

Day 340 - WEDNESDAY: January 17th

Psalms 38, 39 & 40

Psalms 38:1-22 NKJV

A Psalm of David. To Bring to Remembrance. O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pants, my strength fails me; As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, And my relatives stand afar off. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, And plan deception all the day long. But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. Thus I am like a man who does not hear, And in whose mouth is no response. For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God. For I said, "Hear me, lest they rejoice over me, Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt themselves against me." For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin. But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. Those also who render evil for good, They are my adversaries, because I follow what is good. Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

Psalms 39:1-13 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me." I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up. My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue: "LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them. "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish. I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did it. Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; Surely every man is vapor. Selah "Hear my prayer, O LORD, And give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers were. Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, Before I go away and am no more."

Psalms 40:1-17 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. 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. 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. Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 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. Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart." I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. 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. Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD; Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me. 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. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to help me! 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. Let them be confounded because of their shame, Who say to me, "Aha, aha!" Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The LORD be magnified!" 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.

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 38:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 38 begins a group of four related psalms that closes Book I (i.e., Psalms 38-41). These four psalms are linked by central themes. All are confessions of sin in the midst of troubles—the troubles in at least three of these being serious illness and enemies (while the other, Psalm 40, concerns enemies rising during a time of distress, which could also be related to a time of illness).

As the sicknesses in these psalms are a result of sin on David's part, it is possible that they are all one and the same sickness resulting from the same sin. It could be, as suggested in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalm 6, that the plague David suffers is the one he prayed to come on him in place of the populace after he sinned in the numbering of Israel (see 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21). However, the Bible does not actually say whether or not David was then afflicted. The sicknesses in these psalms could well concern another time. The betrayal in Psalm 41 may hint at the time of national rebellion under Absalom with the assistance of David's friend and counselor Ahithophel (if deep depression contributed to David becoming physically ill at that time, though the Bible does not tell us).

The NIV translation of Psalm 38's superscription refers to the psalm as a "petition." The King James and New King James give the more literal rendering of this verbal phrase (which is also found in the superscription of Psalm 70) as "To bring to remembrance." Though God knows our needs, He nevertheless expects us to remind Him of them in prayer—perhaps to remind *ourselves* of our need for Him and His help.

David confesses his sin, which he labels foolishness, and asks for relief from God's heavy hand. God chastens him *because* of His sin

(verses 3, 5). Sickness is not always due to a person's sins (see Job 1-2; John 9:1-3). But sometimes it is, as the numerous instances of God sending plague as punishment attests. Proverbs 3:11-12 explains that God's chastening is done out of love—just as a father disciplines his son. The book of Hebrews quotes these verses (Hebrews 12:5-6) and goes on to comment further, explaining how it all works toward a positive outcome (verses Hebrews 12:7-11). The ordeal leaves David weak from festering sores (verse 5) and inflammation (verse 7). He is depressed by guilt (verse 4) and a lack of peace (verse 8). In verse 10, David speaks of his failing strength and the light having gone out of his eyes. We saw similar expressions in Psalm 6:7 and Psalm 13:3. In its note on 6:7, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says: "In the vivid language of the O[ld] T[estament] the eyes are dimmed by failing strength (see Psalm 38:10; 1 Samuel 14:27-29...Jeremiah 14:6), by grief (often associated with affliction: Psalm 31:9; Psalm 88:9; Job 17:7; Lamentations 2:11) and by longings unsatisfied or hope deferred (see Psalm 69:3; Psalm 119:82, Psalm 123; Deuteronomy 28:32; Isaiah 38:14)." This idiom has passed over into English. We sometimes speak of the light, spark or sparkle having left someone's eye—meaning the person has no further sense of joy in living. Friends and family won't come near David in his illness (verse 11). Enemies conspire against him (verse 12). Isolated and absorbed in his suffering, he has no way to know what's going on and no one to talk to—like a deaf and mute person (verses 13-14). His silence may also be part of a conscious effort to avoid saying something rash or foolish to or before others and thereby sinning further, as he says in the next psalm (Psalm 39:1-2). But David hopes in God to hear and answer His prayer (Psalm 38:15). His silence is only before other people. To God He pours out His heart, confessing his sin and pleading with God to deliver him soon (verses 15-22). Indeed, if the other sickness psalms concern

this period, then David had much to say to God as He composed these prayerful hymns.” [END]

While in this Psalm we don't see God's response or help for David, we confidently know that in His great faithfulness to those who humble and repent, that God will surely be there for David, hear His cries, and respond appropriately. What peace of mind it brings to know that God is always faithful and reliable when we do our part to repent, turn, and cry out to Him for help.

