

“The Resistance”

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Series: *Psalms*

Bible Text: Psalm 141

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If you have a Bible, you can be turning to Psalm 141 this morning. I think that's what's printed in the bulletin this Sunday. I would like to take a moment and let you know that that was on me last week. I feel like every time I make a mistake in the bulletin, I need to vindicate Shannon, our office manager, and just tell you it was not her fault. She did everything I asked her to do. It was my fault. So Psalm 141, it's in your worship guide if you need it. We are closing in on the end of this series this summer. It's this week and next week. Common themes that we've seen. God's justice, discipline over his people, learning to cry out to God, all of those things we've seen. This morning in Psalm 141, a lament of David, we're going to see some of the same things. Justice and learning to cry out, and even discipline. And yet, front and center in this Psalm is David's need and my need and your need to resist temptation to sin. So let's read and remember that this is God's word for us.

A Psalm of David.

1 O Lord, I call upon you, hasten to me. Give ear to my voice when I call to you.

2 Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips.

4 Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in the company with men who work iniquity. Let me not eat of their delicacies.

5 Let a righteous man strike me. It is a kindness. Let him rebuke me. It is oil for my head. Let my head not refuse it. Yet, my prayer is continually against their evil deeds.

6 When their judges are thrown over the cliff, they shall hear my words, for they are pleasant.

7 As when one plows and breaks up the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

8 But my eyes are toward you, O God my Lord. In you I seek refuge. Leave me not defenseless.

9 Keep me from the trap they have laid for me, from the snares of evildoers.

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets while I pass by safely.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we plead with you to send your spirit into this place, into each heart, mind. Let us have your word illuminated to us. Give us ears that can hear. Give us hearts that are actually inclined toward you. Make us able to hear things that we can't hear on our own. Let us see our Lord Jesus and worship him, and let us be people who resist sin and temptation. Give us your grace, we pray, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hulk Hogan died, and I feel like we need to talk about it for a minute. If you're a male around my age, maybe a little older, you need no introduction to the Hulk brother. All that was missing from the first service was one of these, which he used to do, but that felt like a little too far. America's wrestler, wrestling, not Greco-Roman wrestling, which is an actual Olympic sport. Hulk Hogan took down Andre the Giant. I feel like we should just close in prayer right now, you know? Bravado, strength, flash, everybody that watched wrestling loved Hulk Hogan until 1996. You might not know what happened in 1996. The New World Order happened in 1996, and Hulk Hogan went over to the dark side. He became one of the enemies. I know this is shocking to all of you, but I was in middle school at the time, and so this was my whole world. I spent three years of my life tracking closely all of the movements of professional wrestling. What do you do when your hero goes rogue, or in wrestling terms, goes heel, which was something I didn't know about until this week? Many of my middle school friends turned with him, and they came to school wearing their black and white NWO shirts, and they were cheering for the enemy, and I had a choice to make, and I just couldn't do it. I chose to cheer against my hero, and that was a socially costly decision for a middle schooler.

Ridiculous example aside, have you ever had that happen to you? Your hero goes to the other side, and you are beckoned to join.

What do you do when your enemy is trying to get you to come to their side?

What do you do when your rivals come, and they throw some bait at you?

What do you do when the evil thing that you would call evil starts to suddenly look really, really good?

Rarely does temptation come with a sign that says, you're being tempted. If only it did, but it doesn't. Usually it comes with an offer. Usually it comes with a promise. If you join us, you will get status. If you join us, you will get money. If you join us, you will get something. If I would put on that black and white NWO shirt, I would be accepted. This is how sin and wickedness and the schemes of the enemy usually work.

In Psalm 141, it's very clear that the wicked want you and me to join them, and that means that we have to get comfortable with being part of the resistance. How do you get comfortable with that? How do you get comfortable with resisting evil until you die? Because that's what we're called to. How do you endure choosing to swim upstream for the rest of your life? Two things that we'll see from the passage. If you're going to be in the resistance, it requires actually

resisting. And if you're going to endure in the resistance, you're going to have to have confidence that this is worth it. Let's talk about each of those as we walk through the passage.

First, if you're going to be in the resistance, you're actually going to have to resist.

