

Rosebud

Psalm 40:1

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

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.¹ 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!

¹ "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me: whole-burnt-offering and *sacrifice* for sin thou didst not require." (Ps 40:6 LXX)

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!

^{ESV} **Psalm 41:1** *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.* Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;

² the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.

³ The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.

⁴ As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!"

⁵ My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?"

⁶ And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad.

⁷ All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me.

⁸ They say, "A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies."

⁹ Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

¹⁰ But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them!

¹¹ By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.

¹² But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.

¹³ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen."

Psalm 40-41

Rosebud

“**IDON'T THINK ANY WORD CAN EXPLAIN A MAN'S LIFE.**” So ends what most critics to this day call the greatest movie ever. A fictitious documentary made in 1941, only one word was needed to launch the film's greatest mystery which would feed the paradoxes and foreshadow the life and times of one Charles Foster Kane. That word is both the first and last line of what would become known as Orson Welles' most famous character. It is a word that puts on full display what *SparksNotes* calls the central theme of the movie: **The difficulty of interpreting a person's life once that life has ended.** *Rosebud*.

Citizen Kane reflects the timeless art of beginning and ending a story with the same idea. Many good poems, songs, cartoon strips, jokes, and books do this. Sometimes it is called “envelope verse.” Sometimes it is a great first line or a punch line. Sometimes it is through explicit foreshadowing. But you could argue that the best example of it anywhere is in fact *Citizen Kane*.

Or maybe, just maybe, it is [Book 1 of the Psalter](#) of Holy Scripture. Let us retrace our steps into the Psalter, a path we began as we looked at the first two songs and then in all subsequent psalms up to this point. This great book we call The Psalms was divided into five smaller collections ([Ps 1-41](#), [42-72](#), [73-89](#), [90-106](#), [107-150](#)) that scholars call books. These collections are old indeed, dating to Ezra who probably compiled them all into their final form, going back earlier to the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah who had temple priests work on the middle sections, and even stretching back all the way to David and Solomon in the book we end today: Book 1.²

² Cf. [R. Dean Anderson Jr.](#), “The Division and Order of the Psalms,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994) 219-41, especially p. 241. ([I will return to this resource in the future](#)).

Figure 1³

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

“BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL, AND FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS” (103:2)

BOOK I		BOOK II		BOOK III		BOOK IV		BOOK V	
41 psalms		31 psalms		17 psalms		17 psalms		44 psalms	
1	41	42	72	73	89	90	106	107	150
DOXOLOGY AT THESE VERSES CONCLUDES EACH BOOK									
41:13		72:18-19		89:52		106:48		150:6	
JEWISH TRADITION ASCRIBES TOPICAL LIKENESS TO PENTATEUCH									
GENESIS	EXODUS		LEVITICUS		NUMBERS		DEUTERONOMY		
————— AUTHORS —————									
mainly (or all) DAVID		mainly DAVID and KORAH		mainly ASAPH		mainly ANONYMOUS		mainly DAVID	
ORIGINAL GROUP BY DAVID			BOOKS II AND III ADDED DURING THE REIGNS OF HEZEKIAH AND JOSIAH			MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS COMPILED IN TIMES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH			

POSSIBLE CHRONOLOGICAL STAGES IN THE GROWTH AND COLLECTION OF THE PSALTER

Like *Citizen Kane*, it ends where it began, and this becomes important for a proper interpretation of our songs today. As does the author of our two Psalms. We have seen that every stated author in this collection is David, the sweet

³ Found in Danny Akin, “The Book of Psalms,” p. 1, *DannyAkin President, Southeastern Seminary*, no date, at http://www.danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/old/Resource_620/1%20The%20Book%20of%20Psalms.pdf.

psalmist of Israel. There are four anonymous Psalms in the collection, but our two today are not among them. Two of these (Ps 10, 33) are so intimately related to the previous song that they are almost certainly David's. The remaining two are Psalms 1-2, which are anonymous, in part because they serve as the introduction to the 150 Psalms, but also because their focus is not on David, but “The Man” and “The Son.”

