

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Psalm 40:1-3.

The Psalmist was compassed about with innumerable evils. His iniquities had taken hold upon him. His enemies had sought to destroy him. His sin, like a fiery serpent, had coiled about him. He had cried unto the Lord and He had delivered him. Thereafter he delighted to give his testimony as to what the Lord had done for him.

In his testimony David represented himself as having been down in the depths of a horrible pit, the bottom of which was formed of miry clay, so that the efforts which he made to get out only lowered him deeper into the mire. He declared that as he was sinking deeper the Lord took hold of him and lifted him up out of the mire and placed his feet upon the solid rock.

Within the compass of these three brief verses David dealt with five great subjects to which we can devote our attention with great profit, if we so desire.

I. Sin.

The ancient Eastern prison was just a large pit dug in the earth. At the earth's level there was a small opening in the stone through which the prisoners were let down into the pit. There was not any covering from the heavens; the rain fell in, the surface water drained in, and the floor was an awful quagmire of filth. The poor prisoners were helpless in the miry clay. Any efforts to get out only drew them deeper into the mire. It is no wonder that they plunged into despondence and despair.

Under this figure of the horrible pit filled with miry clay, into which the prisoner sinks to his doom, the subtle working of Satan and sin are seen clearly. Sin is a treacherous bog. Its dangers are not apparent to the light-hearted men and women who argue that they can do certain things that they know to be wrong, without being harmed by them. They refuse to be warned by those who know better. Who of us has not seen the feet of young people caught in the fearful mire of sin? Sometimes it has been the mire of liquor. In many cases it has been the mire of lust. With others it has been the mire of business entanglement. With many it has been the fascinating strand of pleasure or self-indulgence. In the case of multitudes it is simply the desire to do absolutely as one pleases, thereby forgetting one's obligation to God and humanity, or being guilty of the sin of omission.

There are vast multitudes of people, who are now the victims of sin and the captives of Satan, across the faces of whom are written the words "helplessness" and "hopelessness." Had anybody told them a few years ago that they would become slaves to the habits and passions which now degrade them, they would have laughed scornfully at the suggestion of such an impossibility, and would have replied in somewhat this fashion, "Do you think that I am fool enough to do such a thing?" They began, just as many young people are beginning today, to indulge in pleasures that seemed simple and pleasant. But Satan soon exerted over them a strange and terrible power, and today, even though they loathe their condition, they are unable to set themselves free. Now they are "holden by the cords of their own sins." They are prisoners in "an horrible pit," and with every human effort to liberate themselves they sink deeper into the mire.

The very language here suggests darkness. It says, "a pit." While the sun shines and bathes the world in it's brightness, dense gloom reigns in the pit. Likewise, the state of sin is one of darkness. The language also suggests misery. It says, "an horrible pit." Sin causes misery, too. The language suggests helplessness. It says, "miry clay." It would be difficult to imagine anything that would cause one to feel more helpless than a gradual sinking in the miry clay. Yet, that accurately portrays the condition of those who are under the influence and power of Satan. In their own strength they are helpless. What a terrible thing it is to be enmeshed in sin!

II. Salvation.

Salvation is a deliverance from "an horrible pit." A Chinaman who experienced this deliverance related the circumstances of his salvation in much the same way that David did, even though he had never read the fortieth psalm. He said, "This poor Chinaman was in a deep dark well. I cried for Confucius to help me. He came and looked at me and said, 'Poor Chinaman! It is too bad you are down so far. If you could only get out, I could help you, and I could keep you from getting in again.' But I could not get out. He could not reach me, and so he had no help for me. Then I cried for Buddha. He came and wept over me and said, 'I am sure I could help you if you could get out.' He, too, was unable to reach me. Finally I heard some missionaries talking about one Jesus who comes right down where men are, and lifts them out of the horrible pit. I cried unto Him and He came to the place where I was, and lifted me."

David had been lifted by the Lord from the slime and mire of the pit of sin. His feet had been placed on the solid rock. He was thoroughly convinced of the reality of this fact. One day a salesman, who had been an alcoholic, was riding in a pullman car with some of his associates. When the whiskey was produced, he said, "No, I am not drinking any more." They laughed at him for they thought that he was joking. But when they saw that he was serious they asked, "Are you sick?" "No," said the man, "but a few weeks ago my business took me into a pawnshop. While I was there a young man came in. He was fully clad and shivering from the cold. He handed the pawnbroker a package and said, 'Give me fifty cents for these. The pawnbroker opened the package and found a pair of baby shoes. He said to the man, 'You are certainly not going to sell these shoes, are you?' Your baby needs them more than you need the money for liquor.' The man replied, 'No, my baby doesn't need these shoes. She died last night. Give me the money quick.'" Then the salesman said, "When I looked at that poor fellow and realized the hopelessness of his life and the sadness of his home, I saw what I might be in ten or fifteen years. I found a quiet place and cried out, 'Oh, God, help me and save me for Jesus sake!' And He did save me and gave me the victory. I will not be drinking with you any more." Christ can save any sinner who will trust Him, and give him the victory over his sin whatever it may be.

