

Psalm 41: You have set me in your presence forever



Psalm 41 (40) (Mode 4. 3....4 / 2.....171)

This is the final psalm in Book I of the Psalms (see verse 13). It is a prayer of trust from someone who is ill.

After speaking of the happiness experienced by those who care for the needy, the psalmist acknowledges that he has sinned, but also that he has cared for the weak. He calls upon God to forgive him and to care now for him.

His main concern seems to be that he does not want his enemies to see in his illness a vindication of their position. However, even his friends are hostile, possibly because of fear of contagion. They assume he has offended God and so are afraid that his illness is putting them in danger too.

Open to God's blessing are those who care for the poor.
When times are hard, the Lord will rescue them.
The Lord protects them, preserves their life,
and blesses them in the land.

The Lord will not give them up
to the will of their enemies,
but on their sick bed will sustain them,
restoring them from sickness to health.

'Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full'(Proverbs 19:17).

I said, ‘Lord, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have failed you.’

‘My child, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. Give up your faults and direct your hands rightly, and cleanse your heart from all sin’(Sirach 38:9-10).

Enemies wish evil upon me:

‘When will he die? When will his name be forgotten?’

When they come to see me, they pretend to be friendly but they are planning mischief in their hearts.

When they leave, they gossip about me.
All who hate me gang up and plot evil against me.
They say: 'He has contracted an incurable sickness;
Confined to bed he will never rise.'

Even my bosom friend (see John 13:18)
in whom I trusted,
He shared my table,
but has turned against me. ('shown me his heel').

But you, O Lord,
be gracious to me.

Restore me to health

so that I can show them how wrong they are.

Then I will know that you are pleased with me,
when my enemies do not triumph over me.

O Lord, hold me.

Keep me in your presence for ever.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for ever and ever. Amen! Amen!