

“Out of the Miry Clay”
Psalm 40
(Preached at Trinity, September 19, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 40** tells of a man who was sinking hopelessly into a pit of mud. Inch by inch it was about to consume him. But in perfect timing he was rescued by God, lifted out of the miry clay and set upon the solid ground.
 2. What led to such a deplorable condition? Once again, we find it was the consequence of sin.
Psalm 40:12 – “mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”
 3. The superscription is familiar. It is a psalm of David handed to the chief musician – thus it was intended for public worship.
 4. Some believe **Psalm 40** to be a Messianic psalm, chiefly because verses 6-7 are applied to Jesus in the New Testament in Hebrews 10. But we have to be careful about applying the whole psalm to Christ, especially since in Verse 12 we find the confession of sin.
 5. There are many things we don’t know about **Psalm 40**. We are not given the details, either of the nature of the sin or of the nature of the trial.
One thing is certain. It is a psalm about David, a great man after God’s own heart who describes himself as going through great affliction. It was a powerful trial. David compares it with falling into a horrible pit, and yet, God delivered him.
 6. This psalm can be divided into three sections:
 - I. **Verses 1-5** – David’s Praise to God for His past mercies.
 - II. **Verses 6-10** – David’s Profession to his own faithfulness to God
 - III. **Verses 11-17** – David’s Petition to God for his present help
- I. **Verses 1-5** – David’s Praise to God for His past mercies
 - A. David sought God during past times of affliction
 1. David cried out to God – V.1 – “heard my cry”
 2. He patiently waited upon God
 - a. Prayer and patience are inseparable friends.
 - b. We pray and we trust waiting upon God for Him to do His holy will. It’s waiting with expectation
 3. The Hebrew construction is that of intense waiting
 - a. The indication is that relief did not come quickly
 - b. Literally it reads, “waiting, I waited”
It is similar to the construction of **Genesis 2:17**
Genesis 2:17 – “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”
“Dying you shall die”

- c. David is saying, “I surely waited for the LORD”
He wasn’t waiting to see *if* something would happen but waiting with assurance that something *would* happen. Expectation!
We may wait long but we do not wait in vain.
- B. David describes the deliverance
1. “He brought me up” – Whatever the trial it was severe. He was sinking deeper and deeper towards destruction
 - a. David describes it as a pit too deep to climb out of.
KJV – a horrible pit
NASB – a pit of destruction
 - b. He describes it as miry clay – it held him fast and he was sinking deeper. We aren’t told the details but it was beyond his ability to escape by his own power. Like sinking into thick mud the more he struggled the deeper he sank. As he sank deeper and deeper until the miry clay was about his neck he cried out.
 - c. By God’s mighty hand He brought him up
 2. The miry clay is surely a metaphor for some great affliction though we don’t know the details. But you can imagine your own struggles.
 - a. The pit of sin. Sin can be a pit of miry clay that we fall into. The Christian life demands great vigilance. We can become ensnared with sin and become covered with the filth of the mire. God can deliver those who cry unto Him.
 - b. The pit of adversity – sickness, persecution, family problems, job related problems, financial struggles – the types of adversity are endless.
The trials and struggles of life can seem to cover you with despair – but God can lift you out of them all.
Psalm 34:19 – “Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”
 - c. Whatever David’s pit was God brought him up.
 3. Not only did God bring him up, He set him upon a rock and made his footsteps firm. Of course, for the Christian that Rock is Christ – our hope and confidence.
 4. God did far more for David. He put a new song in his mouth – **Verse 3**
 - a. We saw this “new song” back in **Psalm 32**
Psalm 33:3 – “Sing unto him a new song”
As I pointed out then this doesn’t refer to new music but a revitalized heart.
 - b. It refers to singing with fresh vitality. From his cry for deliverance came a song of rejoicing – “even praise unto our God”
Fresh mercies result in fresh praises
 5. Many outside the faith will witness God’s great deliverance and turn to God in fear and faith
They will discover the blessing of following the living God
Psalm 40:4 – “Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust,”

- C. David's past experience with deliverance was rich and full
1. He declares God's mercies as "many"
Psalm 40:5 – "Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done"
 2. David speaks of God's thoughts which are upon His people. He is mindful of us! He is not forgetful. He knows our condition.
 3. With whom shall we compare God? His works are too numerable to count.
^{NASB} **Psalm 40:5** – "There is none to compare with Thee; If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count."
 4. We must never forget God's wonderful works in our life. Number them. Speak of them before all men. Rejoice in them. Praise and worship God for them.