III. Security.

"He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Christ not only lifts a sinner from the depths of his sin, but He puts him on a secure foundation. The grace of God brings a man to a place of spiritual elevation, as expressed by the words, "upon a rock"; and to a place of spiritual advancement, as expressed by the words, "established my goings." Christ always elevates the soul and the life of the one who receives Him as Saviour and Lord. Christ's keeping power is as great as His saving power.

It is glorious to be saved. But then the battle with Satan really begins. The Christian needs help. To him the Saviour says, "I will help you." He never leaves or forsakes His own. From the time you trust Him as your Saviour until He takes you home to heaven, He will look after you and help you.

Christ offers healing for the disease of sin, and He provides help for those who need and want it. No other can provide these things for us. Moreover, Christ fills the soul with hope. Man cannot go on without hope. Where can he find hope for tomorrow? Can he find it in his money? No, he can lose that very easily. Can he find hope in his friends? No, they may forsake him. The only hope that a man has is in Jesus Christ.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus name.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Unless our feet have been rightly and firmly fixed on Christ, our goings cannot be established, but they will be full of dangers and possible downfalls.

IV. Song.

"He hath put a new song in my mouth." This new song is not a child of chance, a creature of circumstances, but it is a gift from God. Joyously the Psalmist said, "He hath put a song in my mouth." Because it offers salvation from sin and security in Christ, Christianity is a religion of song. In this respect it is unlike every other great religion of the world. Christ "sets the joy bells ringing in the heart." What is the nature of this song?

1. It is a song of reconciliation.
2. It is a song of deliverance.
3. It gives one the sense of relief, escape, and deliverance.
3. It is a song of security.

David was delivered from his great transgressions and sins and walked with assured confidence. His confidence was born of his faith in God, Who had given him such a sense of bracing security. He did not look to tomorrow with feverish fear as he had done previously. The old horror was gone, and he could look forward in all confidence, knowing that the God Who was keeping him then would be sufficient for him tomorrow.

4. It is a song of thanksgiving.

There was real gratitude in his heart because of what God had done for him. It was perfectly natural for him to burst into songs of praise. One day Christ healed ten lepers. As soon as He had done so, nine of the ten hurried away on their separate pathways, utterly forgetful of and ungrateful to their Healer. Only one came back with a song of grateful praise upon his lips. All too often we are like the nine. We fail to join the one who came back to express his gratitude to Christ for what He had done for him. Too often we are not thankful for what we receive because of a greedy desire for something additional.

5. It is a song of praise.

The Psalmist could not withhold his praise from Him Who had done so much for him. Three notes were predominant in his song of praise, namely, penitence for sin,

pardon for sin, and power over sin.

6. It is a song of victory.

As Christians, we are not marching to defeat, but to victory.

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The riches of His grace!"

V. Service.

"Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." When a poor, worthless, and hopeless sinner is lifted from the sinking sand and his feet are set upon the Rock of Ages, he ceases to be a liability and becomes an asset to society. He is saved to serve. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, live in obedience to His will, and proclaim the way of salvation to others are making a tremendous contribution to the welfare of society.

1. Godliness is conspicuous.

"Many shall see it." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). One cannot conceal the true light.

2. Godliness is revered.

"Many shall see it, and fear." "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? And fear came upon every soul: any many wonders and signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:37,43).

3. Godliness is helpful.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). He who lives a godly life influences others to receive Christ as their Saviour, too.

Two heathen women went to the cemetery to visit the graves of their babies. They wailed, mourned, and cried to their false gods. They threw themselves upon the graves, but nothing happened. Then they looked up and saw a funeral procession. A missionary and his wife were laying their baby away. As they stood by the grave the heathen women could see the peace of God written on their faces. One of the women said, "Why don't they weep and cry out as we do?" The other replied, "They have some kind of hope that they will see their baby again." Ah yes, heaven is awaiting us. It is a glorious place of happiness and joy. It is place without any sin, suffering, or sorrow. It is a place where we will see Christ and be with Him forever.

Some years ago five men were entombed in a mine. Only one of the five was a Christian. During those dark days this Christian man led three of the others to Christ. But one man would not yield to Christ. When all hope of liberation was gone, the leader of the group faced the unsaved man and said, "Fred, I am going to write a message for our friends to read when they find us. I will tell them that four of us have been saved. What shall I say about you?" The man hesitated for a minute and then he said, "I will accept Christ. Write me down as saved." There in the depths of the earth, four men received Christ as their personal Saviour and through grace came into the glorious consciousness that He had

saved them.

Christ now offers to you healing, or the forgiveness of all sin; help along life's pathway; hope for all the days to come; and heaven at the end of the way. Won't you receive what He now offers you?