

April 21

Psalm 35, 41, 43, 45 & 55

Hey everybody, **Mark Ashton** coming at you here with Project 4:4 on April 21st. We're actually on the highway driving back from our district conference somewhere in the middle of Iowa near a town called Osceola. Now I'm here in the car with a few of my cohorts who went to the conference together.

You know the Psalms that you read today are actually kind of a drag. I mean, you think about what you see there. It's all about people stabbing you in the back, it's about your enemies, and it's about revenge. I thought since we are doing people who are stabbing us in the back, I would bring on with this camera – Phil Human who stabbed us in the back by planting a church across town, and Gavin who is going to be doing that very soon. Actually, no, no, we don't feel that way about them at all. They're like our beloved children in Christ planting great churches that we absolutely love, but they happened to be the guys in the car with me and that seemed to be a good transition – or maybe terrible.

Also in the car with me is Chris Hruska, who is a great guy who is on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ and you'll probably see a little bit more of in the future.

So, anyway, I'm going to pass things on here and each of them has a thought from the Psalms that you read today.

This here is **Gavin Johnson**. I'll grab the microphone from my friend Mark. Hey everybody – good to see you. I'm just cruising along in Mark's very luxurious minivan. I never knew minivans could be quite so hip, but I would expect nothing less from Mark.

So you read, I think, four or five Psalms today and like Mark said – some of them feel like a drag. In fact Psalm 41 is the one I want to talk about. It is a song of lament. So the Psalmist is crying out to God – saying, "God, deliver me, vindicate me." I just want to look at the first few verses that you read in Psalm 41. It says, "Blessed is the one who considers the poor. In the day of trouble, the Lord delivers him. The Lord protects him and keeps him alive. He is called blessed in the land. You do not give him up to the will of his enemies. So we see right here that the Psalmist affirms that God has a heart for people that have a heart for the lost.

If you'll remember in the New Testament, Jesus says that on that last day when we stand before him, he will say, "When I was sick, you helped me, when I was in need of clothes you clothed me, when I was in prison you came and visited me. So we see that our Lord has a heart for the poor. And this Psalm affirms that God cares for those who care for the poor.

The book of James also talks about that we should have a heart for the widow and the orphan. So as you think – why is it that God has a heart for those who have a

heart for the lost? I think it's because of this – God's heart is for the lost and for the needy. Jesus said that he came not for the healthy but to heal the sick.

So I think what does it look like for us to be people who care for the needy – who care for the poor? I think it starts with recognizing our own need and identifying that spiritually and physically we are needy people. We are sinners who are in need of grace. As we identify ourselves as people who are needy and we identify God as a gracious and good God who meets our needs, that's going to be reflected in our lives - that we've been met by grace so we're going to want to meet other people with grace and to provide for their needs. So as you take a look at Psalm 41, consider what does it mean that God has met your needs and how can you respond to the needs of the people around you. That's Psalm 41.

I'm going to pass it off to our friend, Chris Hruska.

Hey guys, **Chris Hruska**, as Mark said – full-time staff of Campus Crusade for Christ. I just wanted to take you guys into Psalm 55. One of the things that stuck out to me right away in Psalm 55 is the relationship that this Psalmist has with another person. He says that "his words were smooth like butter, but yet he had war in his heart towards him."

Oftentimes there are difficult relationships and this guy wanted to respond. The Psalmist writes that he wishes that if he were a dove – he would fly away. Oftentimes I think the thing that comes to me when I deal with difficult relationships is just wanting to get away from the person. I just want to try to move away and create distance between me and them. He also writes if I could hide my face from them, I would. He's trying to avoid the person. He thinks that that might be the way, but in the end of the Psalm, he moves towards just trusting that the Lord can deliver him in the midst of his own circumstances. He chooses to stay where he's at and he chooses to trust that the Lord is going to deliver him.

If you look at the beginning of the Psalm, he starts out at an incredibly desperate place. He says, "Listen to my prayers oh God, do not ignore this plea." And as he walks you through the story, he moves at the end of the Psalm by saying, "But as for me, I will trust in you, Oh Lord. Oftentimes if you guys are dealing with a difficult relationship, one person that may on the surface look to have your best interest at hand, but ultimately you know that the relationship is somewhat difficult, I would challenge you to continue to pray over that person, ask the Lord how he would have you to serve that person, to love on that person and to trust that the Lord has you there for a reason - not only for your own growth and development, but also to trust in deliverance of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior.

So right now, I'm going to pass it over to **Phil Human**, church planner and see if he's got something dialed up for you guys.

Good to see everybody. Right now, we're driving down this road in Iowa and we're about to run out of gas because Mark is driving. He thinks he's on the autobahn

and he's driving this behemoth American car that hates gasoline mileage and so he doesn't really care about that stuff. So here's the deal, once we run out of gas and on the side of the road – the good thing is this, we all have phones, we have I-pads, we can find our help really quickly by just dialing up something. If we run out of gas, we can find out exactly where the closest gas station is – Gavin can run get us some gas while we're chilling out here. We're not really in any danger if we were to run out of gas on this road because we have the tools that we need to get help.

But here's what I'm thinking. I'm reading a Psalm today and I'm thinking that there may come times in your life when things are going to happen to you that are far worse than running out of gas on the side of the road. As a matter of fact, maybe you have clicked on this link today because life has kicked you in the head today and you're looking for someone to help you. You're looking for a word of God to help you. I want to tell you that in all sincerity, I want to turn you to Psalm 46 and I want you to listen to this verse: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble." God is your refuge and strength – He is your every present help in trouble! And your phone is not going to do any good for you when life kicks you around, but God is here for you. God is your help. He is your ever present help in trouble and I sincerely with all my heart – we want you to know that God is with you, He is present with you and He is caring for you – and we're praying for you. We know that God is going to take good care of you. Thanks for listening.