

# The King Will Be Exalted in Strength

by Paul Washer

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*The sermon emphasizes the King's strength and salvation, His glory and majesty, and His joy and rejoicing, while also warning of God's judgment and wrath against His enemies.*

**Duration:** 42:14

**Scripture:** Psalm 21:1-3, Psalm 21:8-13

**Topics:** "Exalted"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by reading from Psalm 21, which speaks of the joy and gladness that comes from being in the presence of the Lord. The passage emphasizes the trust that the king has in the Lord and how he will not be shaken because of the loving kindness of the Most High. The preacher highlights the power of God's hand in finding and dealing with enemies, describing them as being consumed by fire in the time of God's anger. The sermon concludes with a call to exalt the Lord in His strength and to sing and praise His power.

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## Transcript

Psalm 21. Oh Lord, in your strength, the king will be glad, and in your salvation, how greatly he will rejoice. You have given him his heart's desire, and you have not withheld the request of his lips.

For you meet him with the blessings of good things. You set a crown of fine gold on his head. He asked of you, you gave it to him.

Length of days, forever, endeavor. His glory is great through your salvation. Splendor and majesty you place upon him, for you make him most blessed forever.

You make him joyful with the gladness in your presence. For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the loving kindness of the Most High, he will not be shaken. Your hand will find out all your enemies.

Your right hand will find out those who hate you. You will make them as a fiery oven. In the time of your anger, the Lord will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will devour them.

Their offspring you will destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men. Though they intend evil against you and devise a plot, they will not succeed, for you will make them turn their back. You will aim with your bow strings at their faces.

Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength. We will sing and praise your power. Well, it's great to be back with you again this evening, and we're in 1 Thessalonians, of course.

But before we go to 1 Thessalonians, just take a look at the passage that was read in Psalms chapter 21. Now, when we look at a text like this, probably if you have New American Standard or other translations, it'll say something like a Psalm of David with regard to a prayer or praise for deliverance. And that is true.

But as I read through the Psalms, and as I become more and more acquainted with a Christological view of the Bible, and then also backed up, of course, by many, many Puritan writings who happen to be my favorite of all, I guess, ages of Christianity, I see in this more than David. And I think that you should too. And I think it provides great hope for us when we see this is more than David.

This is going beyond David to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. O Lord, in your strength, the King will be glad. And in your salvation, how greatly he will rejoice.

You say, well, you know, how is that Jesus? Never forget, as Christ walked upon this earth, he was God, but he was also God in the flesh. And he laid aside many of what we would call the privileges of his deity. And he walked on this earth as a man, trusting in God, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And that's why he can be our example. He triumphed, not simply as God. He triumphed as man.

He triumphed where Adam could not triumph. And he did it for you. Every battle fought, every victory won, was him as a man, in the flesh, your substitute, in your place, so that his victory is yours.

It says, you have, verse 2, you have given him his heart's desire, and you have not withheld the request of his lips. Just look at all the prayers of Christ, with regard to his people, that they would be with me, that you would protect them, that the evil one would not gain victory over them, that they not be snatched out of the Father's hand. You see, all these things, Christ our King interceded for us, and God has granted it.

That should give you incredible confidence. It gives me confidence. When I look in the mirror and see my own weakness, I have no confidence.

Nor do I have hope, nor do I have joy. But when I look at him, and that he was my substitute, not just on the cross, but every day, every step he took, everything he did, he was my substitute. And his victory is mine.

And the prayers he prayed have been answered. They have been answered. And they will be brought to their ultimate consummation or fulfillment on that day that he returns.

Verse 3, For you meet him with the blessings of good things, and you set a crown of fine gold on his head. Yes, you can think of the ascension of David, maybe it brings to mind Psalms 24, and all kinds of things like that, but take it a step further. And imagine the Christ who despoiled himself and laid aside his deity, and walked on this planet as a man, suffered like no man has ever suffered, walked in the greatest humility beyond everything or anything that anyone would ever know.

