

+PSALMS

Chapter 40

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. ⁴ Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! ⁵ You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. ⁶ In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. ⁷ Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: ⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." ⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. ¹¹ As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! ¹² For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me. ¹³ Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me! ¹⁴ Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt! ¹⁵ Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!" ¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!" ¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Ps 40 A prayer for help when troubles abound. The causes of distress are not specified, but David acknowledges that they are occasioned by his sin (see v. 12), as in Ps 38–39; 41. They are aggravated by the gloating of his enemies, a theme also present in Ps 38–39; 41. The prayer begins with praise of God for his past mercies (vv. 1–5) and a testimony to the king's own faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 6–10). These form the grounds for his present appeal for help (vv. 11–17). See also the lengthy prefaces to prayer in Ps 44; 89. Ps 70 is a somewhat revised duplicate of vv. 13–17 of this psalm. (CSB)

From an earlier time in David's life as an outlaw fleeing from Saul. Cf v 6; 1Sm 15:22. *choirmaster*. See p 993. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, delivered by the Lord; vv 4–5, His deeds multiplied; vv 6–8, His desires; vv 9–10, His love declared; vv 11–12, hope for preservation; vv 13–15, disappoint my foes; vv 16–17, God is my help. (TLSB)

40:1–5 Praise of the Lord for past mercies. (CSB)

These words would be a meaningful prayer during any of the many crises when David escaped from death. They would be a beautiful prayer anytime a Christian experiences deliverance of death after an accident or serious illness. However, they are most meaningful as a prayer of the Messiah after his resurrection. (PBC)

40:1–3 David’s experience of God’s past help in time of trouble, which moved him to praise and others to faith – Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer; 9:1). (CSB)

40:1 *waited patiently* – This does not quite catch the note of tenseness that lies in the root of the original. He must have been in some major distress, and therefore, the deliverance is notable. (Leupold)

Augustine: “I waited for the consolation of no mere mortal, who may be consumed by sorrow of his own, before he gives me comfort.... Let us mourn in company; let us weep together, let us ‘wait patiently’ together, let us join our prayers together also” (NPNF 1 8:119). (TLSB)

40:2 The vivid imagery that associates distress with “the depths”—so expressive of universal human experience—is common in OT poetry. (CSB)

Mud remains after the water dries up. Cf Jer 38:1–6. (TLSB)

To set his feet on a rock was the very antithesis to slimy mud that sucks a man’s feet down. (Leupold)

40:3 *new song* – Celebrating God’s saving act. (CSB)

Whether this meant that he would add fresh color to old hymns that were extant; or whether he meant singing the old with deeper understanding; or whether he implied the composition of a song that was entirely new, is quite immaterial. (Leupold)

Many will see – As a result of David’s praise. The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God’s holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings. In his praise the psalmist proclaims to the assembled throng God’s glorious attributes or his righteous deeds. (CSB)

fear – Because the Lord is good, those who trust in him will lack nothing good but in order to experience good days, they must shun evil and do good. (CSB)

40:4–5 The Lord’s benevolence to others: to all who trust in the Lord (v. 4), to his people Israel (v. 5). (CSB)

40:4 See Jer 17:7; praise of the Lord for the blessedness of those who trust in him (see 32:1–2; 146:5). (CSB)

proud – The arrogant and self-sufficient boast of their success apart from the one true God. (TLSB)

40:5 *wondrous deeds* – God’s saving acts, sometimes involving miracles—as in the exodus from Egypt, the desert wanderings and the entrance into the promised land—and sometimes not, but always involving the manifestation of God’s sovereign lordship over events. (CSB)

Salvation history is expounded before the faithful at the sanctuary. (TLSB)

thoughts toward us – God’s actions in behalf of Israel are according to his predetermined purpose (see Isa 25:1; 46:10–11). (CSB)

more than can be told – People cannot completely comprehend or number God’s mighty works. (TLSB)

40:6–8 David’s commitment to God’s will. Heb 10:5–10 applies these verses to Christ. (CSB)

40:6 *sacrifice and offering you have not delighted* – More important is obedience (see 1Sa 15:22), especially to God’s moral law (see Isa 1:10–17; Am 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8)—i.e., the ten basic commandments of his covenant (see Ex 20:3–17; Dt 5:7–21). (CSB)

God had indeed commanded blood sacrifices for sin in the OT ceremonial law. But he had never intended that they should be a substitute for obedience. (PBC)

you have given me – Lit. “dug.” Translated “pierced,” it probably refers to the sign by which a servant pledged lifelong service to his beloved master (see Ex 21:6; Dt 15:17). If, however, it is translated “opened,” it refers to ears made able and eager to hear God’s law (see Pr 28:9; Isa 48:8; 50:4–5). (CSB)

open ear – Open by God’s grace to hear and believe His Word (cf Rm 10:17) and live it (cf Pr 28:9; Is 48:8; 50:4–5). Luther: “We have two ears, first, so that we may be more apt to learn than to teach, to hear than to be heard, to yield to one speaking rather than to speak” (AE 10:188). “You have offered me Your Word that I may hear it, and You do require that I believe Your Word and Your promises. You truly desire to care for me and to help” (Ap XXIV 29). (TLSB)

The Hebrew reads, “A body you prepared for me.” Literally translated, the Hebrew would read, “My ears you have dug out.” - You have made me heedful of the truth involved. (Leupold)

40:7 *behold I have come* – Probably refers to David’s commitment to the Lord at the time of his enthronement. (CSB)