Psalm 39:

The UCG reading program states: “The middle of the superscription of Psalm 39, which may be part of a postscript to the previous psalm, says "To Jeduthun," referring to "one of David's three choir leaders (1 Chronicles 16:41-41, 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1 Chronicles 25:6, 2 Chronicles 5:12; called his 'seer' in 2 Chronicles 35:15). Jeduthun is probably also Ethan of 1 Chronicles 6:44 [and] 1 Chronicles 15:19; if so, he represented the family of Merari, even as Asaph did the family of Gershon and Heman the family of Kohath, the three sons of Levi (see 1 Chronicles 6:16, 33, 39, 43-44)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 39 title). The end of the superscription, "A Psalm of David," no doubt goes with Psalm 39. In this prayer David is "deeply troubled by the fragility of human life. He is reminded of this by the present illness through which God is rebuking him (vv. 10-11) for his 'transgression' (v. 8)" (note on Psalm 39).

As the psalm opens, we see that David has made a determination to not speak aloud, presumably of his anguish, lest this make its way to his or God's enemies. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes on verse 2 that he "fears that he may be misunderstood or that he may speak irreverently and give occasion to the enemy. For the sake of

God, he vowed to be silent in his suffering." Yet verses 8-9 make it appear that David did not want to admit to detractors that his sickness was a result of God punishing him for sin. So the sin he was now guarding against could have been that of defending his reputation against criticism that might have been just (if not coming from hypocrites). Whatever the reasoning, it may help to explain his silence in the previous psalm, especially if it concerns the same illness (see Psalm 38:13-14).

At last, David says that he had to vent his anguish and frustration (verse 3). But it seems that he does the venting to God (verse 4). He begins by basically asking, "Okay, when am I going to die? How much time do I have left?" (as it seemed this could be the end)—and complaining that human life is fleeting, like the few inches of a handbreadth in length and a wisp of vapor in substance (verses 4-6, 11). All that people did seemed so pointless (verse 6). This is the theme running through the book of Ecclesiastes.

Still, David hopes in and prays for God's healing (verses 7, 10, 12-13). He notes that he has lived not as one tied to this world but as a "stranger" or "alien" (a foreigner to this evil world) and a "sojourner" (a traveler or passing guest). And this has not been on his own but rather, as he says to God, "with You" (verse 12). The book of Hebrews says that God's saints "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland...a better, that is, a heavenly country" (Hebrew 11:13-16; compare 1 Peter 2:11-12). So in saying what he did, David was not only reminding God of his relationship with Him, but he was also expressing his hope in God's Kingdom. If it was time for him to die, he trusted in His future with God.

Yet David is not resigned to death. He still prays that God will remove His gaze so that he may regain strength and *not* die (Psalm

39:13). This does not mean, as some commentators suggest, that David is praying for God to leave him alone. For on his own David could never recover. Rather, we should understand the terminology in light of Psalm 80:16, which says that God's people perish at the rebuke of His countenance. The idea is that when He gazes on them in anger, they wither and are consumed. So Psalm 80 repeatedly asks that God would cause His face to shine—to smile favorably. David is likewise pleading for God to turn away His angry gaze of judgment—and, as stated in verse 7, he is hopeful that God will.”
[END]

Psalm 40:

The UCG reading program states: “In its note on Psalms 40-41, the Zondervan NIV Study Bible states: "Book I of the Psalter closes with two psalms containing 'Blessed is the man who' statements (Psalm 40:4; Psalm 41:1), thus balancing the two psalms with which the book begins (Psalm 1:1; Psalm 2:12). In this way, the whole of Book I is framed by declarations of the blessedness of those who 'delight in the law of the LORD' (Psalm 1:2), who 'take refuge in him' (Psalm 2:12), who 'do not look to the proud' but make the Lord their 'trust' (Psalm 40:4) and who have 'regard for the weak' (Psalm 41:1)—a concise instruction in godliness."

