

The Life of David: Living through the Pits of Life

I Samuel 21:15-22:2/Psalm 40

As we open to Psalm 40, David feels life's become like a horrible pit. Probably the closest public event that would mirror David's life is what the quake-struck residents of Haiti and Chile have felt, going through in the ten plus weeks since the 7.0 quake hit Haiti on 1/12/10 and less than a month ago, the much larger 8.8 quake hit in Chile 2/27/10. Since these twin events¹:

- Millions of lives were disrupted.
- Over 200,000 have died.
- Nearly 100,000 are still homeless.
- Tens of thousands got out of touch with friends and family.
- Multiplied thousands are jobless, and have become refugees.
- And all of them are unsure about the future.

Events like those we watched these past two months, are unforgettably imprinted upon our memories.

The² fear, pain, hopelessness we saw reflected from the crowds wandering around dazed by the devastation in the aftermath of those quakes—is a collective picture of what both David, and many others feel at times in life. Life after a huge disaster can aptly be described as living in the pits.

What we saw hundreds of thousands of people facing together, is what David faced alone for months. That is a summary of:

David's Life in The Pits

Remember where we are in God's Word—we are searching the Scriptures and finding the testimonies of David from key events in his life, that God has given to us as inspired Psalms. Where is David when he wrote the 40th Psalm?

David had just gone through an emotional quake that is off the scale. He was still feeling aftershocks, and in Psalm 40 he was remembering life at the bottom, life in the pits. This is what David was feeling as he writes these words:

¹ <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eqarchives/year/byyear.php>

² 050904AM COR-24

- David had lost everything.
- David was homeless.
- David was out of touch with his family and friends and did not know who survived and who hadn't.
- David had no sure supply of food or water.
- David had to find an escape route to flee the dangers he faced.
- David's life and emotions were flooded by a hurricane of troubles.

But David had a choice—sink into despair or flee to the Lord as his refuge. That is the same choice each of us this morning have each day of our lives.

Sink or Find Refuge

David chose to flee to God for refuge; and wrote down in Psalm 40 the pathway out for others who find themselves hitting the bottom in life. Please listen to God's flawless record of David's ravaged life in Psalm 40:

Psalm 40

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 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.

4 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.

6 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."

9 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 lovingkindness 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.

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.

Believers in Christ aren't prevented from hard times and bottoming out in life—they just always have a way out. In fact, most of God's greatest servants have spent a great deal of time in what we could call the pits of life.

Peace and Joys that Never Run Out

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.

Let me illustrate that truth from the life of a very well known person from history.

What is the most widely read, best selling book in the whole world next to the Bible? It is the work of a man who sat in a lonely prison cell for one third of his adult life. A man who lost his first wife to death, had handicapped children, faced constant hardship and loss for much of his adult life. His name—John Bunyan. His book—***Pilgrim's Progress***.

John Bunyan did just as David does in the Psalm. That attitude of fleeing to the Lord for refuge and going on in spite of trials and hardship produced an enduring legacy of praise to the Lord from both David's and John Bunyan's lives. And their testimonies about those hard times have become songs, hymns, and well know books.

Turn again with me to Psalm 40. As you go there, let me tell you about Bunyan's loneliness of the pits and what God produced in his life amidst the stench and filth of a 17th century English prison.

Although Bunyan authored 60 books, the most famous is ***Pilgrim's Progress***. Begun as a story to entertain his children on their visits to his jail cell, it has become one of the most famous and enduring works of Christian fiction.

Bunyan wrote most of the book during his second stay in jail on the brown paper covers his wife used as stoppers on the milk jugs she brought to him in prison. He seems to have been imprisoned at this time for six months, probably in the tiny one-room jail on the bridge over the River Ouse.

First published in 1678, ***Pilgrim's Progress*** sold more than 100,000 copies in its first year in print and remains a best-seller to this day³. Bunyan describes his salvation and the hard pathway of life in this world as a believer. Perhaps better than anyone, John Bunyan expressed the quest for God that marks the Christian life. *Pilgrim's Progress* is the allegorical story of a man who, in a dream, meets a man named Evangelist who asks the despondent hero why he is crying. His answer is poignant:

Sir, I perceive by the Book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to Judgment; and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.

