

# The Intercession of our Compassionate Priest

Psalm 40:9-17

*Halifax: 6 November 2022*

## **Introduction:**

Today we are taking up a new Psalm of Focus for our sermon series in Hebrews.

- As most of you know, our Psalm of Focus is a Psalm we sing for several weeks that relates to our current sermon series.
  - We had Psalm 118 for Hebrews chapters 1-2, and Psalm 95 for Hebrews 3 & 4.
- Chapters 3 & 4 are an exposition of Psalm 95, warning us to make sure that we don't have an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.
  - At the end of chapter 4, from verse 11 to verse 16,
    - we saw that we need to be diligent to enter God's rest because we are in a constant battle in this world with forces that want to destroy our walk with God—the world, the flesh, and the devil.
  - But we also saw that God has given us tremendous resources to help us.
    - First, we have the word of God that searches us out to the depths and shows us how much we need Jesus as Saviour.
      - If we believe, we already have complete pardon and full justification, but He has much more to do in our lives to bring us to the beauty and goodness and love that He wants us to have.
      - His holy word helps us to see that and urges us to go to Him to obtain it.
    - Then, last week, we saw the second great resource we have to keep us going.
      - We have Jesus as our faithful sympathising priest who is able and very motivated to help us. He has faced the battle that we are in against sin—only more than any of us will ever face it—and we were encouraged to come with boldness to His throne of grace for help.
      - As our faithful sympathising priest, He not only forgives us but also helps us to realise in the most trying times to go on for God!
      - He knows what it is to have everything trying to pull you away and He helps us to see how foolish it would be to do that.
  - In chapter 5 & 6, which we will begin next week, His compassion for us as our priest is developed even more.
    - We see how it was so great a compassion that He was brought to vehement cries and tears before God.
      - This was so because He took on Him our greatest burden—the burden of sin that brought on us the penalty of hell.
      - He entered into the very mess that we made in order that He might deliver us out of that mess. He is truly a faithful priest.
    - We are urged to keep on growing in our knowledge and communion with Him, advancing from glory to glory with Him who brings us out of the wilderness of sin and death into His Father's house of glory.
      - We must see that we love His salvation, for those who oppose His work of bringing many sons to glory will not be forgiven—they oppose being restored to God!

As I thought about what Psalm really brings out the compassion of Christ and His zeal to bless those who love His salvation and to oppose those who reject it, I thought of Psalm 40, especially the second part.

- Therefore, I have chosen Psalm 40, from verse 9 to the end as our Psalm of Focus for this part of Hebrews.
  - We will plan to take the first part of Psalm 40 as our Psalm of Focus when we get to Hebrews 9-10, where the part about Jesus coming willingly to do the will of God in place of sacrifices is referred to by the author of Hebrews.
- In the sermon today, I will read the entire Psalm and do an overview of the first part, and then take a bit of a closer walk through verses 9-17.

This being so, please listen now as I read Psalm 40 to you. This is the word of God.

- May the Lord bless you all as you hear.

**Psalm 40:1-17: «To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.»** I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my steps. <sup>3</sup> He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see *it* and fear, and will trust in the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *is* that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. <sup>5</sup> Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works *which* You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.”

<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book *it is* written of me. <sup>8</sup> I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law *is* within my heart.” <sup>9</sup> I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself

know. <sup>10</sup> I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly.

<sup>11</sup> Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD; let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me. <sup>12</sup> For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me. <sup>13</sup> Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to help me! <sup>14</sup> Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life; let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor who wish me evil. <sup>15</sup> Let them be confounded because of their shame, who say to me, “Aha, aha!” <sup>16</sup> Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!” <sup>17</sup> But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the Lord thinks upon me. You *are* my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.

God has spoken. Thanks be to God for His precious word.

Before we get into the text, I would like to say a few words about the Psalms and how we are to look at them.

- It is quite clear from church history that the Psalms were the song book of the apostolic and post-apostolic church.
- At some point along the way, some added a couple of canticles from the New Testament, but the uninspired hymns they wrote were for private use rather than for public worship.

To support this, we have Augustine in 430 A.D. who testifies, “The Donatists [a heretical group] make it a matter of reproach against us, that, in the church, we sing with sobriety the divine songs ... whereas they inflame the intoxication of their minds by singing psalms of human composition.”