“Blessed” or “Happy is the man...” the Psalter begins (Ps 1:1). And we saw that ultimately speaking, this man could be none other than the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who alone perfectly delights in God's law and does the things that Psalm teaches. This was confirmed by the enveloping-*inclusio* “Blessed” or “Happy are all who take refuge in him,” which is the last verse of Psalm 2 (2:12). Psalm 2 ends the way Psalm 1 began. It ends thinking about “his” people, but it is clear from Psalm 2 that the one in whom we take refuge is the Son of God.

Psalms 40-41 stand in relation to one another just like Psalms 1-2 do. In fact, they have the same repeating themes. “Blessed” or “Happy is the man...” (40:4). “Blessed” or “Happy is the one who...” (41:1). But these songs end Book

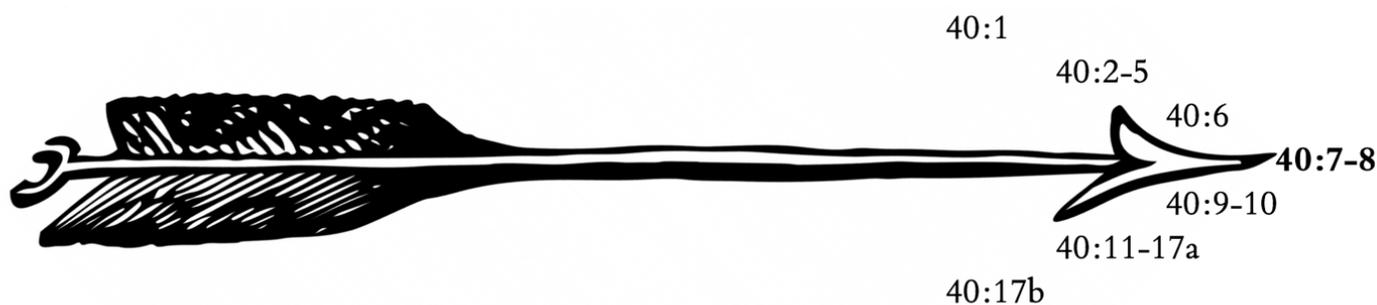
1. As such (and as all five of the last songs of each book do), it ends with a doxology. “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”⁴ In this way, the first and last words of Book 1 of the Psalter begin with “Blessed,” the Rosebud-word of this collection of psalms.

Now we are ready to step into the extraordinary beauty that is the last two songs of Book 1. And hidden here in plain sight, behind the *blessed*, is a rosebud of yet another name. For the blessed man also happens to be the blessed God who is from everlasting to everlasting. At the center of it all is a Passion Play written for the ages, resulting in a sacrificial death and a glorious resurrection (a *rosebud*) fit only for the King of kings and Lord of lords; and fitting also for our thinking of the Passion Week of the Lord Jesus that begins today on this Palm Sunday. Only a God with perfect foreknowledge could have inspired men to compile these songs in just this way.

⁴ Compare with 72:18-19; 89:53; 106:48 and in some ways the whole of Psalms 146-50, including 150:6. Notice also how the first song of Book 2 is set off by the first author other than David: the sons of Korah.

Psalm 40: A Sacrificial Body and A Happy-Blessed People

As we have been learning, interpreting the Psalms begins not only with placement in the book, but with getting a handle on **their structure**. The overwhelming majority of these songs form chiasms, with the repeating themes pointing like an arrow at a central idea. In the case of Psalm 40 (and 41)—fittingly “**To the choirmaster**” or “**A song for The End,**” the central verses are **7-8**.



