

The Redeeming King

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 October 2021

Preacher: Joe Hall

[0 : 0 0] Amen. Well, this evening we are coming to the end of our series in the Psalms, Volume 1. And even though it's the second from last Psalm in Book 1, you might notice that in your Bibles, Psalm 40 gives us a really good overview of what we've seen in Book 1 of the Psalms. It's a high point, a summit from which we look back and see the path that we've walked to get here.

I've got on the screen, hopefully, a list. Fantastic. Yeah, nice and large. A list there of the Psalms that we've looked at together with the kind of working titles that I've been using. And those are just my working titles, but I hope you've been able to see these themes coming through. As we've walked through these Psalms as a church. And more than that, I hope you've been able to see the one who is behind all these Psalms. Book 1 is overwhelmingly the work of one human author, King David. I've tried to reflect that in those titles. But the highs and lows, we've seen the joys and sorrows, the obedience, the suffering, the sin, the rescue, the vindication, has all been playing out in the life of this one man, God's chosen King. And so, our relationship to these Psalms as we sing them, as we do in each of our services, as we pray them, as we read them, as we take these words as our own. Well, it's not like putting on our own clothes that fit us nicely and reflect our own sense of style. They don't come straight to us as individuals or as a church. I've got another slide that shows us what that would be like. David wrote the Psalms, we have the Psalms, and we receive the Psalms as a church. But there's something missing. These clothes, these words, they are bigger than us. They hang off us because they're the clothes, the words of the King. They reflect to us who He is. And so, our relationship to these Psalms is more like this. Our relationship to these Psalms depends on our relationship to this King.

They come to us as our songs, our prayers, and our words in Christ. They are our Psalms because they were His Psalms first. And now, if we are united to Him by faith and all that belongs to Him, all the riches of His majestic glory, they come down to us. So, we could think of these as hand-me-down Psalms, like clothes worn first by our elder brother, but show us who He is and conform us to His image.

And that's nowhere clearer than in Psalm 40, because this King of ours is finally seen to be a redeeming King. How the Lord has dealt with this King, verses 1 to 3, will change the lives of many others, verse 4, as they see what God has done and put their trust in Him. In the words of Christopher Ash, whatever happens to this one man has a massive impact on many people, because this is a King whose life and death redeems. The slide can come down now, if that's okay. Thanks. We see our redeeming King in the Psalm in three ways. Firstly, in His wonderful rescue. His wonderful rescue. If you'd read with me again from verse 1, I waited patiently for the Lord, he says. He turned to me and heard my cry. 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.

[4 : 1 9] So, here's David, the King, reflecting on his own rescue. How the Lord has graciously lifted him out of this filthy bog, the slimy pit, and set him again on solid, firm ground. And we find in verse 12, what the bog is made of what the bog is made of. It's a bog of troubles without number, and of sins that have overtaken him. From wars without and fears within, he is way out of his depth.

My sins are more than the number of hairs on my head, he says. Too many sins to keep count of. Too many to number. He's drowning in sins. In short, there's no way that he could get himself out of this mess. This is a slimy pit and a miry bog that would have claimed his life had the Lord not pulled him out.

David knows that, doesn't he? It's in the very first line. His only hope is in the Lord's rescue. I waited patiently for him, he says. But he didn't have to wait for long, did he? The celebrations begin in the very next line. He turned to me and heard my cry. The intensity of those words is kind of blunted or dulled down by our translations. One writer compares David's cry to the wailing of a newborn. And

the Lord's turning to him as the single-minded care and devotion of a parent coming to baby's rescue. He was utterly helpless in his distress, but the Lord in his love reached down to him. And having been lifted up from this bottomless pit of sins and troubles and sat firmly on the rock, what naturally flows from him is praise. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to God. We'll see this pattern again and again through the psalm.

This rescue flows out of him like a stream upwards to God in praise and then outwards, verse 4, in witness to many. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.

The idea is that we, the onlookers, once we see how it has gone with the king, then we will see how it will go for us. Because in the king's rescue, we see that God is truly trustworthy and we can follow our king in trusting and worshipping God.

[7 : 04] Today, probably most of us think nothing of getting on an airplane. You can watch them coming in and out all day from the airport. Some of you I know have been on a plane in the last few weeks. Susie, my wife, is on one currently. It's hard to believe, given the amount of flying we do, that flying was actually only invented just over 120 years ago. Not that long. But no doubt it went a long way towards the success of the aviation industry that the guys who invented the first flying machine were also the first guys to go up in it. In 1903, the Wright brothers performed the first successful flight in the Wright Flyer. And I guess the logic was, or the publicity stunt, if you like, if these guys had enough faith in their own machine to trust it with their lives, then I guess we can trust it too.