Some Bible commentators have proposed that Psalm 40 itself is actually two separate psalms combined into one—a conclusion deriving from the fact that verses 1-10 praise and thank God for deliverance He has brought while verses 11-17 lament and plead with Him for deliverance that has not yet come. Moreover, most of this latter section (verses 13-17) is substantively identical to Psalm 70. Yet we may recall that Psalm 27 was also a combination of thanksgiving and lament. As in that psalm, the idea here may be recalling God's past deliverance to muster confidence that He will deliver David from his present circumstances. Zondervan states in

its introductory note on Psalm 40: "The prayer begins with praise of God for his past mercies (vv. 1-5...) and a testimony to the king's own faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 6-10...). These form the grounds for his present appeal for help (vv. 11-17...)."

Psalm 70 is probably best explained as a borrowing of part of the lyrics of the appeal section of Psalm 40 to stand on their own as a different song—or at least a special rendition. (The tune was probably different since the words have been altered somewhat.)

As we will see, David's words in Psalm 40 foreshadowed the circumstances of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as the book of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:6-8 as referring to Him.

In verse 1, "the Hebrew translated I waited patiently is literally 'waiting I waited'" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 1). Though time was moving on and no rescue seemed forthcoming, David still trusted. He would not give up hope in God's deliverance. And his confidence was well placed—for God did deliver him.

The "horrible pit" of verse 2 could represent death. The Expositor's Bible Commentary states: "The 'pit' is a frequent synonym of Sheol, the grave (Psalm 88:3; Proverbs 1:12; Isaiah 14:15). In the 'pit' people are powerless (Psalm 88:4), held down by the slime and mud (Psalm 40:2)" (note on Psalm 88). Yet here in Psalm 40 it may simply represent a seemingly inescapable situation into which he was sinking lower and lower (compare Psalm 69:2)—as contrasted with him then being lifted from the mud and set upon a rock (Psalm 40:2). Perhaps a double metaphor is intended. Jesus may have been alluding in part to this verse when He spoke of establishing His Church on a rock (i.e., Himself) so that the gates of Hades (the grave) would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). And given the messianic prophecy of this psalm, we may also see in all these verses Jesus thinking of times God the Father had previously delivered Him as He prayed to God while enduring His final trial.

David next states that God "has put a new song in my mouth" (Psalm 40:3a). God may have inspired him to compose an entirely new psalm. Or David may have meant that God gave him a sense of renewed wonder and appreciation accompanied with renewed energy and joy (see the [Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalm 33:3](#)). And from David's praise and rejoicing, many would realize what God had done and would be led to place their trust in Him (40:3b)—the key to blessing and happiness (verse 4).

David declares that no one can understand the enormity of God's works or of His thinking (verse 5). How many thoughts He has. How He organizes His thoughts. What He thinks about each of us. "The things You planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare" (verse 5, NIV; compare 139:17-18). God does reveal some of His thoughts and intents concerning His people—and they are wonderful: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you...thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

David then mentions his understanding of what God is really looking for from people. It was not the physical sacrifices of the sacrificial system but a desire to follow His way—a desire David himself had (Psalm 40:6-8). The words here, describing various offerings in the sacrificial system generally, may have followed his presentation of a ritual offering. Verse 6 should not be understood to mean that there was no actual requirement for physical sacrifices. There certainly was at that time—but only as part of a desire to obey God. What God required was not the sacrifices and offerings in and of themselves—but a heart of obedience from which sacrifices and offerings would naturally flow as God so determined. David surely remembered the story of Samuel correcting Saul for failing to grasp what God thinks is important: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of

rams" (1 Samuel 15:22; compare also Psalm 51:16-17; Jeremiah 7:22-23). We will see more about this in going through Psalms 50 and 51.

David recognizes in Psalm 40 that rather than just a token physical offering, what God really wants is the devotion of David's entire self. So David offers himself as an offering (compare Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 8:5). He says, "Behold I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me" (Psalm 40:7). What was David talking about? It concerned having God's law written in his heart (verse 8). Perhaps he realized that the Torah (the Law) and indeed all of Scripture was written for him personally, just as it is for all of us—to describe the character that he and all of us must have. But in David's case there may have been more to it. As the Lord's anointed king, David had to write out on a scroll his own personal copy of the Book of the Law, keeping it with him and reading it all his days, internalizing it and living by it for the sake of himself, his kingdom and his family (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). So David expressed his continuing commitment to fulfill all of it.

