



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 40

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title is, *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*
- It was composed by David
- It might have been written shortly before David became king, rather than to the time of Absalom's rebellion
- Some commentators believe though that there was no way to determine on what occasion the psalm was composed
- Doubtless it was in view of some of the trials which occurred in the life of David, there were many of these to which the thoughts of the psalm may be applied
- As it is impossible from anything in the psalm itself, to ascertain which of those afflictions were here referred to



Introduction

- However, others think it was composed about the same time and on the same occasion as the two preceding, Psalms 38 & 39
- With one difference that is here he glorifies God for having bestowed the mercy which he was seeking in Psalms 38 & 39
- It is, therefore, a thanksgiving prayer
- The sixth, seventh, and eighth verses contain a remarkable prophecy of the incarnation and suffering of Jesus Christ
- And some believe that the Psalm was written to refer wholly to Christ
- St. Paul in Hebrews 10:5-9, limits the meaning of this Psalm to Jesus who came into the world to do the Father's will



Introduction

- Psalm Outline
- A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3
- A Declaration of God's Goodness to His Saints, 40:4-5
- An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10
- A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- After a long and patient waiting, prayer has been answered so David offered his thanksgiving
- *I waited patiently, Waited and waited*
- He waited diligently, earnestly, patiently
- His prayer was not answered at once, but it was answered after he had made repeated prayers, or when it seemed as if his prayers would not be answered
- It is earnest, persevering prayer that is referred to
- It is continued supplication and hope when there seemed to be no answer to prayer, and no hope that it would be answered

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- We cry; God hears
- When God hears, God acts
- Sometimes He acts quickly, sometimes it takes a lifetime
- We cannot predict or control the way He chooses to act, or the means through which He will express His response to our cry
- And so, we need to wait
- In the previous Psalm (39:7) David waited upon the Lord without immediate answer
- Here, the answer is stated, *He inclined to me, and heard my cry*
- The word *inclined* here means properly bowed

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- That is, he "bent forward" to hear and heed
- At first, God seemed as One that would not hear
- Ultimately, however, He bent forward to receive David's prayer
- As applied to Jesus Christ, this would refer to the fact that in His deep sorrows related to the work of Salvation, He continued in calling on God, and that God heard Him, and raised Him up to glory and joy
- As we read Hebrews 5:7 the time supposed to be referred to, is after His sufferings was over, after His work was done, after He rose from the dead

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- These were further benefits to David as he *waited patiently for the Lord*
- David's prayer for deliverance was answered
- God delivered him from his present crisis, which was like *miry clay*, and set him in a much better and more secure place *established my steps*
- *miry clay*, The sufferer was as one who cannot find a ground, but slips and sinks
- *He also brought me up out of a horrible pit*, St. Augustine, explain this of the Christian saved by faith from the sink of his sins

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- St. Gregory says, “By the name of *mire* in Holy Scripture sometimes we understand the materialism of earthly possessions, sometimes filthy and polluting doctrines, sometimes the desires of carnal concupiscence” (John 9:9). And so the Prophet cries out, “Woe to him that increases that which is not his!—how long?—and that loads himself with thick clay!”
- Such is the state of the wicked, who have not known God and His commandments; and are stuck in the mud of their carnal desires, that makes them incapable of arriving at eternal happiness

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- The grace of the Redeemer brings us out of this pit
- As soon as we begin, through repentance and faith, to know the true God, we will be liberated from our carnal desires, and we can have peace with God and with ourselves
- The feet that God rescued from a deep and miry pit He puts *upon a rock* “and the rock was Christ;”
- For He says of Himself, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*” (John 14:6)
- He, therefore, put the feet of the just on the faith, the doctrine, and the example of Christ, that they may follow His footsteps

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- St. John Chrysostom says, “The temporal things are like water, like the flood that swiftly runs; he says: “The water have come up to my neck” (Psalm 69:1); Whereas the spiritual things are like a rock; he says: “He set my feet upon a rock”, to keep the “miry clay” away from them.”
- David’s deliverance brought forth spontaneous praise, a *new song* that came from God Himself
- It is possible that this psalm was the *new song* God put into David’s mouth
- God gave him a new occasion for a song; and He inspired him with the very words of it

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- St. Augustine says, “What new song is this? ... Perhaps you used to sing hymns to strange gods; old hymns, because they were uttered by the "old man," not by the "new man;" let the "new man" be formed, and let him sing a "new song;" being himself made "new," let him love those "new" things by which he is himself made new.”
- But once one became renewed in the spirit, he began to sing *a new song* on the love of God, one that God Himself *put ... in his mouth*

