
For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 40: 1 I waited patiently for the LORD. He turned to me, and heard my cry.

The benefit of confidence in God, Psa 40:1-3. The blessedness of those who trust in God, Psa 40:4, Psa 40:5. The termination of the Jewish sacrifices in that of Christ, Psa 40:6-8. The psalmist's resolution to publish God's goodness, Psa 40:9, Psa 40:10 : he prays to be delivered from evils, Psa 40:11-13; against his enemies, Psa 40:14, Psa 40:15; and in behalf of those who are destitute, Psa 40:16, Psa 40:17.

The Title, "To the chief Musician," we have already seen, and it contains nothing worthy of particular remark. Concerning the occasion and author of this Psalm there has been a strange and numerous diversity of opinions. I shall not trouble the reader with sentiments which I believe to be ill founded; as I am satisfied the Psalm was composed by David and about the same time and on the same occasion as the two preceding; with this difference, that here he magnifies God for having bestowed the mercy which he sought there. It is, therefore, a thanksgiving for his recovery from the sore disease by which he was afflicted in his body, and for his restoration to the Divine favor. The sixth, seventh, and eighth verses contain a remarkable prophecy of the incarnation and sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. From the eleventh to the end contains a new subject and appears to have belonged to another Psalm. It is the same as the seventieth Psalm; only it wants the two first verses.

Verse 1

I waited patiently for the Lord - The two preceding Psalms are proofs of the patience and resignation with which David waited for the mercy of God. The reader is requested to consult the notes on them.

And heard my cry - The two preceding Psalms show how he prayed and waited; this shows how he succeeded.

PSALM 40: 2 He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock, and gave me a firm place to stand.

Verse 2

A horrible pit - Literally, the sounding pit; where nothing was heard except the howlings of wild beasts, or the hollow sounds of winds reverberated and broken from the craggy sides and roof.

The miry clay - Where the longer I stayed the deeper I sank, and was utterly unable to save myself. The Syriac and Arabic translate "The pit of perdition, and the mud of corruption." These are figurative expressions to point out the dreary, dismal, ruinous state of sin and guilt, and the utter inability of a condemned sinner to save himself either from the guilt of his conscience, or the corruption of his heart.

Set my feet upon a rock - Thou hast changed my state from guilt to pardon; from corruption to holiness; in consequence of which my goings are established. I have now power over all sin, and can walk steadily in the way that leads to God's kingdom.

PSALM 40: 3 He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

Verse 3

A new song - Cheerfulness and joy had long been strangers to him. He seemed to live to utter the most doleful complaints, and be a prey to suffering and wretchedness. Praise for a sense of God's favor was a new song to him. The word is often used to signify excellence: I will sing a most excellent and eminent song.

Many shalt see it - I will publish it abroad and fear-to sin against the Lord, knowing by my example what a grievous and bitter thing it is.

And shall trust in the Lord - Even the worst of sinners shall not despair of mercy, being penitent, when they see that I have found favor in his sight.

PSALM 40: 4 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, and doesn't respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Verse 4

Blessed is that man - The man must be blessed and happy who casts his soul with all its burden of sin and wretchedness, at the footstool of God's mercy; for he will save all who come to him through the Son of his love.

PSALM 40: 5 Many, LORD, my God, are the wonderful works which you have done, and your thoughts which are toward us. They can't be declared back to you. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

Verse 5

Many - are thy wonderful works - The psalmist seems here astonished and confounded at the counsels, loving-kindnesses, and marvellous works of the Lord, not in nature, but in grace; for it was the mercy of God towards himself that he had now particularly in view.

PSALM 40: 6 Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire. You have opened my ears. You have not required burnt offering and sin offering.

Verse 6

Sacrifice and offering - The apostle, Heb 10:5, etc., quoting this and the two following verses, says, When he (the Messiah) cometh into the world - was about to be incarnated, He saith - to God the Father, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not - it was never thy will and design that the sacrifices under thy own law should be considered as making atonement for sin; they were only designed to point out my incarnation and consequent sacrificial death: and therefore a body hast thou prepared me, by a miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin; according to thy word, The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.

