

# From Pit To Praise

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Please, to the passage that we read in the book of Psalms, that's Psalm 40. We'll read verses 1 to 3 once again, and then come to look at some of the teaching of these verses.

I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He 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.

Whenever we find ourselves looking at a rescue, sometimes it happens. It's always something that draws our attention very keenly. Even if it's just a practice of a rescue, such as you find sometimes if you're on the ferry, and when the rescue helicopter sometimes carries out a practice rescue, or an exercise to lift somebody off the deck of the ferry, usually it's somebody of one of their own crew, maybe sometimes it's somebody who's dropped onto the ferry first of all, then the helicopter comes round again, and comes to lift the person up in the harness, and out over the sea, and then back up into the helicopter.

It's always something that draws people. You'll find people going outside, of course, understandably, to look at all of that, because it's such a fascinating thing. It draws your attention. It has so much about it that just draws your mind to it.

[ 1 : 32 ] It's full of excitement. It's something that really hits your mind. And these first verses of Psalm 40 are a bit like that in terms of what they describe.

In these words you find God's rescue of his people, God's rescue of us as sinners from the pit of destruction, God's rescue job by lifting us out of that, placing us safely on a rock.

We should really come to these sorts of words in the Bible, this passage itself, with that same sense of excitement or interest, because they do deal with a rescue, a much more important rescue in many senses, than what you find in the ordinary course of rescue in this world.

It's a spiritual rescue. It's the rescue of persons, of people, from the pit, he says here, of destruction, from the mighty bog, to set them on a rock, to make their steps secure, to put a new song in their mouth.

It's the personal reflection of David. That's evident from the title. It's addressed to the choir master, a psalm of David. And today we're used to these verses.

[ 2 : 49 ] We sing these verses very often, but you see that's one of the dangers that we face when we come to be so familiar with Scripture, with the words of the Psalms, or of the Bible elsewhere.

We become so familiar to them, we think, well, there's nothing much new in that. I know that already. We don't get that same sense of excitement or interest that we ought to have always coming to passages of the Bible.

And today, I want to just briefly look at two things that come from these verses, the rescue itself, and secondly, the result of that rescue. The rescue, as it describes, the pit he was taken from, the prayer that he uttered, and the placement that took place when God placed him on a rock, having taken him out of the pit.

So the rescue involves the pit, and the prayer, and the placement. But the result of that is praise. It's from the pit to praise, we can call our study this morning.

It's from this pit, yes, to the rock, but it's also to praise, to a life of praise. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

[ 3 : 57 ] So there's the praise itself, but it's also including a prediction. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

That's the outline, basically, of our study this morning. The rescue. Here he is talking about the pit. First of all, I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and heard my cry.

We'll look at the cry in a moment. He drew me up from the pit of destruction out of the mighty bog. Now there are two elements you can see there describing this pit.

It's the pit of destruction, he calls it. We'll see what that means. But it's also a pit in which he was aware of a mighty, cloggy bog or mud that he had got stuck in.

It wasn't just a pit. It wasn't an empty pit. It was a pit that contained this clay, mighty, muddy substance that held him fast.

[ 5 : 00 ] And it's a description in many ways that we can follow in our own spiritual experiences. It is, first of all, the pit of destruction. He drew me out of the pit of destruction. In other words, David is making it very clear what happens if you're not rescued from this pit.

If he had not been rescued, he would have died in that pit. Whether he's talking about something that happened in a literal way in his life, or is he just using this as an image of his own spiritual experience, it doesn't matter, but it's certainly in the psalm because we sing it as a spiritual experience and reality as we sing these verses in praise to God.

As we apply these verses to our own lives as human beings, we understand that they contain something morally and spiritually important for us. And that this pit is the pit that we are actually in in our sinfulness, in our rebellion against God as a result of what we have done against God, what had happened, what happened in Eden, what happened in Adam, our first parent.

We are in the pit of destruction. And all the way through the Bible, you talk, we find the psalmist in this book of Psalms and others throughout the Bible speaking about this aspect of our relationship with God and with eternity.

We are in the pit of destruction. Psalm 116 that we sang has a very similar description where it talks there about the chords or the bands of death.

[ 6 : 35 ] I love the Lord because He heard my voice. He inclined His ear to me. The snares of death encompassed me. The pangs of death, of Sheol it says there, which means death or hell, laid hold on me.

