



Psalm 41:1-3

- (1) Blessed *is* he who considers the poor;
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
(2) The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive,
And he will be blessed on the earth;
You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.
(3) The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness;
You will sustain him on his sickbed.

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Here are some wonderful promises for those who consider the poor. But what does it mean to "consider the poor"?

The Hebrew word in verse 1 translated as "considers," *sakal*, is quite interesting. One Hebrew lexicon defines *sakal* as "to look at; to look at with the mind; to consider; to attend to." As Hebrew is a picturesque language, the word runs the gamut of possible definitions. It begins with looking at something, then mentally investigating it, and finally, all the way to attending to it. It is a word, then, that encompasses a process.

The definition continues, giving more figurative meanings: "To be or become intelligent, prudent, or wise. It implies maturity of understanding or judgment." We can now plug these definitions back into verse 1: "Blessed is he who intelligently, prudently, or wisely, with maturity of understanding and judgment, considers the poor."

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, page 877, comments on this word: "*Sakal* relates to an intelligent knowledge of the reason. There is the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thought resulting

in a wise dealing and use of good practical common sense. Another end result is the emphasis upon being successful."

So, what is David truly saying? By using this word, he does not say simply, "Blessed is he who sees people in need." We could take it that way, as the most basic definition of *sakal* is "to look at," but by using *sakal*, with its gamut of definitions, he implies a great deal more. He is really saying, "Blessed is he who sees a need, and then looking at the complex situation surrounding it, thinks through how he could best, most intelligently, and wisely bring about a successful solution to it."

That is the essence of this word, *sakal*. It is not just seeing a problem that needs fixing. It is seeing a situation—a person in need—then taking stock and determining what one has to give that will fulfill what the other person really needs, investigating the needy person's situation and attitude (as much as possible), considering God's involvement, and extrapolating what actions and methods one may take to produce the best possible solution. After all that, one must actually do what needs to be done to bring the situation to a successful conclusion.

That is a lot of work! There is a great deal involved when a Christian goes about doing good ([Acts 10:38](#))!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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