Let's make our way to the center by looking at the various pairings together. The song begins, “**I waited patiently for the LORD**” (Ps 40:1). The song ends with the words, “**Do not delay, O my God.**” So even though he waits patiently, he desires the LORD to carry out whatever he is

going to carry out speedily. Hence, **the first paring**. But what is he waiting patiently for the LORD to do?

As with so many of the songs in the first collection, what is in focus is the need for **deliverance** from **enemies** and from **sin**. In fact, to recall one more thing from our very first look at the Psalms way back in Psalms 1-2, we mentioned that the tradition is that the first five books of the Psalter **parallel the first five books of Moses**. In this regard, this week I came across a fascinating summary of this. “**The first forty-one psalms were probably gathered together during the early days of the Jewish monarchy by either David or Solomon. Book I was basically assigned to David. This first book highlights God’s power in creation (Pss. 8; 19) and is dominated by the themes of sin and redemption.**”⁵ Creation, sin, and salvation basically summarize Genesis 1-3 even as they are the focus of Genesis more broadly speaking. Now, Psalm 40 deals with all three in the second paring, even as it summarizes so much of what we have seen from in the first 39 songs.

The second pairing focuses first on **what the LORD has done** and **then on what he will do**. This is terribly important

⁵ **Danny Akin** (see n. 3), p. 5.

by way of summarizing the Psalms, because it shows what true faith does. It doesn't cry out for future help and deliverance without first recognizing that God has already given it to you. Faith is not blind and irrational. It is not a leap in the dark. Faith looks to the past which is a sure foundation of hope in the future. It is rooted in covenant history.

What Yahweh has done is summarized in **three actions**. **First, he inclined to me and heard my cry (40:1)**. While the Psalmist waited patiently, the LORD inclined to him and heard his cry. Though we wait, God will answer. It is astonishing that God would incline himself favorably towards a sinner who will call himself such later. Why would God do such a thing? Why would he make himself favorably disposed to anyone who has and continues to violate his holy laws? It is a wonder of wonders to contemplate. But not only this, he heard the cry of the psalmist. This means, he answered him in his day of trouble. What was that trouble?

Second, 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 (40:2). David has sung many times about being

near death's door because of his sins and his enemies. Now he sings openly about the deliverance he has received, not only temporally, but eternally. The LORD has not let his feet slip into destruction and damnation. The images are of sinking fast in a quicksand of miry mud only to be set upon the solid foundation of a rock where he steps will not slide. What is this Rock? It is the words (**Matt 7:24**) and Word of Christ (**1Co 10:4**). Upon this Rock, no one will be put to shame.

Third, he put a new song in my mouth. This is the song David now sings (**Ps 40:3**), and if God hadn't answered him, we would not have Psalm 40! It's existence is proof that God heard him. This language of a "new song" occurs for the second time in Book 1 (see **33:3**). The NT takes this and applies it to the Lamb of God. "**And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation'**" (**Rev 5:9**; cf. **14:3**). We will see shortly that it is no accident that the Revelator applies this to the Lord Jesus.

But now I must ask, **are you someone who has cried out to the LORD or not?** Have you cried to him to recuse you

from the pit of hell, from the enemies of sin, death, and the devil? If not, then you have no new song to sing. Your heart is musicless, void of the melody of the good news. So cry out to him and know that he hears the cries of all who wait patiently for him.

Or are you someone who has cried out but thinks God does not hear and will not answer? If so, then do you not see how he has rescued you from that pit? Has it been so long since you thanked him that the song he put in your heart no longer rings with hope in your ears? Then look again to the Rock and stop walking about in the quicksand and the bog. Wait patiently for him and trust in the LORD. For the first section ends, “Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD” (3). If nothing else, look to the psalmist and how he was heard. Look around at those in the great congregation this day. Talk to them about what they have seen Him do for them. See and know that he is God. Fear him and trust him, and he will make your steps firm.

