

Christ our Refuge: Loneliness. Finding Christ in the Pits Psalm 40

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As we open to Psalm 40 this morning, David feels all alone, abandoned and dejected. Why?

In verses 1-4 we find that he was out of touch with the Lord. His life was defeated. He had yielded to sin. He had cultivated bad habits. He had allowed his circumstances to get him completely down.

Sounds familiar doesn't it?

That is exactly the pathway so many had followed. The good news is that Psalm 40 gives us the map to escape these pits of life. By fleeing to the Lord we find a refuge where we are delivered from constant defeats, besetting sins, crippling habits and paralyzing circumstances. And as we have found each step of the way through this series, the way out is always by fleeing to Christ as our Refuge!

This morning, if you feel far from God—check these four areas of your life: what areas defeat you, what sins capture you, what habits control you, and what circumstances drive you?

Chances are that one or more of these areas has buried you in a pit, and you are so deep that you no longer can hear the voice of God speaking to your heart through His Spirit, and from His Word.

David's testimony is an invitation for us to find Christ when we are in the pits of life!

David was in a pit under layers of defeats, sin, habits, and circumstances. David was learning how precious it was to hear the Lord's voice. He speaks in Psalm 40 about how God had to "dig ears for him".

"My ears You have opened" in Psalm 40:6b in Hebrew is literally "two ears You have dug for me." David is picturing his desire to reflect Christ's coming obedience and dedication. This is a messianic Psalm, a look ahead through David's life at the coming Christ.

We saw last week in v. 1-2, that God had to dig through the depths of his defeats and sins. God came to David and had to dig away all the debris that was blocking David's ability to hear and respond to God's voice in His Word.

The steep rise in the price of gasoline at the pump has made us all realize the new stage our world has entered—more fuels are needed than are readily available close to the surface.

Many geologists note that there is actually still a vast amount of fossil fuels, it is just getting to them that is harder and harder. All that seems to lie in the way is up to three miles of dirt and rock! Digging through all that, especially because drilling after two miles deep can go as slow as 4 feet per hour, and when you are trying to travel down another mile--that can take a long time, and be very costly.

Usually we pay according to how precious, or rare, or hard to find an object is. The fewer or more difficult places it can be found, the more it costs. That is true with precious stones like diamonds, precious metals like gold, and now precious fossil fuels like petroleum.

This morning in Psalm 40 David confesses for all the world to hear—that he has become buried in the pits of life. And this Psalm is his fleeing to the Lord for refuge. And as we will see this morning, that refuge involves God clearing out, tunneling through, drilling deep, and removing whatever stands in the way of David hearing God's voice—and responding in submissive obedience.

David was told by the Spirit of God that this would be Christ's desire—and that is the desire that David embraced, even in the deepest pits of discouragement, depression, despair, and loneliness.

- No matter what **sin tripped him up**—David said I want to do your will. I will obey. I will dedicate my self to do your will.
- No matter what **emotion pushed him down**—David said I want to do your will. I will obey. I will dedicate my self to do your will.
- No matter what **dark thought pierced him through**—David said I want to do your will. I will obey. I will dedicate my self to do your will.
- No matter what **temptation to quit surrounded him**—David said I want to do your will. I will obey. I will dedicate my self to do your will.

Is that where you are this morning? Even if you are in the pits—nothing can keep you there if you desire to do God's will with all your heart.

Lets join him in Psalm 40 as we read just the opening verses of this struggling young person, living for God—in the pits!

Psalm 40: 1-8. Pray

The path out of the pits—that would be a great title for this Psalm!

If you have ever been in the pits, or know someone who has—listen and learn. This is a Divine gift to us in God's Word!

Drilling Through Pits

What are the pits David was talking about? There are four possibilities drawn from various eras of David's life. Remember, David wrote this after the events. He is looking back with an inspired view of life. God's Spirit within him opened his mind and guided his words.

Everything in this Psalm is exactly what the Spirit of God wanted him to say about these times in the pits. Here are the various pits in David's life that God had to dig out, drill through and remove lots of debris--for David to stay in touch with God.

- **The pit of defeat.** This could be Saul in David's mind. It was so hard. Saul could never be pleased no matter how hard David tried; or maybe it was Saul's bitter hatred and jealousy at David's success that defeated David; or even the bitter agony and defeat of David's own son Absalom's betrayal and attempt to destroy his father left David in despair.

What ever pulled David into the pit of defeat—God could rescue him. That is what David confesses in *Psalm 40: 1 I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry.* After the Lord dug through those layers of defeat, David could again hear His voice and feel His presence.

- **The pit of sin.** This could be on David's mind as he remembered Bathsheba. Remember how David decided to stay home while he as King was supposed to be leading the army. While enjoying his palace in Jerusalem he looked down into the courtyard of a nearby house where the grand daughter of his aged counselor Ahithophel the Gilonite (II Samuel 15: 12) lived were her husband the great warrior of King David, Uriah the Hittite. David had noticed her beauty at other occasions but this evening seeing her unclothed drew him to allow his lusts to plunge him into sin. The rest is so sadly known from 2nd Samuel 11.