Of course, the One who completely and absolutely fulfills all of Scripture's requirements, including the sacrifices and the ultimate role of Anointed King—who presented Himself before God as the very quintessence of all offerings—is Jesus Christ. And in the book of Hebrews we see Psalm 40:6-8 quoted as the words of Jesus (Hebrews 10:1-10)—as they in fact were, David having been inspired by Him—and are told that the entire sacrificial system pointed to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Jesus lived His life wholly dedicated to God and then offered Himself as the true atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Psalm 40 is thus a messianic psalm—making the rest of it likely applicable to Jesus as well.

It should be noted that the second line of verse 6 as translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, "My ears you have opened [or 'dug' or 'pierced']" (to hear and accept God's law, it would seem), is not

quoted this way in the New Testament. Rather, the same translation found in the Greek Septuagint is given: "But a body You have prepared for me" (see Hebrews 10:5)—that is, to offer up to God. In a footnote on Psalm 40:6, Expositor's says that the Septuagint rendering "represents a paraphrastic interpretation of a difficult Hebrew phrase" (that is, it paraphrases what seems to be the point here based on surrounding clauses). Even if not technically accurate (though it could be), the Septuagint rendering used in the New Testament is true and is certainly implied in context—that God wanted not animal bodies but David's own body presented as an offering for serving God's purposes (and, in ultimate fulfillment, that the body of Jesus Christ was to be the consummation of sacrificial offering—in both life and death).

David goes on in Psalm 40 to remind God of what he has done since being saved from death. "O LORD, you Yourself know..." he says at the end of verse 9. And what had he done? Besides determining to continue in obedience to God, as we saw in verses 6-8, we further read that he saw the need to spread the word about God and His deliverance. David was the king of Israel and a prophet. He had a great responsibility to teach His people. "I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly" (verse 9a). That is, he hadn't kept it to himself but had proclaimed it to the throngs at the temple gathered for worship.

Interestingly, the phrase "proclaimed the good news" is found in the New Testament as "preached the gospel"—and Jesus Christ, prophesied in this psalm, certainly did that (as did those He commissioned with the same task). Note that David uses the phrase "good news of righteousness." Expositor's notes on verses 9-10: "The Lord's righteousness (sedeq) is expressed in any act ordered on behalf of his people's welfare and the execution of his kingdom purposes. By his righteous acts they are delivered, prosper, and enjoy the benefits of the covenant relationship.... Righteousness in

this sense is synonymous with 'salvation' in the broadest sense. The nature of God's righteous acts is explicated by the other perfections. He is faithful to his covenant people, in accordance with his promises (Psalm 33:4), resulting in the 'salvation' of his people." David further stated how he declared God's faithfulness and salvation and hadn't concealed the truth from anyone (Psalm 40:10). We should realize that one important way David proclaimed all this is through these very psalms we are studying. He composed them to be performed publicly—so the people could learn from them, learn to sing them and join in. And again, we should further consider that the One who inspired not just Psalm 40 but all the psalms was the living Word of God, who later became Jesus Christ. In the remaining verses (11-17), David makes his present appeal, seeing his troubles as the result of his sins (verse 12) and enemies who want to destroy him (verses 13-15). Though it is not specifically stated, it could be that his present crisis is serious illness, as in the other three psalms of Book I's concluding group of four—his weakened state and isolation giving opportunity to his enemies to rise up.

Jesus Christ, we realize, committed no sins—but He took the sins of the whole world onto Himself when He was crucified. In that light, it is interesting in verse 12 that David does not ask for forgiveness (as Christ did not need to). David merely speaks of his iniquities overwhelming him. Perhaps David had already repented but still saw what was happening as the consequences of his sins. Yet when applied to Christ, this would mean that the sins of others (including David's)—now committed to Christ as the sin-bearer—were bringing on Him the horrible consequences He had to face at the end of His human life. And of course Jesus had to face taunting enemies just as David had to (verses 13-15).

In verse 16 David declares that even in the midst of troubles, those who love God and His salvation should "say continually, 'The LORD

be magnified!" This gives further explanation to the first part of the psalm and argues in favor of Psalm 40 being one psalm.

David closes in verse 17 with a final appeal. The reference to himself as "poor" is not meant materially (see also Psalm 34:6; Psalm 41:1). The sense here is of being lowly and oppressed—of being "weak" instead of powerful (see Psalm 41:1, NIV). David is speaking of his condition of humility and abasement (and perhaps poor health)—and, as he also says here, his grave need for help. The help he needs can come only from God, and he prays that God will intervene quickly—as Jesus must have prayed during His final ordeal (and as all of us should pray during our trials today)." [END]