



CAPITOL COMMISSION

From the Depths to the Heights (Psalm 40)

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Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Currently, the Bible study for staff members is held Tuesdays at noon in 514 CLOB. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is to be a means of God transforming the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Psalm 40 is a prayer song of David. The prayer songs throughout the Psalter may belong to either the community (i.e. prayer of the people) or an individual.¹ The prayer songs of an individual may be distinguished as either a psalm of lament or a psalm of thanksgiving. The individual psalms of lament occur most frequently in Book I (1—41) of the Psalter (Ps 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 17, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 35, 38, 39, 41); Book II (42—72) contains five (Ps 51, 57, 63, 69, and 71), Book III (73—89) contains one (Ps 88), Book IV (90—106) contains three (Ps 91, 102, 103), and Book V (107—50) contains one (Ps 143). The individual psalms of thanksgiving are closely associated with the prayer songs of the individual. However, a notable distinction is the

rescue of the psalmist from his distress and suffering. The Psalter contains eleven of these songs (Ps 18, 30, 31, 32, 40, 52, 66, 92, 116, 118, 120). It is noteworthy that the individual psalms of lament occur most frequently in Book I, which are almost exclusively songs of David.² *The significance of this frequency is that David experienced many difficulties with both individuals and nations, and therefore, his expressions of the depths of distress are somewhat expected.* Whereas community prayer songs are absent from Book I, there are thirteen in Books II-V (Ps 44, 60, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 137) wherein a community or national consciousness of the Psalter is developed to contemplate the benefits and responsibilities of God's covenant. The beginning of the Davidic monarchy was developed from its inception (Ps 2) to include the opposition of God's anointed (Ps 3—41), the national response to the covenant, and failure of the nation (Ps 89). Psalm 89 indicates the climax of Books I-III: "How long, O LORD?" (v. 46).³ Psalm 40 made be outlined in reverse parallel.

A Salvation Experience (vv. 1-3)

B God's Providence Is Blessed (vv. 4-5)

C Commitment to the Will of God (vv. 6-8)

D Proclamation of God's Righteousness and Faithfulness (vv. 9-10)

D Prayer for God's Compassion and Lovingkindness (v. 11)

C Confession of Sin against the Will of God (v. 12)

B God's Providence Is Sought (vv. 13-16)

A Salvation Need (v. 17)

SALVATION AND PRAISE

(40:1-3) *(The term salvation is defined broadly to include God's action for creation's behalf and especially the accomplishment of God's eternal decrees. More specifically, salvation refers to God's deliverance of fallen humanity from the penalty, power, and presence of sin through the work of Jesus Christ.)* The psalm begins with personal testimony to an experience of God's salvation. "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry." The Hebrew word, *qāwāh* (קָוָה), translated "waited" means waiting with assurance that God will hear the cry for help, and therefore conveys patient confidence in God (cf. Ps 25:3; 27:14; 37:8-9; 69:6; Lam 3:25).⁴ Verses 1-3 report an evident progression of God's action in response to waiting patiently: "inclined . . . heard . . . brought me up . . . set . . . put." As a result of God's providence, "many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD." The praise of God's salvation is not complete until many "see and fear" the providence of the Lord, and are drawn by the same grace of God to "trust in the LORD."

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS AND LOBBYISTS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30AM, 514 CLOB (DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON, 514 CLOB (AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

SALVATION THROUGH TRUST

(40:4-5) All who trust in the Lord are blessed, which is an indication of happiness and joy. God will intervene in favor of the one who trusts in Him, as opposed to those who are proud and deceptive (or who lapse into idolatry). Trust in God is the antithesis of the proud who are reliant upon self and live without trust. Divine grace belongs to the one who is confident in God, whose “wonders” are “too numerous to count.” The wonders that David referred are not the actions of self, but refer to the providential interventions of God (cf. Rom 8:28). The Lord’s providence has a wonderful effect upon the one who experiences the omnipotent intervention of God.