And it worked, didn't it? Aircraft have come a long way in the last hundred years. But in a sense, we still fly in faith off the back of that first test run so long ago. In the same way, David is saying, if we've seen the king take the test run, put his faith in God, cry out to him and be rescued, then surely we who see that can trust the Lord for our own rescue and know that we will not be let down. Taking us to our great king, Jesus Christ, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2, gives us the same message. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, he says, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. He went first, he says, the pioneer who endured death, shame, the grave, but was raised to the right hand of God. So that when we look at his death and God's raising him from the dead, we can follow in his footsteps and trust the Lord who rescued him from the grave with our own lives and our own deaths.

When we see how his trust wasn't let down, wasn't betrayed, we know that our trust won't be either. That when we cry out as he cried out, then we will be heard as he was heard and rescued as he was rescued.

He, of course, was rescued from the curse of our sin. But our assurance is that when we trust him, then we are rescued from our own countless offenses.

[10 : 15] Our own innumerable sins, guilt way above our head, a bottomless pit of disgrace. That when we follow our king in trusting the Lord for our rescue, we are pulled up out of our sin and set firmly and securely on the rock that is Christ.

And when we grow weary and our faith is worn out and our trust in God is shaken. Well, let's fix our eyes again on him.

Remember how it was, how he cried out from the cross, father into your hands, I commit my spirit. How he trusted himself to the Lord and how his father heard his cry, lifted him from the grave and set him on the throne in heaven.

Friends, we can never set our eyes on Jesus too many times. There is no such thing as too much Jesus. Because it is as we fix our eyes on him that we grow in confidence.

It's out of Christ's once for all rescue that flows our endless praise of God. It's out of his once for all rescue that we are gathered. A vast crowd, writes John in Revelation, that cannot be numbered from every tribe, language, people and nation around his throne.

[11 : 42] Because we have seen how it was with him. And we have trusted him to do it again for us. He did it first. And so to follow him in faith, we fix our eyes on him daily.

And so daily receive his blessing. Blessed, writes David, is the one who trusts in the Lord. Blessed, we finish where we began, don't we?

It's the drumbeat through this whole book. Blessed is the one who loves God's word. Blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

Blessed, the one who trusts in the Lord. This blessing that God gives us in Christ. Well, it's more wonderful than we could ever tell or sing or imagine, says David.

Blessed, the one who trusts in the Lord. In verse 5, many, many, many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us, none can compare with you. Were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many.

[12:46] Too many for me to declare. That word wonders that David uses is an echo from a different time in history, from the exodus.

God's great, defining rescue of his people in the past from slavery in Egypt. It was by God's wonders that he set his people free. And so it's as if David is saying, how many more rescues like that can you pull off, Lord?

How many more exoduses do you have up your sleeve? How many more wonders will you do? It's true our sins are more than the number of hairs on our heads.

But so many are your wonders that if we try to list them all, we'd never finish. So many rescues have you done that we lose count.

Because each and every one of God's rescues is no less great or wonderful than the exodus itself. That's what has blown David's mind here.

[13:51] Or as Christopher Ashe again puts it, There is an exodus redemption for every man, woman and child who shares the trust of the king. Isn't that our story if we are Christians this evening?

Long, my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I awoke the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off. My heart was free. I arose, went forth and followed thee. Can you sing that in your heart this evening?

Does that freedom, that rescue sound too good to be true? If your trust is in Christ, that is your story. It is our story.

Because it was his story first. The power that is at work in us to save, writes Paul, Is the same mighty strength God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead.

[14:55] And so to bring it up to date, we might ask, How many more resurrections can you pull off, Lord? How many more sinners dead in our sins will you raise to life with Christ?

How many will you raise bodily from the dead when he comes again? A multitude, says John, that no one can number. Countless sinners saved by grace through faith in Christ.

God's rescue in and through his king is unbelievably wonderful. And secondly, David takes us even further into this tree.

They're telling us that his rescue is simply perfect. It doesn't get better than this. Here's the king still speaking.

Verse six. No more sacrifices.

[16:13] The kind of sacrifices David is talking about here are sacrifices for sin. Now, normally we think of sacrifices as the kind of climax of the story.