After this, we begin to make our way to **God as the Creator**. We begin with those very first words of the Psalter, “Blessed is the man...” (4). In Psalm 1, this man obeys the LORD in all things all the time. His way is righteous and he

delights in the Law of God. In Psalm 40, this man makes the LORD his *trust*. Now, this too is coupled with obedience for he “does not turn to the proud or to those who go astray after a lie” (4).

But as a kind of summary not only of Book 1 of the Psalter, but also of **Genesis**, going astray after a lie reminds us of Genesis 3 with Satan and Eve and Adam. But to avoid this, our thoughts (like theirs should have been) are to go earlier, back to Genesis 1-2. “You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds” (5). He is the God of all creation. He has made all things by the power of his Word and Breath, without struggle.

But these words also foreshadow the coming of Book 2 of the Psalter and the **Exodus**. For his wondrous deeds make us think of that great event out of Egypt. In another song Moses sang, “Who is like you O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” (Ex 15:11). It is God’s power that comes into view. He is omnipotent and can do all his holy will.

And yet, in the midst of the power, there is the sheer wonder, again, of his thoughts towards us (5). He turns his

thoughts *towards us*. David reflected earlier, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:3-4). Pulling these strands together, he is thinking the same thing now. And like Moses, “none can compare with you” (Ps 40:5). No other *elohim*, no other angels, no other men, no beasts, no mountains, no stars, no matter how powerful they may be, none can compare. Our God is incomparable. He is in a class by himself.

Therefore, the Psalmist proclaims and tells of these things, even though they are more than can be told (5). For he is infinite. But this is the song he must sing. He is compelled by the newness of life that has been given to him. And it is not just a song, it is his very breath and way of life. Everything he does is saturated by this knowledge.

The second half of the pairing begins in vs. 11. Its hope is on the future because of what has happened in the past. “As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!” (11). He is the covenant God of *hesed-love*. He

has shown and will continue to show it in mercy to his children, for he has sworn to do so. But when?

In the midst of evil and sin. You say, “**But the evil of this world is too great to be overcome.**” This is the evil of others: “**For evils have encompassed me beyond number**” (12a). You say, “**But I keep on sinning and doing the same things I know I should not do.**” This is the sin of yourself: “**My iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me**” (12b). Do you now see that God promises not to restrain his mercy from you in the midst of such things? This is incomparable good news for those who need it. He is *full of kindness and compassion, slow to anger, vast in love. God is good to all creation. All his works his goodness prove.* He is not the evil tyrant unbelievers make him out to be. But they do not know him in his mercy, for they have not come to him through his Son. Therefore, they come up with all kinds of excuses for not accepting the good news.

But God is “**pleased ... to deliver**” and to “**make haste to help**” (13) his children. Take him at his word, for it is sure and certain and he cannot swear by anyone greater than himself. He has promised this to all who turn to the Lord

Jesus. But for those who do not, there is a threefold curse (14-15).

One, “Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life.” Two, “let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt” (14). Three, “Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, ‘Aha, Aha!’” (15). It matters not if they seek our life because they are evil, or because they see in us sin that remains. God will not long suffer those who delight in attacking his people.

But for us, he will not leave us in despair over that which dwells without in the world or that which remains within the flesh. “May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, ‘Great is the LORD!’” (16). You see, when he saves you he gives you new affections. He tunes your heart to sing his grace. For he makes you glad. Even though I am “poor and needy,” the LORD takes thought of me (17a). David is overwhelmed with this thought. He keeps singing about it. God is *his* help and deliverer. Do you hear how the song is bringing us to a great conclusion to a book full of songs that have sometimes been so very dark because of the sin that

entered the world through Adam? God is not frustrated or consumed by the darkness, for he is light, and he makes his children sons and daughters of the Light.

The third pairing of verses now focus in on the requirements of worship that God has. We might think back to Cain and Abel. Or we might be getting a foretaste of Book 3 and the themes of Leviticus. Both of these may very well be true. But there is something much more mysterious and glorious here that you need eyes to see. For it begins to reveal to us something of The Man.

