

Psalm 40

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon on Psalm 40 emphasizes the importance of waiting on the Lord and trusting in His timing amidst life's trials.

Duration: 1:10:05

Scripture: Psalm 40:1

Topics: "Christian Life", "Faith", "Patience in Adversity"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill shares insights from Psalm 40, emphasizing the importance of waiting patiently for the Lord amidst a restless generation. He reflects on the transformative power of God, who lifts us from despair, establishes our paths, and fills our hearts with praise. Ravenhill highlights the necessity of maintaining faith and trust in God, even when faced with adversity and the challenges of life. He encourages believers to recognize their spiritual wealth in Christ and to rely on God's strength and loving kindness in times of trouble. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper relationship with God, urging the congregation to seek Him above all else.

Transcript

I don't think I've ever done this in my life. I'm just going to share with you what the Lord gave me this morning in reading this psalm. So it's not a prepared message, it's not... I don't know what it is.

There are sermons and addresses and lectures. But the old Methodists used to have a place for a person they called the Exhorter. Not the Exhauster, the Exhorter.

He would take a text and exhort people, try and urge them on in the things of God, in faith and hope and expectation. And I guess that's the category that my little talk would come into. I think of a friend of mine, he had a very great sermon, at least he thought it was.

And he preached his heart out one day, or one night actually. And going out, a lady said to him, I enjoyed your little talk. You know, that floored him, he thought it was a masterpiece.

And she said, I enjoyed your little talk. So the Lord has very nice ways of reducing us, you know, as we need it. All right, Psalm 40 verse 1. I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry.

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and he set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Blessed is the man that trust, that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn to lies. Now I can't tell you where this fits in the personal biography of the Psalmist, and I don't think anyone else ever could. What I like about it is, it's definitely testimony, and as I've said so often, a man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.

Notice the emphasis, he brought me out of a horrible pit, he set my feet on a rock, he put a new song in my mouth, he established my goings. But this word, or two words here that really arrested my attention this morning, were first, I waited patiently. The generation in which we live has been labelled by many different people in many different ways.

Some have called it the permissive age, I remember LBJ used that a great deal, and some have called it a scientific age, and some have called it the jet age, and some have called it the atomic age. But I sometimes wonder if there ever has been a more restless age than the age in which we live. It's an age of impatience, restlessness, turmoil.

I think so often when you stop at a traffic light, particularly in a city that you don't know, where there's about seven roads converge, and you just get there, and the light goes like that, and you wait, and you wait, and you wait, and you think, it's broken down, that's all there is to it. And you see traffic go this way, that way, the other way, your turn doesn't come, you turn your head like that, the light comes, and everybody hands go, get out of the way, get out of the way, you know, we're all in a hurry. I don't know why we're in a hurry or where we're going, but I like this word, he says, I waited patiently for the Lord.

And you remember that word in the end of Isaiah 40 that says, they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. Now not as he says, I waited patiently for the Lord, because it seems to me we're in a day when, even amongst God's people, they expect immediate response. Prayer, press a button, answer comes, there you are.

And yet this is not God's way. Now I say again, I can't tell you the situations of his life, but I'm quite sure of this, he was in a terrible mess. And remember, this is not a permanent state in which he is, he isn't a permanent state when he gets out of it, because by the end of the chapter, as we'll discover, he gets back into darkness and gloominess and all kinds of oppression, he's surrounded by enemies, he's surrounded by fears, he's a sail on every side.

Side. And as I've mentioned, you may have heard in one of my tapes about the old lady that said that when she was asked why she stayed so permanent in a state of ease and rest, she said, well, I have a favorite text. And the favorite text is what? It came to pass.

And she says, when trouble comes, I say, it's not going to stay forever, it came to pass. You see? And she said the same about those experiences of euphoria, when you feel as though, you ever had an experience you felt you'd never come down to earth again? Oh man, you've had such blessing and joy, and you felt that fellow in the 40th of Isaiah, I knew what he was talking about. They that wait upon the Lord.

I'm mounting up with wings as eagles. I've got into the sky. This is marvelous.

And then next day, somehow, you hit an air pocket, and your nose dug up. But the Bob doesn't do that. I think of him so often when we see helicopters flying around.

I say, Martha, I wonder if Bob's up in the air today. And, you know, people say you hit an air pocket. Well, actually, you hit a pocket where there's no air, I suppose.

If it had air in it, you'd stay up. It has no air, so you fall through it. But, you know, everybody has experiences like that.

So this is why the psalmist says, I've learned to abound, and I've learned to be abased. I've learned to live in fullness. I've learned to live when there's emptiness.

I've learned to live when everything around me, as one hymn writer says, when every prospect pleases and only man is vile. And it's pretty easy to live in that state. But there's a wonderful proverb, and I think you could almost teach your children a proverb every day.

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Now, it's true that most people collapse under prosperity than under adversity. We fight.

We get everything geared to meet hostility and adversity. But, you know, in the calm days, in the lush days, if you read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, you remember that his pilgrim got to a place where there were some, what do you call the meadows? I've forgotten, enchanted meadows or something. And he turned onto them and went to sleep.

After all, there was no lion in the way. There was no adversary. So he just went and he lay down in the lush grass.

And I've done that many times in England as a boy. And smelled the flowers this springtime. And oh, it was lovely.