We don't know the specifics for David, what's going on in his life. In verse 1, he's crying out for help. Help me. Listen to me. Hear me. Whatever the trouble that's coming to him. It's interesting that his first concern is not that God would destroy his enemies. He'll get there. It's that the Lord would prevent him from being a fool.

Look at verse 3. It's his mouth that's going to get him into trouble. Isn't that the way for us? It's our words. We learn about the judges of the wicked in verse 6. They're mentioned and it seems like the people who are in high places are against him and are probably, if they're judges, they're speaking against him from their high place and it would be so tempting for him to open his mouth and fire back and just come at them. You and I know the feeling, especially when it seems justified and when we're right. We might not murder our enemies, but we might give them a piece of our mind. David says, set a guard over my mouth, O Lord. Stand sentinel over the words that I would speak. Keep watch over the doors of my lips. Don't let me speak and bring dishonor to your name. Don't let me take the low road and join in their curses or their coarseness or help me to not say the things I shouldn't say and help me, he also asked, help me not to do the things I want to do.

Look at verse 4. He recognizes that what we do comes out of what we love. We say this a lot around here. I don't know what pastor said it, but I'm shamelessly stealing from him. We do what we do because we love what we love. That's just how humans operate. It's the heart that inclines toward evil and therefore the body and the actions follow. He needs the Lord to help his heart not incline toward evil and therefore not incline toward doing wicked deeds. We know that this is how it works and yet sometimes we're very quick to blame shift. We really want it to be somebody else's fault. Here's some ways that that sounds.

You made me so angry. All right. Did they? Whatever the person did or said could have been right or wrong, but did they carry a backpack full of anger and walk up behind you and dump it on you so they made you angry? No, no, no, no, no, no, no. The anger came from you, right? Don't make me say it. Well, you're not going to make me say it. If I say it, it'll be because I wanted to say it. That's how it works.

We do what we do because we want to.

David acknowledged that this is how it works and so he says, don't let me want to do evil.

Change the wants. Change the heart. Don't let me join in these deeds and busy myself with all form of iniquity and change the heart that wants to get there anyway. The other thing about this is that often busyness and wicked deeds is done in company with those who work iniquity. There are teams. We'll talk about the other team in a minute. We don't operate alone. Others entice.

Others participate. We entice others. Sending is individual, yes, and it's also communal, yes, but he's asking the Lord to protect him from himself, from his own heart, from other people, and from deeds that are evil.

He needs the Lord to show up primarily because sin is not unenjoyable. If only it was. If only every temptation to sin, you knew that it was going to feel like voluntarily getting a root canal with no medication. If only sin felt that way. If only you immediately knew the consequences of it and all the ways that it was going to destroy your life. If only. It's never that way.

One proverb says that saying those words that you really want to say is like morsels going through your mouth and down into your stomach. It is delicious to say to your enemy exactly what you want to say and give full vent to your spirit. It feels so good to let your heart want what it wants and then go get it. And there's a reason why this is the collective creed of our culture. Follow your heart. That's the collective creed of the entire culture right now. Get something for yourself, do what you want to do, and it does feel great for a moment. There's a reason that he says, let me not eat of their delicacies because that's what sin is like. It is a table filled with your favorite things and it beckons you to come and enjoy it. It is the smell of bacon wafting down the hallway first thing in the morning. It has a gravitational pull of its own and it feels like resistance is not only impossible, resistance is stupid. Why would I not go and get this good thing that I want so badly? He can't do it on his own. He has to have the Lord help him and he especially has to have the Lord help him if resisting might kill him. And resisting might kill him.

Look at verses six and seven. You and I are called to resist the enemy of the world, the flesh, sin, evil, all of it, even if it demands our harm. He acknowledges in verse six that there will be a time when God judges his enemies and they're going to hear his words and say, you were right. But then he says, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol, which is death, like clods of dirt that have been plowed up and broken when one breaks up the ground. These phrases are notoriously hard to translate. Your Bible probably has a footnote about that, but the gist of it seems to be there will be justice for our enemies, yes. And we will not come out unscathed and unscarred. Our bones will be scattered at the mouth of Sheol itself. And yet we are called to resist everything that offers us life apart from God himself. We are called to resist sin even if it kills us. The author of Hebrews says it this way. You have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding blood. And what's implied in that is that you may have to shed blood. You may have to resist sin and it might destroy you. Meaning we are called to keep killing sin even if it's trying to kill us. And to quote the theologian John Owen,

if you don't kill sin, guess what's going to happen? It will kill you.

