

Steadfast Love and Strength

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 March 2017

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Do you need to read other Bibles? Psalm 21, 21.

I will read it out loud. It says, To the Choir Master, a Psalm of David. O Lord, in your strength the King rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exalts.

You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips, Selah. For you meet him with rich blessings. You set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

He asked life of you and you gave it to him. Length of days forever and ever. His glory is great through your salvation. Splendor and majesty you bestow on him.

For you make him most blessed forever. You make him glad with the joy of your presence. For the King trusts in the Lord.

[1 : 25] And through the steadfast love of the Most High, he shall not be moved. Your hand will find out all your enemies. Your right hand will find out those who hate you.

You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath. And fire will consume them. You will destroy their descendants from the earth and their offspring from among the children of man.

Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed. For you will put them to flight. You will aim at their faces with your bow. Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength.

We will sing and praise your power. In the screw tape letters, C.S. Lewis writes about how a senior devil advises a junior devil on how to tempt a man.

And in one such dialogue, the senior devil tells him to keep his subject, his human being, focused on the past, not on the past, on the future. Because that's where nearly all vices come from.

[2 : 33] So he says, Nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past, and love to the present. Fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead.

We want a man haggrened by the future. And this passage really, this psalm speaks the truth of that, because it teaches us that by looking on the past at what God has done, that fosters our present trust in him.

And it's that present trust in him that enables us to have assurance of God's deliverance in the future as well. So, and so the main point of this psalm is that we can trust in the Lord for salvation presently, because of his steadfast love and strength.

So in verses 1 to 7, we see how God in the past saved the faithful. And then in verses 8 to 13, we see how God will in future smite the wicked. So let's read verses 1 to 7 first.

It's in verses 1 to 2, actually. The whole verses 1 to 6 actually has a poetic parallel structure. It's kind of a, it has two sections in verses 1 to 6 that recount how God was faithful and the reason why he was faithful.

[3 : 44] So you can, let me show you that. In verses 1 to 2, it begins, Well, Lord, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exalts. You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.

Selah. So God gave him salvation. And the word could refer, it's a pretty wide, you know, encompassing word that can refer also to military victories.

That's probably the context of this psalm, because he talks about the enemies, and it's connected to Psalm 20. And so the king, it seems, had sought God's help and asked him to preserve his life, and God had gave him his heart's desire and saved him.

So salvation is given. And the reason for this gift of salvation from God is verse 3. For you meet him with rich blessings. You set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

And because God looked upon him with favor, God showed his blessing, that's why the king was spared in battle, experienced salvation. And so that pattern of God giving salvation to him, and then the reason for that, which is God's blessing, instead bestowing fine gold, his glory on him, that's repeated in verses 4 to 6.

[4 : 55] So in verses 4 to 5, he recounts again God's salvation. He says, He asked life of you, you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. His glory is great through your salvation, splendor and majesty you bestow on him.

So recognize the word repeated. Salvation is repeated. The word to give is repeated. So again, it's God who gives salvation. And then again, the reason is given for that.

Verse 6, You, for, you make him most blessed forever. You make him glad with the joy of your presence. And the word make, here is the same word that's used in verses 1, verse 3, which says, set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

It's the same word. And then again, the word blessing is repeated, verse 3 and verse 6. So this shows, the parallel pattern shows how God delivers the king who is faithful to him and requests his deliverance.

And then finally, verse 1 and 6 together wrap up and enclose this section together. Because in the verse 1, it said that the king rejoices in God's salvation and strength. And now in verse 6, it says the king is glad with the joy of God's presence.

[6 : 06] Again, the same words. So that's the, and the reason why the anointed king rejoices in God, he's able to rejoice in God's salvation. And all of that is given in Psalm, in verse 7.

For the king trusts in the Lord and through the steadfast love of the Most High, he shall not be moved. It's only those who trust in the Lord that experience God's deliverance and salvation. And that's the basis.

And the basis for the trust, this trust of the psalmist is God's steadfast love. So he says, through the steadfast love of the Most High, the king shall not be moved. And I think those two things are vitally connected.

Because if God's love is not constant, steadfast, if his love is fickle and changing, then we can't trust in him all the time. But because his love is constant, steadfast, we can trust in him.

It's not dependent or contingent on how we're doing or how the world is going. But because God's love is steadfast, we can always trust in him. So that's how God saved his faithful in the past.