A body hast thou prepared me - The quotation of this and the two following verses by the apostle, Heb 10:5, etc., is taken from the Septuagint, with scarcely any variety of reading: but, although the general meaning is the same, they are widely different in verbal expression in the Hebrew. David's words are **לִי כָרִית אָזְנַי** *oznayim caritha lli*, which we translate, My ears hast thou opened; but they might be more properly rendered, My ears hast thou bored; that is, Thou hast made me thy servant for ever, to dwell in thine own house: for the allusion is evidently to the custom mentioned Exo 21:2, etc.: "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free: but if the servant shall positively say, I love my master, etc., I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him to the doorpost, and shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever."

But how is it possible that the Septuagint and the apostle should take a meaning so totally different from the sense of the Hebrew? Dr. Kennicott has a very ingenious conjecture here: he supposes that the Septuagint and apostle express the meaning of the words as they stood in the copy from which the Greek translation was made; and that the present Hebrew text is corrupted in the word **אָזְנַי** *oznayim*, ears, which has been written through carelessness for **אָז גֹּהַ** *az gevah*, Then, a Body The first syllable, **אָז** *az*, Then, is the same in both; and the latter, **מִן**, which, joined to **אָז** makes **אָזְנַי** *oznayim*, might have been easily mistaken for **גֹּהַ** *gevah*, Body; **נ** nun being very like **ג** gimel; **י** yod like **ו** vau; and **ה** he like final **מ** mem; especially if the line on which the letters were written in the MS. happened to be blacker than ordinary, which has often been a cause of mistake, it might then have been easily taken for the under-stroke of the mem, and thus give rise to a corrupt reading; add to this, the root **כָּרָה** *carah* signifies as well to prepare, as to open, bore, etc. On this supposition the ancient copy translated by the Septuagint, and followed by the apostle, must have read the text thus: **לִי כָרִית אָז גֹּהַ** *az gevah charitha lli*; **Σωμα δε κατασκευασον**. Then a body thou hast prepared me: thus the Hebrew text, the version of the Septuagint, and the apostle, will agree in what is known to be an indisputable fact in Christianity; namely, that Christ was incarnated for the sin of the world.

The Ethiopic has nearly the same reading: the Arabic has both, "A body hast thou prepared me, and mine ears thou hast opened." But the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Vulgate, agree with the present Hebrew text; and none of the MSS. collated by Kennicott and De Rossi have any various reading on the disputed words.

It is remarkable, that all the offerings and sacrifices which were considered to be of an atoning or cleansing nature, offered under the law, are here enumerated by the psalmist and the apostle, to show that none of them, nor all of them, could take away sin; and that the grand sacrifice of Christ was that alone which could do it.

Four kinds are here specified, both by the psalmist and the apostle: viz. Sacrifice, **זֶבַח** *zebach*, **θυσια**; Offering, **מִנְחָה** *minchah*, **προσφορα**; Burnt-Offering, **עֹלָה** *olah*, **ὀλοκαυτωμα**; Sin-Offering, **חַטָּא**

chataah, περι ἁμαρτίας. Of all these we may say, with the apostle, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats, etc. should take away sin.

Thou hast had no pleasure - Thou couldst never be pleased with the victims under the law; thou couldst never consider them as atonements for sin, as they could never satisfy thy justice, nor make thy law honorable.

PSALM 40: 7 Then I said, "Behold, I have come. It is written about me in the book in the scroll."

Verse 7

In the volume of the book - במגלת ספר bimegillath sepher, "in the roll of the book." Anciently, books were written on skins, and rolled up. Among the Romans, these were called volumina, from volvo, I roll; and the Pentateuch in the Jewish synagogues is still written in this way. There are two wooden rollers; on one they roll on, on the other they roll off, as they proceed in reading. One now lying before me, written on vellum, is two feet two inches in breadth and one hundred and two feet long. To roll and unroll such a MS. was no easy task, and to be managed must lie flat on a table. This contains the Pentateuch only, and is without points, or any other Masoretic distinction. The book mentioned here must be the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses; for, in David's time no other part of Divine revelation had been committed to writing. This whole book speaks about Christ, and his accomplishing the will of God, not only in "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," and "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" but in all the sacrifices and sacrificial rites mentioned in the law.

PSALM 40: 8 I delight to do your will, my God. Yes, your law is within my heart."

Verse 8

To do thy will - God willed not the sacrifices under the law, but he willed that a human victim of infinite merit should be offered for the redemption of mankind. That there might be such a victim, a body was prepared for the eternal Logos, and in that body he came to do the will of God; that is, to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

1. Hence we see that the sovereign Will of God is that Jesus should be incarnated; that he should suffer and die; or, in the apostle's words, taste death for every man; that all should believe on him, and be saved from their sins; for this is the Will of God, our sanctification.