And then, being torn apart on a cross, being battered and bruised by Yahweh himself, being crushed for our sin, being laid in a grave, which was a sign of the greatest hopelessness, he rose again from the dead. And what met him? What met him when he ascended through those gates? A crown of gold laid upon his head. Not king of Jerusalem, merely.

Not king of Judea or Samaria. Not even king of the remotest parts of the earth. We're talking about king of kings and lord of lords over everything there is, because the Father laid it all in his hand.

Do you see that? Laid it all in his hand. All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. We have Joseph thrown down in a pit, sold as a slave, incarcerated again.

No hope. Darkness. It seems that the word of God to him had failed.

And then, in a matter of minutes, and the Hebrew text is very clear, in a matter of minutes, they come rushing in. They pull him out of that dungeon. They clean him off.

Pharaoh. They bring him into the presence of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh looks at Joseph and says, Although I am Pharaoh, and yet without your word, no one will move a hand or finger in all of Egypt. And so Christ is in that tomb.

It seems like all hope is lost. And then, up from the grave, he arose with a mighty triumph for his foes. And the language in the Greek and the language in the Hebrew bring the two things together.

For in Daniel chapter 7, he was presented before the Most High. And all authority was given to him over nations and peoples. And so he sits now.

Doesn't wring his hands. Has no sorrow. He knows that everyone for whom he died will stand with him in great joy and beauty.

And forever he will be with his people, and he will be worshipped among them. And although they've sinned, and although their hearts now seem still quite dark, he will not be ashamed to call them brothers on that final day. And then throughout all eternity.

Because they're his. They're his. For he asked life of you and you gave it to him.

Length of days forever and ever. I tell you, if you could dig, if you could find, you would still see that the bones of David lay in the ground somewhere in Judea. But it's not the case here.

As Peter talks about in his first Pentecost sermon, what do we see? No, corruption didn't hold this one. Death could not capture this one. No chains were ever made in heaven or hell that he couldn't break.

And so look at what we see. He asked life of you and you gave it to him. Length of days forever and ever.

And this king, he revels in this life. And in the presence of God, there is great joy. And he knows it.

And he delights in it. And he loves it. He is enthralled with the life he has.

And he rejoices in great anticipation on the day that he brings all of you into that life. All of you. All of you.

Every one of you. The wisest and the most foolish. The most mature and the most immature.

All of you. All of you go. All of you.

No regulations on those days to separate you. No culling. No putting you in the back of the room.

All stand equal before him. Because this is the kind of king he is. This is what he does.

This is what he did. We go on. Length of days forever and ever.

Do you hear that? Length of days forever and ever. Unending, unending, unending, unending days have been given to him. And he gives those days to his people.

And it could be, I assume, if we looked at it philosophically, it could be sort of monotonous to think eternity upon eternity upon eternity. But the only thing you have to see is it won't be monotonous because of who he is. He is of infinite glory every day.

If you can say such a thing, greater and greater discoveries, which enable you to have greater and greater joy, so that the joy you experience today is so great. It is though you've never had joy before. And it just goes on and on and on and on.

Then he goes on and he says this. His glory is great through your salvation. Splendor and majesty you place upon him.

You say, how can this apply to Christ? His glory is great through God's salvation. Again, you must understand. He humbled himself and made himself a man.

He wedded himself to us, bone and flesh. He is man. And although the scriptures say quite clearly that he has the power to lay down his life and to pick it up again, and yet at the same time, he was raised by the Holy Spirit and he was raised by the father.

And in his love and distinction of the father, he calls out to him and he praises him because the father has pulled him out of the great pit. And because the father has pulled him out of the great pit, the father has pulled you out of the great pit, because although you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, it cannot keep you. Death is no longer a destination.

It's a portal, quick and swift. And if we read the Gospels correctly, your death is not unaccompanied. Because when the poor man died, the angels came and took him into the presence of God.

An entourage. Only royalty has those kind of things. And this is not just for the Spurgeon, this is not just for the Calvin, this is not just for the Martyn Lloyd-Joneses of the world.

The smallest saints will be brought glory like a king, like a queen, because of the one to whom they belong. He says this, Splendor and majesty you place upon him. Does that kind of bring to mind to you Ephesians 1? It does to me at this moment.