A Praise of Thanksgiving 40:1-3



- The deliverance and the praise that came from it were an effective testimony to others
- They were inspired to *fear* the Lord and to *trust* in Him
- The contemplation of God's mercy in the deliverance of His servant, will inspire a reverent awe, and lead to trust
- This applies to the Lord Christ who descended to Hades, resurrected, and proclaimed the song of praise of victory and triumph over death, drawing many to faith in Him

A Declaration of God's Goodness to His Saints, 40:4-5



- Once more it has been proved that trust in God is the only source of true happiness
- The goodness of God to His people is infinite and incomparable
- This is a natural and appropriate thought flowing from what David had just experienced
- He knew by experience that *trust* – as shown by waiting patiently for the Lord – *is blessed*
- He invites, exhorts, and encourages all to imitate those who have been delivered

A Declaration of God's Goodness to His Saints, 40:4-5



- To make the matter clearer, he adds, *And does not respect the proud, ...* Who looked for help from no one, especially from vain, empty things, that can save no one
- So, he is saying, *Blessed* is the man who is not misled by appearances to despise God's help, and seek the assistance of worldly men who boast of their own power
- David connected trusting God with moral conduct – in this case, the ability to discern and judge the character of others and act appropriately toward them
- Perhaps David's crisis came from refusing to *respect the proud* or those who *turn aside to lies*

A Declaration of God's Goodness to His Saints, 40:4-5



- St. Jerome explains that the word is used to mean turning away from God to idols or false objects of confidence (Hosea 3:1; Ezekiel 29:16)
- It is he who depart from the straight path and turn to what is false and deceitful
- It is not only for his recent deliverance that David owes thanks and gratitude to God
- God's mercies in the past have been countless and have laid him under unspeakable obligations
- David praised God as the worker of many wonderful works *and* for His *thoughts* toward His people

A Declaration of God's Goodness to His Saints, 40:4-5



- God's thoughtfulness for man, His consideration and providential care, deserve praise and thanks equally with His wondrous acts
- God's *thoughts toward us* are wonderful because they are *God's* thoughts
- In Psalm 8:4 David wondered, *What is man that You are mindful of him?* He considered the greatness of the universe and was amazed that God would think about man at all
- Here he took that idea much further and is amazed at *how much* God thinks about His people
- He is also amazed that God thinks such loving, gracious thoughts toward His people, and so many that *they are more than can be numbered*

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- What shall be man's response to that love?
- Not material sacrifice, but the service of glad obedience (40:6-8)
- David understood that in a relative sense, God did not want animal sacrifices
- True service consists in obedience to the will of God
- King Saul offered sacrifices; what he did not do was obey God
- And Samuel told him, *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."* (1 Samuel 15:22)
- *My ears You have opened*, The one thing needed is obedience – a joyful, willing obedience to all that God reveals as His will

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- David described here the different kinds of offerings according to their material, as blood sacrifice of animals, and offering made without blood of the fruits of the earth (Leviticus 2:1)
- And according to their purpose, as burnt-offering; symbolizing the offerings of total consecration and dedication of the worshipper to God, and sin-offering, offerings to atone for sin; for the reconciliation
- David here only foreshadowed the ultimate submission to God carried out by Jesus Christ
- Hebrews 10:5-10 quotes the Septuagint translation of 6-8

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- This is a wonderful and remarkable prophecy of the work of Jesus
- It shows God's ultimate dissatisfaction in animal sacrifices, looking forward to a Perfect Sacrifice, *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire*
- It shows that God the Son came in a prepared body (the Septuagint reads, *But a body You have prepared for Me*, Hebrews 10:5)
- It shows the public coming of the Messiah, *Behold, I come*, verse 7 and (Hebrews 10:7)
- It was as if Jesus said, "Behold, here I Am – I Am the One."

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- *In the scroll of the book it is written of me*, Any fulfillment of this in David is a pale shadow to its amazing and perfect fulfillment in Jesus
- It shows the Messiah as the great theme of the Hebrew Scriptures, *In the volume of the book it is written of Me*, (Hebrews 10:7)
- The whole Scripture has reference to Christ
- The Lord Himself says, *“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”* (Luke 24:44)

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- And our Lord, speaking of the Scriptures in general, said, *“Search the Scriptures ... they which testify of Me”* (John 5:39)
- *I delight to do Your will, O my God*, Again, in a far lesser sense this was true of David, the man after God's heart
- It is a shallow shadow of its perfect fulfillment in Jesus
- Jesus said that doing God's will was to Him as necessary and delightful as food (John 4:34)
- It shows the dedication of Jesus Christ to the will of God, *To do Your will, O God*, (Hebrews 10:7)
- Jesus not only did the Father's will, but found a delight in it