And he didn't realize that he was on territory of a man called Giant Despair, who happened to live in a place called Doubting Castle. Now, if Giant Despair gets hold of you and sticks you in that castle, you're in trouble. You better have some faith and some courage because he's a brute of a guy to get on with.

But you see, he was strict there because every prospect was pleasing. And, you know, you can just take it easy here. But as we've been reminded often, I guess, you know, when we're told to put on the whole armor of God, there is no armor for the back.

If you turn your back on the enemy, you'll get shot. As long as you keep going forward, come hell or high water. It may be the toughest situation we've ever been in, but there's armor for every area that we need.

The whole armor of God, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Every provision has been made for us through the blood. You know, really, there's no reason why we should get into Doubting Castle or into the grip of fear and despondency.

After all, again, the saints that we read of, you know, they didn't have a whole Bible like we have. They didn't know too much about the Holy Spirit, maybe. They didn't have all the exceeding great and precious promises.

Why, actually, we're spiritual millionaires. We're born millionaires when we're born of God. All these things, all things are yours.

That's a staggering thing. I think one of the embarrassments when we get to heaven, when the great judgment day will be, the Lord will say to us, look, all things are yours. What did you avail yourself of? All things are yours and you're Christ and Christ is God.

He's given us everything. He says with his Son, he has freely given us all things. Now, I don't think that means you go out and covet somebody's mansion or covet that you have a personal jet or something like that.

That's a lot of nonsense. That's, it's talking in the circumference of spiritual things because we become spiritual beings. We're in a materialistic world and that world is going to fight back continually to get hold on us in areas that God has delivered us out of.

It can't help living in a materialistic world. I don't believe if you sold everything you had and walked on the street, well, all you do, you become a nuisance and you become a reproach to the gospel and it's a lot of nonsense. See, some people thought years ago they could become really effective and there's a sense in which they strutted because they sold everything and went into monasteries and monasticism fell down on the very thing that it was supposed to avoid.

It fell down on wealth. People began to leave their multi-millions of dollars to the monasteries and so they built monasteries with gorgeous stained glass windows and painted ceilings and the money that other people left, they stuck there in the sanctuary. It always seems absurd to me.

I do not like cathedrals. I wouldn't mind preaching one or two sometimes but in the sense I don't like them for the simple reason they're so ostentatious. There's an artificial dignity.

The place where Jesus was born, obviously, was pretty rude. There's a hymn we sing at Christmas about it, And it wasn't nice. It had animal dung in it.

It smelled of urine. It had cobwebs for curtains. The heating system was sweating beasts.

There's nothing about it where a woman who wanted to bring forth a child, not even the poorest woman, and he's the king of kings and lord of lords. He'd know where to lay his head. He died on a cross, sure.

But then on the other hand, he didn't know all that, that the converse thing might be true, that through his poverty we might be made rich. It works out spiritually for us. Now again, I waited patiently for the Lord.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Elsewhere the psalmist says, My soul wait thou only upon God. You see again, John says in his epistle, Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another.

But so often we turn it round. People make fellowship with each other more important than fellowship with the Father. When that fellowship is destroyed, for instance, if they're removed to another area, or perchance they become sick, or for some reason maybe they were thrown in prison, for doing God's will, I'm thinking of, well immediately all your support goes.

All your nourishment goes. If our strength is fellowship with each other, now that's good. It's not to be despised, but let's keep the order correct.

Our fellowship first of all is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and then thirdly we have fellowship one with another. It diminishes all the time, as precious as it really is. And so again the psalmist says, I've learned this my soul, weigh thou only upon God.

Now going back to the end of the 40th of Isaiah there, you know, the prophet Isaiah there says, that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. And we leap straight from that to the end of the chapter, and we talk about the strength of the eagle, whereas I think we ought to go backward and read the chapter, because it speaks about the omnipotence of God, he upholds everything. It speaks about the omniscience of God, he knows everything.

It speaks about the omnipresence of God, he's everywhere. And to show us how great it is, it says you consider the stars. Why do you know a few years ago, not I guess about 20 years ago, they told us there were about 280,000 stars.

They counted them all, so they thought. And then we've discovered that there's a vast number more than that. I remember at night I'd go out in England and look at the sky and see a great sweeping path of light, and the school teacher told me it was the Milky Way.

A unique thing, it's a zigzag or it's like a river winding through the skies, and it has maybe, I don't know, 280 billion stars in it. And it's unique. But now not far from here, you should go see it, there's a place called Mount Palomar, and they have the largest telescope in the world.

It's got a 60-inch diameter. This is about 30, I guess. That's the width of it.

I'd like one in my yard like that. I'd never go to bed. And it's a strange, what am I talking about here? Telescope, because you sit inside of it to see through it.

And when you get inside of it, you discover that there's not one Milky Way with 280 billion stars. There's maybe a thousand Milky Ways up there. And yet God, in his word, has declared that he knows the stars.

I don't think that's a kind of, I want you to know how vast my intelligence is. I think of what he's saying, there is this. Look, if I know the stars, don't I know you? Don't I know your name? Don't I know where you're located? Don't I know you're upstanding, you're down sitting and you're uprising, you're going out and you're coming in? Now, I'm not as well off as your pastor.

I don't have two or three secretaries. I don't even have one. He's got two or three.

They know everything and ring the phone. I don't have that. And I'm not jealous, but I could use a good secretary.

