

LET THE LORD GIVE AND TAKE AWAY

Psalm 21

If you have ever been through tough times, you know how relieved you felt once things looked like they were turning around. Sometimes, though, when we haven't had to struggle and our lives are pretty (or really) good, we don't have the same appreciation or gratitude for the blessings we enjoy. We may think that all the good things in our lives are a result of our own efforts. Then, as long as I'm making an effort then the good things should keep coming. This attitude fails to recognize God.

We can also forget about God during the tough times. Difficult circumstances could be a test by God. He may allow a situation to happen to us to help us grow and mature. Trials could be at the hands of others who take what they want with no regard for anyone else. Some like to inflict pain on others to demonstrate and/or exploit their power. If you have ever suffered at the hands of someone like that, you may have wished (and prayed) that they would get what's coming to them.

I probably sound like a broken record to you by now, but I encourage you to spend lots of time with Psalm 21. Read it, re-read it, and meditate upon it. Think about David's life - even read the section from 1 Samuel 16 through 2 Kings 2:12 - the ups and downs and the trials and the victories. Most Bibles (at least the two that normally reference) break the song down into two sections with a doxology tacked on to the end. I have titled them: Vindication (1-7) and Vengeance (8-12).

In the first section, David acknowledges Yahweh as the source of his blessings. It is the LORD who is strong. It is the LORD who gives the victory. David's believing loyalty to Yahweh is vindicated through the blessings bestowed on him by the LORD.

David's life, however, was not always so blessed. He dealt with severe trials and hardships at various points in his life. In the second section, we see him calling on God to set the record straight. We have dealt with this type of imagery before in the psalms (specifically in Psalm 18), but it still doesn't make it easier for most of us to process. What helps me is trying to imagine the context and culture of David's life. If I had suffered at the hands of those acting out of selfishness, arrogance, and envy, I might begin to wish for things to happen to them out of a sense of retribution.

The key for David and for us as well is to leave the vindication and the vengeance to God. He is righteous and all-knowing. He will ultimately set the record straight and pronounce permanent judgment. We must trust him and not think too highly of ourselves and not seek to settle the score ourselves. Then, whatever happens, we praise and exalt the LORD for his strength and might.

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