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- *And Your law is within my heart*, David is expressing that he does not only understand it, but receive it with heartiest love, delighting to meditate on it, and to totally submit in obedience to it
- This verse shows the Jesus' love and obedience to the word of God
- Christ did not offer outward, formal worship but His heart was in His work
- To be His disciple, we must be like our Lord in this
- If the heart is not in the worship and service one offers, if there is no pleasure, no delight in God's law, there can be no acceptance

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- David said he had glorified God among His people
- And he would *not restrain* his *lips* in offering this praise
- Yet, as in the previous verses, this has a far greater and perfect fulfillment in Jesus
- It was true of Jesus in His earthly ministry
- By the cross, the Lord Christ preached the love of God to all mankind, not by mere human words, but by shedding His blood
- *the good news of righteousness*, Fully declared and demonstrated in Christ, in sending Him into the world according to His promise, Acts 13:23, and in inflicting death upon Him for man's sin, Romans 3:25,26

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- *In the great assembly*, In the most public assemblies; not only to the Jews, but also to all other nations; to whom Christ preached by His apostles, as is observed, Ephesians 2:17
- *I do not restrain my lips*, He did not keep back anything in His ministry that was profitable; but had taught the way of God in great sincerity and spoke freely
- He was not only the Redeemer, but also the teacher and the preacher to men
- Our Lord's whole life was a sermon; He taught openly in the temple, and was not ashamed to be a faithful and a true witness
- He was the great evangelist

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- St. Augustine says, "He now addresses His members. He is exhorting them to do what He has already done. He has *"proclaimed"* let us declare also. He has suffered; let us "suffer with Him." He has been glorified; we shall be "glorified with Him."
- He also comments on *I do not restrain my lips, O Lord, You Yourself know* and says, "It is one thing that man hears; another that God "knows." That the "declaring" of it should not be confined to the lips alone, and that it might not be said of us, "Whatsoever things they say unto you, do; but do not after their works;" or lest it should be said to the people, "praising God with their lips, but not with their heart,"

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- *I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart, The righteousness of God was evident in both David's words and actions*
- It was not set in a secret place that had no connection with how he actually lived his life
- It was very true of Jesus who poured forth what was in His heart from His lips
- He spoke the doctrine of righteousness with great simplicity of speech
- He was the greatest teacher of the law and gospel

An Affirmation of Commitment to God's Will 40:6-10



- He had fully communicated this knowledge, *Your righteousness*, to others
- Jesus spent His life in making known the great truths about the righteousness of God
- *I have declared Your faithfulness*, The exact fulfillment of the promises made by the prophets in regard to the incarnation of Christ, and the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles
- He had shown to men that God was a Merciful and Forgiving God
- The gift of Jesus Christ reflects and shows God's mercy, kindness, and loving-kindness

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- Suddenly the scene changes, 11-17; the psalmist represents himself as overwhelmed by afflictions, and pleads for speedy help, and the humiliation of his wicked enemies
- Yet even in the midst of distress his trust remains unshaken
- *Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord*, This prayer is spoken by David, can be applied to him but also to Christ
- The words are an expression of confidence in the certainty of God's response
- In verses 9 & 10 he expressed that he has not restrained his lips, so, he trusts, God will not restrain His *tender mercies*

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- As he has not ceased to acknowledge God's lovingkindness and truth, so that lovingkindness and truth will not cease to protect him; it is a declaration of his confidence
- This could also be a prayer of Jesus as He lived upon this earth especially in His sufferings on the cross
- Christ prays to the Father not to delay the same mercy and justice He made known of the Father to mankind, towards Himself by a speedy resurrection to deliver Him from His death and passion
- A reason for having said, *Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me* because *For innumerable evils have surrounded me*

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- David needed this constant supply of the mercy, lovingkindness, and truth of God because he knew his own sins
- He asked God to not leave him to his many sins *more than the hairs of my head*, but to deliver him in mercy
- Truly it was on the cross that Jesus could say, *innumerable evils have surrounded Me*
- Jesus could never say, *My iniquities have overtaken Me*
- He was and is the spotless Lamb of God, without any sin or defect
- But Christ's sufferings were truly without number

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- And in His sufferings, He willfully identified with His people, taking on their sins as His own
- *My iniquities*, The iniquities of mankind, “which the Father placed upon Him,” Isaiah 53, and which He, therefore, looked upon as *My iniquities*
- For Jesus, they were *My iniquities*, not because He committed the sins, but because out of love He chose to bear them and all the wrath they deserved
- *Therefore my heart fails me*, The Savior's soul was so burdened with the multiple pains of the divine penalty that He was very heavy even unto a sweat of blood; His strength was gone and He was in an agony