We come to God through the sacrifice of Jesus. But it's easy to forget that those sacrifices were only ever a solution to the sin problem.

If you sinned, you needed a sacrifice. But of course, God's ultimate desire, the world he first created, was a world without sin. His ultimate desire is that we wouldn't sin.

There's something better than sacrifices, says David, and that is not needing a sacrifice. A perfect and sinless life. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire.

Then I said, here I am. I have come. It's written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God.

[17:14] Your law is within my heart. So here is someone who doesn't desire or require a sacrifice. Because instead, this person desires to do God's will.

He has God's law in his heart. Do you see what he's claiming? Here I am. The perfect one. Now, I hope we know that none of us can stand up and say that and sing that in our own right.

For ourselves. Here I am. I've come. As we've already seen, David couldn't claim that even for himself, could he? His sins have overtaken him.

So he must be speaking on behalf of someone else. Speaking prophetically. This is a person who's written about in the scroll.

A person who all the scriptures point to. And here is David adding his voice to those before and after him. In speaking the words of the one who would come and love God and live for him perfectly.

[18 : 23] And indeed, that's what our reading earlier from Hebrews chapter 10 confirmed for us, didn't it? If the sacrifices could have made us perfect, he says, then why did we never stop needing them?

Before we were trapped, he says, in a never-ending cycle of sin and sacrifice because our sin demanded another sacrifice. But the sacrifice never took away the sin.

But now, says Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5, when Christ came, he said, here I am. I have come. I desire to do your will, my God.

Your law is within my heart. He finished the never-ending sacrifices by his perfect life and his perfect death.

The only one who never needed a sacrifice. He became the sacrifice for those of us who did. By a single offering, he has perfected for all time, those who were being sanctified.

[19 : 27] Here he is. He has come. And he has done what none of us could ever have done. We could never sacrifice enough. Never to clear ourselves of guilt.

Our countless sins. But because he came and gave himself perfectly once. While we who trust him never have to make another sacrifice again.

Just imagine our worship service. If he had not come and done that. It would be a bloodbath, wouldn't it? It would look and smell like a slaughterhouse we would leave covered in blood.

But completely unchanged. Only to come back next week and do it all again. But because he came. And he obeyed where we failed. And gave his perfect life in place of our sin-stained lives. We worship only by trusting in him. In his one sacrifice for us all.

[20 : 33] Because he obeyed even to the point of death. And even death on the cross. Here then is the perfect king of Psalm 1. The Psalm 1 king who loved God's word.

Who delights so wholeheartedly in it. That he would fulfill it even to his own death. And that perfect rescue he now proclaims to us.

See how freely he tells us the story again. Again, verse 9. I proclaim your saving acts. I do not seal my lips, Lord.

I don't hide your righteousness in my heart. I speak of your faithfulness. I don't conceal your love. And your faithfulness from the great assembly. It would be really easy, wouldn't it?

To turn this into an instruction. Go, proclaim, tell, witness. Well that was where this morning's passage ended. But it's not what this passage says.

[21 : 36] Because notice who's doing the telling. Well it's the king who came to rescue. And notice who he's telling it to. He's saying it in the great assembly.

Not out there. In here. So what's going on? Well this is the king himself. Who never tires of telling us what he has done for us.

And friends, that is good news. That the Lord Jesus preaches himself to us. He preaches his rescue to us.

Because how very, very much we need to hear it. Not once in our lives. And pray a prayer and we are saved. But over and over and over. The drip feed.

As Martin Luther in his typical elegance put it. We must beat the gospel continually into our heads. But thankfully Jesus is gentler than Martin Luther.

[22 : 38] He simply reminds us. As often as we hear him speak. That his rescue is perfect and enough. There will never come a day.

When he will grow tired. Of telling those who trust him. That his loving rescue is all we need. He doesn't seal his lips.

Or hide it in his heart. He doesn't conceal it in the great assembly. Instead he preaches his love and faithfulness to us. Every time we open his word. And whenever we hear it preached.

As he did then so he does now. He came and preached peace. Writes Paul. To you who are far off. And you who are near. For through him we all have access.

In one spirit to the father. He preaches. Rescue on earth. The son of man must suffer many things. Be rejected by the chief priests and scribes.

[23 : 36] And be killed. And after three days rise again. But the preaching that Paul talks about. Wasn't done on earth. Because his readers never heard Jesus in the flesh.

