

## FROM THE HEART

Psalm 40

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Worship has been defined as, “Our response to Who God is, to what He promises, and to what He does.” Sometimes we worship, we respond to who God is, through:

Serving others, as in response to “Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as you love yourself.” Hence, when we serve others in the name of the Lord, we are actually worshipping the Lord.

Coming to Him in prayer on behalf of others.

Obedying Him when it would be easier not to.

Singing songs of love and adoration to Him, or singing songs about God and life with Him when we gather together.

The bottom line is: our expression of worship can take on many forms. This morning, I want to show you a form of worship that is spelled out for us in Scripture and is modeled for us by a warrior, a real man’s man. This man’s man was also a musician and a king. His name was David. In particular, we are going to look closely at one of his songs, **Psalm 40**. While you are turning in your Bibles, let me tell you a little about it.

The psalm falls into two major sections. First, as in other psalms, in **verses 1-3** David tells us the occasion that brought about his writing of the psalm. In these verses David is praising God for the results of what He had done for him as he waited upon the Lord during a dark hour in his life. The rest of the psalm, **verses 4-17**, is a song that God gave David to sing for the purpose of teaching Hebrew believers and us an important lesson about a true act of worship. In other words, David is instructing us in a way that God has called each of us to worship Him.

The backdrop to this song is an unspecified situation during which David found himself in deep trouble. He had enemies who wanted to see him fail, to see him humiliated, to see him removed from office, or maybe even to see him dead.

In the beginning of this psalm, David tells us how the story ends. He has not failed, been humiliated, been removed from office, or been killed. Instead, David was rescued by God. But with his song, beginning at **verse 4**, he spells out what it was like for him to go through the ordeal. He speaks of what he was feeling, what he did during that time, and how he committed to worship God in a special way when God rescues him. As a result, this psalm is filled with lessons he learned and lessons that God wants him to teach us, so that we will live a more fulfilled life right here and now, even during times of duress.

In addition, David writes this psalm to encourage others that they are not alone in the challenges life throws their way, regardless of their immediate circumstances. Ultimately, his reason for giving his testimony in song is that he wants to model for us how appropriate it is to seek after God when we are in trouble and to publicly praise Him when He delivers us.

With that brief establishment of a setting, let's read the whole psalm through and then come back to look at it in more detail. I'll be reading from the NASB translation:

**For the choir director. A Psalm of David**

**<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup>He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay [or bog or marsh], and He set my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm. <sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD.**

So right there, we are told that what follows is a song that God gave David to sing in public, so that others would learn to do what David did--praise God with him and, in turn, trust God to deliver. Here is the song:

**<sup>4</sup>How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.**

**<sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; my**

**ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is**

**written of me. <sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart.” <sup>9</sup>I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness**

**in the great congregation; behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. <sup>10</sup>I have not hidden Your righteousness within**

**my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the**

**great congregation. <sup>11</sup>You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will**

**continually preserve me. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; make haste, O LORD to help me. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, aha!” <sup>16</sup>Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let those who love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!” <sup>17</sup>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.

In **verse 1**, “**I waited patiently**” translates “**Waiting, I waited.**” It is an emphatic expression describing a long time of waiting before he was delivered. It implies a continuous, dark period of confusion, angst, betrayal, and confusion about what to do. He had come to the end of himself.

The Hebrew phrase that follows, “**for Yahweh,**” means he waited for Yahweh’s help. He expected relief from no other than God. Yet David knew God, and he knew that from God’s past track record of having delivered him from other dangers, He would deliver him once more. Therefore, he was resolved to continue believing, hoping, and praying until God did deliver him. As he later states in the psalm, he was not going to turn to other men of influence or trust in other worldly maneuvers.

In **verse 1**, the words, “**to incline**” give us a picture of one bending over or lowering closer to someone so as to hear more clearly what is being said. It’s a gesture that depicts the listener’s deep desire to hear and to respond. It’s a gesture that reveals that our Almighty God is personal and cares deeply about the individual and all that is on his heart. He wants us to share everything with Him.

