

Psalm 40:1-17 (NLT2) ¹ I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. ³ He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD. ⁴ Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD, who have no confidence in the proud or in those who worship idols. ⁵ O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them. ⁶ You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand - you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings. ⁷ Then I said, "Look, I have come. As is written about me in the Scriptures: ⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart." ⁹ I have told all your people about your justice. I have not been afraid to speak out, as you, O LORD, well know. ¹⁰ I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart; I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power. I have told everyone in the great assembly of your unfailing love and faithfulness. ¹¹ LORD don't hold back your tender mercies from me. Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me. ¹² For troubles surround me - too many to count! My sins pile up so high I can't see my way out. They outnumber the hairs on my head. I have lost all courage. ¹³ Please, LORD, rescue me! Come quickly, LORD, and help me. ¹⁴ May those who try to destroy me be humiliated and put to shame. May those who take delight in my trouble be turned back in disgrace. ¹⁵ Let them be horrified by their shame, for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!" ¹⁶ But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness in you. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, "The LORD is great!" ¹⁷ As for me, since I am poor and needy, let the Lord keep me in his thoughts. You are my helper and my savior. O my God do not delay.

The phone rang, "Pastor, I am so depressed that I can't even get out of bed." That is how the conversation began. It is a conversation that has stayed with me and one I cannot forget. The Psalmist writes, *I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.* ² *He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.* Friends, guess who is the One who was in the deepest pit ever. He was in the pit so deep that taking a breath was more painful than any pain you and I have ever experienced. He was in the pit, naked, and suffering more than any person has ever suffered. Do you know what Jesus did while He was in the pit. He was actively trusting in the Father to raise him from the dead. Jesus never lost that trust in the Father for to do so would have been his first sin, and Jesus never sinned. He hung with all our guilt, all our shame, and yes, all our sorrows. He felt dirty to the core as in deep mud and mire. The sin of the world

was upon Him, your sin, and my sin, and on the inside was continual trust in the Father to rescue Him from the pit of hell.

Luther taught us that the Psalms point us to Jesus. I believe this Psalm speaks of David when he was in the pit and it can also refer to Jesus on the cross, dying for the sins of the world; it may refer to both. Either way the same God who rescued Jesus Christ will rescue everyone who trusts in Him. "There is a blessing for everyone who waits patiently for God like Jesus did (James Johnston, Psalms Volume 1, pg. 410)."

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. Some time ago I heard something that to this day I wish I could forget. Our neighbor, two houses down heard the same cry. The scream made my body shake. It was the cry, the scream of my daughter Bethany. Johnny and Bethany collided on their bikes. Bethany's cry was the cry of the worst pain possible. The neighbor and I sprinted over to Bethany. We bent down and picked her up and carried her over to the grass and laid her down. Falling on the pavement my little, precious daughter had deep gashes and they were absolutely awful. It took both of us to pick her up. I was so angry at my son for causing her so much pain. I can still feel that anger when I think about this. Nothing hurts a parent more than seeing their child suffer. I was now in the pit with her, hurting for her, aching for her. It was too much.

Exactly what put David into the pit of pain, suffering in the mud and mire we do not know but it is where David found Himself. David had many faults which I do not need remind you of. On the other hand, David had a heart for God. He learned young in life, even his teenage years, that no matter how difficult life can be, He could always go to God and God would somehow rescue Him, in God's way, in God's timing, and in a way that only God can do and not ourselves. He learned to put things into God's hands and leave them there, waiting patiently for God's deliverance, for God's rescue, in God's timing. What got David into so much trouble was when his heart for God became hardened. David turned to himself, to his own coping skills, and

refused to turn it over to God. David took the situations into his own hands and tried to rescue himself with no thought of God at all. So many of David's pit experiences he brought onto himself by making bad and sinful choices. On the other hand, some of his pit experiences were brought on by the enemies around David through no fault of his own. David knew well what mud, what muck, what mire felt like, smelt like, and maybe even tasted like.

Friends, God has perfect hearing. God hears the cries of your heart. He sees you in the pit. God bends over to your level. He sees your trusting heart and God knows exactly what to do for you and in you. God has a way of picking you up, of raising you up. It is one of God's finest qualities, finest traits, He lifts you up. This is God's promise and God is always true to His word. *I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. ³ He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD.*

Joseph found himself in a deep pit, thrown in, by his brothers. The pit was a cistern. Had the rains come, Joseph would have drowned. There was no way out of the pit. The brother's hated him so much they wanted him dead. You know the Joseph story. Slave traders come and purchase Joseph to serve as a slave. I use this story because sometimes it is family issues that put us in the pit. Do you know what Joseph did while in the pit. He screamed and screamed until he could scream no more. He could smell death; it was that close. Do you know what his brothers did as Joseph was in the pit screaming for his very life. They were up above eating lunch, enjoying the very food Joseph had brought them to eat. Later on, through a series of events that only God could have brought about, they met with Joseph face to face and did not recognize their own brother. Joseph put great pressure on them, and this is how they responded. **Genesis 42:21 (NIV)** ²¹ They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished

because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."