It begins with a familiar idea, if you know earlier parts of your Bible. “In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted” (6a) and again, “Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required” (6c). For some this may not in fact be familiar, as they have been taught a kind of external religion only. This is something David learned from his elder and mentor and teacher Samuel who had to teach Saul a lesson in worship. “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?” (1Sa 15:22). It will become so important later in the life of Israel that Isaiah will begin (Isa 1:11) and end (66:3) his book on this theme. And Hosea says, “For I desire

steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam they transgressed the covenant” (Hos 6:6-7). And Jesus would use this idea time and again with those in his own day who had an external form of religion but did not understand its power (Matt 9:13; 12:7).

Something that Evangelicals have made very important because of it in their proclamation of the Gospel is the absolute necessity of a changed heart by the Spirit of God through personal faith. Jesus called it being “born-again.” This is what David is singing about. External religion is simply not enough. Even though religious duty is important in terms of showing you what a holy God is like and what he requires, it is not enough. It does not save anyone. Only Jesus does that as he is proclaimed and pleased to work through the Gospel. You sit in church, but that no more makes you a Christian than sitting in a garage makes you a car. This changed heart comes from hearing what you are being told, perceiving with your inner man that it is true, and believing it by faith alone. But faith alone in what? Faith must have an object.

That object is very cryptic in the Hebrew. Sandwiched between these two thoughts of God not delighting in and requiring offerings from you are the words, “**But you have given me an open ear**” (6b). This is in one sense exactly what I just said. You have to hear and listen and perceive what is being said. God can and alone does this by grace for you, as Calvin says here, “**We are deaf until God opens our ears, that is, until he corrects the stubbornness that cleaves to us**” (Calvin, Hebrews 10:5). But what is being said? That which we cannot choose to hear of ourselves is made possible by the power of the Gospel, for it is living and active by the Holy Spirit who breathes it out through the Word.

This passage is quoted in **Hebrews 10:5-7**, which is part of a lengthy biblical commentary on our passage in the form of the Hebrews’ sermon! But it says something here that seems inconceivable given what we have just heard. “**Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure’ (Heb 10:5-6). ‘But a body have you prepared for me’ replaces ‘But you have given me an open ear.’** How can this be?

This is one of the most puzzling problems in biblical interpretation. The short answer is that Hebrews is quoting from the LXX. The longer answer is that the LXX is a translation of the Hebrew. They could never get away with just making something new up. So instead, there has to be something that led them to this translation that is shown to be inspired in the book of Hebrews. The problem is, we are not certain what that is.⁶ For our purposes, it doesn't really matter how it came to be. The fact is, it did. And this is the inspired word of the Preacher who himself could not get away with saying something to his audience if it were not accepted by the Jews themselves.

Before looking at it fully, let's look at the second part of the pair, which is **Psalm 40:9-10**. Perhaps recalling the past good news preached to Abraham or even foreshadowing the Congregation of Israel in the book of **Numbers**, he speaks now very overtly of the gospel. "I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of

⁶ A good summary of older attempts to figure it out is found in Appendix I.2. John Calvin and John Owen, [*Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 389–390. See also my sermon "True Form" on Hebrews 10:1-18.

your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.”

There is much here. **First**, notice that David speaks of Gospel: **Glad News!** This is a happy thing he sings about. **Second**, David seems to have some kind of inside information due to his status as a kingly-prophet. But rather than keep it in and not tell anyone, he writes it down plainly, and even ensures that all the people will come to know it by making it the last song in Book 1 and a song that would become part of the liturgy of the people of Israel in their temple. **Third**, this good news is of God’s faithfulness (*emunah*) to save (*teshuah*) his people because of his covenant love (*hesed*). This is God’s truth (*emeth*). All of this we have seen before in Book 1. **Fourth**, he speaks here of the great congregation (*qahal*). This is translated in the LXX as the Ekklesia, the Church! David is singing about the mystery of the church to the church of the OT. **Fifth**, he is singing about his future Messiah. This is truly a song “**For the End!**” Messiah returns us specifically to Psalms 1-2.

