

Psalm 40

Title: Praise and Prayer

Author and Date: David

Key Verses: Psalm 40:3, 5, 11, 13, 16-17

Type: Praise / Lament

Outline

- A. Praise the Lord for his past deliverance (verses 1-10).
- B. Prayer to the Lord for his present deliverance (verses 11-17).

Notes

Title: “For the Chief Musician.” See the notes on Psalm 4. “A Psalm of David.” See the notes on Psalm 3.

Summary: Psalm 40 combines elements of praise and prayer. The psalmist has patiently trusted in the Lord (verses 1-2), so he praises the Lord for his past deliverance, wonderful works, and faithfulness (verses 3-10). The psalmist also laments his troubles and prays to the Lord for his present deliverance (verses 11-17). The psalmist was saved from sickness and death in the past (verse 2), but he still has present troubles – evils, iniquities, enemies, and poverty (verses 12, 14-15, and 17). This psalm may have been written by David during the time of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam. 15-18) or the rebellion of Adonijah (1 Kings 1).

Verse 2: “A horrible pit” (Heb. a pit of tumult or destruction) and “the miry clay” are symbols of death or trouble and trial (Psa. 69:1-2). The psalmist went from “pit” to “praise” (verse 3). The psalmist’s “rock” is God himself (Psa. 31:2).

Verse 4: “Blessed is the man” is one of the nine “beatitudes” in the Psalms (1:1; 32:2; 34:8; 40:4; 65:4; 84:5, 12; 94:12; 112:1). “Such as turn aside to lies” is thought to be a reference to worshipping idols.

Verse 5: “They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee” (KJV). Here, the psalmist is speaking of the incomparable nature of God: “None can compare with you...” (NIV, ESV, HCSB).

Verses 6-8: The psalmist is saying that outward compliance with sacrificial ritual alone (just “going through the motions”) is not what the Lord “delights” in (verse 6). The Lord has prescribed in “the volume of the book” (KJV, verse 7; “roll”, ASV, or “scroll”, NASV), the Old Law, that he wants *heart-felt* obedience, not just sacrifice. He

desires first an inward heart that “delights” to obey his will and follow his law (verse 8; Psa. 37:31). The Lord will accept sacrifices only from those who first give *themselves* to the Lord. For this same principal found elsewhere, see 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Psalm 50:8-15; 51:16-17; Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 6:19-20; 7:21-24; Amos 5:21-24; and Micah 6:6-8. These verses are quoted by the author of Hebrews (following the LXX) and applied to the obedient sacrifice of Jesus and the removal of the Old Law (Heb. 10:5-7). Some commentators attempt to make this entire psalm messianic, but the “iniquities” of verse 12 cannot be applied to Jesus Christ.

Verses 13-17: Each of these verses, with slight variation, becomes the whole of Psalm 70.

Verses 14-15: “Let them...” is the language that we find elsewhere in the imprecatory psalms. The psalmist wants his enemies to be divinely judged and brought down (see the notes on Psalm 35:4-8, 25-26). Note the contrast between the enemies who “delight” to hurt others (verse 14) and the psalmist whose “delight” is to do the Lord’s will (verse 8). The words “Aha, aha” are words of mockery (Psa. 35:21; 70:3). Compare Psalm 35:25-27 with 40:14-16

Questions

1. How does the psalmist act toward the Lord and how does the Lord respond (verses 1-2)?
2. What resulted in the Lord’s blessings for the psalmist and for others (verse 3)?
3. What does the man do and not do who is blessed of the Lord (verse 4)?
4. What does the psalmist say about the wonderful works of the Lord (verse 5)?
5. What does the Lord not delight in and what does the psalmist delight in (verses 6-8)?
6. What does the psalmist proclaim and declare in the great assembly and what does he refuse to do (verses 9-10)?
7. What does the psalmist need from the Lord and why (verses 11-13)?

8. What does the psalmist want to happen to his enemies (verses 14-15)?

9. What does the psalmist call upon those to do who seek the Lord and love him (verse 16)?

10. How does the psalmist describe himself and the Lord (verse 17)?

Applications for Today

1. The Lord will hear the prayers of the righteous and will bless all who patiently wait for him and trust in him (verses 1-4). Who did Paul and the apostles put their trust in (2 Cor. 1:9)? What does the Lord hear (1 Pet. 3:12)?

2. When a faithful one patiently trusts in the Lord he will cause others to trust in the Lord also (verse 3). What did Jesus and Peter say about godly examples (Mt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12)?

3. The Lord's wonderful works, thoughts, and blessings toward us are too numerous to count (verse 5). How numerous are the thoughts of God according to Psalm 139:17-18?

4. The Lord does not want our outward ritual only, but also our inward delight to obey him (verses 6-8). What do we learn from the following scriptures about what God wants and does not want (summarize in a few words): 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Psalm 50:8-15; 51:16-17; Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 6:19-20; 7:21-24; Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24; and Micah 6:6-8?

5. We need to proclaim and declare openly to others the Lord's righteousness and truth (verses 9-10). What do Christians put on (Eph. 4:24; 5:9; 6:14)?

6. The Lord is willing to help us with our troubles and trials (verses 11-17). What did the Syro-Phoenician woman ask Jesus for (Mt. 15:25)? What did Paul get from God (Acts 26:22)? Who does Jesus help (Heb. 2:16) and how does he give help (Heb. 4:14-16)? What will the Lord not do (Heb. 13:5)?