I suffer distress and anguish. And all of that reminds us if God doesn't save us, we are done for. That is the outcome of our sin, of our rebellion against God.

It is a word which means utter desolation and being wasted and perishing and ultimately death.

There is no doubt in David's mind what would have happened but for this great rescue of God.

That is what we need to become convinced of too. That we are in the pit of destruction and need of rescue. In the time of our birth, whatever our circumstances in life may be, however well off we may be in financial or material terms, that is not going to rescue us from our dilemma as sinners.

We are in the pit of destruction and we require God's rescue. And it is not just the pit of destruction, he says, out of the mighty bog. It is bad enough that he is talking about a pit but it is even worse when he talks about this pit of destruction that has this mighty bog that held him fast.

[ 8 : 02 ] He needed someone to lift him out of it. He could not extract himself out of it. And in those days, and to this day, you find naturally occurring pits in these desert parts in these areas that David was familiar with.

In the Middle East, you find that they are hewed out sometimes by flash floods and then filled up with sediment, with mud if you fall into them. The top is narrower than the bottom.

It is difficult to get out of them. It is impossible if they have got this cloggy mud at the bottom that you cannot actually extricate yourself, release yourself from very easily. You are caught in it.

You are caught up in it. It sucks you down. It keeps you there. That is what David is saying. Not only was he in this pit with these high sides, with the restrictions that that itself caused, he took me out of the mighty bog.

Sticky, glue-like bog that held him fast. That is what sin does to us too. That is what our sin actually does in terms of keeping us stuck fast until we are rescued in this pit of destruction.

[ 9 : 18 ] Many people will tell us today, it does not feel like that to me. I do not see that my life is actually constricted in that way. I do not see that I am actually held in a way that is against my will.

It is not something that is damaging to me. I feel free. I feel able to rejoice and to enjoy life. It does not feel like I am in a pit of destruction, that I am stuck in a miry bog.

I am living life the way I want it to be lived. It is how I choose to live. Of course, that reminds us that you do not come to be convinced of this or to see that this is the truth about ourselves, each and every one of us as we are as sinners, until God comes to convince you of it.

And when the Holy Spirit comes to apply this word of God to your life and to my life, this is one of the things that happens as a result. God comes to persuade us that however free we may feel our life to be, however much we may think that our life has been and is and will be the way we want it to be and the best way for us.

When God comes and convinces us of what we are, we can see, I need to be rescued. I need to be taken out of this. I need God to lift me out of this or I am going to die here.

[10:41] And I am going to die forever. The death that hell is if I do not get rescued. That is what David is bringing before us in this pit.

A pit from which he needs to be rescued. And that pattern is all the way through the Bible. We will see it in some of the references, some of the passages, the verses we will see in a minute.

There is the pit but let us secondly look at his prayer because the rescue involved his prayer. I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and heard my cry.

What else is there to do when you are in the pit? When you are in this predicament what else is there to do but to cry for help? When you realize where you are, when you realize that death is closing in on you, when you realize that this is really your condition, what else is there to do but to cry out for rescue?

Well sadly we don't naturally do that, do we? I didn't cry for rescue in the earlier part of my life before God came to show me where I was in reality.

[11:51] I didn't cry out for rescue, I didn't see my need to be rescued. You don't cry out for rescue until you are convinced that you need to be rescued, that you are in that situation. When he says I waited patiently, that word patiently in Hebrew has an intensity to it.

Don't think that the word means just in a relaxed kind of mode or manner he waited for something to happen. The word patiently actually means literally he waited with intensity on the Lord as part of the process of his crying out to God until God came to rescue him.

This is what he was doing when he realized that he was in this pit, that he was going to die in that pit if he wasn't rescued, he cried out with intensity to God. There is an intensity about this word because if you find yourself literally, if you were to find yourself literally in this sort of pit in a desert with some boggy mud clinging to you holding you fast down in that pit, you wouldn't start playing with your mobile phone.

You wouldn't start actually playing games on your mobile phone. You wouldn't start doing these sorts of activities to relax. You would actually cry out. If you had your mobile phone, you would use it to call to somebody to come and rescue you.

That is what the psalmist David is saying. I waited with intensity upon the Lord. And he cried out, he inclined to me and heard my cry.

[13:26] My cry for rescue. You know, one of the challenges we face as Christians and as a church today is the idea that you don't need to be rescued at all.