Coming to the center of the poem we have **vv. 7-8**. These also return us to Psalm 1 and Torah, which reminds

us of Genesis 2 and the law of God. It perhaps also foreshadows Book 5 that has themes from **Deuteronomy**. But at the heart is the delight of someone to do God's will. "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'" Who is this? David? Kind of. But Hebrews tells us that **it is Jesus**.

Now let's put this all together by returning to the idea of sacrifices. It isn't that God doesn't delight in sacrifices *per se*. It's that the sacrifices we can offer do not appease his wrath. They don't do what we need them to do to make him favorably disposed. This is why Jesus—The Man—came. When he came into the world our Lord Jesus said **Psalm 40:6-8**. Really, he said it all. For he is its fulfillment.

Jesus offered a sacrifice so that was fully satisfying to God. **The sacrifice** he offered was **his own body**. So yes, God does delight in some kind of sacrifice. The Sacrifice of Christ on **Good Friday**. It refers to his body that will be offered in full and perfect obedience to the will of the Father. Why did Jesus do this?

He said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book." Jesus is

spoken of as the **Prophet**; David is prophesying about him. Jesus is spoken of as the coming **King**; king David is telling us about him. Jesus is spoken of as the **Priest**; it is particularly his priestly work in mind in Hebrews and this part of the Psalm 40. All three of these offices remind us of Adam who failed on all three counts. But Jesus obeyed, because he came to do God's will (**Heb 10:9**; **Ps 40:8**). This he did to do away with the first order to establish the second, a new order, a new covenant (**16-18**) offered in the offering of his body once for all (**10**), an offering that takes away our sins (**11**). And thus he will remember your lawless deeds no more. This brings some conclusion to Psalm 1, for we know we are not perfectly walking and delighting in God's law. But because of Psalm 40, you can be forgiven in Christ.

1a) **Psa 40:1**, I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me, and heard my cry;

1b) **Psa 40:2-5**, Deliverance/ Let him be blessed/ The Lord's thoughts toward us:

1c) **Psa 40:6**, You did not desire sacrifice + offering, therefore You opened My ears [to Your Law implied]:

central axis) Psa 40:7-8, I said, Lo, I come: in the scroll of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: Your Law is within my heart;

2c) **Psa 40:9-10**, I have preached Your righteousness + faithfulness + salvation + lovingkindness + truth to the congregation:

2b) **Psa 40:11-17a**, Deliverance/ Let them be ashamed/ the Lord thinks upon me:

2a) **Psa 40:17b**, You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.⁷

⁷ **Christine Miller**'s interpretation of Psalm 40 at: <http://www.alittleperspective.com/psalm-40-chiastic-structure/>. Her comments are also helpful, "The C pair pairs, in that even though the

Psalm 41: A Terrible Betrayal and a Blessed God

Book 1 ends with Psalm 41. This song begins where the last one ended: with **the poor and needy**. This shows you the internal connections between the songs. But look at the change between them. In **40:17**, “**I am the poor and needy.**” It is right to see yourself here, though I’ll say something more about this in a moment. Do you see yourself as poor and needy or in need of nothing from God? In **41:1**, “**Blessed is the one who considers the poor.**” This introduction is very curious.

