

# Psalm 40:1-3

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## Observation

<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he turned to me and heard my cry.  
<sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm place to stand.  
<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear the LORD  
and put their trust in him.

### David (Psalm 40:1-3)

This Psalm of David reflects a common experience in our Christian life.

There are a few clear elements we can identify with:

Firstly, the times when we encounter great distress, as if being buried deep in the mud and mire within a slimy pit that is too difficult for us to climb out by our own efforts.

Secondly, we cry out to God, “God, where art thou? Do you hear my cry of pain? Are you abandoning me ...?”

God’s response to our cries does not seem to be quickly forthcoming. In pleasures, time seems to fly; but in agony, a second of waiting feels like forever. Nevertheless, holding on to the promise of God’s faithfulness, we wait patiently.

God is indeed faithful; He hears our cries and He does not abandon us. He lifts us out of our depth of despair, out of the snags and hitches (mud and mire) that we are trapped in, and sinking. At last, we are free. We heave a sigh of relief as our feet are planted on solid ground. Our

faith in God, our patience in waiting, have been sorely tested. Struggling along, we finally pass the test and we actually develop a stronger sense of awe towards God. With songs and gratitude, we put renewed trust in our God; with hymns of praise and music, we worship Him.

Often, in little distress we think we are smart enough to deal with it and so we turn God aside. When in deep distress, we then despondently discover the human limit of our capability to handle. It is in downhearted moments that we are forced to look outward (outside of ourselves) to the Almighty, pleadingly and mustering all that we have of our patience and trust, fervently hoping against anguish for help to come. It is like children who strive to be on their own to manage some problems and take no notice of those above them in wisdom who are able to help. It is only when the problems deteriorate into knottiness and they enter a miserable situation that they pick up resolve to turn their eyes towards whom they should have faith in from the start.

Are we ignorant children of God who shun our Father in heaven many a time when we can turn to Him for help, but only cry out to Him when our bad circumstances reach the stage that we are sunk in the mud and mire of a slimy pit?

Consider the following stages:

- Trust in God is expressed when one is in deep suffering.
- Prayers (pleadings) are cried out.
- Patience is manifested in waiting upon God.
- Deliverance comes.
- Praise to God. Trust in God is affirmed good, and strengthened.

*“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” – Heb. 5:7*

Christ is our example. When we wish for deliverance from dire predicaments, we need:

- (1) prayers and petitions with fervency and

(2) to direct our prayers and petitions to the one who matters.

If we turn our attention away from God and go to idols to seek help, can the idols save us?

We should never imagine that our state of distress could be in any way more severe than Christ's that God is unable to deliver us from it.

It does not matter whether our distress is of any particular kind or a jumble of vague issues. From Ps 40:12, we can tell that David's distress was more on account of sin in its hodgepodge of manifestations:

*"For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me."*

David's is not the only example we can find in the Bible about God's grace and mercy shown to those who cry out to Him for deliverance. Other examples are aplenty, such as in Hezekiah's deliverance from the pit of destruction (Isa. 38:17), Jeremiah being lifted out of his deep agony in the cistern of Malkijah (Jer. 38:6-12), Jonah's deliverance from the belly of hell (Jon. 2:2 KJV), etc.

*"Many will see and fear the LORD, and put their trust in him." – Ps.  
40:3b*

The fear of the LORD is described as wisdom's instruction in Prov. 15:33.

The success of David's prayer and the many similar examples of deliverance from deep distress should be our encouragement. All who fear the LORD and have trust in him can put their hope in His unfailing grace and mercy.

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