

THE PRAYER OF A BEGGAR

Psalms 40

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

We can all remember a time when we have waited patiently for God to deliver us from the dark pit of our sins. We know as children of God (John 1:12) and ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) we are called to put off the old self (Ephesians 4:22-24) and embrace all that is holy, righteous and true (1 Peter 1:16). And yet there are times in our lives when our habitual sin is so grievous that all we can see is the mud and mire of spiritual blindness that comes from breaking God's commands. While sin does not mean one loses one's salvation, it certainly has a negative affect on the closeness of one's walk with a holy God. Also, since this world hates the light one can expect one's enemies to rejoice seeing the hypocrisy of one's actions and subsequent discipline from God. When this happens how does one get out of this dark pit and back on the righteous path? In Psalms 40 David outlines five steps that he took to have his walk with God restored: reflecting upon past deliverance, singing a new song, prayer of confession and protection from his enemies and the last step was for the beggar to ask God for speedy deliverance.

Reflecting Upon Past Deliverance

"Muddy times may be the experience even of the greatest saints and slimy pits the lot even of kings and preachers."¹ For example King David, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel



13:14; Acts 13:22), is the one who wrote Psalms 40! This is a Psalm that contains both praise to God for past deliverance (verses 1-10) and a lament to be forgiven and subsequently saved from his enemies (verses 11-17).² Given our ability to judge holiness through the lens of our own thoughts, feelings and actions; it is easy to justify one's choices and fall into the pit of habitual sin! Today's sermon is meant not to glorify sin or to suggest that grace is cheap, but instead to give hope to those whose sin

has drug them into pit so dark and deep that one feels there is no possibility of escape. David

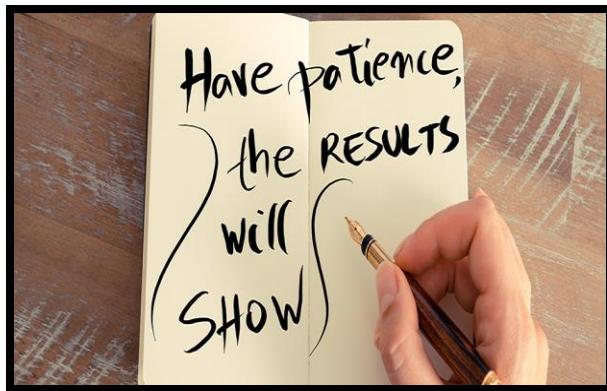
¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 347.

² D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1030.

sought to combat these feelings of despair by reflecting upon all times that God has saved him in the past.

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.

In verse one David tells us that he had to wait patiently in the past to have God turn to him and hear his cry.³ While none of us like the muddy pits of life in which God seems to be so distant from us, one must not forget that God is not like a genie in the bottle whom can be



commanded to do miracles within our timetable. Since a day is like a thousand years to God (1 Peter 3:8), is it really a long time if He makes us wait a day, week, month, year or longer? Furthermore, can you remember a single time when confession did not eventually lead to the removal of God's hand of discipline? Has God's grace and mercy ever been withheld from anyone who has turned from their sin and sought God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength?

Never! Like David when we fall into the dark, muddy pits of sin we are not to lose hope for God promises to always turn and hear the cry of a broken and contrite heart!

² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.



Not only did God turn and hear David's cry for help He also lifted him out of the slimy pit and set his feet on a firm rock to stand! The desolate pit David talked about in this verse could be reference to Sheol. If one takes this interpretation, then David was saying that he had faced either a serious illness⁴ or a dangerous situation in the past that threatened his life.⁵ The desolate pit could also have been a reference to a cistern like the one Jeremiah

³ Gerald H. Wilson, [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 644.

⁴ Willem A. VanGemeren, ["Psalms,"](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 318.

⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 381.

was thrown into.⁶ If one takes this interpretation, then David was saying that he was in a pit of despair due to being stuck in a sin, possibly his adultery with Bethsaida and murder of Uriah.⁷ Since in verse 12 David confesses sin and in verses 13-16 asks to be delivered from his enemies, both of these interpretations are likely to be true at the same time. With no secure footing possible,⁸ David vividly remembers how God lifted him out of the slimy pit and gave him a place to stand, on the rock of his salvation!⁹ O the joy in knowing that God is always willing to forgive and pull us out of our miry muck and place us on a firm foundation!

Singing a New Song



³He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him. ⁴Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. ⁵Many, LORD my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare.

Every time David remembered that God had rescued him from the mud and mire, his song of despair was soon replaced with a hymn of praise!¹⁰ David stated he did not get out of his pit by seeking the council of the wicked, proud people of this world who put their trusts in false gods, but was rescued by having trust in the

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 347–348.

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 348.

⁸ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, “Foreword,” in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 191.

⁹ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 637.

¹⁰ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 637.

covenant God, whose acts of love and kindness¹¹ are too many to be counted.¹² “God’s plans stand firm forever (33:11; cf. Isa 46:10–11), and they are good (Isaiah 25:1; Jeremiah 29:11), though his people often resist them (106:13; 107:11).”¹³ As seen in Psalms 22, David is confident and overwhelmed with joy that his past experiences of deliverance¹⁴ would invite unbelievers to taste the goodness of God¹⁵ that can only be obtained through both trust and a fear of the Lord.¹⁶ If only the lost would see, hear and understand (Matthew 13:15) God’s mighty works of deliverance as demonstrated in David’s life,¹⁷ then maybe they might put their trust and fear in He would bless and place them on the rock of salvation!

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened—burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, ‘Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.’ I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, LORD, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.”



