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Praying from the Pits



Part 18 (050904PM)

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The last two steps in the pathway out of the pits of life are prayer and praise. Psalm 40 shows us that praying and praising gets us through the pits.

In fact if we back up through all we have seen so far—it all makes so much sense.

- When we pray we can praise;
- When we praise we can repeat truth about God;
- When we repeat truth about God we can renew our submission to God;
- When we renew our submission to God we can reaffirm our trust in Him;
- When we reaffirm our trust in Him we can remember His work in our life.

And back we go again to prayer, to praise and back through those six steps David captures for us in the pathway out of the pits. So the last two steps in the pathway out of the pits of life are praise and prayer.

To introduce Psalm 40, turn with me to [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#). What can God do with our hard times, lonely times, dark times and fearful times? He can use them if we give ourselves to Him. In fact, we can even begin to rejoice in the Goodness of God even in the darkest of circumstances. That is what David does in Psalm 40 and that is what Paul tells us by the power of the Holy Spirit—we all can do in every circumstance we find ourselves in through all of life.

- [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#) *Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Does that work nowadays? The Psalms are 3,000 years old—do they still work? To find out, let's listen to a testimonial from none other than Paul, writer of half of the New Testament!

Psalm 40 is a song or Psalm written three thousand years ago by David as he faced the low point of his life. Now turn with me to Acts 16 and look at one of the low points of Paul's life. As we read, I want you to see the way that Paul dealt with the pits of life.

- [Acts 16:25](#) *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns (Greek hunmeo) to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*

Isn't it interesting how many words we pulled right out of the Greek language into English? Hunmeo—what does that sound like? Hymns—they were singing hymns to God. And what is amazing is the prisoners were listening to them.

You say, "What were they singing?" We know what they were singing because hunmeo doesn't just mean randomly singing, it is the same word that is used at the Last Supper with Jesus Christ. It says in that Scripture that when they had sung a hymn (hunmeo) they went out. In the Greek language translating the Hebrew events that always means that they were singing from the Psalms.

Look at Psalm 113 with me because we know what Paul was singing in the prison. And I know, growing up for years, I wondered what would they have been singing? What songs were popular back then? Well, the word that is used tells us. That is one of the blessings of the Greek language—it gives us insights that we can enjoy even in English.

In Psalm 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 136 were the "hunmeo" (hymns) that the Jews sang at special events. Remember they did not have the New Testament yet. This book of Acts is a very early part of the canon of the New Testament. The Gospels came later, most of them and Paul's Epistles followed. So there is no New Testament—they don't have "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" yet. They are singing the Old Testament.

	Unexpected Changes of Life
Part: 9	Refuge for the Loneliness of Life— Job Loss
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Part: 4	Christ: Our Life-Long Refuge
Part: 3	The Safest Place on Earth
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Part: 1	Anchored to Christ

In Psalm 113 I want to show you how to praise the Lord even through the pain. Now I don't know what pain you are going through. You might be going through family pain, or social pain, or physical pain, emotional pain. You might be going through financial pain. You can sing through the pain if you get these words. You can imagine Paul bent over and bleeding in a dark stinky prison with no ventilation, no sanitary facilities, no pest removal service to kill all the vermin.

This is what Paul is singing:

- *Psalm 113: 1-2 Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD! ²Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore!*

Paul said I want to praise the Lord right now and always.

❖ Point #1: Pray and Praise Consistently

Do you know how to praise the Lord through pain? Praise Him when you are not in pain. Praise Him when things are going well. Praise Him right now before the pain starts and you will be able to praise Him always.

❖ Point #2: Pray and Praise Systematically

Again in this Psalm note another truth.

Psalm 113:3a "From the rising of the sun to its going down "

Don't just praise Him sporadically, praise Him not only right now and all the time but praise Him through out the day. Don't compartmentalize your life. Don't say my life belongs to the company I work for and God gets Sunday. Praise Him from the rising of the sun to it's going down. So not only now and always, but all day long.