Christian, the hero of Bunyan's story, flees from the wrath to come, and sets his face toward the shining Light and the Wicket Gate to seek an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fades not away⁴. That is his salvation experience.

³ Sword of the Lord. <http://www.swordofthelord.com/biographies/bunyan.htm>

⁴ Sproul, R. C., *The Soul's Quest for God*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1992.

All Believers Face the Pits

His course toward glory is marked by obstacles, however. Friends named Obstinate and Pliable mock him and try to dissuade him from his mission. He encounters the slough of Despond early in his pilgrimage and falls into it. A man named Help rescues him from his plight and says:

This miry slough (pronounced: sluff) is such a place as cannot be mended: It is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends Conviction for Sin doth continually run, and therefore it is called the slough of Despond; for still as the Sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place: And this is the reason of the badness of this place.

What Christian has never visited the slough of Despond? Who has never tried to avoid it altogether? Our souls have all been assailed by doubts, fears, and discouragements. It is not by accident that the most frequent admonition from the lips of Jesus in the New Testament is the exhortation to "Fear not."⁵

When we choose to obey. We flee to the Lord. He is our pathway out of the pits, so that we can rejoice anytime, anywhere we find ourselves in this life.

The Pathway Out of the Pits

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.

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.*

⁵ Sproul, R. C., *The Soul's Quest for God*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1992.

The first step out of the pits is to remember God's work in our lives. David remembers 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!

Don't be surprised by troubles. Real victory in life is not evading and escaping the majority of troubles that head our way. No, it is to seek that God be exalted through my life what ever He chooses to do with me and all my hard times.

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?

Live with mysteries. We can't always know why God is allowing circumstances—but we do know we can trust Him to do all things well. Jesus said to His disciples in John 13:7, "*What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.*"

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."*

Inviting God to open our ears is the key to submission with God. This is a dual analogy. Digging is a word for clearing away debris as well as deeply inscribing. These are the two steps to submission—clear out any hindrances that are in the way, and submit to the permanent marking of ownership.

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.

If we are willing and so desire we declare that publicly like Paul does so often. "I want to serve the Lord all my days". And when we make that offering of our lives that is reflected in Romans 12, it is a permanent service that goes through life and lasts forever. Like Thomas Chisholm declared:

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.

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. The key New Testament book on righteousness⁶ is Romans—God’s righteousness is mentioned 66 times and we see our need of it.

So David’s life testifies to God’s righteousness. God is always faithful and what He does is right! So David says God is righteous.

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

5. **LIKE DAVID--REJOICE IN GOD EVEN IN THE PITS.**

⁶ In Romans Paul declares that God is righteous in the four key areas that matter for eternity: God is righteous in declaring us as hopeless in our **sin (1-2)**; God is righteous in providing for our **salvation (3-5, 9-11)**; God is righteous in demanding our **sanctification (6-8)**; God is righteous in bestowing gifts **for our service (12-16)**.

*Psalm 40:13-17 (also as 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!"*

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.

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.

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

David broke with the crowd, stopped getting and seeking approval from his peers and went straight to the top. He wanted God and God alone to be his goal. And that was still his desire.

One way or another we all get what we want in life. David wanted God. Do we? Really, down deep in your heart of hearts are you planning, figuring, calculating, scheming—how do give God more of your life? David was and did and look at him now—forever settled in Heaven as a man after God's own heart.

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!**"

Like David, we need to rejoice in the Lord.

Like David, we need to learn how to make it through the pits of life and out into the sunshine. Finding Christ as our refuge means that:

1. **LIKE DAVID--REMEMBER GOD'S WORK IN YOUR LIFE.**
2. **LIKE DAVID--REAFFIRM YOUR TRUST IN GOD.**
3. **LIKE DAVID—RENEW YOUR SUBMISSION TO GOD.**
4. **LIKE DAVID--REPEAT TRUTHS ABOUT GOD—He is Righteous.**

5. LIKE DAVID--REJOICE IN GOD EVEN IN THE PITS.