There's a word there, very hard to translate into the English language, and the idea is just lavish, lavish, lavish, bucket upon bucket upon bucket upon bucket, infinite, glorious, splendor and majesty heaped upon the Christ. He's the rightful heir of this kind of glory. And if he be the rightful heir of this kind of glory, and the Scriptures say in Romans that you've been made co-heirs with Christ, then look at what waits for you.

Look at the joy. As I walk in this Christian life and I see after 30 years that I have not made as much progress as I had hoped, because of that my joy, rejoice in the Lord always, my joy, inward, solid, sometimes hidden, but my joy, reason would dictate that it would diminish, because I see I haven't made the progress that I had hoped I would make. But see, my joy is not diminished, because what has happened is the basis of my joy has changed.

It's moved locations. The basis of my joy is not even my progress in sanctification. The basis of my joy is His progress, His kingship, His resurrection, His ascension, His glorification.

That everything I will be in the future is dependent upon everything He has done and is. And therefore, even though I could still write a line regarding myself saying, only a failure, glory is still mine, because of the One to whom I belong. His splendor is our splendor.

And then He says in verse 6, For you make Him most blessed forever, you make Him joyful with gladness in your presence. My wife sometimes gets on to me, she says, you know, you never want to watch anything serious. And I said, you're right, I don't.

I mean, you never want to watch a drama or something really just, you know, powerfully, you know, moving and pain and sorrow and all these things. You never want to watch something like that. And I said, of course I don't, I'm in the ministry.

I see that every day. What do I want? I want something that makes me laugh. Honestly.

And the older I get, the more I want just one thing. Joy. Well, look what it says here.

For you make Him most blessed forever, you make Him joyful with gladness in your presence. Do you know what's waiting you? Joy. Joy.

You don't know joy. You have no idea. Oh, you've tasted an atom here and there of joy.

But even that has been clouded by other forces, wrong forces moving in your heart, ideas, circumstances, everything else. You've never known joy. But one day joy will burst forth just like that sun comes up every morning and bursts forth and chases away the darkness.

You will know joy, unspeakable and full of glory to such a degree that if God did not supernaturally transform you before giving you such joy, it would drive you mad. That's how much joy is waiting for you. So see, even if everything in this life goes wrong, even if nothing meets up to expectation, even if the moment a person is converted, they're locked away in a cell in the darkness, never to see light again, and no one knows their name, they have cause for what? Rejoicing.

Because one day, one day sooner than yesterday, because every day draws us closer, one day, one day light will come, joy will come. Joy. Complete.

Eternal. Not intermittent. Not a smidgen here and a smidgen there.

Not mercy drops around you are falling, but more something like a deluge. That if you were simply still mortal, it would break you into a million pieces, that joy will be so great. And then he goes on and he says this, For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the loving kindness of the Most High, he will not be shaken.

The king has taught his brothers and sisters how to live. This is how he lived. This is how he walked every day on this planet.

He trusted in the Lord, and through the loving kindness of the Most High, he wasn't shaken. You look in the mirror, you'll be shaken. You look at your own ability to follow Christ and keep the commands, you'll be shaken.

You look at what the world tells you about God, and about yourself, and about salvation, you will be shaken. But if you concentrate on the loving kindness of the Lord, which is covenantal, which continues, which is faithful, you will not be shaken. Though the very foundation of the world be overturned, you will not be shaken.

Though you're lost in the bottom of the sea, you will not be shaken, because you know that even there, His love will find you and bring you out. You see that? The king trusts in the Lord, and through the loving kindness of the Most High, he will not be shaken. Now the rest of this, at least most of it, has to do with something that's maybe not for all of you, but I have to believe it's for some of you.

And that is this. This psalm now takes a negative turn. And the message is not so much a message of encouragement for God's children, but a message of encouragement for God's enemies.

No. Warning. Warning.

And you say, but Brother Paul, I'm not really a child of God yet, but I'm not an enemy. You're one or the other. There's no middle ground.

I'm sorry. You are one or the other. You are either a child of God or you are an enemy of God.

