

The Least of These

In this series on Psalm 41, we've been looking at what it means to consider the poor. David, the Psalmist, teaches us that we want to care for the poor, *physically* as well as *spiritually*. We saw that the word translated "poor" is not narrowly concerned with only those who may be struggling *financially*. The Psalmist is pointing to those who may be "weak, low, powerless, and helpless." Depending on what we may be facing, *this can be any of us at any given time!* Another important aspect of this Psalm comes in the first verse. "Blessed is the one who *considers* the poor!" The Hebrew verb translated "considers" in this verse carries the meaning of seeking to "wisely understand the real issue or the real problem" in any given situation. It's not enough if we only and always seek to address the *physical/material* needs while either ignoring or marginalizing the *spiritual* needs.

In my last article we looked at verse 9: "Even my close friend in whom I trusted....has lifted his heel against me." This verse—while certainly touching David's historical situation—clearly points forward to Jesus Christ. We know that the *entirety* of this Psalm is not applied to Jesus—particularly because David confesses that he is a sinner (vs. 4). And yet, along with verse 9, there are other aspects of this Psalm that are *ultimately* fulfilled in Jesus. For example, going back to the earlier part of David's Psalm in verses 1-3, we know that Jesus is the only one who *perfectly* cares for the poor, the needy and the downcast in both body and soul. All those whom the Father gives him, "[he] will never cast out." (John 6:37) He provides for the greatest need of his elect—our need to be forgiven of our sins and to be a child of God—by grace through faith. David ends Psalm 41 (vs. 13) with a Doxology of praise to God: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen." Let's take a few moments to make some practical application from this Psalm.

—Wisely consider how to rightly help those in need: There are often times when we can assume that our consideration of the poor, helpless and weak is just so much wasted time. We may also find ourselves thinking that we just need to *do the least* that we can in our service to others rather than seeking to do our best. But our service to and *consideration* for the poor and oppressed *is important*. We want to wisely *consider* how best to meet the needs of those—both *physically and spiritually*—whom God blesses us to be able to serve. We may often have the opportunity to serve both Christians and non-Christians. Remember that meeting the needs of others takes many forms and many of them can, *seemingly*, go unnoticed. For example, wiping runny noses and changing diapers in the home and in the church nursery doesn't seem very glamorous. Teaching small children about Jesus who seem distracted all the time may seem fruitless, but *there's a great need to give ourselves to the children of the church!* Never forget that service to those in genuine need—whatever the need—is *blessed by God*. The Lord Jesus was our example. We're never to think that serving the poor and needy is beneath us.

—Don't grow weary in doing good: Those we seek to help—especially those whom we try to help *spiritually*—may not want to hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter how much it may seem that others are against us, God's people can know that God cares for us and that he will never leave us. Don't despair when friends or enemies turn away from you or look for ways to tear you down. God loves us in Jesus Christ. Jesus was forsaken by the Father

so that we would never have to be. Because this is true, like David, we have much to be thankful for.

—Give praise to God: Remember that this is a corporate Psalm that was sung by the children of Israel. It's important that we remember the blessing of gathering in God's presence to give him the worship that he, alone, deserves. Christ has addressed the greatest need for the "poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3) "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) We want to continue to seek to care for others in body and soul. Our Lord Jesus taught us an important truth that we would do well to take to heart, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of *the least of these* my brothers, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40

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