I'd work it to death, I'm afraid. But you know how wonderful to know the Spirit of God is really like that. He's like a personal secretary.

He knows how going out. He knows how coming in. Sometimes I think I'd like to write something on what God's Word is.

It's an armory. We put on the whole armor of God. Well, supposing I say to you, the fruits of the Spirit are armored.

You say, how in the world? Nobody goes around with a bunch of bananas around the neck and apples around the waist. If they're going out, you'd look an idiot going out with it. But wait a minute.

If you're going out to a situation tomorrow, say you had to go to a funeral. Wouldn't you be wise, if you like, then change the figure and not say armor. Let's call it a wardrobe.

Wouldn't you be very wise to go to God's wardrobe and say, well, God, you give the oil of joy for mourning. I'm going in the midst of darkness and sorrow and unbelief. Put on me this garment.

Let me put on the garment of the oil of joy for mourning. Let me take something in there that speaks of another world, of another power. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Sometimes we need an overdose of that. You go into a situation where you know that you don't need wisdom particularly here. You don't need strength.

You don't need to manifest any gifts. There's a supreme need here that I show love in a way I've never seen it before. You know, we're living in such a strange day.

Honest to goodness, it makes me sick sometimes. The interpretations of the Spirit for life. It's all got to be demonstration, miracles, signs, something that captivates.

You know, like doing a juggling act and I go off and somebody else does a bigger act. And you switch to my channel and I'm doing something. And it's so, to me, profane and fleshly.

Sometimes we show the grace of God in the circumstances of life far more when we're not saying too much. I say so often, if you have power, you need power not to use power. The trouble with dictators is they get power and then they get lost.

They do not know how to use the power they have. I don't think Howard Cassell is the wisest man in the world, but I noticed the other morning after the news, they said he was talking about this new boxing champion, Spink. And it said, in essence he said, he knocked Muhammad Ali out.

Muhammad Ali out. Got winning the world championship, knocked him out. He doesn't want to own his mother.

He doesn't want to own his relatives. He has more money than he's ever had, though he hasn't got a million yet, poor thing. But, you see, having power has toppled him.

I think of an illustration. I don't know if I've ever used it on a tape. Maybe I have.

I don't know. But there used to be a great holiness preacher in America by the name of John Smith. I guess there'd be millions of John Smiths.

And in a college, where was it now? A college, the Evangelical College in Chicago some years ago. I went to speak there and they gave me a bedroom. And before I went out, it's an old-fashioned, you know, it's like a picture in an old catalog from Sears Robert.

Big old bed of about this height off the ground and old furniture and a big old rock. And I don't know what in the world it didn't have. And just before the man went out, he showed me to the room.

He said, I think it might interest you to know that John Smith slept in this bed. I said, well, that's very interesting. I don't know whether now they say Leonard Ravner slept in it, but anyhow, John Smith slept in it.

And you know, I remember that man. He was a very brilliant, very eloquent preacher. And he was going to a conference and a country preacher wrote and said to him, you know, the train stops.

At least it will stop. It's a whistle stop. We would like you to come and, well, it will be a Saturday night.

And if you'll come and preach for us, we'll see you get to your appointment the next morning. You can get a late train out of town, as a matter of fact, about midnight and you'll be at your appointment. It would mean so much to the folk in the country if you'd come.

So he decided to go. Well, as the preacher said, the place was packed, jammed, crammed right out. And so the old fellow thought, well, I'll give them the best I've got.

One of his classic sermons was on Acts 1a, you should receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you. And after they'd introduced him, he stood up and said, well, I'm so glad to have made this stop before I go to the great conference. And I want to preach to you tonight from a favorite text of mine, Acts 1a, you should receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you.

And he paused and he said, I want to preach on one of my favorite texts, Acts 1a, you should receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you. And he paused and he said the same thing over again. And then he said, would you bow your heads in prayer, please? And they bowed their heads in prayer and he whispered in the ear of the preacher, my mind's gone blank.

I've preached this message a hundred or two hundred times. I can't think of a thing. Take over.

And then he said, friends, look, I better tell you what's happened. He said, I've had a blackout mentally. I can't think of a thing.

I was going to tell you what you needed the Holy Ghost for, but he said, I'll tell you one thing. The Holy Spirit doesn't come just to make you a fascinating preacher or to do a lot of things you've been told previously. What the Holy Spirit comes to do is to reveal Christ.

His supreme work is to glorify Jesus. And he said, you'll need the Holy Ghost to go to the mission field. You need the Holy Ghost to be a good preacher.

You need the Holy Ghost to pray. But he said, you know, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of love and power, of a sound mind. And he went on, he said, you know, you need the Holy Ghost to walk around the bedroom at two o'clock in the morning with a bawling baby.

Now, in those days, in case you don't know, grandma here will know, and some of us know, you didn't have wall to wall rug in your bedroom. You had coal lino. It was like getting out of bed walking on a block of ice.

There were no creature comforts. Then he said, you know, when you walk around a bed for a half an hour with a squalling baby, if you don't have the grace of God in you, there'll be some trouble.

Some sparks will be flying. You need the Holy Ghost even to walk around a bedroom with a squalling sick baby in your arms. Now he said, let's pray.

And he prayed. And he headed off the platform, and he went down to the train depot, and he got a train, and he went to the conference. That was all there was to it.