RESPONDING TO LIFE’S CHALLENGES	
<i>focus: self and problem</i>	UPWARD CALL <i>Belief / Joy</i>
↓ Conformity ↓ (Rom 12:2)	↑ Concentration ↑ (2 Cor 10; Phil 4:8)
↓ Contrivance ↓ (1 Sam 27; 2 Cor 2:6-8)	↑ Commitment ↑ (Ps 37:5; 1 Pet 2:21; 5:9) ↑
↓ Contempt ↓ (Numb 14:1-2, 11, 23)	↑ Consideration ↑ (Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-9)
↓ Concentration ↓ (Numb 13; 1 Sam 27:1-2)	↑ Confess ↑ (Ps 32:1-5; 1 John 1:9)
DOWNWARD SPIRAL <i>Unbelief / Depression</i>	<i>focus: Jesus Christ and remedy</i>

SALVATION IS A RESOLVE

(40:6-8) Saul was made king before the Lord in Gilgal (1 Sam 11:15). King Saul, however, did not lose the kingdom because he failed to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices. He lost the kingdom because he was not obedient to the Lord’s commands (15:10-11, 22-23). David’s words in verses 6-8 were not opposing the sacrificial system, but the mere formalism of those who are not eager to delight in God’s commands. Sacrifice is not entirely unimportant, but it is less important than obedience. David confessed that God opened his ears to the Law for the purpose of commitment to the Lord (cf. Isa 6:10; Jer 6:10). His eagerness to obey is expressed by his preparedness, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” Obedience to God was the resolve of David’s heart, which was also true with regard to Christ’s obedience unto death (Heb 10:5-7).

SALVATION IS THROUGH GOD’S PERFECTIONS

(40:9-11) The psalmist’s gratitude for so great a salvation caused him to proclaim God’s perfections to the congregation gathered for worship. David spoke eagerly with regard to God’s salvation for others. “Behold, I will not restrain my lips.” The psalmist could not be silent having received so great a salvation. He was compelled to testify with regard to God’s righteousness and faithfulness. David’s proclamation of God’s perfections was to “the great congregation.”

SALVATION NECESSITATES PRAYER

(40:12-16) The celebration and proclamation of God’s perfections are the basis for David’s prayer. Although he experienced God’s salvation, David was aware that life’s challenges are always near. Therefore, he prayed, “You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me,” requesting that God’s compassion and lovingkindness preserve him. David found himself surrounded again by difficult situations; however, on this occasion, the trouble was the result of his own sin. David’s knowledge of the Word of God (Ps 40:7) resulted in a true understanding of God’s righteousness and his sinfulness. Obedience to God coexists with acknowledgement of sin.

DAVID’S KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD (PS 40:7) RESULTED IN A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HIS SINFULNESS.

The psalmist understood that God alone was his salvation (40:13-15). David waited patiently for the Lord (40:1), but also prayed for Him to “make haste” according to His will (“be pleased”). Knowing the justice of God, the psalmist prayed for shame and humiliation for those who sought to bring him harm. The request was not failure to love one’s enemies (Prov 25:21; Matt 5:44); rather, the enemies who shouted, “Aha, aha!” were contemptuous toward God, and therefore, judgment was appropriate (2 Thess 1:9-10). However, for those who seek God there is rejoicing and gladness (40:16). The enemies of God are silenced and God’s people shout with joy.

SALVATION IS JOY IN THE LORD

(40:17) The psalmist concludes with a confession of his personal need for salvation: “I am afflicted and needy.” David understood his helplessness in the presence of his enemies. He did not presume upon the grace and power of God, but simply confessed, “Let the Lord be mindful of me.” He knew God as his “help” and “deliverer.” The psalmist’s needs, however, were urgent (“do not delay”). Nevertheless, he would wait patiently for the Lord’s salvation. Regardless of life’s challenges, God’s people may be confident that there is an eternal purpose in the difficulty and the Lord will not withhold His compassion. God’s lovingkindness and truth will preserve His servants, according to His perfect will. Those who seek God will not be disappointed, but may rejoice and be glad in His salvation. “The LORD be magnified!” (40:16).

* Thank you for allowing me the honor to provide the weekly Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with me, or contact me by email or phone.

¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 47-52.

² Psalms 1, 2, 10, and 33 are not ascribed to David.

³ Books IV-V are the response to Psalm 89, and therefore, Books I-III. Jehovah alone has been the refuge of the nation in the past, and will be in the future. The nation is to trust Jehovah as king and refuge, through obedience to His revealed will. It is prudent to also note the primary change in use of the divine name, *Jehovah*, in Book I (272 usages) to *Elohim* in Book II (164 usages).

⁴ James G. S. Thomson noted accurately that the phrase “waited patiently” literally reads, “Waiting I waited for the Lord” (*The Praying Christ: Jesus’ Doctrine and Practice of Prayer* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959; reprint, Vancouver, Canada: Regent College, 2002] 136).