❖ Point #3: Pray and Praise Reverently

- *Psalm 113:3b "The LORD's name is to be praised.*

Focus on God's immutable character. God does not change. My circumstances do. My conditions do. My life changes. My health changes. My "ups and downs" come and go. But God is always the same.

You know, most of us live between downs and ups. Aunt Mary died- we are down. But Aunt Mary left us and inheritance- we are up. We hope to settle in between. Praise not what I am going through, not what I feel right now, not what I hope is going to happen. Praise something that is changeless. "The Lord's name is to be praised." God is immutable. His Word does not change, his character does not change, His Christ does not change. God does not change.

❖ Point #4: Pray and Praise Confidently

- *Psalm 113:4-5 The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens. 5 Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells on high,*

How do you sing through pain?

- By realizing that God is sovereignly in control.
- By believing He is omnipotently able to take me right out of the prison of my pain if He wants to. If I am in it, I need to be in it because it is part of his plan.
- By trusting that He is in control, He is higher than the doctors and the politicians and the business owners and the tax collectors or whoever is on you right now. He is not only in control, He is the greatest, He is above them all.
- By adoring Him as majestic, He is awesome, He is beyond our comprehension and He wants us to know about Him and sometimes that is why we go through pain. If life is all perfect and good we would not have time for Him. That is why He sends pain and suffering into our lives. That's why He sends those events that are so hard to understand because we need to come to Him if we cannot understand them. If we cannot endure them, if we cannot make it through, we need to come to the One who is higher than us. That is what He wants us to focus on in our pain.

❖ Point #5: Pray and Praise Humbly

- *Psalm 113:6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?*

He is in touch with us. This verse says that He bows down His ear to hear. He opens His eyes to behold what is going on in our lives. He is the One who wants to get our attention. That is what Paul is singing about down in the prison.

Can you imagine him down there in the stocks, bleeding, bugs crawling on him, saying "God is in control, God knows all things, He owns all things, He can set me free in an instant if He wants to. Wait a minute, we haven't come to the end of the story because it is going to happen.

❖ Point #6: Pray and Praise Meditatively

What was Paul meditating upon in his prison cell? He is pondering the compassion of our Great God.

- *Psalm 113:7-9 He raises the poor out of the dust, And lifts the needy out of the ash heap, 8 That He may seat him with princes—With the princes of His people. 9 He grants*

There aren't many things that are as strong as a woman's desire to have children but cannot. They will go to any length— they will go to a fertility doctor, they will take all the tests, they will be totally uncomfortable and go through all the ups and downs and hopes.

Do you know what this Psalm says? **He will satisfy even the deepest needs.** You cannot think of a deeper need than that of a woman who wants to be a mother. "He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children." Praise the Lord.

Now, in the Hebrew economy, there was no higher or greater desire than to have children. Then, your worth was in your children. What a wonder it was to have children. God says that a Godly woman's worth is in raising and cultivating Godly children. If God does not give physical children, He says you ought to have spiritual children.

But what we see here in the 9th verse of the 113th Psalm is that the God who is the God that were to praise now and always and the God that we are to praise from the sunrise to the sunset is to be our focus.

Focus on His immutable character,

- He is in control,
- He is the greatest,
- He is majestic, awesome,
- He is in touch,
- He is compassionate,
- He can satisfy our deepest needs what ever they are.

We could do this through all those Psalms (113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 136). God is the one who can help us to sing through our pain.

What is the lesson?

1. We can sing through pain. How? By focusing on the eternal, changeless God.
2. By praising Him now when things are not bad and always.
3. By praising Him all day long,
 - Praising Him because He is the greatest
 - Praising Him because He is in control
 - Realize that He can satisfy the deepest needs of our heart

That is the God that wants to take us through pain and suffering. Not remove us from it, but let us learn through it.

"It is Well With My Soul" by Horatio G. Spafford.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

The Pathway Out of the Pits

Now, let's go back over this Psalm and learn from each step David took as the Lord led him out of the pits.