About three years after, he was going back to the same conference again, and he got a letter from the same pastor asking him, would he go to the same church and preach a message? Well, it's all right saying you're humble. It's when folk prove it you've got trouble, isn't it? As I say, it's easy to sing, when I survey the wondrous cross and pour contempt on all my pride. When I pour it on, I'll be very careful.

When somebody else puts it on with a bucket full, it's a different situation. Then you find out whether you have any or not. Well, finally he said, yes, I'll go.

I don't know what I'll say, but I'll go. And when he got to the train depot, there was a young preacher again, riding the buggy, picking up the baggage and taking the great preacher. And he said, I want to tell you something about the last trip you had here.

Oh, now, now, please, he said, don't remind me. You mean when I had the blackout? Yes. He said, you know, that was the greatest meeting we've ever had in our church.

The greatest meeting? What do you mean? Why? He said, after you went, he said, I said to the people, look, I don't know what that preacher's talking about because we've never had any children at our house. But I want to tell you, I know I need the Holy Ghost to get out of bed at two o'clock in the morning and walk on that icy linoleum with a squalling baby. Now, and I can get almost irritated with far lesser things than that.

Shivering in your pajamas or squalling baby in your arms, don't know when it's going to quit. I need the Holy Ghost. And he said, I don't have the Holy Spirit like that.

And he said, I said, friends, I don't have it. He doesn't reside in my heart in that way. And I'm going to the altar and really pray through.

And he said, the whole church followed me. We prayed till after midnight. And he said, we've had a different church ever since.

And he said, you know, it wasn't long after that when my wife said to me one day, I've got some news for you, sweetheart. What is it? Why? You know, we've been married now seven years and had no baby, but we're going to have one. And he said, well, that's great.

He couldn't live to see the young preacher that was coming along. And he said to the preacher, you know, one day, while I was out, my wife was rushed to hospital. And I hurried to hospital anxious to see this beautiful little baby boy.

I'm sure he's going to be a boy. When I got there in this small hospital, he said that everybody knew me. I prayed with so many people there.

And he said, as I went in, the nurse said, oh, I passed. I want to, oh, I've no time to talk to you. I want to see my, was it a boy? Yes, it's a boy.

Well, I want to see him. I'll talk to you. No, no, no.

Come, come here, please, please. I think your wife's sleeping. Come here.

And he sensed there was something wrong and he went into a side room. And he said, the doctor wants to see you. The doctor came in and he said, well, how are you? And he said, fine.

Now, what's it all about? Listen, I want to see my wife. I want to see my boy. He said, pastor, sit down a minute.

I want to tell you something. I've delivered scores of babies in my life. I've never delivered a baby like this.

Your baby's totally deformed. Even its eyes are not straight. It's obviously very retarded.

Instead of having two arms, it's got two little things like two red carrots hanging down. And it's got two little things like two red carrots for legs. Does my wife know? No, she hasn't been told.

Now, why didn't you tell her? Because there's not one of us brave enough to tell her. You tell her. Well, the pastor broke down.

He said, I wept and wept. And he said, they dried my eyes and put some powder on and said, look, you go in and tell her. She's been wanting you to come and you better get in right now.

And he went in. And when he went in the room, they'd screened off the section where she was. And she just lit up and said, did you hear it? It's a boy, isn't it? Wonderful.

We've got a boy, not a little preacher. And she said, you don't look so happy. Did you think it would be a girl? No, darling.

Why can't you smile? Aren't you happy? I mean, you wanted a boy, didn't you? Yes, I wanted a boy. And then he told her what had happened. And you know, just like pulling the switch, her mind cracked.

She began to scream and to rave. They had to get people and tie her down. And she oscillated between sanity and insanity for about six months.

And he wouldn't let her go to an institution. He had her at home. No, six weeks, pardon me, not six months, six weeks, six weeks, about six weeks.

Then somehow stabilised. And an awful lot of prayer went up. And naturally, I guess you'd ask the question, why wouldn't you? I used to see girls come to Teen Challenge, some of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen.

And they had the most beautiful babies you've ever seen, too. And they were prostitutes. And I've seen wealthy people whose children were deformed and so shocking.

And I don't know why God lets you go that way. But he said, anyhow, he said to his wife, sweetheart, look. Do you remember I knelt at the altar that night and told God I was willing to walk around the bedroom at night, if need be, for two hours or three hours with a squalling baby in my arms? And she said, yes, I never dreamed it would happen like this.

He said, well, darling, I'll tell you what. He said, you take care of the baby till supper time. And after that, I'll take care of it.

Then you go to bed at 10 o'clock. We'll go to bed at 10 o'clock. And the moment that baby makes a noise, it's my responsibility till breakfast time.

Poor old John Smith couldn't keep his head up. He was convulsed. After all, if he'd preached his message on Acts 1-8, it might never have gone home like this thing went home.

And he said, by the time I got out of that buggy, I could hardly stand. And he said, the fellow was so radiant. He said, you know, pastor, it's been the greatest year and a half of my life.

God has never been more wonderful. My wife, thank God, has become stabilized. And the baby only lives six months.

But he said, every night after he came to hospital, sat out of hospital, somehow it seemed between one o'clock and two, the little thing woke up as though it knew as much as he did. Come on, let's see if you've got the Holy Ghost. Come on, let's see if you're going to crack under this.