David is at the tabernacle to pay his vows. (TLSB)

in the scroll of the book it is written – Some take this to be a reference to a prophecy, perhaps Dt 17:14–15. The context, however, strongly suggests that the “scroll” refers to the personal copy of the law that the king is to take at the time of his enthronement to serve as the covenant charter of his administration (see Dt 17:18–20; 2Ki 11:12; cf. 1Ki 2:3). (CSB)

God’s Word or Law. Leather scrolls were rolled up for carrying or for storage. (TLSB)

God had prescribed in his word how his people were to live and what they were to do with their lives. If this was to be an effective guide for all decisions, it had to become a natural part of one’s thinking. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

40:8 *I delight to do your will* – Whatever is in full accord with God’s “desire” (v. 6)—a claim that frames the stanza. (CSB)

To find pleasure in one’s inmost being by hearing God’s Word and doing His will (cf Dt 6:6; Pr 3:3; 7:3). (TLSB)

Only Christ became obedient unto death on the cross. (PBC)

40:9–10 David’s life is filled with praise, proclaiming God’s faithful and loving acts in behalf of his people. This, too, God desires more than animal sacrifices (see 50:7–15, 23). (CSB)

We can pray these words only because Christ fulfilled them when he sent the gospel throughout the world so that we too would receive it. (PBC)

40:9 *told* – He begins by stating “I have proclaimed the good news,” but he will stress this point by heaping up words as we find in the phrases below. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

righteousness – Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. (CSB)

in the great congregation – The worshiping assembly at God’s sanctuary. (CSB)

We are duty bound to confess the virtues of His righteousness in corporate worship. (TLSB)

40:10 *not concealed... your steadfast love* – He is not silent about God’s praise (see 38:13–16; 39:1 and notes (Let the Lord answer (v. 15) my enemies. Like a deaf-mute, David will not reply to his enemies (vv. 13–14); he waits for the Lord to act in his behalf.)). (CSB)

Augustine: “He believes; he ‘lives by faith.’ ... He has not said in his heart, ‘I do indeed believe in Christ; but I will not tell what I believe to this persecutor, who is raging against me, and threatening me’ ” (NPNF 1 8:125) (TLSB)

heart – In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—“the wellspring of life.” (CSB)

your love and faithfulness – That is, your love-and-truth (see 40:10). David keeps his eye steadfastly on the Lord’s love and truth (faithfulness; see 25:10), which are pledged to those “who keep the demands of his covenant.” (CSB)

40:11–17 The prayer for help. (CSB)

40:11 *your steadfast love and your faithfulness* – Which he has been proclaiming to all at the temple. (CSB)

He is totally dependent and helpless, so he needs the Lord’s compassion; he is a faithful member of the covenant, and so he expects the Lord’s faithful love. He will be preserved through these. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

40:12 *evils have encompassed me* – These are painful calamities he was enduring – and they were innumerable. It is clear that his iniquities were at fault. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

iniquities have overtaken me – In the form of the “troubles without number” that burden him. (CSB)

Consequences of David’s sins are catching up with him. (TLSB)

The will to resist, to keep on going, is not there. His emotional and spiritual resources have abandoned him. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

cannot see – Until enlightened by God’s Word; then sin becomes painfully clear. (TLSB)

more than the hairs of my head – Augustine: “Who is there can calculate the number of the hairs of his head? Much less can he tell the number of his sins.... You have guarded against great ones; you do not now commit adultery, or murder; you do not plunder the property of others; you do not blaspheme; and do not bear false witness; those are the weightier kind of sins. You have guarded against great sins, what are you doing about your smaller ones?” (NPNF 1 8:126). (TLSB)

40:14–15 In the midst of his troubles his enemies harass him, as in 38:12; 39:8; 41:5, 7 and often in the Psalms. May those who wish to put him to shame themselves be put to shame. (CSB)

It will be noted that in the prayer directed against those that oppose him his intention is in no sense the destruction of his opponents, but rather that they may meet with such experiences as may bring them to their senses. (Leupold)

He prays that his ill-willed enemies, who want nothing less than to murder him, might be brought to shame. (TLSB)

40:15 *Aha! Aha!* The psalmists frequently quote their wicked oppressors in order to portray how they mock God and his servants. (CSB)

An expression of malicious joy. (TLSB)

40:16 *Great is the LORD!* Common and natural confession and word of praise. (TLSB)

40:17 *poor and needy* – Here, as often in the Psalms, “poor” characterizes not necessarily one who has no possessions, but one who is (and recognizes that he is) without resources to effect his own deliverance (or secure his own life, safety or well-being)—and so is dependent on God.). (CSB)

One who cannot draw himself from the pit of sin or secure salvation on his own. Aug: “It is He that makes rich those who are the true poor; and makes poor those who are falsely rich” (NPNF 1 8:128). (TLSB)

Ps 40 One who has fallen away from God now cries out for His fatherly kindness and mercy. As saint and sinner, we are unable to keep God’s Law perfectly, though He requires that we do so. By the power of His Word and Spirit and by faith, He instills in us a new desire. Our Lord Christ kept the Law perfectly and died on our behalf that we might live with Him in His kingdom. • O my Lord, help me, that by Your grace I might learn Your Commandments more completely each day. Preserve me, I earnestly pray, that by Your Holy Spirit I will never become ungrateful and seek after the world’s vanity or other gods, but cling truly and solely to You, dear God and Father. Amen. (TLSB)