

From the Miry Pit to the Solid Rock

A Sermon on Psalm 40

by

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1. Introduction

2. The One Who Trusts in the Lord Remembers and Retells of His Faithfulness (vv. 1-5).

a. God's salvation brings His people a new song of praise (vv. 1-3).

- i. David finds himself in the throes of an incredible trial once again, yet despite his bleak circumstances, the first thing he does is look back upon the faithfulness of God.
 1. He says, starting in v. 1, "I waited patiently for the Lord," and the way the Hebrew captures this is that there is an intensity to David's waiting.
 - a. David waited, but with every expectation that God would rescue him—and that is just what the Lord did.
 - b. He continues to describe the situation in v. 1 by saying that the Lord, "...inclined to me and heard my cry."
 2. "He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm."
 - a. The situation David found himself in was hopeless.
 - b. Whether he is speaking literally or metaphorically, David describes a place we all reach at some point.
 - c. But the Lord heard the cry of his child, stooped down into the miry pit with him, pulled him out, and put him back on solid ground.
- ii. "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God."
 1. The inevitable result of God's salvation of his servant David was praise.
 - a. You can't help but give God the glory He is due when He brings you out of the pit and places you upon solid ground.
 - b. The inevitable result of praise is that more worshippers are added to the mix.
 2. "Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord."

- a. The interesting thing here is that while David looks to the past, he now looks to the future work of God.
 - b. As a result of saving David, the “many” will see, fear, and trust in the Lord.
- b. *God’s faithful ways are too numerous for His people to count (vv. 4-5).*
 - i. David begins by describing an active state of blessing upon the one who has made the Lord his trust (v. 4).
 - 1. This blessed man who trusts in the Lord does not turn to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.
 - a. The word David uses here for “proud” is the nickname that Egypt became known by, so there’s an interesting bit of irony on display here.
 - b. Then David speaks to those who lapse into falsehood, and wrapped up in this would be the many false gods people turn to for salvation and help.
 - 2. “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, and Your thoughts toward us; there is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, they would be too numerous to count.”
 - a. Notice that David focuses on both the works and the thoughts of God toward His people.
 - b. Here he has in mind all of the things that God has done to save His people in the past, but also, all of the future plans He has in store for them.
 - c. Even if one were to try and count all of the things the Lord has done and all of the things He has yet to do, they would find it impossible.
 - ii. The people of God have every reason, therefore, to trust in Him.
 - 1. He has yet to fail any one of us in our time of need, nor will He in the future, for He is unchanging and never reneges on His promises.
 - a. All one must do to see the faithfulness of God on display is to look to the past, yet also look to their glorious future.
 - b. Even if all in this life fails, nothing can remove the promises of God for what’s in store for those who trust in the Lord.
 - 2. The past faithfulness of God and His future promises is a sure foundation for those who trust in Him.

- a. Not only can we look back in our lives to see all of the ways that the Lord has preserved us and sustained us, we can look ahead.
- b. Yet more than this, you can remind yourself that in Christ, you rest upon the most solid ground in all the world.

3. The One Who Trusts in the Lord Relies on His Word (vv. 6-8).

a. God's Law opens up His people's ears (v. 6-7).

- i. David's response to the Lord's goodness and faithfulness is ultimately dedication—but there is much more going on in this passage than meets the eye at first.
 1. As he speaks to the fact that sacrifice and meal offering is not desired by the Lord, nor has God required the burnt offering and sin offering, he is, in fact, alluding to Christ.
 - a. The author of Hebrews picks up on these verses in chapter 10 to show that this is a Messianic passage.
 - b. It speaks to the fact that the sacrificial system in all its glory, was inadequate.
 2. But in Christ, who came to do the will of the Father in complete and perfect obedience, the power of sin is swallowed up in victory.
- ii. In some sense, what David understood is that the sacrifices could never fully deal with the problem of sin in his own heart. Nonetheless, he dedicates himself to the Lord.
 1. On one end, he looked with anticipation for the day Christ would come and make an end to a system he knew was never designed to last.
 - a. Yet he is also recognizing the need for a true, genuine love of God, which goes well beyond the mere external trappings of a dead faith.
 - b. In other words, David understands full well that the sacrifices are also inept if the one making them doesn't trust in the Lord.
 - c. David alludes to this in v. 6, as he says the Lord has opened up his ears. God has made him so he can hear—and what he hears and loves, is the very Word of God.
 2. "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me."
 - a. Whenever one was made a king in Israel, they were given a personal copy of the book of the Law.

