

# A Psalm of the Savior

Psalm 40:1-3

(based on a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon on the same text)

Dad had his four-year-old daughter in the car when he bumped the horn, honking it by mistake. Anticipating that she would expect an explanation, he said, "I did that on accident."

She replied, "I know that, Daddy."

He replied, "How'd you know?"

The girl said, "Because you didn't say 'JERK' afterwards!"

Patience is hardly second nature for most of us, but David shows us that it does have its rewards:

<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD;

he turned to me and heard my cry.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

It is natural to apply this psalm to our own multiple deliverances. The text speaks of a rescue from a muddy, slimy pit, and some of us have seen more than our share of those. But, do you really see your own testimony in this psalm? "I waited patiently for the Lord." Please! How often do we wait patiently on the Lord or on anything else? A more genuine song lyric might be, "I tend towards impatience." Or, perhaps, "It drives me batty that God is seldom in as big of a hurry as am I." A closer look at the psalm may reveal that it seldom describes us at all.

This was David's song, but not always, just as it is sometimes about us, but not always. I want to focus today on some prophetic language about a King much greater than David. This is always a song about Jesus, for as we read on in the psalm, we will also encounter these words:

<sup>6</sup>Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced;

burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, "Here I am, I have come - it is written about me in the scroll.

<sup>8</sup>I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

In the psalm, some servant of God (one whose ears have been pierced by a Master), appears to accomplish the will of God. These very same words will appear again in Hebrews 10, but there they describe Jesus making atonement by His own blood for the sins of His people.

We can use some of the same expressions from this psalm to describe our own deliverances, but only because of Jesus. Maybe patience has served you in many trials since you came to Christ, but your salvation from the supreme slimy pit was not because of your patience, but because His.

## I. His Patience, God's Consideration (verse 1)

<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD;

he turned to me and heard my cry.

### A. Jesus' Patience Was Tested in a Wilderness

Because Jesus was tempted, He understands our struggles with temptation. But, can we ever understand His? He was tempted to do things He actually had the power to do so as to become a King by popular acclaim. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but nothing Satan could tempt you to do would ever cause me to think about making you my King. Why would he dare you to change a stone to bread? Is there some chance you could? Jesus was tempted to jump off the temple, relying on the angels catch Him. That idea doesn't tempt me at all. Jesus was tempted to bow to Satan. A man may do that for a little prize now and then, but kingship is not in the cards.

If we saw a man change a stone to bread, we would not detect sin in it. We'd book his act for the next 4-C's meeting. Jesus could have done that to display His metaphysical might, but if He decided that turning rocks into bread was a good thing to do, every hungry person in the land would have shown up with his own rock, saying, "Do mine next!" The crowds gladly would have named Jesus their king. In fact, after He fed a multitude of 5000, Jesus had to withdraw from them, because they wanted to make Him a king by force. They were ready to march on Jerusalem, try to toss out the Romans and put Jesus on the throne. What a fiasco that would have been!

## **B. Jesus' Patience Was Manifested in a Garden**

Luke describes Jesus praying in a garden on the night before He took our sins to the cross:

... <sup>41</sup>He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup>"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." <sup>43</sup>An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup>And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. – Luke 22:41-44

"Take this cup from me." Jesus was saying, "Father, if You can save your people some other way than for me to face tomorrow's cross, show me that plan." But there was not another plan, so He conceded, "not my will, but yours be done." The battle for our salvation could only be won by the work of the cross. But, Jesus' struggle with choosing God's plan was won in Gethsemane.

Moments later, the peace that attended Jesus' choice to trust His Father was tested. When those soldiers and that mob came to the Garden to arrest Him, His disciples were ready to fight. In fact, Peter nearly took a man's head off when he started swinging his sword. Jesus calmly restored the ear that Peter had severed from the High Priest's servant and He rebuked His impulsive Apostle: "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11).