That it doesn't matter what your belief is, as long as you're sincere, everything will work out okay. Even if you've got another religion that you follow assiduously, as long as you're sincere in it, it doesn't really matter, God will accept you for your sincerity.

That's one of the things that we have to discount and need rescued from. Because that's part of the pit itself, part of the workings of sin, part of the legacy of sin, part of the way by which Satan persuades us.

Actually, all will work out well, even if things seem tough at the moment, even if the Bible is seeking to convince us that we are in this pit, that we need to be rescued from it, we're not to worry about that, because somehow God and His goodness will ensure that we will actually come to be in heaven at last.

It's not going to work that way. Why else would you have so much in the Bible to do with rescue, to do with God saving us, to God bringing us into a true freedom from our sinful situation?

[14:51] So he says, I waited patiently, I waited with intensity, I waited until he inclined and heard my cry, I cried out to him, I kept on crying out to him.

Isn't that what you did yourself? Isn't that what you must do if you haven't done it already? Isn't that so important? Especially in view of the next thing, where he inclined and heard my cry.

There are a few more wonderful truths in the Bible than that God listens to us when we cry for rescue.

It's stated very matter of fact. It's stated as if it's almost inevitable, as if it's something that really God has the duty to do.

But it's not like that. It's in his mercy, it's in his grace, it's in his goodness that he inclines his ear to our cry, when we cry to him. It doesn't matter whether it's for the first time as we come to him to rescue us from that pit of sin, or even in your ongoing life as a Christian.

[16:03] There will be many times when you feel that you need to cry out to God, when you have cried out to God, when you may be crying out to God even now. How precious it is to you, that you know from God's own truth, that his ears inclined to the cry of his people, that he does actually cup his ear as it were, straining his ear as it were, just to pick out the cry of your voice as you cry out to him.

You remember how he described himself to Moses in the book of Exodus when he was going to send Moses to the people of Israel in Egypt as they were in their bondage to the Egyptians, mistreated as slaves.

You recall how Moses, as he was spoken to by God in chapter 3 of Exodus, verses 7 to 8, this is what God said, the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

You see, it's the same thing exactly in principle. The people of Israel, the people that Moses belonged to, that David belonged to, there is where they were at that time, in the pit of Egypt, in the miry bog of slavery.

[17:39] They needed to be rescued. God is saying, I've heard their cry. And what does he say? I have come down to rescue them. We'll see that in a minute in Psalm 40. I've come down to rescue them, to deliver them out of that situation, but in order to bring them into a land that's flowing with milk and honey, out of the pit and onto the rock, into security.

captivity. And you remember Jesus, Jesus in Mark chapter 10, verse 49, as he's traveling along, a beggar sitting by the roadside named Bartimaeus, blind, depending on people, throwing something into his cup for his living, cries out after Jesus, Jesus, son of David, have mercy upon me.

And the disciples turn around and tell him to be quiet. Try and stop him crying out. But the more that they tried that, the more he cried out, son of David, have mercy on me.

And you read something remarkable. You can pass over it very quickly. It doesn't seem all that important, but it's filled with the most wonderful theology and truth.

Jesus stopped. Jesus stopped. A beggar causing Jesus, the son of God, to stop.

[19:06] How? By a cry for mercy. And that's really, in a picturesque way, exactly what David is saying here. That's exactly what happens when God listens to your cry and to my cry.

We're not worthy that God should listen to our cry. Who are we anyway in the presence of God? Well, we're a people in which he is interested, interested to the extent that he's listening out for our cry.

Don't think, as some people will tell you, you mean nothing to God. That you're not important in any sense to God. This great God who created you now that you're a sinner, now that you're lost, now that you've rebelled against him, don't think that he's no longer interested in you, that you're no longer meaningful to him.

Would he have sent Jesus to die on the cross if we were just a new relevance? something just to kick aside and ignore?

He inclined to me and heard my cry. Have you stopped Jesus with your cry?

[20:18] Do you know the brilliance of this for yourself? is it something you've never yet done? And it's not just that you do it once, but we do it again and again and again.

Because every day we live, for some reason or other, we need to cry out to God. And the more our distress, the more our restrictions, the more our anxiety, as we're seeing in the evening, through many tribulations, we enter into the kingdom of God, the more you can be persuaded.

You have a God on the throne of heaven, who is inclined to your cry. Where is there anything more precious than that to you today? As a sinner, there's the rescue from the pit, through the prayer, and notice the placement.