Because the only thing that changes the category for you is what you do with Jesus. And if you've done nothing with Him, if you stall, if you delay, if you simply admire Him and ponder over Him and maybe even to some degree you delight in Him, but you have not given your life to Him, you are an enemy. You are an enemy.

That is the severity of what God has done. Christ is a healing balm. Christ is a cutting blade.

A cutting blade. Christ is the great bulwark against the wrath of God. Christ is the one who signals for the wrath of God to come.

I've got good news for you and I've got bad news for you. The good news is God is here. The bad news is God is here.

Now whether it's good or bad depends on what side of the line you're standing on. And believe you me, you're not standing in the middle. You are either His or not His by choice and by rebellion.

And don't allow yourself to blame God for your own refusal to surrender your life to Him. Don't talk to me about the sovereignty of God. Don't talk to me about prior regeneration because the Scriptures won't allow you to talk that way because it says today if you find yourself outside of Christ, repent and believe the Gospel.

No matter how old you are, no matter how young, throw yourself on Christ. And if you do not, it's not because you do not understand, it's because you refuse. You refuse.

And why do you refuse? Your deeds are evil. And you choose those over the righteous deeds of the King. Let's go on.

Verse 8. Your hand will find out all your enemies. Your right hand will find out those who hate you. Now look at that.

Your hand will find out all your enemies. Right now, in this building, I do not know who is an enemy of Christ. You may be hiding within a godly church.

You may be hiding within a godly family. And yet know this, everyone in the world may think you're Christian, but His hand will find you out. It will search for you like the death angel searched for every firstborn child in Egypt and will plunge you into death and darkness.

You will be found out. Your sin will be found out. You will be exposed.

And though, like the book of Revelation says, though you choose to hide in the bottom of the sea, from there you will be brought up. Though you choose to hide in the deepest part of Sheol, from there you will be brought forth. The King's right hand will find His enemies.

It wasn't for any reason that He said that He had a winnowing fork in His hand and He would separate the wheat from the chaff. Know this, this day, that you will be separated. You will.

There will come a great divide which no man can pull together. When you see families, husbands, wives, parents, children torn apart from one another, the valley of decision, verse 9, you will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger. The Lord will swallow them up in His wrath and fire will devour them.

I remember one time, years and years ago, a young man was doing some sort of boasting before Charles Leiter about he had no fear of God. And he said he'd stand there on that day of judgment and he would address God. Job tried that, not even on the day of judgment.

And in the end, he put his hand over his mouth, didn't he? Charles Leiter looked at him and said, young man, on that day you stand before God, you will melt before Him like a tiny wax figurine before a blast furnace. Yes. As much as God loves righteousness, He hates unrighteousness.

As much as He loves His people, and as much as He still holds out an olive branch of peace to the wicked, there will come a day when love will say, no more. And mercy will withdraw its hand and no longer hold back the wrath of God. And in that moment, you will be eternally destroyed, eternally consumed by the wrath of Almighty God for every cent, for every thought, every word, every deed, everything you should not have done.

And you did. And everything you should have done and you did not do. Always with truth.

In some ways it's like the moon. There's a light side and a dark side. And in God, there is not only love and mercy and benevolence, but there is hatred against all unrighteousness.

And that's why the Gospel is a serious thing. And that's why we're not prone to play in this church. It is a matter of life and death, both of them being eternal.

Verse 10, Their offspring you will destroy from the earth and their descendants from among the sons of men. Now when we look in the physical realm, we realize that every person is judged for their own sin. Children are not judged by God for the sins of their parents.

And yet at the same time, know this, we are a collective people. In the West, it's very hard for us to understand this. We're such individuals, we think there is no corporate sense to our existence.

But that is simply not true. If the President of the United States makes a horrendous, evil, immoral decision, it will affect us all. If a father makes a horrendous, evil decision, it will affect his children, even be an influence upon them.

Also know this, know this, that spiritually, when we talk about descendants, we talk about those who are like us. Everyone who has rejected Christ, everyone who in their stupid boldness presents themselves before God, thinking they'll be justified by their own deeds, they will be consumed. It says in the book of Revelation, there shall be no place found for them, talking about this world, and this now heaven.