David continued his praise of the Lord by declaring that the right response to God’s

¹¹ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 383.

¹² Willem A. VanGemeren, “[*Psalms*](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 319.

¹³ D. A. Carson, ed., [*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1031.

¹⁴ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, “[*Foreword*](#),” in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 191.

¹⁵ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 350.

¹⁶ Allen P. Ross, “[*Psalms*](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 824.

¹⁷ D. A. Carson, ed., [*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1030.

mercy was not sacrifice but obedience.¹⁸ When David quoted 1 Samuel 15:22, “sacrifice and offerings you did not desire” he meant that in response to his sin in the past God wanted more than just sacrifices from him.¹⁹ For example, when David sinned with Bethsaida the only way he could be restored to a proper relationship with God was by offering Him a broken and contrite heart (Psalms 51). A broken heart is one presented as a dedicatory offering (Romans 12:1-2)²⁰ unto God by opening one’s ears²¹ and internalizing His righteous commands!²² David did this out of fear of the Lord, not as one who felt coerced²³ but as one who genuinely wanted to have His laws written upon his heart (Jeremiah 31:33)²⁴ so that instead of sinning against God he might commit his life to doing God’s will. David finishes this section by telling us that he publicly made known God’s mercy in his life to the people of his kingdom so that in hearing his witness they too might fear the Lord and put their trust in Him (verse 5).²⁵ From this passage we learn that the key to being lifted out the pit to be placed on the rock of salvation occurs only through internalizing God’s commands and will in our lives.

Prayer of Confession

¹² For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.

With God’s past, merciful deliverances firmly in his mind David confessed to God that he has once again sinned and subsequently found himself in a pit of mire and mud! While we do

¹⁸ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 384.

¹⁹ Gerald H. Wilson, [*Psalms*](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 639.

²⁰ Willem A. VanGemeren, [*“Psalms,”*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 320.

²¹ Gerald H. Wilson, [*Psalms*](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 639.

²² D. A. Carson, ed., [*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1031.

²³ Willem A. VanGemeren, [*“Psalms,”*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 320.

²⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 351.

²⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 386.

not know what David's sin was, we do know that in this pit he was feeling overwhelmed²⁶ to the point that he had lost perspective and was utterly exhausted from his suffering.²⁷



With eyes that could not see because of the constant weeping²⁸ and a heart that was about to fail, David confessed that he was on brink of losing all hope!²⁹ Romans chapter one talks about the downward pull of sin.³⁰ Like David, when we sin against God it drives a wedge between us and Him that can leave us feeling that restoration with a holy God is no longer possible. Fear not for there is hope! Looking through the lens of past deliverances of verses 1-

2, David confessed his many sins³¹ and appealed to God's hesed³² to be forgiven, pulled out of the miry pit and placed back on the righteous path. This of course came with a renewed desire to obey and have God write the command(s) that he broke upon his very heart!

²⁶ Willem A. VanGemeren, "[Psalms](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 323.

²⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#), vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 359.

²⁸ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 387.

²⁹ Gerald H. Wilson, [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 642.

³⁰ James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 348.

³¹ Allen P. Ross, "[Psalms](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 824.

³² Gerald H. Wilson, [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 642.

Prayer for Protection

11 Do not withhold your mercy from me, LORD; may your love and faithfulness always protect me. 13 Be pleased to save me, LORD; come quickly, LORD, to help me. 14 May all who want to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. 15 May those who say to me, “Aha! Aha!” be appalled at their own shame. 16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, “The LORD is great!”

While some through hearing of the testimony of David's past, divine deliverances joined him in trusting and fearing the Lord; others saw David in a pit as an opportunity to do him great harm. Being the king of Israel, David had many enemies that sought to take his life. When they



saw him in a pit they wrongly assumed that Yahweh lacked power to redeem His people.³³ In response to their threats David prayed not that God would kill them but instead for judgment in the form of shame, confusion and disgrace.³⁴ Like David, when we fall into our miry pit of sin there will always be enemies of Christ that will want to exploit and harm us. Jesus told us not to be surprised by this fact for the world hates Christians because they do not proudly and vainly rely on the false gods of this world (John 15:18-25). In these cases, we need

not fear those who can harm the body but not the soul (Matthew 10:28, 1 John 4:4). Let us be like and pray that the “Lord will come to vindicate his own and avenge His enemies” (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10).³⁵

³³ Willem A. VanGemeren, [“Psalms,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 324.

³⁴ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, [“Foreword,”](#) in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 192.

³⁵ Willem A. VanGemeren, [“Psalms,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 324.

The Beggar Asking for Speedy Deliverance

¹⁷But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.



David finished this passage by humbling pleading with God for a speedy deliverance. When David said, “I am poor and needy” it was not a reference to a lack of material wealth for as king of a nation he was rich, but was a reference of one who was a “sacred beggar at mercy’s gate.”³⁶ David did not approach a holy God and defiantly demand He come good on His promises to protect him and establish his thrown forever (2 Samuel 7). Instead knowing full well that he alone bought the pit of sin he was in and therefore was without a shekel of merit,³⁷ David humbly

cried out Abba Father, come quick and save me! Even though we are ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), created a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7), does not mean that we can demand God to accept sin in our lives. Like David as beggars we bring our filthy rags of righteousness (Isaiah 64:6) before our God with the hope that He might wash and purify them. So, the next time one gets caught in slimy pit of sin, patiently and humbly call upon and confess to the Lord and then watch Him not only cleanse you (1 John 1:9) but also lift you out to place you on the rock of your salvation (Psalms 18:2)!

³⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [The Happy Beggar,](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 242.

³⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [The Happy Beggar,](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 242.