You may be tempted to think this refers to people who help the poor. Properly speaking, in the ancient world, looking after the poor was **the job of kings**. King Lemuel says that his mother taught him, “**Open your mouth, judge**

Law contains the ordinances of the sacrifices and offerings for sin and atonement, those sacrifices are not the end desire of the Lord. What He really wants is righteousness, so that there is no need for sacrifices and atonement. **Therefore He prepared for the bodily incarnation of Messiah.** The Hebrew for “My ears You have opened,” is literally, “ears You have dug for Me,” i.e., made for Me is implied. The picture is of a potter digging clay from which to make a vessel. Because the Lord does not desire sacrifice and offering, Messiah proclaimed the righteousness (and faithfulness etc.) of the Lord to the great congregation, and His incarnation cut off continual sacrifice and offering and provided for sins too great for us. Isn’t it interesting that it says “great congregation” and not just “congregation.” I think it means, the whole of God’s *ekklesia* from the beginning to the end of time, the **great** congregation.” It is a Messianic prophecy as the central axis. Compare with the similar structure at: <http://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2017/01/21/psalm-40/>.

righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Prov 31:9).⁸ King Solomon said, “If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever” (Prov 29:14).

But Psalm 40:17 is first and foremost not about you being poor, but about David—the king—being poor and needy! Thus, he is in need of a king to look after him! If Psalm 40 ends with God looking after him as poor and needy, and Psalm 41 begins with someone being blessed who considers the poor, then the intended context of Psalm 41 from the get-go should be seen as speaking of David’s King. It is the LORD who considers and takes thought of the poor in the day of trouble at the end of 41:1. You would only see these connections if you read the two songs together. In fact, the connection at this point and others is so strong, that some have even thought of these two songs as one song split into two stanzas.⁹

⁸ Cited in Charles James Butler, Ph.D., “Psalm 41: A Prophecy of Christ,” American Presbyterian Church, <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/psalms/psalm-41-a-prophecy-of-christ/>, last accessed Apr 4, 2017.

⁹ See Richard Clifford, “Psalms 1-72,” *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 37.

The structure of Psalm 41 is very similar to that of Psalm 40 in the fact that its chiasm results in a Messianic prophecy in the center of the poem.¹⁰

1a) [Psa 41:1-2](#), Blessed be the man who considers the poor:

1b) [Psa 41:2c-4](#), You will not deliver him to his enemies/ strengthen + sustain him/ Lord, be merciful to me;

1c) [Psa 41:5-8](#), My enemies speak evil of me:

2c) [Psa 41:9](#), My familiar friend {n} has lifted up his heel against me;

2b) [Psa 41:10-12](#), Lord, be merciful to me/ raise me up/ my enemy does not triumph over me:

2a) [Psa 41:13](#) {p} Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.¹¹

But if it is a song about Messiah the king who in the center part will suffer, then it is really a song that is all about the Suffering Son. Hence, it has links to Psalm 2 just like Psalm 40 had with Psalm 1. Let's make our way to this central prophecy, this time not by looking at the pairings of repeating ideas, but simply in order of the verses as they come to us.

Yahweh is said to do **three things** for this poor man. **First**, he **delivers him (1)**. **Second**, he **protects him and keeps him alive (2)**. **Third**, he **sustains him on his sickbed (3)**. Now,

¹⁰ **Butler's** work (n. 8) in a very conservative way in terms of our Reformed tradition (but with a lengthy unnecessary quarrel with the five-book organization of the Psalter) offer some helpful insights on the whole psalm as a prophecy of Christ.

¹¹ **Miller**, <http://www.alittleperspective.com/psalm-41-chiastic-structure/>.

even though the song is ultimately about Christ, it still has David as the human author. Obviously, Jesus did not get sick on a sickbed, though he was kept alive in a most incredible way and he eventually is called blessed in the land over his enemies (2).

Next, the Psalmist calls upon Yahweh to do two more things. “As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you’” (4). He needs God’s grace and he needs healing from his sins. This idea of sinning against God is a thread that has been woven through many of these last songs of Book 1.

Suddenly, the poem starts to feel dark, just like some of those did. “My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’” (5). They are trying to snuff out even the memory of him. “And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out he tells it abroad” (6). “All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me” (7). “They say, ‘A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.’” (8). This string of verses climaxes in vs. 9, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me” (9). The

language harkens back to the Genesis promise to Satan, “You shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15).