1. LIKE DAVID--REMEMBER GOD'S WORK IN YOUR LIFE. David first notes the five ways God had worked in his life. Here is God's grace directed towards David—*Psalm 40: 1-3 I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. 2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. 3 He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord.*

The first step out of the pits is to remember God's work in our lives. Like David, we need to remember God's work of grace in our lives.

2. LIKE DAVID--REAFFIRM YOUR TRUST IN GOD. *Psalm 40: 4-5 Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5 Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered.*

David verbally says that he trusts God.

Sometimes we need to break the spiritual silence in our heart by *talking to God*. Telling Him what we know is true. *Preaching the Gospel* we believe—to ourselves! David reaffirmed his trust in God. Are you?

Like David, we need to reaffirm our trust in the Lord.

3. LIKE DAVID—RENEW YOUR SUBMISSION TO GOD. *Psalm 40:6-8* *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. 7 Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."*

What a beautiful way to look at hard times!

God is tunneling a well of water to refresh me; God is making room to bury into my life His greatest treasures. But that is not all that David shares with us from this time in the pits. There is another exciting picture for us of submission to God.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me.
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Like David, we need to renew our submission to the Lord.

4. LIKE DAVID--REPEAT TRUTHS ABOUT GOD—He is Righteous. *Psalm 40:9-12* *I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O Lord, You Yourself know. 10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth From the great assembly. 11 Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me. 12 For innumerable evils have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head; Therefore my heart fails me.*

As David looked back over his life of loneliness, desperation, sorrow and fear—he saw one truth most clearly, God is Righteous. So David's life testifies to God's righteousness. God is always faithful and what He does is right!

Like David, we need to repeat truths about the Lord.

5. LIKE DAVID--REJOICE IN GOD EVEN IN THE PITS. *Psalm 40:13-17 (Psalm 70:2-5)* *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me! 14 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who seek to destroy my life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor Who wish me evil. 15 Let them be confounded because of their shame, Who say to me, "Aha, aha!" 16 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!" 17 But I am poor and needy; Yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.*

Psalm 70 is the final Psalm from this time in David's life. It is reflective as he looks back on this time and shares Lord!

- **Psalm 70:1-5** Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord! 2 Let them be ashamed and confounded Who seek my life; Let them be turned back and confused Who desire my hurt. 3 Let them be turned back because of their shame, Who say, "Aha, aha!" 4 **Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; And let those who love Your salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified!"** 5 But I am poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.

Cry to God when life is hollow. Life was so bad at this time that David says four times in verses 1, 5—make haste, come now, don't wait, hasten. He says Lord I am not going to make it in this job, this marriage, this family, this sickness, this disaster. Quickly come, I am sinking and am going to perish.

One final lesson—the message of Psalm 40 and 70 is summarized in one of Paul's most repeated exhortations, [Philippians 4:6-7](#). If we could summarize these two verses they would say in the form of two imperatives: **"Worry about nothing; pray about everything!"**

David rejoiced in God. Are you?

Troubles—yes; pessimism—no!

Poor and needy—always!

Like David, we need to rejoice in the Lord.

6. LIKE DAVID--PRAY FOR OTHERS WHILE YOU GO THROUGH THE PITS. *Psalm 40:16-17* Remember that *Psalm 40:13-17 (Psalm 70:2-5)* *16 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!" 17 But I am poor and needy; Yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.*

Though we at times are desperate—God is not. He knows what is coming before it ever starts. God is managing every detail. What does David do in verse 4? He prays for others who sought God.

- **Psalm 40:4** *Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.*

What does that say to us? When we are alone and struggling it is the perfect time to pray for others who may be going through what we are facing. Here is a simple plan we can remember:

- Are you sick? Then pray for others who are sick—you know what they are going through!