Later, in **verse 6**, David further describes God’s desire to have a personal relationship with us by saying that he not only stoops to hear us, but also “digs out our ears and removes wax or any impediment” that we might hear from Him and respond accordingly. That’s literally what the Hebrew words translated in English, “**My ears You have opened**” mean. God wants us to have a relationship with Him--to hear Him.

Sometimes it is really hard to wait, to let go and trust in God’s perfect timing, when we are in desperate straits. For me, at times like this when I try to wait, I end up talking much more to God than being quiet to listen for His voice. My prayer these days is, “Oh Lord, please calm me down as I wait; dig out my ears that I may hear from you.”

In **verse 2**, when David speaks of the “**pit of destruction**,” he is describing his emotional state of depression, because he feels left with no human means with which to deliver himself. He adds a second description of his helpless state when he speaks of the “**miry clay**,” which is a marsh or bog with a watery bottom and no firm footing upon which to stand.

In short, David is rejoicing because the Lord has heard his desperate cry and has delivered him. To be specific, God took David out of his sinking depression caused by his troubles and placed his feet on solid ground. What a great picture a miry bog is of a life that is lived without the savior: damp, cold, no security in the ground you stand on, and every step bringing further struggle or possible drowning. But with the Savior there is solid footing, confidence, security, and an ability to move unhindered.

And notice further that in **verse 3** David tells us that God gave him “**a new song**” to replace an old song sung in the past about a previous deliverance about which David had praised God. This is a new song, describing a deepened experience, which has led to an enriched spiritual life. He is wiser, stronger, and humbler in faith.

He further explains that the purpose of this song is to encourage others to seek out God when they are in trouble, to trust in the Lord, and to praise God publicly (like he is doing) when God has blessed them.

The first stanza of the song is in **verses 4-5** and makes two pronouncements.

The first is a pronouncement concerning the believer who trusts in the Lord; the second is a pronouncement about God.

The first pronouncement in **verse 4** is a description of those to whom God shows his favor, ones who out of their confidence in God, don't turn to the "**proud.**" That is a reference to people of influence who don't know God, and any hope that they could give counsel or deliverance would not be true or helpful. This is a warning to Christians that in seeking counsel as to what to do in life, don't ignore Christian lawyers, Christian investment counselors, or Christian therapists and instead go for secular help. Why would you seek after others who do not know God or the truth of God? David goes on to inform us that when we seek after counsel from non-believers, we will "**lapse into falsehood**" or "**go astray after a lie,**" as the ESV translation puts it. The obvious results would be disastrous for the believer.

Then in **verse 5**, we have a pronouncement about God and how He deals with those who seek after Him and His counsel rather than the world's wisdom.

Notice that David states that God has "**thoughts toward us.**" That is, He has purposes and plans for us that are better, in the long run, than what the world could offer. In using the pronoun "**us,**" David is not so subtly reminding his congregation and us the readers that this praise is being directed toward God in a public setting. In this way an audience can see that, "God's thoughts aren't just toward me, but toward you too! So why not jump in with me and praise God for how He has blessed you in your everyday life this past week? Don't be so prideful that you don't recognize who is responsible for your deliverance, safety, and security, nor be so ungrateful as not to thank Him."

In **verses 6-8**, while he is still in trouble, David promises to obey God no matter what. But before we look at these verses, let me tell you about something that will be coming up in our Adult Sunday School class on June 4, at 8:45 am, for those of you who might be interested. These **verses 6-8** are quoted by the author of **Hebrews in 10:8-10**, because they not only speak of David's present condition and life, but also speak prophetically of the life of Christ. We don't have time this morning to look at how these verses reference Jesus Christ, but we will during that Sunday School hour. So, if you want to learn more about that, come and join us on June 4, 8:45am.

**<sup>6</sup>Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; my ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.**

**<sup>7</sup>Then I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. <sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart.”**

Notes in the *ESV Study Bible* concerning **verses 6-8** are absolutely correct on the intended meaning and help the reader to understand David’s point: “These verses are part of the Old Testament corrective to any who think that the sacrificial system worked automatically, apart from expressing faith, repentance, and obedience (cf. **Psalm 50:8-15; 51:16-19; Proverbs 14:9; Isaiah 1:11-17**).”