- We know that the Arians (who denied the deity of Christ) composed a book of 150 songs to support their false doctrine, but the church had no such collection.
- Proof that this was the position of the whole catholic church (excluding the heretical sects) is found at the Synod of Laodicea (A.D. 343) where the Synod forbade “the singing of uninspired hymns in church” as it also forbade “the reading of uncanonical books of Scripture.” At the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), the prohibition of singing uninspired songs in church was reaffirmed.
- So the widespread use of uninspired songs in public worship today is contrary to the practice of the early church.

Obviously, the Apostles and the early church fathers believed that the Psalms were suitable for New Testament worship.

- It is only bad theology that causes people to think that they are not full of Christ.
- It is important in singing them to recognise that they are the church’s songs.
  - We sing them not as individuals, but as members of the body of Christ our head who represents us all before the Father.
  - While they certainly connect with our personal experience, they are ultimately about the experience of us all in Jesus Christ.
  - We are His body, so much so, that He took our sin and our suffering and that we obtain His righteousness and blessing.
    - Even now, He is afflicted with our affliction, and we have the benefits of His affliction when He was here—that is, His suffering for our sins.
- Some of the songs in the Psalter are especially focused on Christ, the head—Psalm 40 is such—others are focused more on us the members—like Psalm 51 where we confess our sin.
  - Yet, at the same time, though Psalm 51 is not personally true about Christ as an individual, it is absolutely true of Him in association with His body—in fact, it is in some ways even more true of Him because He takes responsibility for the sins of the whole body (a responsibility we are not capable of bearing)—and confesses them before the Father.
  - Then there is a Psalm like Psalm 1—it declares that the righteous man is blessed and that the unrighteous man cursed.
    - But who is righteous? Only Christ and His redeemed people.
    - When we sing, “Blessed is the man who walketh not astray,” we are singing of Christ—and of us who have our righteousness from Him.
    - Who is unrighteous? Those who do not have Christ as their Saviour and so are left in their sins without recourse.

To use the Psalms properly in worship, it is very important for us to understand these things. Otherwise, the collection of inspired songs in our Bibles is not suited to us today.

Now let’s turn our attention to Psalm 40.

**I. Psalm 40 begins with the announcement of a grand deliverance from a fearful pit—surely hell.**

- **Psalm 40:1-3: I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my steps. <sup>3</sup> He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see *it* and fear, and will trust in the LORD.”**

A. Believers can bring up many examples of God’s deliverance.

1. Christian nations have examples—think of Israel in Egypt,
  - congregations have examples—think of Faith in Tillsonburg,
  - families have examples,
  - and as individuals we have examples—the drunkard who finds Christ, the proud achiever of the world who is finally converted...
2. But surely the great deliverance that is ultimately in view here in Ps 40 is the deliverance of the whole church from the pit when Christ our head came to bear our sins.
  - a. When He came to bear our sins, He was brought into the pit of sin and condemnation.
    - God’s wrath and judgment for the entire church’s sin was brought upon Him.
    - When His offering was accepted, the entire church was brought up out of the horrible pit with Him.
  - b. This song is His testimony first and foremost, and our testimony in Him.
    - When He bore our sins, He waited patiently for the LORD, and the Lord inclined to Him and heard His cry.
      - He was brought up from the horrible pit of hell, from the miry clay, with His entire church.
      - We in Him were established upon a rock and our steps were established.
    - This put a new song in His mouth—did He not say that He will sing psalms of praise in the great assembly (the church)?
      - Songs of praise to our God for saving Him and His people—He speaks as a king representing us—the song is in the mouth of the whole kingdom.
  - c. We are told that many would see this deliverance.
    - They would see the deliverance and it would cause them fear God—to see their own need of deliverance.
    - Then they trust the LORD. They come in faith and receive salvation.

