

Psalm 40

A helpful Psalm for when you have problems

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We all have problems from time to time. King David certainly did!

Sometimes he wrote down his thoughts and prayers showing how he was feeling at the time. These are recorded as Psalms and can be very helpful for us when we are going through our own problems.

Psalm 40 is one of these Psalms. We may feel we are in a *slimy pit* or *in the mud and mire*. v2. But God can (and does) help us in these situations and bring us through them.

Here are some key aspects to remember when you are in the middle of a problem:



1 *I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.*

- Turn to the Lord and wait patiently for Him to work on your behalf. If you struggle in your own strength it won't make much difference. God is all-knowing and all powerful. Call on Him.
- It's OK to cry out to God in any situation! See Psalm 27:14.
- You can be assured that God loves you and wants the best for you. He will turn towards you and hear your cry.

2 *He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

- No matter how slimy the pit feels or how deep the mud, God can help you in the situation.
- Sometimes He will save you from the situation and sometimes He won't. Either way God will be with you and will act to bring you good. Romans 8:28.
- If you are not delivered from the situation you will still benefit because suffering brings about character in your life. Romans 5:2-5.
- Never give up hope, regardless of the how serious the situation seems. God wants you to have your life strongly founded on the Rock: the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in Him is there a firm place to stand, regardless of your circumstances.
- Later, when you look back on the situation you will have an entirely different view of it. You will see that in some way God got you out of (or through) the situation and will be able to say *He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

3 *He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in Him.*

4 *Blessed are those who make the LORD their trust, who do not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.*

- Changing your focus from the situation to the Lord really helps. David was able to praise the Lord while he was in the middle of his problems. This turned him from negativity and helped him focus on the only source of hope that he had: the Lord.
- You can always praise the Lord in your circumstances (but not necessarily for the circumstances!).
- Your reaction in times of difficulty can be a great example to others. If they see you reacting with courage, hope and trust in the Lord it will help them to *put their trust in Him*. People recognise that the 'real us' is revealed in when we are under pressure. If your reaction is to trust in the Lord it can be a powerful testimony for others of the reality and the goodness of God.

5 *Many, LORD my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare.*

- God is sovereign; He is in control. Even though you are going through a difficult time He is able to do wonders in you and in the situation. Remember how He has done this in the past.
- Recognise that God's plan is being worked out in your life – as long as you continue to love, follow, and obey Him. Trust in Him and don't depend on your own abilities. Acknowledge that God's sees things over the long term and that His plan for your life is being worked out. Your present circumstances are just a step along the way and He still has many wonders planned for you. Proverbs 3:5,6.

6 *Sacrifice and offering you did not desire - but my ears you have opened - burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.*

- Don't bargain with God. e.g. *I will follow you all my life if you get me out of this situation.* You can't earn God's deliverance. He will act on your behalf because He loves you – not because of anything you do or have done.
- God wants your heart to be right towards Him. Religious rituals (including sacrifices, offerings, attending Church, reading your Bible, praying ...) become meaningless unless done for the right reasons. 1 Samuel 15:22. Make sure that you give God the obedience and lifelong service He deserves – even in the difficult situation.

Hebrews 10:5-7 quotes from Psalm 40:6-8. It shows how Jesus was obedient to the Father's will as He went to the Cross.

His attitude was "I have come to do Your will".

7 *Then I said, "Here I am, I have come - it is written about me in the scroll.*

8 *I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart."*

- Ultimately the most important aspect of the situation is that God's will is accomplished in your life. So make sure your focus is "I take joy in doing your will, my God." That's exactly what Jesus did when He was going through far greater difficulties than you ever will. John 4:34; 5:30, Hebrews 10:5-10.

9 *I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, LORD, as you know.*

10 *I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.*

- Ask others to pray for you, and don't be too proud to seek their help with practical matters like meals, shopping, mowing of lawns etc. Then keep them informed of your progress. If *many are to see it and fear*, and will *trust in the Lord* they need to hear what is happening in your life. But don't allow yourself to get dependent on others. God is the One who will provide your saving help. He may use doctors, nurses, fellow Christians, family and friends to help you medically and practically, but ultimately, it is His love and faithfulness that will get you through the situation.
- Don't be afraid to tell others of God's love and faithfulness. When they see how He has helped you, they may seek His help when they face their own problems in the future.
- Maintain righteousness in your heart. When you are under significant pressure it's easy to let your standards drop, especially if you are angry, or hurting. If you get all bitter and twisted it won't help the situation. Far better is to maintain your righteousness so that God's love, joy, peace, patience and hope are continually present in your heart.

11 *Do not withhold your mercy from me, LORD; may your love and faithfulness always protect me.*

12 *For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.*

- Acknowledge your sin and repent of it. Make sure that there is nothing between you and the Lord.
- Be specific when dealing with your sins, even though you may feel there are so many that they have overtaken you. Face up to each one honestly before the Lord. Cast yourself upon His mercy. Confess, repent and accept His forgiveness. This will be very freeing and will significantly help in the situation.

Psalm 40 verses 13-17 must be very important for us because they are repeated in a separate Psalm. See Psalm 70.

13 *Be pleased to save me, LORD; come quickly, LORD, to help me.*

- Ask God for help. Be honest with Him about the situation and how you are feeling.

14 *May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace.*

15 *May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame.*

- People will react to you and your situation in different ways. Some may oppose you; others may judge you, or talk about you behind your back. Some may pity you or mock you, and others may try to help you, but with a selfish agenda (like Job's three friends). Hopefully some will try to support you, encourage you, pray for you, listen to you, or just be there for you.
- Recognise that everyone has an agenda, so don't be sidetracked by others and their help or lack of it.

16 *But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, "The LORD is great!"*

- Ultimately your deliverance comes from the Lord. All through the situation, and especially when you have been delivered from it, stay focused on Him.
- Rejoice and be glad that God is working in your life.
- Recognise that it is God who is at work in you, and honour Him for it. *The Lord is great!*

17 *But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.*

- Recognise that you haven't got through the situation because of your own strength or wisdom. Acknowledge that God is the One who has helped you and delivered you. Give Him the credit for what He has done!
- Re-affirm that He is God. *You are my God.* He is Lord of all, including your life and the various situations that you go through.

We all go through difficult times. This Psalm shows us that God is our greatest help and support in any situation, regardless of how difficult it may be. Unfortunately it is easy to forget God when you are in the middle of a problem and you may get angry with Him, or even blame Him for the situation - when in reality He is there, and is working in love on your behalf.

When you are in the middle of a problem remember Psalm 40. God loves you regardless of the situation, and is working His purposes out in your life.

See 2 Samuel 22:1-51 for David's reflections after he was delivered from a very difficult situation. You may recognise many similarities to what you are experiencing!