Let's see if you're going to squeal and yell. Can you keep your pieces? I want to tell you this. I got into bed with my feet like ice.

And I got into bed with more victory than when I got out. Whether I got out at 10 o'clock or 11 or 12 at night, God sustained me in that trial more than facing a thousand people preaching. Not only that, it worked out in the fellowship that they had.

They said, this man isn't preaching a philosophy. This man isn't just telling you which way to go for blessing and that way for healing and that way for something else. The Spirit of God works in him.

And the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. And he's proved to us that there is no fear in love. We don't know.

We see through a glass darkly. Why did it come to me? I mean, it's handicapping my ministry. But he said, I never rebelled for one moment.

I just said, Lord, my times are in thy hands and my God, I wish them there. And if it pleases you to work this thing in this way, in me, to impress this people that I can live a holy life in the midst of adversity, because his wife was always a challenge to him in her sickness. And with a child like this, he said, you know, this is the greatest thing.

That ever happened in my life. I say that to say again, what strange ways God has. You know, I think sometimes we almost challenge God in prayer.

We get very brave and say, Lord, do this and do that. When something comes, we say, well, why? And the Lord's going to say, well, turn the page back. I happen to have a record of what you prayed the other day.

Put all the pressure on me. Don't give me the burdens according to my strength, but give me strength according to the burdens. Lord, I'm not asking you to bless me.

I don't care whether you bless me or not. I'm asking you to make me a blessing. If you bless me, you may just enrich my selfishness.

You may make me more contracted and narrow. I want to gather blessings like some people gather postage stamps or gather antiques. I'm not concerned that you bless me.

I'm concerned that you make me a blessing. That something works in, but rather that it works out. And somebody feels the impact of the life of God shed abroad in this life of mine.

Let me go back to this for a little while here. He said, I waited patiently for the Lord. Oh, my, my, my, my, my.

Do you remember what the writer to the Hebrews says? Let us run with patience. That's a paradox. Why do you need to run with patience? How in the world do you need patience? Look, you're going to start here and finish there and you better get there as quick as you can.

No, you better not because you won't win. That's why. I went to a Bible school in England for a few months and nobody was allowed any recreation, no exercises except you could walk around the grounds, which we did.

But on a Wednesday afternoon, we put on some shorts and running shoes and we had an area that we ran around. It was about five miles. And I wasn't in good condition to run it anyhow, though I'd walked hundreds through England.

But you know, when we started off, there were two packs, the hare and the hounds. And you were offered the, what do you want to run with, the hare or the hounds? Oh, run with the hare as they go away. The fellow whispered to me, he said, Draven, don't go with the first pack.

Don't run with the fast men. No, no, no, no. We'll overtake them before we've gone too far.

You know, all the fellows, they just had a running short and a pair of shorts and rubber shoes there. They all lined up and the handkerchief was dropped. We ran through the college grounds and up these beautiful old country lovely hills and kind of silver stone on the side and beautiful streams.

And they went off and we went five minutes after. They went off as though they were doing a hundred yard dash, you know. Out they went through the gate.

Now, oh boy, we'll never see them again until we get back at the end of the race. And, you know, we set off after them. And we'd run about 15 minutes, I guess, when they were up the side of the hill on the side of a low stone wall, you know, where you could look down to the river.

They were sitting there all panting and exhausted and we just went past and waved and on we went on our trip. We were home before they got home. Why? Because they did not run with patience.

They didn't get a second winding. They thought all you do is get from here to here as quickly as you can. No, let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

You see, looking off onto Jesus, it doesn't matter who you look to in the Hebrews 11, they're all imperfect. So you look off onto Jesus. That's what the Greek says, looking off onto Jesus, the author and the finisher.

He's run the race before us. Now there are many, many adversaries. Sometimes the race was uphill.

Sometimes it was a very rough road. At certain places, there'd be beautiful young women and they'd roll a golden ball out and a man would try and run and grab at it and in grabbing he would fall. He'd lose his balance.

It was done purposely to avoid that that man should win the prize, get to the end of the race. Now Paul says we're all running, if we're Christians, we're all running, but not everybody gets the prize. If you don't touch all the bases, as you would say, if we don't really follow in the way that the Lord has guided, there's no shortcuts.

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us. And then, of course, we have another word here. It says in the sixth chapter of 1 Timothy, For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, after they had heard from the faith, they coveted.

I read of a Catholic priest who said not long ago he'd heard every sin of the Bible confessed hundreds of times except one sin. Can he guess what it was? Nobody guessed. Covetousness.

Recall it by some other name. And then he says it's when people start backsliding. Now I used to think, you know, I was rather brought up in an area where people kind of despise rich folk.

It never troubles me how much, what a man possesses. I know very wealthy men. I know multimillionaires.

It never worries me what a man possesses. It's what possesses the man that's the trouble. When a man can't eat or live or sleep, when he sacrifices his family, his children, and even his Christian life, his devotional life in order to pursue wealth, well, he's consumed.

It's become an idol to him. But if he has everything else in order, why not? There are evidences in the Scripture where God blesses people that have wealth. But listen to what it says.

The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they avert from the faith and pierce themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Peter talks about the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.

As I said a couple of days ago, this was totally foreign. Those Romans that listen to Jesus must have thought this man's out of his head. The weak go to the wall.

This is the day of the man of arrogance and power. Push them out in all that you succeed. But Jesus says, My yoke is easy, my burden is light.