II. **Verses 6-10** – David's Profession to his own faithfulness before God

- A. First, he describes his life of obedience – **Verses 6-8**
1. David's life was not merely one of religion or ceremony. It was a living relationship with God. It was a fully surrendered heart.
 - a. It calls to mind Samuel's words to Saul
1 Samuel 15:22 – "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as *great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams."
 - b. The OT sacrifices could not take away the guilt of sin, the terror of sin, the power of sin. Their value was that they pointed to Christ. In Christ we find forgiveness from the guilt of sin and freedom from the power of sin.
 - c. David adds: "mine ears has thou opened"
God has given David ears to hear – ears of submission
 - d. The word for "opened" can also be translated "pierced" which is how it reads in the NIV
It draws our attention to the Hebrew practice of a slave desiring to remain permanently with their master. The ear was pierced.
Exodus 21:6 – "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever."
 2. **Verses 7-8** – the Law of God was written not only upon the scroll but upon David's heart.
 - a. David's life was a life of obedience
 - b. This is the nature of the New Covenant
- B. Not only did David live in personal obedience his life was a declaration to all men
1. David was among a long line of preachers of righteousness
Psalm 40:9 – "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest."
 2. David made no effort to conceal God's demand for righteousness. He made no effort to conceal his desire to obey.

3. The claim of some that their religion is a private thing is a vain lie. There is no such thing as a private relationship with Christ.
- C. These verses are also messianic for in their ultimate fulfillment Jesus perfectly kept the Law, ended all sacrifices with His ultimate sacrifice of Himself, and who preaches deliverance to the captives.

III. Verses 11-17 – David’s Petition to God for his present help

- A. So far David has given three things as the basis of his great confidence as he sought God in the present
1. First, there was the testimony of God’s great deliverance in the past
Psalm 40:5 – “Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.”
 2. Second, there was his unfailing trust in God’s mighty hand.
Psalm 40:4 – “Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust”
 3. Third, there was his own life of commitment and obedience before God.
Psalm 40:8 – “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.”
- B. With these things as the basis of his assurance he once again sought God’s aid
Psalm 40:11 – “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.”
1. The word for “lovingkindness” is רַחֲמֵי
 2. God’s love and Truth was is constant source of strength
 3. God’s love for us gives us assurance that He is working for our good and His Truth enables us to rest in His promises.
 4. Such confidence is essential as we face our fiery trials
Psalm 40:12 – “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”
- C. David prays for God’s deliverance
1. This was a familiar prayer for David
Psalm 40:13 – “Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.”
Psalm 22:19 – “But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.”
Psalm 38:22 – “Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.”
 2. David’s affliction once again included the attack by his enemies
David prays for their downfall – **Verses 14-15**
Psalm 40:14-15 – “Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. ¹⁵ Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.”

3. These verses serve as an encouragement to all who trust in God.
 - a. We face many enemies – some physical, some spiritual
God forever stands as our great conquering King
Romans 8:37 – “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”
 - b. Matthew Henry: “When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries *Aha! aha!* thinking he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be *desolate, for a reward of his shame. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! The accuser of the brethren is cast out.*”
 - c. **Verse 16** - Let all who seek Him rejoice in Him
 - d. Let all who love the deliverance of God say continually,
“The LORD be magnified.”

Conclusion:

1. None of God’s people are exempt from trials. Some are horrible trials in which we feel like we are sinking in miry clay in the bottom of a deep pit.
James wrote: ^{NAU} **James 1:2** – “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”
2. Sometimes our trials are of our own making as we foolishly trudge ahead without considering God’s Word.
God uses trials to cause us to trust Him more. He uses trials to purge us of our attachment to the world.
But we can always rest assured. God will in due time deliver us from the pit and put us upon the solid rock. He puts a new song in our hearts.
3. God has a purpose and He works His purpose for our good.