (v. 13)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “blessed”
 - This word that occurs 25 times in the Psalms (out of a total of 40 in the entire Old Testament), is prominent at the seams in the Psalter.
 - “Blessed” (*ʾašrê*) not only opens and closes Book 1 (1:1; 2:12; 41:1), it is used in the final psalms of Book 3 (89:15) and Book 4 (106:3).

- In Book 5 “blessed” occurs in Psalms 144:15 and 146:5, bracketing Psalm 145 that is the final psalm before what is known as the “Great Hallel” (Psalms 146–150) with which the Psalter closes.
- As for Book 2, it could be pointed out that Psalm 72:17 uses the same root word (cf. 41:2) in a reference to the Messiah: “Let all nations call him blessed.”
- Compare Revelation 1:3.

- **v. 1** “considers the helpless”
 - “Considers” is the Hebrew word *maskil* (see the headings of Psalms 32 and 42).
 - It calls for a wise and perceptive dealing with and response to those in need.
 - There are right ways and wrong ways to deal with poverty, weakness, and disenfranchisement. A wrong-headed approach based upon emotions is more damaging than helpful.

- **v. 3** “sickbed ... restore”
 - “Sickbed” in the Hebrew is primarily a reference to illness due to menstruation. David’s illness made him unclean and unfit for contact with the public.
 - “Restore” could be translated “changed” and could refer to turning a mattress over or to air it out during the time a sick person lies on it.

- **v. 8** “a wicked thing”
 - The wording is literally, “a thing of Belial.”
 - “Belial” is used of moral evil (see “worthless men/man” in Judges 19:22 and 1 Samuel 25:25).
 - It is also used of Satan himself (see 2 Corinthians 6:15).

- **v. 9** Quoted in the New Testament
 - John 13:18
 - Jesus employs Psalm 41:9 to describe the treacherous conduct of Judas.
 - “[I]t is evident that ‘the Scripture is fulfilled’ not merely when a prediction receives its accomplishment, but when words descriptive of certain circumstances in the life of the O. T. saints find a still fuller and truer realization—one not foreseen by the Psalmist, yet one no less designed of God—in the circumstances of our Lord’s earthly life.”—J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966 reprint of 1878 ed.), 1:343.
 - This is more of an application of the text in Psalms, rather than messianic fulfillment.

- It is interesting, however, to note that Psalm 2 began Book 1 with a messianic psalm and that the final psalm of Book 1 was quoted by the Messiah.
- **v. 10** “That I may repay them”
 - “The plea ... is unusual, in that the psalms mostly pray that God Himself will do this. David, however, as king, had authority to act judicially, a power which he used in fact with great restraint.”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 163.
- **v. 13** “Blessed”
 - This is not the same Hebrew word as the one found in verses 1 and 2.
 - The Hebrew is *bārûk* (17 times in Psalms out of over 70 times in the Old Testament).
 - This term for “blessed” expresses the human desire to give goodness and benefit to God—an expression of whole-hearted giving.
 - “Blessed be the LORD” occurs in the concluding doxologies to Book 1 (41:13), Book 2 (72:18), Book 3 (89:52), Book 4 (106:48), and Book 5 (144:1—just prior to the “Great Hallel”).
- **v. 13** “Amen and Amen.”
 - Each of the five Books in Psalms ends with praise.
 - A double “Amen” closes Books 1 (41:13), 2 (72:19), and 3 (89:52).
 - “Amen” and “Hallelujah” (= “Praise the LORD”) close Book 4 (106:48).
 - A double “Hallelujah” (= “Praise the LORD”) closes Book 5 (150:6).
 - The name of Psalms in the Hebrew is literally “Praises.”

4.0 Singing Psalm 41

The God of Abraham Praise

Written by Thomas Olivers, 1765 (based on *Yigdal Yahweh*, a Jewish doxology, ca. 1400)
Originally based on Psalm 40:16 (Heb 17, “The LORD be magnified.”)

- 1 The God of Abraham praise, Who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of everlasting days, and God of Love;
Jehovah, great I AM! by earth and Heav’n confessed;
I bow and bless the sacred Name forever blessed.
- 2 The God of Abraham praise, at Whose supreme command
From earth I rise—and seek the joys at His right hand;
I all on earth forsake, its wisdom, fame, and power;
And Him my only Portion make, my Shield and Tower.



3 The God of Abraham praise, Whose all sufficient grace
Shall guide me all my happy days, in all my ways.
He calls a worm His friend, He calls Himself my God!
And He shall save me to the end, thro' Jesus' blood.

4 He by Himself has sworn; I on His oath depend,
I shall, on eagle wings upborne, to Heav'n ascend.
I shall behold His face; I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace forevermore.

8 He keeps His own secure, He guards them by His side,
Arrays in garments, white and pure, His spotless bride:
With streams of sacred bliss, with groves of living joys—
With all the fruits of Paradise, He still supplies.

10 The God Who reigns on high the great archangels sing,
And "Holy, holy, holy!" cry, "Almighty King!
Who was, and is, the same, and evermore shall be:
Jehovah—Father—great I AM, we worship Thee!"

12 The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high;
"Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," they ever cry.
Hail, Abraham's God, and mine! (I join the heav'nly lays,)
All might and majesty are Thine, and endless praise.

5.0 Praying Psalm 41

- Lord, make me biblically "considerate" of the helpless. [v. 1]
- Heal me from my illness and forgive my sin. [v. 4]
- Father, protect me from my enemies. [vv. 2, 4-9]
- Set me in Your presence forever, O God. [v. 12]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 41

- The blessing of meditating on Scripture is greatest when we obey its teachings.
- God's grace is the solution to sin's problems.
- Praise is the response of a grateful heart.