Blessed are the meek. He says, For they shall inherit the earth. The three things that are emphasized here in Psalm 40, he brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay.

So number one, he lifted me up. Number two, he set me up because he set my feet on a rock. Number three, he tuned me up because he put a new song in my mouth.

Now, what miry messy clay? What's he talking about? I don't know. I don't know whether it's after his terrible collapse in adultery and murder and everything else. But he's talking about being in a miry clay, in a pit of miry clay.

Now, you can be in a pit. I've been in a pit more than once, a dry pit. You've no trouble.

But if you get mud up to your knees and you try to stand and you try and make any movement, all you do is slide. Now, he may be talking about some domestic situation, but if more than that, I'm sure he's talking about a moral situation, a spiritual situation. And he says he brought me up out of a horrible pit.

But when he brought me up, he set me up. So from a place that was slippery, he brought me to a place of stability. Can you think of more opposite things than a miry clay? And a rock? He likes the word rock, doesn't he? He talks about God being his rock and his fortress.

Now, here I am. I'm in a miry clay. I can't do much for myself.

And in his infinite mercy, God reaches into the depths and depravity and sin and wickedness. Read the first chapter of Romans and see there the condition. It's like reading today's newspaper.

Where people are given up to licentiousness, to lust, to lasciviousness. As I say often, this is a lax, loose, lustful, licentious age. It's identified with as it was in the days of what? Nor, yes, and as it was in the days of what? As it was in the days of Sodom.

And Jesus says, Warned to thee, what? Chorazin, warned to thee, Bethsaida. It will be better for Sodom in the day of judgment than you. God never came in flesh and walked in their midst like he's done here.

The only evidence they had of anybody anywhere near godliness was a man by the name of Lot. And he says he vexed his righteous soul every day. I don't read anything else about it.

Again, if he'd had any influence at all, since there was Lot and his wife and two daughters, and they both were married, so that's six of them. And he prayed and said, If there are ten righteous, will thou for the sake of ten, said Abraham. And Lord said, You find ten.

Which meant only five in Sodom and five in Gomorrah. That's not very much. And even outside of his own family, Mr. Lot, Mrs. Lot, the two daughters, the two sons, six, he's only asking for four outside of his family.

And there were not four outside of his family that were righteous. Well, that was a mess that they were living in, and it's the mess that we're living in today. We're surrounded by mire, by filth.

People love it, they enjoy it. People talk sin, they buy sin, they sell sin, they breathe it, they sing it. They enjoy it.

Sin is rebelling against God. Man is in a state of rebellion now. You see women walking off naked.

It's rebellion against decency. You hear them singing some of the guttural stuff on, if you do, I don't even look at it. I guess you don't.

But sometimes I switched. I switched one Saturday night late to see what the news was. There's a fellow jerking and they said, what, there are 25,000 young people and they won't leave here till two o'clock in the morning.

You think of all that gathering of rebellion and wickedness. And as it was in the day of Noah, it is today. And in the day of Noah, there were two things that marked humanity.

The earth was corrupt before God and it's filled with violence. And it seems everywhere now, every time you pick up a newspaper, there's this underground violence breaking out. These folk that held up the trains there in Holland this morning, the terrible story that was told by Jack Anderson on ABC about the, not only the atrocities, the vileness, the unbelievable wickedness that's been happening there in Cambodia.

We're supposed to have cleaned the mess up and got deliverance and they're butchering people. The streets are running with blood. They're brutalizing people in the most unbelievable way.

And now he said, not only there, Afghanistan there. He said, we've already closed our eyes to Cambodia. They determined that anybody who was a somebody before they took over is going to be obliterated, cut their heads off, use them for fertilizing fields, use their blood for fertilizer.

That doesn't make... In an age that's got more education, more universities, more knowledge, more science, and we're the most devilish people on earth. We're spending millions of money to try and find out how to destroy. We want to control the neutron bomb.

Well, we had bombs. They blew a block. They blew a roof off a house.

And then in World War II, we developed what we call the blockbusters. It was a big thing that came down and it was as tall as I am and twice as wide, filled with dynamite and stuff. You dropped it and it blew maybe a city block away.

Then we decided we'd go a bit better than that. We developed the atom bomb. Then we went better and we developed the H-bomb.

Now we've gone better. We've got the neutron bomb. Now they've gone better.

Yesterday they tell us really worse, worse, worse, worse, worse, and they've developed the blast bomb. The neutron bomb is very good. All it does is kill people and it doesn't touch your property.

Wouldn't that be nice if they drop one here and your cat takes over everything in the house? You'll be killed but your cat will have everything comfortable. Wouldn't it be nice? You should whisper that in its ear. If we happen to be blown up, enjoy the house.

That's what it's going to be. It will destroy life but not property. The new one now will blast property but not touch life as much.

Man, we've entered some dangerous areas now. The log genetics, we're fooling with that. They tell us now, they said yesterday, they're going to show us what in a few months, this baby that was produced, this cloning thing.

Well, evangelists have been doing that for years. They've been manufacturing false babies spiritually. So what's new on earth? But what an area we've come into.

Man is in rebellion. His mind is in rebellion. He's rebelling against everything.

Why? Heavens, when we were youngsters, people danced decently. You ladies had a long dress and a man held her by the waist and they went around to the blue danube. If you played that in a dance hall today, they'd all fall asleep.