2. And as the apostle grounds this on the words of the Psalm, we see that it is the Will of God that that system shall end; for as the essence of it is contained in its sacrifices, and God says he will not have these, and has appointed the Messiah to do his will, i.e., to die for men, hence it necessarily follows, from the psalmist himself, that the introduction of the Messiah into the world is the abolition of the law; and that his sacrifice is that which shall last for ever.

PSALM 40: 9 I have proclaimed glad news of righteousness in the great assembly. Behold, I will not seal my lips, LORD, you know.

Verse 9

I have preached righteousness - I think it best to refer these words to Christ and his apostles. In consequence of his having become a sacrifice for sin, the Jewish sacrificial system being ended, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and the door of faith, the doctrine of justification by faith, opened to the Gentiles. Hence the Gospel was preached in all the world, and the mercy of God made known to the Gentiles; and thus righteousness - justification by faith, was preached in the great congregation - to Jews and Gentiles, throughout the Roman empire.

The great congregation, both in this and the following verse, I think, means the Gentiles, contradistinguished from the Jews.

The word righteousness means the plan or method of salvation by Jesus Christ - God's method of justifying sinners by faith, without the deeds of the law. See Rom 3:25-26 (note), and the notes there.

PSALM 40: 10 I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart. I have declared your faithfulness and your salvation. I have not concealed your loving kindness and your truth from the great assembly.

Verse 10

Thy faithfulness - This means the exact fulfillment of the promises made by the prophets relative to the incarnation of Christ, and the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Loving-kindness - Shows the gift itself of Jesus Christ, the highest proof that God could give to a lost world of his mercy, kindness, and loving-kindness.

PSALM 40: 11 Don't withhold your tender mercies from me, LORD. Let your loving kindness and your truth continually preserve me.

Verse 11

Thy tender mercies - רַחֲמֶיךָ rachameycha, such propensities and feelings as a mother bears to her child; or animals in general to their young.

Let thy loving-kindness - חַסְדֶּךָ chasdecha, thy overflowing and superabundant mercy.

And thy truth - What is revealed in thy word: continually preserve me. Mercy to help me, truth to direct me; and, by the operation of both, I shall be continually preserved from sin and evil.

PSALM 40: 12 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. My heart has failed me.

Verse 12

Innumerable evils have compassed me about - This part does not comport with the preceding; and either argues a former experience, or must be considered a part of another Psalm, written at a different time, and on another occasion, and, were we to prefix the two first verses of the seventieth Psalm to it we should find it to be a Psalm as complete in itself as that is.

They are more than the hairs of mine head - This could not be said by any person who was exulting in the pardoning mercy of God, as David was at the time he penned the commencement of this Psalm.

PSALM 40: 13 Be pleased, LORD, to deliver me. Hurry to help me, LORD.

PSALM 40: 14 Let them be disappointed and confounded together who seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt.

PSALM 40: 15 Let them be desolate by reason of their shame that tell me, "Aha! Aha!"

Verse 15

That say unto me, Aha, aha - הַאֵה אַה. See on Psa 35:21 (note).

PSALM 40: 16 Let all those who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let such as love your salvation say continually, "Let the LORD be exalted!"

Verse 16

Let all those that seek thee - be glad - In making prayer and supplication to thee, let them ever find thee, that they may magnify thee for the blessings they receive.

Love thy salvation - Who earnestly desire to be saved from sin: saved in thy own way, and on thy own terms.

The Lord be magnified - Let God be praised continually for the continual blessings he pours down.

PSALM 40: 17 But I am poor and needy. May the Lord think about me. You are my help and my deliverer. Don't delay, my God.

Verse 17

But I am poor - עָנִי ani, afflicted, greatly depressed.

And needy - אביון ebyon, a beggar. One utterly destitute, and seeking help.

The Lord thinketh upon me - The words are very emphatic; אדני Adonai, my prop, my support, thinketh, יחשב yachshab, meditateth, upon me. On which he concludes: "Thou art my help and deliverer." Seeing that my miserable state occupies thy heart, it will soon employ thy hand. Thou, who meditatest upon me, wilt deliver me.

Make no tarrying - Seeing thou art disposed to help, and I am in such great necessity, delay not, but come speedily to my assistance. The old Psalter speaks to this effect: "Let us not be so long under distress and misery that we lose our patience, or our love to thee."