The hope for the Christian is that if we resist and suffer, the Lord raises the dead. We'll talk more about that in a minute. But for those who fail to fight, and especially if you're here and you're not yet a Christian or you're wrestling with this stuff, I want you to sit with this especially. You might have a morsel or two in this life, and you might have a taste of a delicacy banquet. But it will kill you in the end, and there will be no redemption. The wicked will never stop coming and demanding that you join them. And if you belong to God and call Christ your Lord, you're going

to have to get comfortable resisting, but you are going to actually have to resist. Let's talk about that for a minute.

God demands radical responsibility from us. So how's it going? How's it going in fighting the sin that you have and that you know about? How recently have you capitulated to your own desires that you know were wrong? Are you motivated, doing okay, making some strides, not perfectly, struggling, but making some strides, still motivated? Have you moved into a demotivated and deflated and fairly defeated mode, and you're just kind of tempted to stop resisting? Is it possible that you aren't even aware that there's anything you needed to resist in the first place? Resistance is difficult if you keep failing. That's true. Resistance is impossible if you've fallen asleep. And our age is very spiritually sleepy.

We are the third soil in Jesus' famous illustration. The seed of the word has fallen on it, and it's grown up, and yet the weeds are overtaking and choking, and we are busy, busy, busy, busy, and therefore we are sleepy and unaware, and we can't even focus, and we don't even know that there's an enemy. You can't fight if you don't know you have an enemy.

If you were to wake up, what might you begin to see? If you were to begin to see things as they actually are, what might you see in your ambition and busyness? If you got to the bottom of it, you might begin to see the seeds of ambition and busyness. You might begin to see if there's greed underneath there. Steve preached about that last week. Or you might see that, man, underneath my busyness, I am just craving status. Or underneath all of my busyness and ambition, I want power. I want to be in charge. I want to be in control.

You know what would be a great step? If you can begin to see those things is to call them what they are. Call them the enemy that needs to be resisted. That would be a great first step. Then you actually know what ground you're fighting on. To call the enemy what it is.

Can you see the delicacies spread out before you these days and the things that you really do want to join in?

What level of delight do you feel when you get a minute to yourself and you disappear into your work?

What level of delight do you feel when you get a minute to yourself and you disappear into your preferred form of entertainment?

When you get a minute to yourself and you just disappear into your phone, what are those things that are so delightful for a moment?

Can you see it?

Will you resist?

What level of joy fills your heart when you say exactly what you wanted to say and you know it's destructive but it felt so good anyway?

We have to see if we're actually going to resist. That's the first thing.

Maybe you see clearly. You might be hearing you say, look, I know exactly what I'm fighting against. It is painfully obvious to me and everyone around me. I'm just really tired of losing. I'm struggling. How do you keep resisting the constant pull of the world? How do you resist a tractor beam that is just pulling you in?

You have to see that it ends in death.

Steve said this a couple of months back. He said often with our temptation and sin, we don't go far enough ahead with sort of our fantasy ideas. We need to actually go past the moment where we're eating the feast and see what will the result be after that.

What's it going to lead to? How does this banquet end in death?

Because the food is poisoned. We have to resist because it's going to kill us.

This might be the hardest thing in my life and I bet it is for you too. If you're going to resist sin, you're going to have to learn how to be somebody who gets comfortable saying no. Does anybody in our world ever say no to anything? No. We're really bad at it. We say yes. We say yes to everything. We're just going to have to get comfortable saying no, swimming upstream, being unpopular, cutting against the grain. We're going to have to be willing to take the bones of our reputation and the bones of our convenience and the bones of our status and our money and hurling them at the mouth of Sheol itself and letting it die. We're going to have to let it die. You're going to have to be willing to be uncomfortable. And if you're not, you're probably already losing. There's a certain amount of embracing loss and cost in the Christian life.