- b. As king, they were to know the Law in and out so they would rule according to God's standards and truth.

b. God's Law pierces to His people's heart (vv. 8).

- i. He says, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart."
 1. The only way David can utter such a statement is that he has truly devoted himself to knowing God and His Word—but more than this, it is his delight.
 - a. These two statements are in apposition, which simply means that they are equal to one another.
 - b. In other words, delight in doing God's will is to have the Law of the Lord within your heart. They are one in the same.
 2. For David, reliance upon God's Word, again, much like the sacrificial system, is not mere perfunctory lip service, but a wholehearted devotion to God Himself.
 - a. There is not a divide between knowing the Word and obedience to the Lord.
 - b. But there is also not a divide between David's affections; he has made it his every delight to actually obey God.
- ii. The Word of God is our own firm foundation to stand upon amidst the troubles of this life.
 1. The first reason for this is quite simple: the proper response of one who has seen God's faithfulness firsthand is a love of His Word.
 2. The second reason we must be a people of the Word, is that it is one of the greatest ways God has given us to persevere.
 - a. When you stand upon the Word of God, you stand upon a firm foundation. You stand upon the truth.
 - b. You will never find a Christian who flourishes apart from regular saturation in and obedience to the Word of God.
 - c. It is the Word of God that will reorient your heart and mind to God Himself.

4. The One Who Trusts in the Lord Rejoices in His Character (vv. 9-10).

- a. God's righteous works cannot be restrained from His people's lips (v. 9).*

- i. This section of the psalm marks an abrupt shift where David begins to make his request known to God for deliverance.
 1. We will see why shortly, but for now, notice how he makes his needs known to God.
 2. David does not start with his request, but begins by showing proof of prior praise.
- ii. David points out that he has made the good news of God's salvation known to the whole congregation before. The insinuation is that if God delivers him again, it will result once more in praise of who God is.
 1. Every time David has been in peril and rescued out of it, he has made it a thing of formal worship.
 - a. The entirety of the book of Psalms is designed for the corporate worship of Israel.
 - b. In many cases, just like in our Psalm today, the circumstances are vague enough that everyone who picks them up can relate to them in one way or another.
 2. David's first concern is one of worship, because he knows God's first concern is one of worship.
 - a. Before he even asks God what he wants, he begins with this promise of praise, "Behold, I will not restrain my lips."
 - b. He can make this bold claim because his track record is unparalleled in this. He doesn't even need to ask the Lord to search his heart, he simply states, "O Lord, You know."
- b. *God's awesome character cannot be contained to oneself (v. 10).*
 - i. "I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart."
 1. When the Old Testament speaks of the heart of man, it speaks to the very core of his being.
 - a. We tend to think of the heart as merely the place where our emotions come from.
 - b. Scripture shows us that the "heart" involves our intellect, emotions, beliefs, affections, and everything else.

2. What David displays here is the same notion that Christ spoke of when he said that from the heart the mouth speaks.
 - a. David believes at the very core of his being is that God is righteous, or just, in everything He does.
 - b. God is just, fair, and good—and this is a truth that David not only agrees with, but is absolutely enthralled with.
- ii. David has spoken of God’s faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness, and His truth before the great congregation.
 1. By “faithfulness,” David speaks of God being steadfast and trustworthy in all He does.
 - a. The Psalmist testifies of this reality in Psalm 102:27 where he says, “But You remain the same, and Your years will never end.”
 - b. It speaks to the fact that God is unchanging. The word that comes to mind is stability.
 2. By “salvation,” David speaks to the fact that God is a saving God.
 - a. However, the word he uses here can refer to both an immediate salvation and an eternal salvation.
 - b. In other words, God’s great work of salvation encompasses every aspect of life and death.
 3. By “lovingkindness,” David speaks to the reality that God is always faithful to His covenant love towards His children.
 - a. This is the Hebrew term “hesed,” which speaks of God’s utter faithfulness and love toward His people through covenant.
 - b. God’s lovingkindness means that God cannot violate a single promise, because it would be a violation of his own character.
 4. By “truth,” David again emphasizes the fact that God is steadfast, but this time, in light of His Word.
 - a. Truth, in other words, is the self-expression of who God is.
 - b. Yet more than this, it speaks to God’s sure promises (think of Numbers 23:19).

