

GOD'S GREATEST WORK
Psalm 40

Intro: From the commentaries that I examined on this Psalm I learned that most of them consider this to be a purely Messianic Psalm. Some have nothing to say about David and what he experienced to make him write such a Psalm. The chief emphasis in most of them is that the Psalm speaks of Christ. They do this because of the fact that the writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 40:6-8 in Hebrews 10:5-7. So there is a solid reason for saying that this is a Messianic Psalm.

But the question I have is this: Does it all speak only of Christ? Does this not record as well the experience of David? Do we not have a Psalm here which speaks biographically of the way that the Lord had dealt, and was dealing, with with him? Personally I believe that we do, and thus a Psalm that can be of tremendous help to us in our walk with the Lord.

Matthew Poole and Arthur Clarke are two exceptions to what most of the commentaries say. They know that it speaks of Christ, but they believe that it also speaks of David.

Poole had this to say:

It is certain and evident that David speaks some things in this Book of Psalms in his own name and person, and some things in the name and person of Christ, of whom he was an eminent type; and that sometimes he speaks in both these capacities in the same Psalm . . . And this seems to be the condition of this Psalm . . . (III, 63).

He went on to say that some of this Psalm, especially v. 13, could not belong to Christ, while vv. 6-8 could not belong to David.

My only disagreement with Mr. Poole is that I believe it all can apply to David. And I will show you how and why as we go along.

The Psalm has three parts. Let me give them to you:

- I. DAVID'S TESTIMONY (vv. 1-3). (Read as we go along.)
- II. DAVID'S MESSAGE (v. 4).
- III. DAVID'S PRAYER (vv. 5-17).

We do not know when David wrote this Psalm. It has been suggested that it was either at the time when Absalom rebelled against him, or when Adonijah tried to get the throne shortly before David died.

Whatever it was, it was a most devastating experience--which seems to point more to the rebellion under Absalom. I do not think it is a statement of David's salvation, but of a severe trial which David went through, which seemed utterly hopeless

at the time. Note that the Psalm is intensely personal. The only times he used the plural are seen in vv. 3 and 5: "our God," and "toward us-ward." Every other time he spoke of God it was "my God."

And so the Psalm begins with David's testimony after the trial was over. Let us look at . . .

I. DAVID'S TESTIMONY (Psa. 40:1-3).

V. 1 tells the whole story. This probably represents weeks of time when he waited "patiently," perseveringly, day after day, on the Lord. And he was not disappointed. The Lord finally answered.

What did the Lord do for him?

Read vv. 2, 3.

The threefold work is described in v. 2.

The extra blessings are added in v. 3. There are some songs that we cannot sing until we have gone through certain experiences. Note the "new song" in Rev. 14:3.

But David realized at this time that his trials were not for his benefit alone, but for others as he said in v. 3b. You see, the faithfulness of one saint encourages others to trust the Lord. Note the word "fear" in connection with what we had this morning in 1 Peter 1:17. And think of how "many" of the people of God have been encouraged to trust the Lord from Psalm 40. This is one reason I believe it is important for us to see that this was David's Psalm as well as the Lord's.

Out of this came David's message--a message based on his own personal experience (which is often the most powerful message we can give).

II. DAVID'S MESSAGE (Psa. 40:4).

From God's dealing with him, David could write a beatitude. Regardless of the trial, happy is the man who trusts in the Lord, and who looks to the Lord for his help, not to man. No better message could be given.

Then we have . . .

III. DAVID'S PRAYER (Psa. 40:5-17)--the rest of the Psalm.

Let me ask you a question: What are we taught by the fact that the longest section of the Psalm is given to prayer?

Does it not teach us that we learn to pray, and to pray often and for extended periods of time, when we go through trials and experience the faithfulness of God? I am sure that it does!

But what is in the prayer? Chiefly, four things:

A. The goodness of God (v. 5).

Always begin your prayer with God, worshipping Him, glorifying His goodness. It is impossible to do it as you might want to. The evidences of God's goodness are too numerous to be able to remember them all.

B. What God wanted from David (vv. 6-8).

These are the Messianic verses. Do they also have something to do with David? Yes! They bring out the purpose of God for David in this particular trial.

What did God want from David? He wanted David to learn two important lessons:

- 1) He wanted David to know that He did not want what David had, but He wanted David himself. See v. 6.
- 2) He wanted David to know that his service was not the main thing, but his obedience. See vv. 7, 8.

And I am going to suggest something here which is only a suggestion. I think that there is reason to believe that David had written down in a scroll what he had learned from this experience so he could go back and read it from time to time. Have you ever done that?

We get so busy doing things for the Lord that we forget that what the Lord wants mainly is us (not good English, but you get the point), and not our service, but our obedience. That was one lesson Saul never learned. Cf. 1 Sam.15:22.

The third thing in the prayer is this:

C. David's faithful life (vv. 9, 10).

I take it that David was speaking here about the change that had taken place in his life as a result of his trial, and what God had taught him. The Lord became more prominent in his ministry to his people. Note how many times the word "thy" appears in v. 10.

D. What David wanted from God (vv. 11-17).

Four things:

1. Merciful protection (vv. 11,12).

The end of one trial does not mean the end of all trials! We continue to need the Lord.

Note, too, how David's sins had been brought before him--as numerous as the hairs of our head. But compare this with God's "wonderful works" which cannot be numbered.

2. Deliverance from his enemies (vv. 13-15).

There will always be those who hate the people of God because they hate God. If the Lord does not help us, we will not be able to stand against them.

3. A prayer for others (v. 16). When you and I have been tried, it makes us more tenderhearted to others in their trials. And we pray for them, that the Lord will answer their prayers, and their faith, too.

Finally,

4. A confession of need (v. 17).

The blessings of God do not make us independent of God, but they make us more dependent. They enable us to see how really "poor and needy" we are.

Concl: Are you encouraged? You certainly ought to be--and so should I! There is no encouragement like the encouragement we get from the Word of God.

What should we expect from our trials?

- 1) A greater love for God.
- 2) A clearer understanding of the things that are important to God.
- 3) A more godly life.
- 4) A stronger prayer life.
- 5) A greater sympathy for others.
- 6) A continuing realization of how much we need the Lord.