I was reminded this week of the quote from C.S. Lewis who speaks of temptation and says only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of the wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later.

Resist. Be made uncomfortable. Even if you suffer.

You probably already thought of this. If I'm going to be willing to suffer, Hobie, you're telling me that I need to choose the path of pain, sign me up, right? Awesome. Let's go suffer. Wonderful. No, that doesn't make any sense for us unless there is a payoff. Let's get into that, second point.

If we would ever endure the whole of our life resisting sin in the world, we're going to have to have confidence that it's worth it.

Let's talk about confidence that we have. It begins in our relationship to God. We have to be confident that if we call on him in prayer and ask for help that he actually hears us, that he actually wants to answer us, that he's for us.

Look at verse two. David asked that his prayer would be counted before God as incense. That's strange to us. But worship of God in the Old Testament included an offering of incense. There was an altar laid out in the book of Exodus for incense to be offered. It was supposed to be a pleasing aroma in the so-called nostrils of the Lord. Other places that idea of incense turns into the prayers of the saints are equated to incense rising before the Lord, acceptable in his sight, pleasing. David wants his prayers to be a pleasing aroma. He wants his lifted hands at worship to be regarded, accepted as the evening sacrifice. It's to say, let my prayers actually land before you, Lord. Let me be acceptable in your sight. We have to have confidence that God actually accepts us and that he hears us and loves us.

We also have to have confidence that we're not alone, that we are part of the people of God, that we have a team as well. If there are men who practice iniquity on the one side and then there are the righteous, we need to know who the righteous are and identify ourselves with them.

Did you notice verse 5? *Let a righteous man strike me*. That's a weird thing to say. Let a righteous man strike me. It's more than just a kindness, as the ESV says. The word in Hebrew is the same word for covenant loyalty, steadfast love. If a righteous man comes to me and strikes me to pull me back from the brink of destruction, it is covenant loyalty to me. For one, to rebuke me, to call me to account, to say a hard word is like oil on my heads. Again, that doesn't translate necessarily. That's refreshment for them. That's like the equivalent of saying the refreshment that you have after a shower. It also is the idea of anointing, to have a rebuke from one of God's people is like being called back from the abyss and set apart for God himself. We read in the Proverbs earlier, faithful are the wounds of a friend. We need a team. You have to have confidence that God is for you. You have to have confidence that these people are your people and that they love you enough to get involved in your life.

We also have to have confidence that God will actually be just and deal with the wicked. Again, we've talked about this throughout the summer. Their feast of delicacies will give way to destruction. He brings it up in verses five and six. He's praying against their evil deeds, but he acknowledges in verse six that there will be a time when from the top to the bottom, their judges will be thrown over the cliff and they will understand that David's words were pleasant, good, and true.

If you don't have confidence that God will be just, you will spend all of your waking hours trying to take vengeance yourself and to deal with these people who did you wrong. They're people who have wasted away from that very place.

Or, if the judge of all the earth isn't just and doesn't deal with your enemies, it's also possible that you just become a coward slinking in the shadows when they are powerful.

It's also possible that if the judge of all the earth isn't just, you will just join them because they're going to win in the first place. David wants to remind us, no they won't. They won't. The judges, the unjust, will find themselves on the wrong side of the cliff. God will be just. You keep resisting.

The last thing he talks about is confidence in God's deliverance and protection. This same God is your refuge, your protector, and the one who will make all of your enemies fall into the very traps that they had set for you. That's what he says in verses eight through 10. At the end he says his eyes are toward the Lord. He seeks refuge in God himself. He asks God, don't leave me defenseless, literally in the original. Don't lay my soul bare. Don't leave me exposed. He's going to have to have confidence that if he asks for help, God is actually going to show up.

How can somebody like me and somebody like you ever have that kind of confidence? That if you ask God for help, he will actually show up.

Why do we know that he will be good things for us and not judgment for us?

Why do we think that he will hear our prayers and accept our lifted hands?

Why should we be accounted among the righteous when we know that we have participated among the deeds of iniquity?

Why should we think that God's justice won't fall on us?