- Are you abused by co-workers, family members, or classmates? Then pray for others going through the same pains and hurts.
- Are you in a dead end job? Then pray for hope for others that also face the daily struggle of what to do to survive in the days ahead.
- Are you successful and tempted to be selfish? Then pray for others you know who are also experiencing prosperity and ask God to keep them from selfishness and pride.

Like David, we need to intercede for others.

- **AS YOU PRAY—FEEL ANOTHER’S PAIN.** (Strong’s #4834 *sumpatheo* ‘feel together with’; # 835 *sumpasko* ‘to experience the same thing’; this is our shared concern or sympathy) **1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;**
- **AS YOU PRAY—REMEMBER YOU SERVE THE SAME MASTER.** (Strong’s # 4889 *sundoulos* ‘sharing same master’ (not service) this is our shared master.) **Colossians 1:7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf; Colossians 4:7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.**
- **AS YOU PRAY—REMEMBER YOU ARE HEADED TO THE SAME DESTINATION.** *Sumpolites* = **fellow citizens** (Phil. 3) **Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. **Fellow citizens Eph 2:19 > Phil 3:20** = our shared rules of conduct; #4847- *sumpolities(n)* **Ephesians 2:19** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, *Politeuomai* (v) **Acts 23:1** Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”; **Ph 1:27** Let your conversation be *Politeuma(n)* **Ph 3:20** For our community(lit) is in heaven; *Polites* = citizen of same town
- **AS YOU PRAY—REMEMBER YOU WORK ON THE SAME CREW.** *Sumergoi* = **fellow workers** (Rom. 16) **Romans 16:3, 9, 21** Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. 21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. **Fellow Workers** Rom. 16:3,9,21 Our shared labor union. *Sunergos(adj)* **Rom 16:3,9,21** My ---; **1 Cor 3:9** We are ---with God working w/God; **1 Corinthians 3:9** For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. **11 Cor 1:24** Are ---of your joy produces joy in church; **2 Corinthians 1:24** Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.; **11 Cor 8:23** My partner and ---concerning you; **2 Corinthians 8:23** If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ; **Phil 2:25** My brother and --- lifts lowly work to the high calling; **Philippians 2:25** Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; **Phil 4:3** Other My --- Reflects on our eternal design; **Philippians 4:3** And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life; **Col 4:11** Focus on kingdom tasks; **Colossians 4:11** and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me; **1Th 3:2**, Phile 1, 24; 3J8 - Laboring for truth; **1 Thessalonians 3:2** and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith; Philemon 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer; Philemon 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.
- **AS YOU PRAY—REMEMBER YOU SHARE THE SAME PARTNERSHIP.** *Sumkoinonia* = **fellow partners; Fellow Partners/Partakers** **Phil. 1:7** = Our Shared Fellowship *Sugkoinoonas(n)*; **Eph 5:11** Have no - w/the unfruitful works neg sin; **Ephesians 5:11** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.; **Phil 1:7** You were --- in defense and conf pos grace; **Philippians 1:7** just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ; **Rev 18:4** Be not --- of her sin; **Revelation 18:4** And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.
- **AS YOU PRAY—REMEMBER WE STRUGGLE WITH THE SAME THINGS.** Our Shared Struggle *Sunagonidzomai* **Romans 15:30** Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, *Sunathleo* **Philippians 1:27** Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, **Philippians 4:3** And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.
- **AS YOU PRAY—ASK FOR STRENGTH FOR ANOTHER’S WEAKNESSES.** (Strong’s #4837 *sumparakaleo* ‘to console jointly’; this is our shared encouragement.) **Romans 1:12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.** It is the Spirit empower desire and action to – Draw near to God through His Word. The Spirit of God is our PARAKLESIS (#3874) as seen in **Acts 13:15** “word of exhortation” is speaking God’s word.

1. **By personal ministry in the power of Holy Spirit.** **Romans 12:8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
2. **By the powerful ministry of God’s Word.** **Romans 15:4** For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.
3. **By the powerful consolation that comes from God.** **Romans 15:5** Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.

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