Consider for a moment our Lord Jesus who is the Son of God. We learn that he grew in grace and the knowledge of God’s will by learning his Scriptures. As David’s son, he would have known that songs like this particularly speak to him as David’s descendant. Yet, as having a direct line to the Father, the Lord Jesus certainly knew that the words spoken here were absolutely about him. He knew it long before he ever went into his public ministry.

We think about his many enemies. The Jewish leaders who often gathered at his table speaking empty words in order to trap him. The same who upon leaving his presence set out to kill him. He had enemies who tried to keep his Name from spreading, by telling lies about him, especially after they found a way to kill him and rumors were spreading that he said he would rise from the dead. But they said he will not rise again from where he lies.

It is into this that our Lord tells his friends, “He who dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me” (Matt 26:23). This is one of those few verses that is of such importance that it is actually recorded in all four gospels, and

even Acts (echoed in [Acts 1:16](#)). [Mark 14:18](#) records it. [Luke 22:21](#) records it. [John 13:18](#) even says, “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’”

In light of this, how interesting is it that the Psalter begins, “[Kiss the Son](#), lest he be angry, and you perish in the way” ([Ps 2:12](#))? Book 1 now comes to its greatest climax with a prophecy of the Betrayer, like Satan--in fact the one whom Satan entered--lifting his heel against him. And how does the Betrayer betray? “[While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?’](#)” ([Luke 22:47](#)).

What a remarkable thing God’s word is. Not only could you not write this if you wanted to, you couldn’t have organized this properly if you had to. Even the positioning of the Psalms is inspired (I believe), and meant to lead you into the fullness of faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. I can finally begin to get a glimpse now of just how ironic and terrible that kiss really was. He was not kissing him to bow

before his feet, but to cut him off from the land of the living that he may never rise again. Such is the seething hatred that Satan and men have against the God who is gracious to them every day of their lives on this earth.

Now we read the prayer, “**But you, O LORD, be gracious to me**” (10). David’s words, surely. But Christ’s words, truly. Is there one word that can explain Jesus’ Christ’s life? No more than one could gives us the picture of the life of Charles Kane. Many are good. Many are necessary: God. Man. Perfect. Obedient. Prophecied. Fulfilled. Gracious. Judge. Suffering. Servant. But there is a word just here that reminds us of a different kind of rosebud.

The prayer continues, “**... and raise me up.**” David? One day. But Jesus? Already. He who prayed to rise has **risen**. He who has risen **arose**. At that moment of betrayal the church enters into this Passion Week, a flower dies, black pedals and buds teach us about the wrath of God against sin. A kiss betrays the Son.

But after this, he rose. A rose of a different bud. A white rose, made pure by his red blood that satisfies God’s wrath and takes away your sin. This is the hidden flower in Book 1 of the Psalms. It is God’s Rosebud. Of infinitely greater

value than anything Charles Foster Kane yearned with all his might to return to throughout his life when he was young and innocent. Now, it is yours in Christ Jesus.

What a tale we have been told in Book 1 of the Psalms. What a way to tell it, by returning to themes like a master storyteller, to reinforce their power, to cause to stir up your emotions, to get you to see your Master and to cry out to him in the day of your distress. To help you to see that vengeance is His and he will repay (Ps 41:11). To do so by dying and rising from the dead.

This is what we know as The End. It was told to the Choirmaster for these last psalms. As you reflect, consider the last words. “By this I know that you delight in me: My enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever” (11-12). Oh the blessed glory of our Risen Savior who has ascended above all the powers of hell and darkness, who was upheld by his Triune God, who has no enemy able to triumph over him. The songs and the book end in worship.

And therefore, Blessed is that Man—Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

from everlasting to everlasting (40:13). Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people through Christ (Luke 1:68) and through whom is the Christ, according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever (Rom 9:5).

Amen. Amen. And Amen.