There will be no place found for them. Can you imagine, bold sinner, when you're walking down the corridors to enter into the judgment throne room of God, and you're with your chest out, bold and mighty, thinking that you're going to withstand this God in a debate, that you're going to prove your innocence, and as you're drawing near, you see angels that could consume the world, running the other way in abject terror from the face of the One that you're going to have to face. Without Christ, without His blood, you will not be delivered, and this time it is not an angel of death coming through Egypt.

This time, it's God. And don't think that on that day, Christ will stand up and oppose His Father, because you have rejected Christ. Remember Psalms chapter 2, that the Messiah, the King, when He is rejected, His anger is also great.

I know this isn't taught in modern day evangelicalism, but it's one of the reasons why modern day evangelicalism is nothing but an entertainment and a circus. This is true. And also understand this, from the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 27 and 28, that when the curses and the judgment for those curses are called out on the people and the sinner is separated to be condemned, all the congregation of the godly are to stand up and cry out, Amen and Amen.

And on the day of judgment, children, if your parents are redeemed and you are not on that day when God sentences your soul to hell, even your parents will stand up and say, Amen, Amen, so be it. The God of all the earth has done right. And then we go on.

Verse 11, Though they intend evil against you and devise a plot, they will not succeed. All the armies of hell, all the armies of heaven, resurrect every army that's walked on this planet since Cain murdered Abel. Bring them all together in their full strength, go into the future, bring all the armies from there with all of their technology and everything else and have them storm the throne of Christ.

It will be like a little gnat beating its head against a world of granite. You will not fight him, though you fight him today. You will not fight him then.

No, you will not. You will not. Even his friends, even his friends in the old dispensation were terrified at his presence, though they only saw a fraction of it.

Moses, standing before the mountain, he was so afraid, his knees quaked. Isaiah, before the throne of Christ, and it was Christ that he saw in Isaiah 6, according to John chapter 12, it was Christ on that throne that he saw. He said, Woe is me, I am undone.

I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Why was he undone? Because his eyes had seen the Lord of hosts. And just the proclamation of his holiness caused the entire heavens to shake.

That's the God before whom you will stand or fall. And then he goes on and he says this, For you will make them turn their back and you will aim with your bow strings at their faces. Now, some of you may be listening to this.

I had no intention of preaching this tonight. You may think, Boy, I feel like I'm back in the 1950s or something or some Puritan is up in the pulpit preaching. Well, you need to ask yourself what he's preaching.

It may be offensive to you, offensive to your culture, offensive to everything you know about Evangelicalism, but is it true? Is it in the Bible? Because here's something you need to know about history. And it's this. How do you know you're interpreting the Bible correctly? Maybe one of the best ways is to go back through 2,000 years of Christian history and ask yourself if your view of God is anything like the view of God of 2,000 years of Christians.

And I want to tell you something. Evangelicalism has gone so far from a high view of God, it doesn't even recognize God when He's preached. But this is the God of the Bible.

I cannot accentuate or exaggerate His love. Matter of fact, one of the worst things about being a preacher is knowing every time you preach Christ, every time you preach God, every time you preach the love and benevolence and grace and mercy of God, you fail. Because no man can even comprehend the smallest part of His love and even less can he preach it.

Nor can I accentuate or exaggerate His fierce wrath against evil and how horrifying it will be on the day of judgment for men to stand before Him. And even the Scriptures warn you, don't they? That even the captains and the great men of this world will cry out for the rocks to fall upon them. To do what? To hide them from the wrath of something quite unusual.

The wrath of the Lamb. That the One who shed His blood for the salvation of men will turn against the men who refuse that salvation and come with such a terrifying judgment that even apocalyptic language cannot put it in the right perspective. And He says, He will aim, you will aim with your bowstring at their faces.

My dear friend, Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, he mentions something of this. Of God, from Psalm 7, Psalms 11, of God pulling back His bow. Now a hunting bow is very difficult to pull back.