He drew me up from the pit of destruction, and set my feet upon a rock. Well, here is drawing him up, first of all, in order to set him to set his feet upon the rock.

He's really, literally saying, he caused me to ascend, he really drew me up, is a very good translation of the data we have in the ESV. He drew me up, he drew me up, he caused this, he did this.

[ 21 : 35 ] I didn't do it myself, David is saying, how could I? But he did it. Psalm 18, very similar references to what you have here, which just shows how much this is found throughout the Bible, throughout the book of Psalms as well.

Psalm 18, verses 4 to 6, the cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me, the snares of death confronted me in my distress, I called upon the Lord to my God, I cried for help from his temple, he heard my voice, and my cry reached his ears.

Then he describes this incredible upheaval that took place, which is really David's way of describing how amazing it is that God actually answers such a prayer, and that God's answer is not just a small, minute, insignificant thing, but you see, it goes on then to describe in summary, in verse 16, he sent down from on high, he took me, he drew me out of many waters, he rescued me from my strong enemy.

I like to call that the theology of the helicopter, because that's really what it is. He sent down from above, he took hold of me, he drew me up, that's what the helicopter rescue does, that's why it's so fascinating to see the winchman coming down onto the deck of the ferry in the exercise, or if it's a real rescue, that's what you see happening.

The winchman is lowered down, you admire the skill of the helicopter pilot, keeping that vehicle absolutely steady, even if it's a raging gale, you admire the skill that keeps it so steady, that the winchman can come down and land on the deck of a heaving ship, and then tie the mechanism round the person to be rescued, and then up he goes, over above the sea, on into the rescue helicopter.

[ 23 : 39 ] Well, here, spiritually, God's skillful rescue of David. You can apply it to every saved sinner. sinner. He drew me up from the pit of destruction.

But when you're rescued by the helicopter, it doesn't just mean you're taken on board the helicopter. It's not the end of the story, is it? That's not where it ends. It's then, you're then taken on to hospital and hopefully eventually to home.

That's what David is really saying as well. He set my feet on a rock. You find the same thing in Ephesians. The time's going past.

You need to hurry on. Ephesians chapter 2. Remember, the first few verses there, we describe what you might say is the pit of sin and our sinfulness. You who are dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, that's Satan, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and where by nature the children of wrath, like the rest of mankind, there's the pit of destruction, the miry bog. And you've got the contrast, but, or the rescue first and then the contrast, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive in union or together with Christ.

[ 25 : 21 ] He set us on the rock that is Christ because that is the only secure foundation to life, isn't it? Jesus Christ himself, the person of Christ, and that's what David's words here really mean when you take the New Testament into your purview, into account.

He set my feet upon a rock and making my steps secure. You see, not only does God place us on a secure foundation, what a great contrast there is between the pit and the miry bog of the pit.

You can't use that as a foundation, but when he's rescued from that, he's placed on a rock, a total contrast to the miry bog, the squelchy bog of the pit.

not only that, but he made my steps secure. God places us in Christ, when God rescues us.

He gives direction to our life as well as foundation. He shows us the way to go. He keeps guiding us in that direction. That's what David's words really say.

[ 26 : 37 ] He set my feet on a rock making my steps secure, making my steps secure and giving me direction in my life.

Well, there is the rescue. I hope you follow that yourself, not just logically, though I hope that was clear as crystal, but spiritually and experientially for yourself.

That it has been your experience this great rescue. And that this great rescue is something, as you now see, we will sing about.

That you sing about in praise to God. Out of the pit, by prayer, into placement on the rock. Let me just close by the result of that.

Verse 3, he put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Now, it would be remiss to leave that out of the total picture that David is giving us here.

[ 27 : 41 ] Because not only is he saying, he rescued me out of this pit and placed my feet on this rock. He heard my cry. Not only that, but he gave me, instead of my cry, he gave me this new song in my mouth.

You see, he couldn't have sung this new song before he was rescued. Until he had been rescued. It's the song of the rescued. It's the song of those who know that they have come to be delivered by God from their sin, from their guilt, from all that their sin brought about.

You see, he says, it's a new song. He put a new song in my mouth. It has in it not just the idea of new in the sense that it couldn't have been done before he was rescued.

There is that to it, certainly. But it's new in the sense that it has a freshness to it. There's a freshness to the song of praise that David now has.