How do we know that our soul won't be laid bare and exposed before the Lord in the end?

Look back up at verse five. There would be a grandson of David who would be struck, but not by a righteous man, and it wasn't covenant loyalty to him. He did not need a rebuke. He was sinless, and yet he was rebuked and condemned. And it wasn't oil for his head. The only thing on his head was a crown of thorns and the overwhelming flood of God's wrath. His prayer would be heard and accepted by God, but his prayer, let there be another way, would be answered with a resounding, there is no other way. And the wicked ate at the table of delicacies when they crucified the Lord of glory on a Roman cross and rejoiced that finally this stubborn, itinerant Jewish peasant is dead and out of their lives forever, finally silenced.

But they forgot one thing.

They didn't account that bones scattered at the mouth of Sheol in death could possibly be raised.

They didn't count on the resurrection.

And they didn't account for the promise that judgment would come that would be so intense that people would be begging for the mountains to fall on them rather than to face the vengeance of God.

Our only confidence, our only hope, the only thing that will give us what we need to resist until the day that we die is a God who saves sinners by the life, death, and resurrection of his son Jesus, who gives us the kind of confidence that if we call out to him, he hears us because he loves us, and he has proven his love for us once and for all in the person and work of Christ.

Your prayers come as incense before him. When you ask for help, he delights to give it. When you ask him to incline your heart away from evil and toward him, he has actually given you, the third person of the Trinity himself, God the Spirit indwelling you for that very purpose so that the inner workings of your heart can change, so that your wants can change. We should have great optimism that not with perfection in this life, but with real change, we will grow more into conformity to the image of Christ, that our affections can change. And he's brought you into the community where there are brothers and sisters who love you enough to actually rebuke you if they must. No witch hunt, nobody keeping score, but if someone sees you running toward the cliff, they're going to run and get you and try to get you back.

If there's a God who raises the dead and says he will raise us too, there's no need to get weary or discouraged, and there's no need to be afraid of ostracism or persecution or discomfort. There's no need to be worried about all of that. He's worth it, and you're not alone, and you can carry on until the final day.

We need to reckon with the fact that in this period of time, the church is referred to by the theologians as the church militant. Have you ever heard that phrase? That doesn't mean that we are the church fighting the government or something like that. It means we're the church militant, meaning we're in a fighting posture.

We fight sin and the enemy and the world. And if you're going to be in a war, you had better have some comrades, some brothers with you, brothers and sisters.

I was listening to a song recently by, this is going to be more than you wanted to know ever, but Mark Knopfler of the Dire Straits Band, he has this song called Brothers in Arms. And I was listening to it thinking, that's actually not a bad way to refer to the church. The church has all these little descriptors that we use. The church is a house, the church is a family, the church is a building, the church is a people. But the church is also a group of brothers in arms who are called to fight and to fight for each other. And so we need to be willing to help our brothers and sisters see that God is worth it and resistance is worth it and we have to keep going.

Until the last breath, the enemy will keep trying to convince us to join him.

Until the last breath, the middle school buddies are going to be waving their black and white NWO shirts saying, come on, come on, we're all doing it.

Until the end, the feast that you're beckoned to will change over time. You probably know that if you've lived, but if you're on the younger side, whatever looks delicious to you but is evil at 15, might look different when you're 25, might look different when you're 45, might look different when you're 65.

Different things will entice, but its goal will be the same. To destroy you and to get you to bankrupt your faith in Jesus. So get comfortable being part of the resistance. You will in fact have to resist. You will have to say no to a thousand things, but you have a reason to resist. Christ is worth it. Until we are the church triumphant, embrace being part of the resistance. Let's pray together.

Father, you know our weaknesses better than we know them ourselves. You know all the places where we are enticed and you're the one that has power. We pray for your help. Would you give us great confidence in the Lord Jesus and the work that he's doing on our behalf. Give us confidence in the empowering and dwelling Holy Spirit. Help us to believe that you who started this thing are the one who will bring it to its completion. Give us everything that we need to resist sin and evil until the day that you make us and all things new. And would you even use now this meal, this little taste to remind us of good news and to strengthen us to resist. We pray Jesus in your name, Amen