Even if you're a strong weight lifter, if your arms are not trained to pull back a bow, you will not be able to pull it back. And so, when an animal comes before you and is drawing near to where you are, you not only have to shoot correctly, you have to time your draw correctly. Why? Because the bow is so heavy, the string is so hard to pull back that you realize you can only hold it for a matter of seconds before your hand starts to quiver and you have to let go.

Edwards in the Puritans talked about God pulling back as an archer His bow, that His arrow was already set upon you and that His hand is trembling. Do not delay repentance. Do not delay coming to Him.

Do not delay. Today, if you hear my voice, do not harden your heart. Psalms, Hebrews, over and over again.

Don't do it. Don't do it. And then verse 13.

Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength, and we will sing and praise Your power. Now, we need to look at this text in the text, in the context. The preceding verses are talking about what? The power of God manifested in the salvation of men? No.

The context is clear. The power of God manifested in the destruction of wicked men. And the people cry out, Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength.

Not only a victory over sin, not only a victory over death, not only a victory over darkness or Satan, but His victory over evil men. You see, I choose the word evil for a purpose. If I were to say sinner, it would not have the same impact.

If I stand out on a street corner, even at one of these universities, and cry out, All men are sinners. I may get some angry following. Most will just dismiss me because the word sin and sinner means so little today.

But if I stand in a lecture hall, and I debate for two hours, that those listening to me are evil. They will be riled. They will be bothered.

But the fact of the matter is, all I have to do is point to their daily paper, and point to the thoughts of their own heart to prove that my argument is sound. Do you see? Evil. That's when I told a group of students one time, I'm going to tell you the most terrifying thing that could be known about God from the Scriptures.

They all got prepared, and then I said this, God is good. And a student said, What's so terrible about that? And I said, You're not good, so what does God do with a person like you? He will judge you. I hear people say, Well, you know, God doesn't send anyone to hell.

He puts up every roadblock possible so that they don't go to hell. That's not true. Jesus said, Don't fear those Roman soldiers who can kill your body.

Fear God who can kill your body and cast your soul in hell. Preachers are always trying to make God look better than He Himself wants to appear, at least in the context of what we think is better today in our culture. God will be exalted in His strength.

God will get glory for Himself out of the salvation of His people. Out of the salvation of sinners, He will be praised throughout eternity for His salvation of sinners. And God will be praised throughout eternity for the damnation of sinners.

So know this, I remember one time walking out in a field, and God so exposed my hypocrisy. I was praying, and I was saying, Oh God, save my children. Save my children.

Save my children. I want my children to glorify You. And immediately God exposed the wickedness of my heart.

Because what came into my heart was not a voice from heaven, but the Scriptures and sound theology. And basically God said this, Don't worry, your children will glorify Me. I will be glorified in them if they repent and believe.

And in their salvation I will be glorified. And don't worry Paul, I will be glorified in your children if they refuse to repent and believe. I will be glorified in their eternal destruction.

Now you follow Me. Here's the thing, a lot of preachers don't believe that because they don't study the Scriptures. Other preachers believe it, but because they're so cowardly, they won't publicize it.

Well by God's grace, we both believe it and we publicize it. I believe, therefore I have spoken, Paul said. It's the same way with this message.

I believe because it is scriptural, because it is the historical interpretation of the Bible, I believe it and I proclaim it to you, and now it is left unto you to do what? Respond. Repent and believe the Gospel. Throw yourself upon Christ and do not delay.

Do not delay. Do not delay. And if you are a believer, if you are one of those who trust in Christ, then glory, glory.

This sermon tonight was supposed to be in 1 Thessalonians 5. It was supposed to be about rejoicing, but this text is about rejoicing. Rejoicing. Rejoicing in who He is.

Who He is. Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word.

But Lord, that Your wind, Lord, would come and breathe upon these bones. And that the lids of blind eyes would be pulled back so that they might see. And that hearts as cold as a stone might be transformed into hearts of flesh.

And as You called out Lazarus, come forth. Call out people, Lord, that they might come forth. Lord, we do not know from where Your Spirit comes or to where He goes, but we know when He has worked.

Because He leaves in His wake changed lives. People who on the inside love Christ. Oh Lord, do such a work tonight.

And wherever, wherever this is seen or heard, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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