

Christ Obeyed (Evening Service)

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[0 : 0 0] Let me add my welcome to Tad. So I am Aaron and it's wonderful to be here with you this evening. If you're new, come and say hi to me. I'd love to meet you. I won't ask you awkward questions.

I just want to say hi. So we finished Malachi, a series in Malachi last week. And tonight we start a new series. So we're looking, this time of year what we do is we take sort of five or six Psalms that group themselves around a particular theme. And this year we're going to be looking at Psalms that seem to have a particular relevance to Christ. And we'll talk more about that shortly.

But tonight we're in Psalm 40 and you heard it read. And I wonder, as you heard it read, I wonder if you thought to yourself, oh, I like the start. It's quite good. It's a bit confusing in the middle there. Quite like the end. I think we like the start and the end because they're about God helping us. But I actually think the middle is the key to understanding the whole thing. So what we'll do is we'll tackle the middle section last and we'll begin by looking at the start and the end. That's a confusing sentence, I know, but you'll catch up or you'll be fine. So we're going to look at the start. Anyway, that's what we're going to do right now. We're going to look at the first three verses. And if you have your Bibles open, that's probably helpful. So verses one to three, the basic just is this, is David is recalling a time that God rescued him. And in verse two, he talks about a miry bog and being in a pit and whatever this thing was, whatever the scenario was, he couldn't get out of it. He's completely helpless. And I'm going to assume if you're older here, you can rattle off about half a dozen times in your life where you felt like you were in the miry clay or the pit of some description. And if you're younger here, I don't want you to feel left out. These times are coming. It'll catch up. So what did David do? So he's in this terrible situation, whatever it is. And what does he do? He says, first one is what he does. He goes, I waited patiently for the Lord, he says. The message version of the Bible translates it like translates to this. It says, I waited and I waited and I waited for God, which is actually a pretty good literal translation. So what did David do in the midst of his despair?

He waited for God. He waited for God that he trusted in to act. And the Hebrew indicates he waited for a really long time. And this waiting, when we think waiting, often we might think healthcare in Canada, you know, we might think I'm waiting for a knee operation. And so I know I'm like a number in a system and it's an impersonal thing. And I just have to kind of wait it out and eventually I'll get a phone call. It's not like that. This waiting is more like this.

It's more like the waiting of a sick child who's waiting for a parent to bring this child Tylenol in the middle of the night and trusting that the parent knows how much to give and when to give it. Now we can know that and you can hear that, but waiting is actually very difficult, isn't it? I think waiting is very hard for us. I find it difficult to wait for anything.

[3 : 20] I was trying to think of an example and I think food and maybe doctors again. So food, like if you think, like back in the days if somebody wanted something to eat, they have to sharpen up a stick and gather a hunting party, you know, and they'll go out for a couple of days and they'll find a herd and they'll stalk the herd, you know, like it's a big process. Today I can stand in front of a microwave and wait for 90 seconds for something to be ready and I'm still like, like I feel like this thing's stealing my life, you know, like can you believe, can you believe 90 seconds I have to wait for this? I was in the doctors the other day and I'm in the waiting room and I had this kind of moment where I realised I was a terrible waiter because I asked the lady, I think she indicated it might be like 30 minutes or something. So I immediately get out my phone and I immediately just research random nonsense or I'm on social media, you know, I'm just doing,

I couldn't, I couldn't just wait. I couldn't be present and be calm and wait. I had to be entertained. Waiting's tough. And that's the danger of our waiting thing, right? Is I'm in the waiting room and I had to fill that gap with something.

Waiting's tough. And I think in the midst of our problems, we don't wait well. We don't wait well for God. And I think that's why when you're in the pit, when we're stuck in the miry clay, sometimes it's very easy to turn to sin because we think, well, just anything to make me happy.

I'll do anything to make me happy while I'm waiting. Waiting. So it can be something like, there's lots of examples. Here's one. Whilst waiting not to be single, you know, we could fall into a trap of sort of randomly hooking up with people.

And what you do is you actually just dig this hole in the pit for yourself, don't you? Waiting's hard. But waiting is baseline Christianity. So the whole nature of our journey is waiting.

[5 : 31] We're waiting for Christ to return. We're waiting for God to answer our prayers. And prayers don't come immediately. Answers don't come. And prayers are not magic. And we don't know how God's going to answer them. But we don't wait without hope. And we don't wait passively. We see in verse 1 that David's not just moping around in this waiting time. That he's crying out to God. That's what we do.

It's active waiting. So what does David do? He waits. He waits. He waits. He waits. And he waits. And he waits. And he waits. And he waits. He does this one good thing. He waits. And God does many good things in response to that. And we see in those verses, he lifts them out of the pit. He puts his life in a secure place. He puts a new song in his heart. And not only that, this whole experience of David's becomes this powerful witness to others. Verse 3, 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. See, our greatest witness is one of our greatest witnesses. It's people seeing us go through trials, go through very difficult things, go through pain. And people see us doing that as people of hope.

