

Psalm 40

Introduction – As we have seen, all of the Psalms point us to Christ, but some are more explicit than others. The New Testament teaches us that the words of Psalm 40 are springing from the heart of Christ and have reference to the sacrificial obedience of His passion and death. To sing this Psalm is to sing His Words as much as David's.

Old Covenant/New Covenant (vv6-8, Heb 10:5-10) – God never desired external conformity to His rituals alone; He always wanted the whole person in obedience (v6). In the New Covenant, Jesus has come and fulfilled the shadows; therefore there is no longer any need for the types to be continued (Heb 10). But even in the Old Covenant there was to be a proper understanding of the sacrifices – and this is throughout the OT Prophets (1 Sam 15:22, Isaiah 1:10-17, Jer 7:21-16, Hos 6:6, Micah 6:6-8). In the OT and in the NT the warning is the same: God is not interested in people going through the motions without a true, lively, robust faith in Him.

The phrase “*My ears you have opened*” (v6) could be translated “*My ears you have pierced*” reflecting the law in Exodus 21:6 when a slave rendered himself permanently under the service of his master in love. This makes sense when you consider the Heb 10:5 rendering, “*But a body You have prepared for Me.*” Christ came in fulfillment of the prophets and these shadowy sacrifices (v7). And He came with great delight to do the will of His Father (v8, Heb 12:2).

Psalm 40 with This in Mind – David certainly had a personal context in this Psalm, but David was a type of the greater David, and we should see this Psalm in light of Jesus' passion account, because the New Testament explicitly points us there. Agreeing with this, Spurgeon writes, “*Jesus is evidently here...and therefore we shall let the sun shine even though this should conceal the stars.*” Let the Messianic tone of this Psalm direct our meditation.

Out of a Horrible Pit (vv1-4) – Waiting patiently for the Lord (v1, a theme throughout Psalms 37-40), this waiting is not stoicism. Jesus cried out with many tears in the Garden before His crucifixion (Heb 5:7, Luke 22:39-46). This teaches us what it means to have faith, to love the Lord, to obey even with great travail. Jesus' love was not sentimental (He did not *feel* like going to the cross), it was sacrificial. His Father delivered Him from a horrible pit (Hades) and established His rule upon a rock (v2). God placed a new song in the mouth of Christ and many will see it, turn and trust in the Lord (v3). Jesus sets the pattern of what it means to be a blessed man (v4).

The Sacrifice (vv5-10) – Every day, we stand under a Niagara Falls of blessings (v5). God never intended mere conformity to ritual (v6) and all of this is fulfilled when Christ says, “*Behold, I come*” (v7). He came to have His heel bruised and to crush the serpent's head. He came to Jerusalem to die, according to the Scriptures – and it was His delight to do so. Christ has come as the great Preacher (vv9-10) proclaiming the Good News of His righteousness. But His declaration of righteousness was not limited to a sermon of mere morality. The declaration of righteousness is the declaration of the Gospel – the faithfulness of God in salvation (v10).

The Shame of the Cross (vv11-17) – Again, while the Psalm has specific application to events in David's life, if we consider its Messianic context, we can understand this Psalm in light of Christ's Passion. Upon the cross, God placed the iniquities of the elect upon His Son who bore them (vv11-12). In the courts of the high priest, the soldiers mocked Jesus, and while hanging on the cross, the unbelieving Jews taunted Him to save Himself and come down from the cross (vv13-15). All those who trust in the LORD will be saved and so Christ called on His Father not to delay (vv16-17).

Out of Your Own Horrible Pit – This Psalm sings the story of the righteous salvation of God. Jesus is the new David, the new Israel, the new humanity – and He found Himself in a horrible pit. God had forsaken Him, but even then, He cried out “*my*” God (v17, Matt 27:46). Why did God forsake Jesus on the cross? He did it for you. He did it for the world which He came to save (John 3:16-17). He came to fulfill all righteousness, the faithful salvation of the world by a covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God. He endured the cross and God has put a new song in His mouth. We are His body and we sing that song of thanksgiving and deliverance. We have much to sing about. To those who have ears to hear, we are singing about your deliverance from sin and death, from the devil and your fallen flesh.

How does this get from David's story to Christ's story – to your story? Faith. When Jesus died, so did your sin. When He died, you died in Him. When He was buried, you were buried in Him, and when He was resurrected, you were raised to new life in Him (Gal 2:20). Jesus only died for the sins of His people, for only the sins of His people were atoned on the cross. But what does it mean to faithfully preach this salvation. The story has always been the story of the second Adam coming to bless all the nations, to redeem the world, to cover the world with His glory and salvation. His righteousness is not bad news for the world (as if only a few will be saved). It is Good News – to all men. Believe – and sing!