Understand that animal and meal offerings were not of primary importance to God under the Mosaic Law. What was of primary importance, more than those sacrifices for either worship or the removal of sin, was the believer's true commitment of himself or herself to the Lord to obey Him. This was exemplified in a negative way by King Saul’s wrongful offering up of a sacrifice, in **I Samuel 15:22-23**.

In contrast to Saul, who was not ready or willing to listen to God and to follow after him, David writes that his ears had been opened by God, and thus he was ready to listen and obey whatever God said.

The Hebrew translation of **verse 7** requires that an interpretive decision be made as to whether it should be read “**written of me**” or “**written for me**.” Grammatically, this phrase can be translated either way. I sense the ambiguity of the preposition being either “**of**” or “**for**” to be divinely inspired, so that both meanings can be had. For when the application of this psalm is speaking of David, the preposition would be properly “**written for me**,” meaning “for my betterment, for my instruction.” In other words, David meant that the Law was to rule in his heart. But when the application of these words are prophetically speaking of Christ, as the writer of **Hebrews** uses this verse, the

preposition would be properly “**written of me,**” meaning about Jesus and His devotion to the Father and to being the Messiah.

So simply, David is saying in **verses 6-8** that his sacrifice is, as he states in **verse 8**, the bringing of himself as the Law requires and doing whatever God wants him to do. It is the bringing of himself into full submission to God, even if it means that he will have to die in order to do so.

In **verses 9-15**, David gives some details of the problems he faced, how he felt about them, and the path he walked with God through the situation before God delivered. In other words, these verses are telling us what David was thinking and feeling while he was under duress and asking God to deliver him. David had been through similar situations before, and thus he knew what to do in the midst of this challenging time. He would seek after God, and when God gave him an answer, provided for his needs, or gave him a way of escape, he promised to perform a public duty of worship, because he knew that this public worship was what God expected of him. What public duty does God expect of him and us? Let’s read **verse 9** again and see!

**“I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation.”** To what does “**the great congregation**” refer? It refers to those who have come to worship in the Temple. David, the warrior, the king, the man, before all who were there, had in the past declared his problem and God’s rescuing or resolving the issue for him. He states, “**Behold, I will not [the next time when God rescues me] restrain my lips, O Lord, You know.**”

It is interesting to note that in Hebrew, the same word that David uses for “**restrain**” here in **verse 9** he uses again in **verse 11**, but is translated in our English Bible as “**not withhold.**” In **verse 9**, David said that he did not restrain his lips from praise. In **verse 11**, David says that God will not restrain or withhold his mercy, love, and faithfulness to preserve David. There is an apparent correlation: as God shows us mercy, and if we will publically praise God, publicly tell others of His faithfulness, then God will continue to pour out his mercy to us. But when we arrogantly refuse to publicly thank Him for His mercy toward us, He will hold off in demonstrating his mercy toward us. I’m not saying that He stops being merciful, but what I am saying is that God clearly tells us in **Romans 9:10-16** that He can pick and choose when to be merciful and when not to be merciful. David learned that the more he

humbled himself and publicly praised God from a stance of gratefulness, the more he would see God's mercy in his life.

<sup>10</sup>**“I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart.”** In other words, I haven't kept quiet about all that you have done for me, kept it close to my heart but not shared it with others in public. **“I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.”**

By way of a modern day example of what David says he was doing, he might have said, “One year ago, I faced financial ruin and thought I would end up on the street. Unjust people stole my kingdom and I thought I might end up living as a beggar rather than a king. But I cried out to You, O God, and you answered me. You delivered me, and I was honest with the congregation as to my struggles and also gave praise to you for delivering me and meeting my need.”

David continues, <sup>11</sup>**“You, O Lord, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.”**

In other words, David is, by faith, declaring that, “God, as you did for me in the past, not withholding your compassion, lovingkindness, and the preserving of my life, I believe you won't withhold them from me now.”