They jerked. They've all to get the, what is it they call it? St Vitus dance. They used to call it like that.

If you got that when we were youngsters, they locked you up, put you in a straitjacket. Now you pay \$20 to do it and go and be half dressed at night. In other words, everything's in a state of rebellion against law and order and decency and God.

We will not have this man to reign over us. We've got to help us. Well, it's not till you get to the other side of the fence, you know what it's all about, is it? David got his fill of this and he says, when I was in such need, I waited patiently for the Lord.

He has inclined his ear unto me and he heard my cry and he brought me up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay and not only brought me up, but he set me up. He put my feet upon a rock and established my goings. He gave me character.

He gave me strength. He gave me what it takes to live a righteous holy life. And then he says in the next verse, and he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.

Many shall see it and fear or even many shall hear it and fear. You know, as I thought of that, I thought of how many millions of people have sung the Psalms. You couldn't go in a church in Scotland on the Lord's day without them singing the 23rd Psalm and nobody can sing it like Scots people.

They've got about six different tunes and if they sang it through on the six different tunes every time I was there, I'd still be blessed. Brother James's air is a lilting tune. Then they have another one, Crimmon, the Lord's my shepherd, sung to a slow tune.

And then they have another one called the old hundred and that's a different tune entirely. And when they sing it, there's somehow something when they sing it. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

And the Psalmist David says he put a new song in my mouth, but not only in his mouth because he got in his mouth, he got in your mouth and mine. And he says that he's going to praise unto our God. Many shall see it and rejoice.

And you know, it's a surety that there's no singing in hell. We're told what they sing in heaven, they sing the song of Moses and of the lamb. And the more we know about the Lord, the word of God, the Psalms and the doings of God, well, we'll be more, feel more at home and get to heaven.

We'll already been initiated. He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto God. He'd nothing when he was down there.

He lived in a material, blind, sophisticated world, but it's all of self and flesh. It's all destructible. And now he's got something indestructible.

It's his song in my mouth and it is praise unto God. Well, that's going to be an exciting thing, I think, when we get to heaven and sing those songs. In Hebrews 6, 12, it says that you may not be slothful, pardon me, that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

You know, the Psalmist is singing here, why? Because God has done a wonderful deliverance in his life. That's where he says, many shall hear thereof and be glad. Well, if he had a song in his mouth, and bless your heart, with all he knew, he didn't know half as much as we know in one sense.

I mean, we've got the full revelation of the cross. We've had evidence of God condescending to walk in our midst to become flesh and blood. Oh, we can gaze, I come at least in the 40th of Isaiah.

And I can see this God of majesty, this God holding the world together, this God that sustains all things by the word of his power. This one whose knowledge is unlimited, his strength is unlimited. You see, he says, I was in a horrible pit and I found a God whose arm was long enough and strong enough and a heart that was big enough to lift me out of a horrible pit.

You see, we bunch it all together and say, do you know what God has done for the church? Well, that's all very wonderful. But the thing is, as Paul says, I believe that God so loved the world, he gave himself for the world. I believe, because he wrote it afterwards, that Christ loved the church.

But he said, do you know what's more amazing to me than that he loved the world and he loved the church? He loved me and gave himself for me. I don't know what was in you before he saved you. I know what was in me before he saved me.

I know I haven't been to hell and back as the kids said. I've been brought up in a very godly home for which I thank God. And yet I knew the rebellion in my heart.

I knew the desires. I knew I had as much chance of becoming a criminal or an outlaw or a drunkard as anybody on the face of the earth. Except that by the infinite grace of God, he intercepted my life before I got into a state like that.

The potential was there for every one of us to become the most outstanding rebels that the world has ever seen. So do you wonder when he really gets lifted up and set up and tuned up, that he writes psalm after psalm after psalm after psalm after psalm? Man, he feels as though he's swimming in an ocean. He can't touch the bottom.

He can't see the height, the depth, the length, the breadth. He says it's God. It's not the sacrifice of the priest.

It's God himself. I don't wonder what one of the great hymn writers says. My goal is God himself.

Not joy, not peace, not even blessing. But it's thee, my God. Now I say this wasn't permanent.

This was something that was passing. Because he says in verse 9, I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Notice now what he says, these negative things.

In verse 9, I have not refrained my lips. In verse 10, I have not concealed my loving kindness. Again, from the great congregation.

What hasn't he done? I have preached righteousness. I have not refrained my lips, O Lord. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.

Now what he means there is, I haven't just kept it there like some secret thing. I haven't found righteousness, mercy and peace, and then concealed it and just covered it up and said, well, I'm going to keep quiet about it because I live in the midst of hostility and I live in the midst of heathenism and I live in the midst of opposition. He says, I didn't do that.

I gave vent to it. I let my life show forth your praise. I let my lips declare.

In the midst of the great congregation, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord. I have not hid thy righteousness. Middle of verse 10, I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregations.

Withhold not thy tender mercies from me, O Lord. Let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me. Now, here is the punchline as far as I'm concerned.

He's looked back in the first half of the psalm. He's back in the same trouble. Not the same in one sense, because the other things were moral.

Now he's facing other things which are equally difficult. He says in verse 12, for innumerable evils have come past me about. Mine iniquity has taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up.

They are more than the hairs of mine head. Therefore, my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me.