Maybe you are caught in a similar sin. Maybe one sin has led you to another and you are hopelessly mired in the pit of sin. That is the nature of sin. Sin is a powerful monster that entraps all who play with it. While captivated by sin there is no end to what you may do. If you are in the pit of sin there is help available—God is in the business of rescuing us from sin.

Flee to Him, cry to Him from your pit and let Him pull you out and put your feet on the Rock. But that will only happen when you repent by seeing that sin is horrible like David says, and that it mires us down like David describes. And that is exactly what David confesses in *Psalm 40:2 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. After the Lord dug through those layers of sin, David could again hear His voice and feel His presence.

- **The pit of bad habits.** We must mortify our proud flesh, when David didn't he may have thought of his pride that lured him into the sin of numbering the people (2 Samuel 24). Habits control our lives either for the good or for the bad. Be careful what habits you cultivate in your life—those small things we do over and over again. Make wise choices. William James, in his classic *Principles of Psychology*, put it this way:

Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke or virtue or vice leaves its ever so little scar.

The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time! " Well! He may not count it, but it is being counted nonetheless. Down among his nerve cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes.

Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one.¹

David knew that the Lord could change him and get him started on a fresh new path. That is what David confesses in *Psalm 40:3* 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.

After the Lord dug through those layers of habits, David could again hear His voice and feel His presence.

Bad habits can be replaced by new ones that are good. This happens by small Spirit prompted choices each day to obey and do God's will—those choices can form a new Spirit empowered habits.

- **The pit of circumstances.** If anyone could wallow in the despair of having all the worst of circumstances, David sure could. When he wasn't running from Saul, he was fleeing his own country men, or the Philistines and everything in between.

David knew that God was watching over every step of his life, he knew God had orchestrated every circumstances to maximize his ability to glorify the Lord! So he joyfully exclaims in *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.

¹ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1952), p. 83.

After the Lord dug through those layers of circumstances, David could again hear His voice and feel His presence.

But when ever we think of hard circumstances look at Paul's. Turn to 1st Corinthians 4:9-13; 2nd Corinthians 6:4-10; 2nd Corinthians 11:24-28.

1 Corinthians 4:11-13 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

2 Corinthians 6:4-10 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Did Paul stay in the pit of circumstances? No, God drilled down through all those troubles and said something to Paul. Remember what He said?

*2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And He said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

We didn't choose and can't change most of our circumstances—but we can choose our attitude. Paul chose to embrace Christ's gracious offer! Just like David who wouldn't let his circumstances defeat him and hold him down. That is what David

confesses in *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.

The Pathway out of the Pits

Christ is our refuge we can flee to Him at any time and in any condition—and He will never turn anyone away. So how did David get rescued from the pits? How did God lead him out? Here is the simple pathway recorded in this confession of God's faithfulness he made from the pits. First note his six steps on the pathway the Lord led him by out of the pits. If you haven't penciled these into your copy of the 40th Psalm you can do that now. After this survey, we will look at each one closely.

1. **DAVID REMEMBERED GOD'S WORK IN HIS 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.*
2. **DAVID REAFFIRMED HIS 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.
3. **DAVID RENEWED HIS 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."
4. **DAVID REPEATED TRUTHS ABOUT GOD**—He is Righteous. Psalm 40:9-10 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.
5. **DAVID REJOICES IN GOD.** Psalm 40:11-17 Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Let Your loving kindness 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. 13 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.

The bottom line of life is—who do you want to please? There are only two possible choices at the deepest level. Either we please God or we in one way or another are seeking to please ourselves. David wanted God to be pleased. It started way back in his youth as we saw in Psalm 19.

6. **DAVID INTERCEDES FOR OTHERS.** Psalm 40: 16-17 **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 and again in 16? He prays for others who sought God. 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:

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. **DAVID REMEMBERED GOD'S WORK IN HIS 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. David remember God's work in his life. Think back over your salvation experience. Repeat it to yourself, mull it over in your heart. Then think of the last time you cried to the Lord and He responded. Go over that in your mind—that is what David was doing!

Maybe even use another's words to capture your own experience—for example John Newton's (1725-1807) "Amazing Grace" (Hymn # 202).

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

3. The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

4. Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

*. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

*. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, Who called me here below,
Shall be forever mine.

5. When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Another great remembrance of God's work in our lives saving us is Charles Wesley's (1707-1788) "And Can it Be? (Hymn # 203). I especially like the third and fourth stanzas:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Like David, we need to remember God's work of grace in our lives.

2. **DAVID REAFFIRMED HIS 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?

Do you remember the words to last Sunday's hymn? It is a great sermon to preach to your soul. Why not practice with me? Lets repeat these words to the Lord and remember God's work in our lives?

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great high Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
King of glory and of grace,
One in Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God!

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