

Psalm 40

1. *I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.*
2. *He brought me up out of the roaring pit, out of the mire and clay;
he set my feet upon a rock and made my footing sure.*
3. *He has put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
Many shall see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.*
4. *Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
Who does not turn to the proud that follow a lie.*
5. *Great are the wonders you have done, O Lord my God.
How great your designs for us!
There is none that can be compared with you.*
6. *If I were to proclaim them and tell of them
They would be more than I am able to express.*
7. *Sacrifice and offering you do not desire but my ears you have opened;*
8. *Burnt offering and sacrifice for sin you have not required;
then said I, 'Lo, I come.*
9. *'In the scroll of the book it is written of me that I should do your will,
O my God; I delight to do it: your law is within my heart.'*
10. *I have declared your righteousness in the great congregation;
behold, I did not restrain my lips, and that, O Lord, you know.*
11. *Your righteousness I have not hidden in my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your loving-kindness and truth
from the great congregation.*
12. *Do not withhold your compassion from me, O Lord;
Let your love and your faithfulness always preserve me,*
13. *For innumerable troubles have come about me;
my sins have overtaken me so that I cannot look up;
they are more in number than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.*
14. *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me.*
15. *Let them be ashamed and altogether dismayed
who seek after my life to destroy it;
let them be driven back and put to shame who wish me evil.*
16. *Let those who heap insults upon me
be desolate because of their shame.*
17. *Let all who seek you rejoice in you and be glad;
let those who love your salvation say always 'The Lord is great.'*

18. *Though I am poor and needy, the Lord cares for me.*

19. *You are my helper and my deliverer; O my God, make no delay.*

Let all who seek you
rejoice in you and be glad.

Psalm 40 begins with a thanksgiving (vv.1-10) and ends with lamentation (vv.11-17).

In distress the psalmist remembers God's goodness in the past. The pit and the miry bog stand for the underworld. But God has entered into his misery and delivered him. His ability to praise is a gift of God and his deliverance makes him testify to others. God can provide a solid rock, take the cry of distress away and replace it with a song of joy (vv. 1-3).

The 'new song' is his testimony to the congregation. Unshakable confidence in God means rejection of arrogant self-assurance (vv.5-6).

The offering to God is the worshipper himself ('Lo, I come'). What is required is an open ear and conformity of God's will, as recorded in the sacred scrolls (vv. 5-8).

The law is not a burden, but good news of deliverance, because it reveals God, who acts in saving love (vv. 9-10).

Vv. 13-17 are very like Psalm 70, where we find a theme of lament, the attack of enemies. Underlying this, however, is joy. The psalmist prays that this joy may reside where it properly belongs, in the company of the faithful worshippers of God.

So, there is a message of waiting expectantly (see also Psalm 130). We sometimes cry out to God in a crisis, for example in wartime or, as we are experiencing at present, a virus pandemic, when we are inclined to pray more often than in easier times. God takes the cry out and assures us of his constant presence and love. The psalmist sees his sins as being more innumerable than the hairs of his head, and yet the love of God is greater than he is able to express. Psalm 40 expresses the greatness of God, but also God's intimacy, his presence alongside us, both in good times and in times of difficulty and distress. Therefore, the psalmist says in v. 5, 'There is none that can be compared with you.' And further, 'In the scroll of the book it is written of me that I should do your will, O my God; I delight to do it: your law is within my heart.'

There can't be a greater song of confidence than that!

Prayer

O God of infinite love and power, give us grace to believe that the things which are impossible with us are possible with you. Save us from all doubt of your goodness and questioning of your love; and help us so to trust in your wisdom and mercy that we may be calm and unafraid.

Amen.

(From *New Every Morning*)