**Verse 12: “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.”**

In earlier years this psalm was often misunderstood because of an inadequate understanding of ancient Hebrew and an inattention to similar usages of “**evil**” and “**my iniquities.**” These are references referring to afflictions brought on by someone else. In **verse 12**, David is not speaking about his own sin or iniquities, nor that his sin is what got him into trouble. In some of his psalms, such as **Psalm 51**, it is clear he is speaking of his own sinful rebellion. But the context of this psalm has not been his own sin, but as **verse 12** and the three verses that follow state, the sins of evil men surrounding David who sought to destroy him by removing him from the throne and/or killing him. We read:

**<sup>13</sup>Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; make haste, O LORD, to help me. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, aha!”**

The expression “**Aha, aha!**” is an exclamation of sarcastic delight when David’s enemies, who think they have the upper hand, are about to see him go down. However, they are suddenly shocked to discover that he isn’t, and that God has rescued him.

At this point, it is good to be reminded of who is writing these words. David is one who is totally committed to God and has sought after Him, and yet he is getting hammered. There is a lesson here: following after God does not promise an easy, uneventful, or safe life without tragedy or suffering injustices. Total commitment to following after God doesn’t guarantee easy living.

**Verse 16** begins with “**But,**” revealing a contrast between those who want to bring him down and those who are faithful followers and wish to do what is right. In these next two verses, David makes several requests. In **verse 16** he makes a request on behalf of the people who will see God deliver him, and then in **verse 17** he makes a final request on his own behalf.

On behalf of the congregation, by faith David prays for them: “**<sup>16</sup>Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘The LORD be magnified!’**”

Then on behalf of himself he adds in **verse 17**, “**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.**” With the phrase “**afflicted and needy,**” David is describing himself at that moment as a person of little influence, weak, helpless, and oppressed.

When we step back and look at why David wrote this psalm to be declared among the people, we see that his words are important to share in the congregation. He testifies to his ordeal, his affliction, and his neediness and calls out to God, and God delivers. Others who are cast down, defenseless, or struggling will be encouraged that our God is a God who delivers and has mercy on people who humbly seek his face.

There are so many applications that we can draw from this psalm, and we cannot list them all. But here are four quick ones:

Those who wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. When trouble comes, seek God and wait, even though it may take time, and God will deliver you, one way or another.

Secondly, God does not respond to religiosity but to the heart that desires to know His will and do it. If you are in trouble and are praying to God and going to church, but you are continuing to live in rebellion against God and doing things that are illegal, you should not expect God to deliver you. But when you seek to know and do God's will, He will deliver in His time and in His way.

Thirdly, When God answers prayer, rescues, or brings deliverance, you are to praise God privately and publically. And to be honest with you, this is the reason we have come to this psalm this morning. I wanted to set the stage for what is going to take place here next Sunday morning, before the preaching of God's Word. Next Sunday is the fifth Sunday of the month. Each quarter has one month with five Sundays. We have dedicated that fifth Sunday to be our "From the Heart" Sunday, when different ones of you can bring glory to God by sharing how He has been at work in your life. It is a time to bring glory to Christ and not to you. It is to be a time of encouragement for others who may be struggling with life as you have struggled with your life.

Just look back at **verses 9-10** and notice the various ways that David is firm in his resolve to proclaim God's greatness. In **verse 9** he states, "**I have told,**" and again, "**I have not restrained my lips.**" Then in **verse 10**, "**I have not hidden . . . within my heart,**" meaning, "I have not kept it a secret." Twice more he says in that verse, "**I have spoken,**" and "**I have not concealed.**"

David is making it obvious that there should be a time when we gather together for individuals to give praise to God for his working in their lives. And so we are giving you that opportunity next Sunday. Men, in particular, and women as well, we need to hear from you as to what God is doing in your lives.

In **verse 10**, David says that he “did not conceal, or hide or refuse to reveal” what God has done. Men, hear me on this: for David, a warrior and man’s man, to be open in his praising the Lord suggests that men, in particular, need to publically praise God for His work in their lives. By David’s example, he is calling men out of hiding to be men and to declare their adoration and worship of their God and His specific faithfulness in their lives.

This leads me to a final application: Real men lead in this area of spiritual life. Lesser men keep quiet. Real men, godly men, publically praise God for His faithfulness. Our women will be here to see which of you will have a reason to be somewhere else next Sunday. So will I! I believe our women will look forward to hearing from some of the men in this fellowship, including our elders and deacons. It should be a fun morning!