A pit experience can occur when a previous sin or sins finally catch up to you and you experience the consequences of your own actions. It is called the pit of sin. You reap what you have sown, the consequences of your own actions. The Bible says, "Your sin will find you out."

A pit experience can occur due to no fault of your own. At work there is a coworker who is absolutely toxic. He or she has no self-awareness and have made it their aim to make your life miserable in the guise of thinking you are being helped by their overbearing, overwhelming, overtly self-righteous, and overly controlling ways. The toxic person sees him or herself as the one in the right and you are always wrong. Such people have a way of making you question your own sanity. Yes, you pray. Yes, you trust God. Yes, you do all that you can to have a healthy relationship but all that you do does not help in the least. "God where are you?" "You are not hearing my cries." I am reading a book of how to deal with toxic people and sometimes the answer is to walk away. Changing jobs may be the only way you can live a healthy life again.

There is the pit of personal defeat. No, you did not lose the Super Bowl, but it sure feels like it. I do wish to thank the Green Bay Packers for putting the Seahawks into the next round of finals. You were most kind to do so. A personal defeat can occur at home, at school, at work, at church or in some other setting or relationship. David was anointed to be the next king, but Saul was still in that position. King Saul hated David, to no fault of David. King Saul was insanely bitterly jealous of David. King Saul hunted David down in order to kill him and David had done nothing wrong.

It is said you can tell a lot about a person by the way they treat their enemies. King Saul was madly hunting David down to slay him and had an entire army of Israel behind him. What did David do. He continually laid down his problem before God in prayer. David had an opportunity to kill Saul, twice, but to do so would have been a sin against God for killing God's

anointed king. It took a few years for God to completely intervene by removing Saul and eventually bring David to the throne. Dr Boice writes, "If you are defeated, bring your defeats to God, wait on God. David waited patiently for the Lord. If you wait patiently, you too will learn that God has important things for you to do, and he will give you significant victories in His own personal time" (James Montgomery Boice, Psalms Volume 1, pg. 349).

In one way, Moses was in the pit for 40 years after killing the Egyptian, thinking he was serving God. Moses took matters into his own hands, did it his way and not God's way. Forty years later God used Moses to take God's people out of Egypt into the promised land.

⁴ Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD, who have no confidence in the proud or in those who worship idols. ⁵ O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them. Recently I told a person in the pit to tell me some of the ways God had worked in his life previously. He shared many God sightings, many ways they had received the help of the Lord. I told the person that God did not bring you this far to let you down. God is still God and is on the throne. God has brought you this far to take you farther. God has good things planned for those who trust in Him. He will not leave you or abandon you. Everything you need right now can be found in Jesus. Yes, you feel let down by the people around you but look to Jesus first, seek his kingdom and God's ways first. Do not go around killing Egyptians.

⁶ You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand - you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings. ⁷ Then I said, "Look, I have come. As is written about me in the Scriptures: ⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart." *⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart.* God is saying to us in the pit, quit working so hard to earn my blessing. Quit trying on your own to raise yourself up. Your righteousness stinks. God's righteousness in

you is a fragrant aroma. Quit beating yourself up. Ask God to give to you ears to hear his word that will lift you up. You may be in the pit because you turned a deaf ear to God.

⁹ I have told all your people about your justice. I have not been afraid to speak out, as you, O LORD, well know. ¹⁰ I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart; I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power. I have told everyone in the great assembly of your unfailing love and faithfulness. When God raises you up out of the pit, you have a beautiful testimony to give. God will use your past pain to help others in their pit as you speak of God's faithfulness, goodness, God's saving power and unfailing love. Experiencing these aspects of God is what pulls you up and out.

Each of you has a testimony of God's work in your life. Please do not keep it to yourself. God has done a great work inside of you so you will tell others what God has done. I want all of us to be vocal about God and God's work in our lives. I cannot tell you how to be more vocal and outgoing. God has to tell you that. It is between you and God. God uses you according to your personality and spiritual gifts. That means your way of speaking is completely unique to yourself. God is the one that has to loosen your lips. The Spirit is prompting you to speak out. This is no time to be mute. Paul says, "I believe therefore I speak."

The final verses 11-17 are prayers for future deliverance.

Some final points. **1. Waiting on God gives God time to act before you or I react and make the situation worse. It is called walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh.** "When God asks you to wait, He has important work for you to do below the surface of your life. Your faith is growing as you learn to trust in Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG) 2. ⁵Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. ⁶ Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. **3. "No one who waits on God**

is ever disappointed. In His timing God will take action” (James Johnston, The Psalms Volume 1, pg. 409).