And when you come into this new situation to know that your life has been rescued by God, to know that Jesus is your Savior, and when you come to know that deliverance, even in situations in this life as a Christian through which he takes you, through the deserts of this life, through the times when you know that you're struggling in your life, when you come to rescue from that, when God delivers you, or takes you through that, and when you're on the other side of it, you have a new song.

[ 29 : 10 ] Your experiences in the pit add a dimension to your song which it wouldn't otherwise have. It's new in the sense.

It's fresh. It has that newness to it. It's praise to our God. That's the content of it. You know, every time we're singing the praises of God, even in our corporate worship here, what we're really doing, you can think of it this way, we're sending a letter of thanks to God.

We're writing out a letter of thanks to God for what he is, for who he is, for what he's done, for his rescue of us especially. When you're singing the praises of God, and we'll sing these verses in a moment at the close of our service, these few verses, the beginning of Psalm 40, what's happening there is that we come using the words that God has given us throughout the Psalms, as we use in our practice, or whatever people use in terms of their praising of God elsewhere.

They are sending a letter of thanks to God. Sing these words, thankfully. If you know that that's what your context is today, that you've been rescued by God.

Because they are words that comprise a letter of thanks to God. He put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God.

[ 30 : 38 ] And then he's got a prediction, many shall see it, and shall fear, and put their trust in the Lord. You see, David is concerned that it's not just that he will benefit from this experience of being rescued by God.

He's got a burden in his heart now as somebody who's been rescued, that others will come and know this for themselves. Many will see. Many will realize what's happened to me.

And will come, he says, and fear. That's to reverence God, to pay homage to God, to put their trust in the Lord, as he puts it himself there. It's not to draw attention to himself that David is saying this. It's so that he will draw attention to his God. That's what the burden of the saved people of God is. Everyone today here who is rescued, who is a Christian, who's standing on the rock that is Christ, is concerned that all others who are not yet there will come to know this for themselves.

Many shall see and put their trust in the Lord. I understand that when a honeybee discovers a new source of nectar that's not been tapped before by the bees in that hive, that bee comes back to that hive, and you can see this on film and video, it comes back to that hive and it performs a certain kind of dance, you might say.

[ 32 : 08 ] And it's a figure of eight dance. It goes around like this, vibrating its body in a figure of eight for some time.

And it's been discovered that if you take a line through the middle of that figure of eight, whichever way the line, whatever direction it's in, that's the direction towards the new source of nectar.

It's an amazing thing that the honeybee is able to detect where that new source, even if it's a distance away from the hive, comes back to the hive, performs this dance in the exact direction in which the bees need to go to retrieve this new source of honey.

That's what a Christian life really is about. It's setting the direction as to where Christ is to be found, as to where rescue exists, as to where we also have found our hope and want others to have that hope too.

When Jesus was revealed as the Messiah in the Gospel of John, I mentioned this before, but it's important many times to us to notice it. Those who had been previously disciples of John the Baptist turned from following John the Baptist because his ministry was fulfilled in Jesus.

[ 33 : 34 ] And they began to follow Jesus. And Jesus turned to them and asked them, what are you seeking? These two disciples. One of them was John himself, we understand.

And one of those who heard John the Baptist speak was Andrew, Simon, Peter's brother. He found his brother Simon. Jesus turned to them, first of all, these two disciples, one of them being the beloved disciple, we understand.

Anyway, he says, what are you seeking? And Jesus turned and said, what are you seeking? So they said, Rabbi, where are you staying? Where do you abide? He said, come and you will see. These words are really important in this passage of John. Come and see. Come and see for yourself. Let's see. So Andrew found Simon, Peter's brother.

He found Simon. And he said to Simon, we have found the Messiah. You can just imagine the excitement in these words. He wouldn't have just gone home and said, we found the Messiah.

[ 34 : 40 ] Come and look at it. We have found the Messiah. What generations had been waiting for. He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, so on. Next day Jesus said, go to Galilee. He found Philip and said, follow me. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? He's not prepared to accept the word of Philip at all. What does Philip say?

Come and see. Come and see. These are the words of David through this passage to you and to me as well. Here is life.

Here is rescue. Here is salvation. Don't leave it to others to tell you about it. Come and see for yourself if you haven't already done so.

[ 35 : 50 ] May God bless these thoughts to us on his word. We're going to finish now by...