We should be able to bring thoughtful propositions about God to the table when we're interacting with people that don't know God. But it's personal testimony, how God has worked in our life to pull us out of miry pits. Goodness, that's a fabulous witness to the goodness of God. And this is emphasized in verses 9 to 10. You see, if you slide your eyes a bit further down the passage.

What's David's response to rescue? He tells people. And if you look at those verses very quickly, you'll see all the speaking words. I have told, I have spoken, I've not restrained my lips, I've not hidden this, I've not kept something a secret. So there you go. That's verses 1 to 3.

And what he does in the next verse is he universalizes this experience. So he goes, so this thing happened to me and it was really bad and I had to wait a really long time, but God pulled me through it. And now he says, this can be your experience.

[8 : 00] Others can have this experience. So he writes this, it's like a little song or a little maxim or something. Verse 4, blessed is the man, this is man and woman, blessed is the man and woman who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud and to those who go astray after a lie.

He's saying, whatever you're going through, he's urging the people that are reading this, don't do this by yourself. Don't try and nut this out by yourself. You can get through it with God.

He goes, I know this, I know this to be true. I know this is true and I want you to know this is true. Don't go through this by yourself. Walk through it with God, he says. Now, here's the question.

Why is David saying all this stuff? He's got other things to talk about. Why write a psalm that begins with him recalling a past deliverance, something that happened a while ago? Well, the reason he's writing this, the reason he writes this down, and the reason he begins with past deliverance is because he's in trouble again. He's in another pit. You jump back down to the end of the psalm. Verse 12, for evils have encompassed me beyond number. My iniquities have overtaken me.

I cannot see. They're more than the hairs of my head, my heart. It fails. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver it. O Lord, make haste to help me. So he's in a pit again and he's praying, God, get me through this. God, you've saved me in the past. And he's remembering that. And he's rehearsing the goodness of that in his mind. He's rehearsing it. He's thinking about it because his life's bad again. Help me, God. So that's why the start of the psalm's there, to remind David of a previous rescue because he needs it again. Now, this first problem of David's, verses one to three, we don't know what was going on. Was there like, was he trying to be assassinated? Had an invading army had come in? We've got no, was he really sick? We've got no idea what was going on.

[10 : 13] But the second problem, the current problem of David, we have a little bit of an idea of the source anyway. I don't know if you noticed this. Verse 12. See, the first problem is broad. We can apply it very generally because we don't know specifically what was going on. But verse 12, you can maybe relate to this. Verse 12. Here's the source of his problem.

So whatever this situation is, and it sounds bad, it's his own fault. He is in this situation because his own sin, his own selfishness put him there. And it's so bad, he is so overwhelmed by it, his heart fails him. And his enemies see it as an opportunity to take him out. They say this, ah, David's done something stupid. We can get shot of him.

We can get rid of him. It's a great psalm. I like it. It's very realistic, isn't it? I think, you know, the, you want to break it down to a couple of main points. One of them is certainly this is, well, it's not this. Here's what it's not. It's not, if you have enough faith, you won't suffer. Now, you know that to be nonsense, right? You can't, it's not, that's not Christianity. I think one of the main points is this. We're really good at digging pits and falling into them. And we need to be rescued from these constantly. And God is faithful to do that. Now, I need to say a million words to nuance this. I'll say about like seven or something. What rescue looks like is up to God. You know, sometimes God actually does take away a problem. Sometimes God does bring healing into physical healing. Sometimes God, sometimes he's this miraculous job offer or opportunity or relationship or something.

But sometimes in God's wisdom, rescue looks very different to that. Rescue looks like walking with a limp for the rest of your life. But your rescue is a heart rescue because it draws you, it draws you close to God. And that's what rescue looks like. And we don't always, we might not see that.

Anyway, let's get back to the middle of the psalm now, because I think we've looked at the start and the ends, but I think the middle is sort of where some of the gold is really. Because I don't know, when you read that, you sort of think, well, maybe, maybe, maybe really good if like, if the psalm just went from verse five straight to verse nine, oh, I had this terrible problem and God saved me. I've got this terrible problem again. God, God, will you save me again? But there's this middle stuff. What's, what's going on there? So let's have a look at this tricky little section just for a few minutes. So let me remind you of what it says here. Verses six to eight.

[13 : 12] In sacrifice and offering, you've not delighted, but you've given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering, you've not required. But then I said, behold, I've come.

In the scroll of the book, it is written of me. I delight to do your will. Oh my God, your law is written in my heart. Okay. A little bit tricky, right? What's that about? I think on the first level, here's what it is. So David has said, I had this huge problem. God rescued me.