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- Despite his many iniquities, David could and did rely upon the Lord for deliverance
- He is not only asking God to deliver him but asking God to take pleasure in his deliverance
- He could ask boldly because he believed it to be consistent with God's pleasure
- David's request was made with urgency
- *Let them be ashamed ...* This may be understood here rather as a confident expectation than a wish or desire
- It implies the certainty that they would not be successful, or would be hindered in their purposes

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- Spoken by Christ, it was in every way an appropriate prayer that the purposes of those who would defeat His plan in coming into the world might be let down because on the execution of that plan depended the salvation of men
- Matthew 26:39, Jesus prayed that, if possible, the cup of sorrow might be taken away
- *Who seek to destroy my life*, As understood of Jesus, this would refer to the times when His life was in danger, as it often was, before His time has come, John 7:6; Matthew 26:18
- The purpose of His enemies was to take His life and to prevent the spread of his doctrines

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- According to God's plan of salvation, Jesus was to die at a certain time, and in a certain manner and He should die at the time which had been foretold by the prophets
- All this would have been defeated if, before that time came, He had been put to death by stoning, or in any of the numerous ways in which His life was threatened
- *Let them be driven backward*, As those were who came with Judas into the garden to arrest and capture Him, John 18:6
- *brought to dishonor Who wish me evil*, The hosts of darkness will be completely defeated and all the attempts of Satan be put to the infinite destruction

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- In verse 15, He repeats the same thing a third time
- The wretchedness that occurred in the hearts of Satan and evil men by envy, malice, disappointment, and despair, shall be a fit reward for their cruelty to the Lord when He was in their hands
- *“Aha, aha!”* Words expressive of joy, Psalm 35:21, exulting at Jesus sufferings on the cross, Matthew 27:39
- Those who gloried in having triumphed over Christ and congratulated each other on it

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- The psalmist cannot long be satisfied with mere prayer for self
- He extended his supplication, and made it cover the whole body of the faithful, *all those that seek God*
- And as he prophesied confusion to his persecutors, so he now predicts joy to his followers in the same form
- He called the people of God – at least those who *seek* Him – to be happy in Him, and to *say continually, “The Lord be magnified!”*
- All those who seek the glory of God, who love Him and put their trust in Him, *rejoice and be glad*, divine and unspeakable joy

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- If the wicked mocked Him, saying: ‘Aha, aha’, namely, with a spirit of rejoicing over His suffering, the godly, prays and rejoices when they see God glorified in Him
- The wicked seek to destroy His life (14), while the godly seek the salvation of His soul (16)
- The humiliation of the wicked gives a reason for the righteous to rejoice in God, not merely because they are set free from persecution, but because they see in it the proof of God’s righteous sovereignty and the revealing of His purposes of salvation

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- David could combine his sense of great joy in God with a realistic thought of his present need
- Secure in the truth that God cared for and thought about him, David again appealed to God to be his *help* and *deliverer*, and he needed God to do this without *delay*
- *poor and needy*, In the Hebrew, the first conveys the idea of poverty; the second of affliction; quite applicable to Christ
- As He was literally, 2 Corinthians 8:9; and in a spiritual sense, when forsaken by His disciples, and surrounded by His enemies; and had the sins of His people, the curse of the law, and the wrath of God upon Him

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- But, however poor and afflicted He may have appeared to man, He was rich in the protection of His Father; and, therefore, He adds, *Yet the Lord thinks upon me*
- He calls His Father *the Lord* because He speaks in the person of a servant; as the Son of Man
- *the Lord thinks upon me*, He now explains at greater length, saying, *You are my help and my deliverer*
- For God the Father cares and *thinks* for His Son, by helping and protecting Him
- *Do not delay, O my God*, Namely, to deliver Him from all trouble by a speedy resurrection

A Prayer for Deliverance From Trouble 40:11-17



- It is as if David's eye laid on a suffering Messiah
- As afflicted, crushed, broken, forsaken - with all the woes related to the work of salvation and all the sorrows expressive of the evil of sin compiled upon him
- Yet confident in God that He *thinks* in Him, and in the assurance that He would *help and my deliverer* Him
- St. Augustine says, "What are you to do then, poor and needy one? Beg before the gate of God, knock, and it shall be opened to you. And what are the alms? Let the Beatitude answer, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)"

Discussion



- What is the historical context in which David is writing?
- Give five examples of Messianic psalms.
- What did David mean when he wrote that he *waited patiently* on the Lord for help? Why would someone have to wait on God?
- What are the visible results of God's working in our life according to v.3?

Discussion



- Why are sacrifices no substitute for obedience? What motivates you to obey the Lord?
- How does David describe salvation in the first few verses of this Psalm?
- Verses 7 and 8. What do these verses have to do with Christ and Hebrews 10?