

OUT OF THE MIRE INTO THE CHOIR

"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.

This Psalm has a message we need to hear. The Psalmist was compassed about with innumerable evils. His iniquities had taken hold upon him. His enemies had sought to destroy him. Sin like a fiery serpent had coiled about him. He had cried unto the Lord and the Lord had delivered him.

This is a graphic picture indeed. Within the compass of these three brief verses six great subjects are treated, namely, supplication, sin, salvation, security, song and service.

I. Supplication.

1. The condition in which he found himself.

(1) A position of degradation -- a pit.

(2) A position of misery -- a horrible pit.

To understand this passage aright we must go to the East. What a contrast between an Eastern prison in that day and a Western prison in our day. The ancient Eastern prison was a pit dug in the earth, just a large space dug in the earth. There was a small opening at the earth's level through which the prisoners were let down into the pit. There was no 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. As David described that horrible pit, he pictured the man down in the depths of it, the bottom of which was formed of miry clay, so that the efforts which he made to get out only drew him deeper into the mire. He was sinking in dark and deep depression. He was plunged into despondency and despair.

(3) A position of danger -- the miry clay.

a. Insecurity -- sinking in the mire.

The ground was slipping under his feet and he could not find a good foothold. There was nothing solid or dependable.

b. Helplessness -- everything was giving away beneath him. Every attempt to climb out meant falling back and sinking deeper.

c. Facing death.

Apparently there was no possibility of his getting out since his feet were fastened in the miry clay.

2. The nature of his religious exercise.

"I waited patiently for the Lord." That was a habit of his soul. He believed in the existence of God, had a sense of dependency upon Him and an expectation of good from Him.

3. The result of his religious exercise.

How beautifully the Psalmist describes the Lord's dealings with Him. "He inclined unto me." Oh, how the prisoner must have rejoiced when the darkness seemed to become a little darker, when the hole in the earth's surface was covered by the face of one he hoped might be a friend. "He stretched right out and down to me." His arm was long enough to reach him, even when he was in the deepest pit. "He heard my cry." It was very much as the mother, when the house is full of company, hears the cry of her baby in an upper room.

II. Sin.

Under a figure of a horrible pit filled with miry clay, into which the unwary traveler goes to his doom, the subtle workings of Satan and sin are seen. The pit was "horrible," gloomy and terrible, the place of certain destruction if no help came. The clay is called "miry" to indicate that there was no solidity, nothing but a foul seething mass, where no rest could be found. What a horrible, corruptible and corrupting thing sin is! I can think of nothing worse than a place of eternal sin. Hell is such a place.

III. Salvation.

Salvation is sin's antidote. It means deliverance from a horrible pit. Here is a Chinaman's interpretation of salvation: -- "This poor Chinaman was in a deep well. I cried for Confucius to help me. He came and looked at me and said, 'Poor Chinaman, it is too bad that 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 that I could help you if you could only 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 to Him, He came to the place where I was and lifted me." This deliverance is free, timely, complete and joy-inspiring. It was wrought out in harmony with eternal righteousness and man's freedom.

IV. Security.

"Set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

1. His intellect is established in truth.

2. His heart is established in love.

3. His purpose is established in conduct.

Not only is this a divinely restored and established state, but it is a divinely progressive state. Onward! is the watchword of the godly man. The point reached today is the starting point for tomorrow. The grace of God brings men to a place of spiritual elevation -- "Up," spiritual stability -- "rock," and spiritual advancement -- "established my goings." Some people have not realized that Christ's keeping power is as great as His saving power. Paul said, "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

V. Song.

"He hath put a new song in my mouth."

1. From what fountain of inspiration does this new song flow?

(1) It is not a child of chance.

(2) It is not a creature of circumstances.

(3) It is not merely a song of youth.

(4) It does not rise in the hills of prosperity.

(5) It does not come from worldly success.

(6) It is not caused by a rugged determination.

There are times when we sing from a sense of duty. We feel that for the sake of others it is the helpful thing to do, and in this we are right. There is something finely heroic about the man who refuses to parade his sorrow, but rather locks it all in his heart and smiles on the world. It requires a high type of courage to keep a song upon the lips while there is a sob in the heart. Yet there are those who are big and brave enough for this taxing task.

- (7) It is a gift from God.

The psalmist joyously declares that "He hath put a new song in my mouth."
So the fountain source is abiding.

2. What is the nature of this song?

- (1) It is a song of reconciliation.

- (2) It is a song of deliverance.

An ungodly heart emerging from trouble has the sense of relief, escape and deliverance.

- (3) It is a song of security.

This marvelously delivered man walks with an assured confidence. His confidence is not born of his faith in himself, but of his faith in God. God has given him a bracing sense of security. He does not look to tomorrow with feverish fear as he once did. The old horror is gone, and he can now look ahead with quiet eyes, knowing that the God who keeps him today will be sufficient for him tomorrow.

- (4) It is a song of thanksgiving.

There was real gratitude for what the Lord had done for him.

- (5) It is a song of praise.

He could not withhold his praise from Him Who had done so much for him. Three notes are predominant in his song of praise, namely, penitence for sin, pardon for sin, and power over sin.

- (6) It is a song of 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!"

VI. Service.

"Many shall see it and fear and shall trust in the Lord."

1. Godliness is conspicuous -- many shall see it. Matthew 5:16. You cannot conceal the true light.
2. Godliness is revered -- many shall fear. Acts 2:37,43.
3. Godliness is blessed -- many shall trust in the Lord. Acts 2:41. He who lives a godly life influences others to come to Christ.