[7 : 08] But God will smite the wicked. So it's by remembering and trusting in the Lord on the basis of his steadfast love that we can be assured of how God will deliver in the future. That's what we see in verses 8 to 12.

Your hand will find out all your enemies. Your right hand will find out those who hate you. You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath and fire will consume them.

You will destroy their descendants from the earth and their offspring from among the children of men. Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed. For you will put them to flight.

You will aim at their faces with your bows. These kind of verses are a little bit discomfoting, right?

It's kind of, you think, wow, that sounds pretty violent. He's going to, you know, put them to flight and aim at their faces with his bows. This is God's deliverance.

[8 : 06] And these kind of passages remind us that God, that this ferocity of his, ferocity of his anger toward evil, right? He really is a just God.

He really is a holy God. And he hates evil and he hates sin. And he will meet them with fiery and unrelenting judgment. But notice that this is in the future tense, right?

This kind of deliverance doesn't happen now, but it will happen. So David has not yet seen God's judgment of the wicked in this kind of complete way.

But the fact that God's been faithful to him in the past and the fact that he now trusts in him in the present is what assures him that the enemies will in the end be judged. And at this point, you might wonder what this psalm has to do with us, right?

What does this have to do with me? It was about David. We're not kings and we're not in physical warfare against any of God's enemies.

[9 : 04] and verse 4 kind of insinuates toward a reality that goes beyond the life of David because it says that God granted him life and length of days forever and ever.

And the language forever and ever can't refer to, you know, David's immortality because David died. And the Bible nowhere promises, you know, immortality in the flesh.

It promises spiritual eternal life and resurrection in the end but not immortality in the flesh. And so the language actually reflects the covenant promises that God made to King David in 2 Samuel 7 verses 12 to 16.

God promised to David, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. And I will be with him to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

[10 : 12] When he commits iniquity I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him. As I took it from Saul whom I put away from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. Right? So that's the promise that's in view in this song.

Right? That God's going to establish David's throne forever. So this talk about life forevermore is referring to the fact that God's sustaining the kingdom that he built.

That he is going to be faithful to this covenant promise and that's what he's doing in preserving David. And so if this and this promise to David of course ultimately is fulfilled in Jesus even though it immediately refers to Solomon his son it ultimately refers to Jesus who is the fulfillment of this covenant promise because that's why he's described as the son of David in Luke 1 32-33 the angels foretelling the birth of Jesus says he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

So that's Jesus is the one that fulfills that promise. So then the Psalm 21 that not only does it speak of David's military victory and triumph over his enemies but also of our salvation from sin and death because that's what it ultimately points to Jesus the victory that Jesus accomplished for us.

[11 : 43] And so then likewise for us we need to trust in the Lord for our salvation because of his steadfast love and strength. And that means our basis for his trust in him has to be his steadfast love right not our performance and not how we're doing not our righteousness but Christ's righteousness and that's why there's an emphasis in this Psalm of the strength of the Lord the might strength in verse 1 and verse 13 it begins and ends with an invocation of O Lord in your strength right if we look around us right humanity is always seeking salvation for itself right and people in education right will hear this all the time that they'll say education is the goal that's the solution that's what's going to accomplish salvation for us educate enough people about inequality you know racial inequality gender inequality income inequality then we can save ourselves and establish salvation on earth right or they'll say science is the solution right if we can only progress enough in our scientific knowledge then we can find solutions to all our problems it says money is the solution right if only we can boost the worldwide economy and generate enough growth and enough money then all the social ills will fade away but the truth is there's not the strength in us to save ourselves because all of human ingenuity and industry and goodwill are not enough to eradicate the core evil in all of us which is sin which is at the basis the foundation of all social ills and only God has the strength to save us from that and that's what he did by sending his son

Jesus Christ to die for our sins and rise and rise victoriously from the dead and because he has done that when we trust in Jesus we can be assured of life forever more as this king was and we can be assured of our future deliverance and of the judgment of the wicked and of all evil in the world and so that's the display of God's ultimate strength that's in Jesus and so we need to trust in the Lord for salvation because of his strength and the steadfast love he displays in Jesus so with that let's turn to the Lord in prayer and come to him with all our weaknesses and failures and sins I'm going to sing Mighty to Save first Lord services not to join in God night soon night night little night night