5. In all of these things, David recounts the fullness of who God is, and it brings him nothing but delight.
 - a. The firmest foundation for any of God's children to stand upon is God Himself, for from Him, all other things flow.
 - b. The reason we can look back upon God's past faithfulness, the reason we can trust in God's word, the reason we can ask God for help, is all because God Himself is faithful and true in all His ways.

5. The One Who Trusts in the Lord Requests His Help (vv. 11-17).

a. God preserves His people through their sins (vv. 11-13).

- i. Notice that now David finally enters with confidence before His God to ask for help.
 1. In light of everything David has just said about who God is, he now can say, "You, O Lord, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me."
 2. In spite of the circumstances David finds himself in, he has every bit of confidence that the Lord will have compassion on him and rescue him.
 - a. God is faithful to His covenant, God is true, therefore, David knows that God will preserve him.
 - b. He will not let his servant sink down to the bottom of the miry pit, but once again, will place him on solid ground.
- ii. Notice why David says this though, "For evils beyond number have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; they are more numerous than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed me."
 1. David recognizes the simple reality that he is completely desperate and helpless, just as he was before.
 - a. He describes his situation has produced this web of tangled evils that surround him on every side.
 - b. His sins have overtaken him and are even more numerous than the hairs of his head, but he is not without hope.
 2. "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me."
 - a. This simple plea is one of great hope and confidence in God Himself, for David knows that God preserves His people through thick and thin.

- b. David knows God is faithful to His covenant, He is true, and because of this, He will be moved to compassion on His servant.

b. *God protects His people from their enemies (vv. 14-15).*

- i. “Let those be ashamed and humiliated together who seek my life to destroy it; let those be turned back and dishonored who delight in my hurt. Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, aha!”

1. David uses imprecatory language in his prayer to God here, and he gives us the reasons why.

- a. He asks that God shame and humiliate them because they seek to destroy him.
- b. He asks that God dishonor and turn them back because they wait to inflict much harm upon him.
- c. And finally, he asks that God would let them be appalled because they taunt him in the expectation that they’ll kill him.

2. The reason David asks for their destruction is simple: the Lord has promised to curse those who curse Israel.

- ii. Behind this is the reality that David knows well; the Lord protects His people from their enemies.

1. David is helpless against these men, but he also will not take vengeance for himself.
2. He entrusts himself to the vengeance of the Lord, knowing that God will indeed rescue him as He has rescued Israel from every foe in the past.

c. *God pities His people in their weakness (vv. 16-17).*

- i. David begins by asking the Lord to let the saints rejoice.

1. Notice though, David asks that they would be brought to rejoice in two very specific things.

- a. The first is in God Himself.
- b. The second is in God’s salvation.

2. In either case, the result is that God would be magnified.

- a. When you think of God being magnified, you might be tempted to think of God being made to appear larger.

- b. In reality, what David is asking for is that the Lord would be seen for how great He truly is.
 - ii. “Since I am afflicted and needy, let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.”
 1. The words that David uses here are weighty; he speaks of himself as utterly helpless and destitute. It is on this basis that he makes a simple plea and confession.
 - a. His confession is that God is his help and deliverer; God is able to save him. God is able to help him.
 - b. He asks that the Lord be mindful of Him and to not delay in saving him.
 2. Whether it is due to recognizing the weight of his own sin, seeing the rise of enemies who seek his harm, or even sensing his own weakness—David cries out to God for rescue.
 - a. David has come to the end of his rope and intimately knows he isn’t able to do a thing about it.
 - b. Yet he also knows that he stands firmly on solid ground in asking for God’s help in his time of need, because God pities the weak.

6. Conclusion

Small Group Questions

1. Where in your life are you currently not standing on a “firm foundation” (God’s faithfulness, God’s Word, God’s character, and/or God’s help)? How come?
2. Why do you believe these four foundations are vital to your faith, and especially your perseverance to the end?
3. How do you cultivate these spiritual disciplines so that they produce a deeper love of God?
4. When we think of our sin and the salvation we have in Christ, our largest issue has already been solved. How does the gospel encourage us to remember how great God’s salvation is as we face the hardships of life, and even the consequences to our own sin?