## **C. Jesus' Patience Was Proven on a Cross**

Jesus kept silent as His accusers whisked him from one hearing to the next. He stood before the chief priests, before the Roman governor, Pilate, and before Herod, the local ruler from His home province of Galilee, who just happened to be in Jerusalem for the Passover. In His all-trusting patience, He held His tongue. He stood before Pilate a second time. The governor seemed inclined to acquit Him, but Jesus only spoke words of truth that sealed His fate.

Jesus did not refuse the cross. He did not curse the name of Judas for His betrayal. He did not voice any disgust for His cowardly companions who abandoned Him. Jesus was wholly yielded to His Father's will. He not only took the cup offered Him, He emptied it. The soldiers that crucified Jesus cast lots for His garments. He prayed that God might forgive them. The crowd mocked Him. He said nothing. He was willing to be treated as the scum of humanity. No man ever waited patiently like this Man, but an impatient Jesus could never have been a Savior.

<sup>23</sup>When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. – 1 Peter 2:23-25

Christ's patience saved us, not our own. Of course, if you are in fellowship with Jesus, there is much about this psalm that you can apply to your troubles. Do you demonstrate trust in God by waiting for Him patiently in your struggles? Or, do you look for quick fixes and easy ways out without really examining their potential for honoring Christ. If you wait at all, do you wait prayerfully? There is little value in waiting without prayer. What can you learn? How can such waiting accomplish anything but to agitate you more? Stoic waiting, worried waiting, moody waiting – these are useless as a witness to the sufficiency of Jesus and they are powerless to bring peace or courage to the trial. Godly patience waits in joyful and prayerful trust.

## **II. His Patience, My Liberation (verse 2)**

<sup>2</sup>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.

### **A. The Deliverance of Jesus Is Pictured as a Great Rescue**

Not many folks in the backwoods had seen hang-gliding, but Ol' Zeek decided to save up and get a hang-glider anyway. He took it up on a mountain, got a running start, and into the wind he goes!

Meanwhile, Maw & Paw Hicks were sittin' on the porch swing talkin' 'bout the good ol' days when Maw spots the biggest bird she ever seen!

"Look, Paw!" she exclaims.

Paw raises up, "Git my gun, Maw."

She runs into the house and fetches his shotgun. He takes aim. BANG ... BANG! The monster bird continued to sail silently over the treetops.

"I think ya missed him, Paw," she says.

"Yeah," he replies, "but at least he let go of Ol' Zeek!"

David describes a more successful liberation, this one from a "slimy pit." By this awful image, he may have had a dungeon in mind. Ancient dungeons were often mere wholes dug into clay-like rock. A prisoner was lowered through a small opening. Once the hole was covered by a stone, he was abandoned, without light or fresh air. These pits were damp and disgusting. They were never cleaned no matter how long a man was shut up in one nor how many others were in there with him. The more the poor wretch tried to climb out, the deeper he sank in the slimy clay. A man in such a pit was in utter darkness. He would have to grope for whatever food and water were allotted him. From such a dark and putrid place, cries of distress were to be expected.

Jesus cried out from His own dark distress. As He hung on the cross, a midday darkness covered the land. The guilt of every man, woman and child who ever lived was draped around Him. He was alone, abandoned by His friends, and it seemed that for the first time in His life that God had also abandoned Him. He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When He suffered for us, Jesus willingly put Himself in a place where it appeared that there was no solid ground beneath His feet. He was dragged down by our sin, but His Father lifted Him out.

## **B. This Deliverance of Jesus Is Pictured as a Solid Foundation**

That rock upon which Jesus stands is the eternal promise of God that He would send Someone to crush the head of the serpent that tempted Eve in the garden, Someone through Whom He would bless the world. Jesus is that Someone. The prophets pointed to what Jesus accomplished. Jesus came to die for sin and to destroy it. When He walked out of a grave two thousand years ago, God established indisputably that Jesus has both the power and the right to save us from our sins.

We enjoy many of the benefits of this psalm. We enjoy rescue from sin's slimy pit. We enjoy a solid footing in what Jesus accomplished. But, do not miss this: Your victory over such despair is only possible because of His victory. We did not secure these things because we waited so patiently for God's will to be accomplished. They are ours only because Jesus secured them for us by subjecting Himself to die on a cross and to the slippery, vile pit, which was our sin.