Uh, it's a fabulous witness to other people. Now let me tell you what else I have learned about this. It's like David's learning from his journey. So David first says here, here's something I've learned that, um, what's not this. It's not, he's not saying I've learned that the sacrificial system is complete nonsense. He's not saying that, even though it says, God, you don't delight in it.

But David is saying here, well, he's realized that God doesn't want just empty religious practice. So it's, so it's, uh, you know, like Tad, Tad says, oh, man, I've got this, I've got this, got this thing in my life. You know, I've got this big, like, you know, water and we need to get rid of, I don't know. I'd better start turning up the church every week, you know? If I come to church every week, I'll show the big man that I'm kind of like, I'm a pretty good guy. That's, that's empty religion, right? That's an empty religious practice.

God doesn't, he wants our hearts. He doesn't want us to just grind out our faith. But we grind out our faith when we, when we, when we pray to him, but we don't mean it, or we say grace and we don't mean it, when we sing songs and we're not really engaged in it, we're kind of just grinding it out. You know, in, in Amos five, there is this stinging indictment of empty religious practices. And God is, he's speaking to his people and it's like, it's very harsh. God says, he says this, you can look it up afterwards. It's sort of like in the mid twenties of Amos chapter five. He says, I hate it when you guys get together. Like he's talking to his people, you know, doing their things that they do, their feasts. I hate it when you guys get together.

[15 : 35] I hate your singing because it's empty. It's just, they're just doing stuff because they think they should do it and they might earn some favor. So what does David learn? No more empty religious practices that God wants our heart. And the way God is going to get there is through our ears.

It says, I've opened your ears so you can hear me because my words matter. I'm speaking truth into them. God has things he wants you to believe. He has, he has things he wants you to do. So he opens our ears to hear him. And when God opens our ears, we become people in verse eight, they can say, I delight to do your will. Even when life is really tough, I will keep doing your will. I'll keep being obedient, even though, even though I want to fill that gap. Even though I want to fill this waiting time with stuff that'll just make me happy for a moment. No, we, we were people who delight to do God's will. Now just a, just a couple more minutes here that, here's a good question. Did David delight to do in God's will? Bit, a little bit sketchy to be honest. It's a bit touch and go, his life, as is ours. So is David just sort of talking it up? Is he writing stuff down and be like, oh, this will be, this will sound good. This will sound impressive. No, I mean, I think like, like us, I think his intention was to live as a person who delighted in God's will and always did God's will, but it's not his life experience. So this one level we have David speaking his own words on his behalf, inspired by the Holy Spirit. On another level, these are the words of Christ.

I think what happens, what's happened here is the Holy Spirit has caused David to express truths that go, you know, that are well above his pay grade, that go beyond his current experience. And I think what he's doing here in this little middle section, he's, he's describing something much bigger than himself. Now you go, where did you get that from? Why are you saying that? Because that's, you could just, you could say anything, couldn't you? Well, I take it from Hebrews 10.

And Hebrews 10 directly quotes these words, these verses here. In Hebrews 10, it says, these are the words of Christ. See, our intention is above to say, I'll delight to do your will, God, I'll do everything you want. Absolutely, 100%, 100%. We don't do it. See, only Christ is ever fully delighted in God and ever fully obeyed God. A great example, Garden of Gethsemane, facing the deep pit of the cross, and Christ resolves himself in prayer in relationship with his heavenly father. And he says, but not my will, but yours be done. So what Hebrews does, right? What Hebrews does is it takes us back to the Psalm and it recasts this whole thing. And it says, this whole thing, there's a whole other level to this. He recasts the Hebrews, this, this Psalm 40. And instead of, instead of, these are just the words of David, the words of Christ. And instead of just,

God will help you with your problems, which is wonderful and true. It's saying, God will rescue you from your greatest enemy. So if you go to Hebrews 10, you read it, you'll see what I'm talking about here. God will save you from your greatest enemy. God will save you from sin.

[19 : 04] So we habitually dig these pits and we fall into them because we've, you know, we're trying to fill these gaps, right? Trying to fill these spaces in our life. We need to be continually rescued from our own selfishness, for our own sin, from a mire bog we can't escape. But God had entered our world.

God entered our world in Christ and staged this ultimate rescue, this amazing rescue. And it's only something that he could do because he's the only person that can actually fulfill these words of David and say, yes, I will delight to do your will. I will do your will completely.

And I'll be the ultimate sacrifice. So folks, here we go. Finishing up here. Some of you have a tough time ahead. Some of you have a current difficult time in your life. Here's what I'm saying to you.

Trust God. Be obedient to God. The psalm calls us to obedience and keep praying. And no matter how we feel, and even when we feel guilty, and even when we disappoint ourselves and we disappoint God, trust in this. Trust in the fact that God has already rescued you.

that he's pulled you out of the biggest pit you could ever dig. And he's put your life on the solid ground of a relationship with him through Christ. And you cannot out sin God's mercy. You're on the most solid ground in the world. So there you go. Trust in that folks. Amen.