O Lord, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

Let them be desolate for a reward for their shame that say unto me, aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee. Let such as love thy salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified.

But I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me. Thou art my help and my deliverer. Make no tarrying, O my God.

Now again, I say in the first part of the psalm, he's come up out of a horrible pit. God has lifted him up, set him up, tuned him up. And then suddenly adversity comes again.

I don't think he's fallen into the same sin here. I think the number one is memory is accusing him. After all, I think with a lot of people, the problem is not that they're not forgiven.

The problem is they can't forgive themselves. And in one sense, it's good to remember that. It's good to remember who we injured.

It's good to remember the things, because they act as a balance. They keep us from going overboard. They keep us to remembering our frailty.

The possibility is there all the time. Unless I walk very close to God, I'm still flesh and blood. I live in enemy territory.

This world is no friend to grace to help me unto God. And yet I've got to remember that I'm not back in the slime. I have my feet on a rock.

I have a new song in my mouth. The adversary is coming, but the Lord is my shield. That's what he says.

The Lord is a sun and a shield. Well, after all, if I have between me and those circumstances of mine, if I have omnipotence, well, I shouldn't be very much afraid of that, should I? I should not be afraid, though a horse should encamp about me, he says elsewhere. And these are our riches in Jesus Christ.

This is not merely that this experience is again for a king. After all, if we're really born again of the Spirit of God, we're a royal priesthood and we're a holy nation. The Lord looks in loving kindness and mercy upon

us.

Nobody else is. Everybody's scowling at him. Maybe they're pointing the finger at him.

Maybe they're reproaching him. And yet he says, Lord, I need, I need this strength. I want your loving kindness to continually preserve me because innumerable evils are round about me and iniquities have taken hold of me.

I'm not able to look up. They're more than the hairs of mine head. Therefore my heart faileth.

And yet he says, Lord, let thy loving kindness and truth preserve me. There's a song that's sung from another psalm in one church I used to go to. It seemed they sung it every time they opened their mouths, nearly every meeting they opened.

Thy loving kindness is better than life. And does it matter how much is against us if God is for us? We're not going to get out of this. As somebody says, you're not going to get out of this world alive.

Some of us may, the Lord comes. But we're not going to get out of a situation where there's opposition all the time. From the moment you became the property of God until you die, Satan hates every bit of territory you yield it to Christ.

He wants to gain that territory. He wants to gain the mastery. And yet again, the psalmist is giving us to realize again, look on the majesty, look on the loving kindness, look on the greatness of his mercy.

Maybe again he looks up at the stars. He seems to have liked them, doesn't he? He says, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. And day unto day are through speech and night unto night showeth knowledge.

There is no fear nor language where their voice is not heard. You see, God has spoken in creation. You can go to some parts of the earth and they'll still stand in awe looking at the stars.

They declare the glory of God. A man can look at creation and believe that there's a superpower behind it all. I remember somebody said to a friend of mine one day, I don't believe in creation.

I don't believe that God made this world. I think something, a bit of jelly rolled off a beach and it gradually developed to something else. And a little kid in the crowd said, but who made the beach? I mean, if jelly rolled off the beach, who put the beach there before the jelly? No, no, no, no, that's pure stupid.

But what my friend said, he said, well, I want to show you something. He said, what is it? He said, Webster's Dictionary. Webster's Dictionary, what's wonderful about it? You didn't hear? No.

Oh, he said there's a big factory in Cincinnati and somebody put a bomb in it and blew it up. And at one end of the building, there were 100 tons of paper. And at the other end of the building, there were about 50 different types, different forms of type.

And somebody threw a bomb in it. And when they went the next day, they were all Webster's Dictionaries. They were what? He said, well, the bomb blew the paper here and all the type went in.

And next morning, they found beautiful. He said, you're insane. Well, he said, that's what you asked me to believe.

You asked me to believe that this thing gelled with that thing, which gelled with something else, and the world just came into being. Everything suggests intelligence and life. And the psalmist says, look, the very heavens declared the glory of God.

God has spoken to man. How did he speak? Well, he spoke in creation. Then he spoke in conscience.

I was interested talking at a missionary conference a few weeks ago with some of the missionaries. And they said, it's amazing, the people that they met up in the bush, the conscience they had about certain things. If you steal, you were punished.

If you committed adultery, the man was taken out into the bush. The woman identified him. And chop his head off.

Doesn't get a chance to do it a second time. Boy, we'd have saved a lot of trouble if we'd done that, wouldn't we? Doesn't the book say about taking a man and stoning him if he commits adultery? Doesn't it talk about punishing the people who do the criminal acts? But no. There's an inward monitor.

You can find Plato and Socrates saying some very wonderful things of almost Christlike. Why? Because they had a refined sense of conscience. They knew why even the Apostle Paul, again in the 17th of Acts, says that they had gods, strange gods.

But there was one monument to a God they didn't know. They were still feeling that somewhere, there's some point where we could identify or we could reach out to someone who could respond and answer and feel these emotions and stirrings and needs and remove our guilt and remove conscience from us and our defilement and everything else which has perverted us. So God speaks in creation.

And then God speaks. As the psalmist says, the heavens declare the glory of God. God has spoken in conscience.

God has spoken through his Son. Says in Hebrews 1, doesn't it? In the first chapter there. God who at sundry times and in divers manner spake unto the fathers.

Oh yes, there was the prophets.

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