## **III. His Patience, Our Jubilation (verse 3)**

<sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

### **A. First, There Was Singing**

We sing praises to Jesus today because God put a new song in the mouth of Jesus. We seldom think of Jesus as singer. Psalm 22 is a clearly prophetic passage looking to the crucifixion of Jesus. From verse 1, we know that the words of David, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" would become the words of Jesus. In verse 8, we know that the words of the mockers who hurled insults at the psalmist would become the words of Jesus' mockers: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him." When verse 18 says: "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing," we vividly see the soldiers at the foot of Jesus' cross.

So why would we think anyone but Jesus is in mind when the rescued sufferer becomes the praise leader in verse 22: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." It is clearly Jesus that the author of Hebrews is describing with these words: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises" (Hebrews 2:12). There, it is the risen Master Himself who leads His people in praise. In one sense, Jesus the Lamb is the Object of our praise. In another sense, the Master Himself leads us in worship to the throne of God. He is the Author and the Object of our song of praise.

### **B. There Was a Birth of Faith in Many**

A drunk stumbled onto a baptismal service one Sunday afternoon down by the river. From the water, the Preacher asked him, "Are you ready to find Jesus?"

The drunk entered the water and answered, "Yes, Preacher. I am."

The minister dunked the fellow and raised him right back up. "Have you found Jesus?"

"No, I didn't!" says the drunk.

The preacher dunks him under a bit longer, brings him up and says, "Now, brother, have you found Jesus?"

"Not yet!" said the drunk.

Annoyed, the preacher forcefully holds the man under for about 30 seconds. He lifts him out and asks harshly, "Friend, are you sure you haven't found Jesus yet?"

Gasping, the drunk answers the preacher, "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"

Jesus' reward for having gone down into the slimy pit of human sin is that many will find Him. "Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD." Not everyone, but many will look to Jesus and live. Which are you? Which will you be? If you belong to Jesus, the deliverance described in this psalm secured your deliverance. You have to be touched by the nature of its images, because you know that Jesus endured the slimy pit of your sin so that you might escape it.

Perhaps, you have never come to Christ in faith, but this description of a slimy, miry pit rings close to home in your life. My prayer is that you will see that there is life in Jesus if you will open your eyes. God longs to replace the darkness and the stench of where you are now with the beauty and joy of His presence. On a cross, Jesus stood in for you in that dark place, but you have to see that. You have to see that He loved you before your eyes ever saw the light of day.

You have to see, but you also have to fear. I do not speak of a fear that makes you turn and run. On the contrary, I speak of a sense of wonder that draws you to One so holy and yet Who loved you so much even in your sin. The reality that Jesus bled and died for you merits your reverence.

You must see that Jesus endured your slimy pit. You must stand in marvelous fear at the foot of the cross. But most importantly, you must trust that the cross secured your salvation. You must come to Jesus in humility and ask Him to save you, trusting that He can. When the multitude that heard the Gospel preached for the very first time saw that they had crucified the Son of God and fearfully marveled at the fact that they had crucified their own *messiah* – and, when they knew that God had raised Him back to life, they asked the Apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.." – Acts 2:38

The solution today is the same as then. It is not enough to see and to fear that He endured the slimy pit of your sin in your place. You must come to Him, trusting Him to save you.

And, if you are in Christ, but you know that you have been hanging out too much near slimy pits, remember your baptism. That's when the Bible said you were clothed with Christ. That's when you were raised to new life. That's when your heart was circumcised and you became a citizen of God's covenant nation. This is how the great reformer of the faith, Martin Luther, often warded off specific temptations in his life. He would simply remind himself, "I was baptized!"

It has not been my intent to take any of Psalm 40 away from you. Just know this: While the psalm is a true picture in many ways of your deliverance from sin, and mine, this is only because Jesus first endured the pit of all of our sins, waiting patiently for His Father's salvation.

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