B. All who trust the LORD—who have faith like Abraham—are blessed.

- **Psalm 40:4-5: Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. <sup>5</sup> Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works *which* You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.**

1. Abraham stood out from all the other nations that were separated at Babel.

- They had sought to make a great name for themselves lest they be scattered. They sought to find blessing by their own works.
    - But God told Abraham that HE would make his name great, that He would bless him, and that in his Seed—Jesus, the Messiah—all the families of the earth would be blessed.
    - It was salvation by the Son of promise instead by the efforts of fallen sinners.
      - Surely you realise that you don't have what it takes to save yourself!
      - Only Jesus can save you. Trust in Him!
2. Those who trust the LORD see His wonderful works for them.
- They see God sending Jesus to save His people.
    - They see His calling of them by His Spirit,
    - They see His wonderful works of justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation for glory.
  - As it says, His wonderful works are more than can be recounted!
  - Jesus and His people are thrilled with all that the Father has done for us!
- All in all, in Psalm 40, we have Jesus telling us His story as Israel's true king.
- C. We know that this is Jesus speaking in Psalm 40 because in verses 6-8, it says that He was sent to do what God required.
- This is referred to as His words in Hebrews 10:5-10. But it is obviously about Him.
1. We know that the sacrifices of the OT were not sufficient to take away our sins.
- In verse 6, He says: **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears you have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require.**
  - Jesus is the One who was called to come and do what was required for the forgiveness of His people!
2. We know the oracles written in the book that speaks of the One who comes to the do the will of God are about Him.
- Verse 7-8 makes it clear that the One speaking in this Psalm was the One whose coming was foretold.
  - It says: **Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book *it is* written of me. <sup>s</sup> I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law *is* within my heart."**
    - He came with a strong commitment to do what God wanted to save His people from their sins.
    - He came as the Son of God from heaven to be a man that He might do what God required of sinful people if they were to be saved.
3. Jesus came into the pit and did what God wanted in order that He might bring us all out of the pit.

TRANS> Look at the interesting way He describes His work.

## II. Jesus describes His work as proclaiming the gospel.

- Look at verse 9-10: **I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. <sup>10</sup> I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your**

**faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly.**

- A. Notice how He emphasises that that it is the good news of righteousness.
1. The good news (or *gospel*) that He proclaims is the way of righteousness.
    - What we have already seen.
      - That He entered into the pit of condemnation and the curse into which we had all fallen, cried out to God, and was delivered from that horrible pit with all of the people He came to save!
      - He proclaims the good news that, through faith in Him, we who are helpless sinners, forever condemned, are made righteous.
        - We are made right with God—declared righteous in His sight.
        - There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
  2. He not only declares the way of righteousness for us, but also reveals God’s righteousness.
    - Often, when the guilty are pardoned, it involves setting righteousness aside—letting the wrong go.
    - But with Jesus, the Father’s righteousness is more fully revealed than ever...
      - Because with Jesus, we see that God doesn’t clear the guilty—
      - Rather than clearing us, He Himself bears the penalty for our sins.
        - His perfect righteousness as a God who gloriously will never tolerate sin is fully exhibited at the cross.
        - The penalty of our sin is fully paid and God’s righteousness remains.
          - God’s righteousness is magnified, not diminished, by the cross.
- B. He stresses that He proclaimed the message of righteousness without restraint.
1. Look at how He emphasises this—three times!
    - He says: **“I did not restrain my lips.”**
    - He says: **“I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart.”**
    - And He says: **“I have not concealed your lovingkindness and your truth.”**
  2. Why does He say that? Why would He be tempted to suppress the message of God’s righteousness?
    - Because the message of God’s righteousness is offensive to man.
    - Sadly, it is especially offensive to the church—the great assembly that He proclaims it to.
      - The majority of those in the church do not have true faith. For example, the majority of professing Christians in North America believe that Jesus sinned.
      - When Jesus was here, the majority of those in the Old Testament church were offended by the message of righteousness because they were trying to establish their own righteousness by works—by doing good.
        - It offended them to be told that they were not good enough for God and needed to trust in Jesus to save them by the cross.
        - That is the reason they rejected Him and would not believe.

- As sinners, we all struggle with being told that we are not good enough for God.
    - We want to think that our sin is trivial and that God should be able to just overlook it.
      - Of course the sins that we commit against each other are quite trivial as far as we are related to each other—and we should be able to overlook them.
    - But sin against the most high God is another story!
      - It would bring shame to Him to overlook even the least sin against Him—He never does.
        - Jesus covers them all by His suffering and death on the cross.
        - As we have said, God’s righteousness is magnified.
3. So Jesus testifies here that He did not hold back at all in making the message clear.
- We must not hold back either.
  - We must fully receive the truth. And then...
  - We must not hide the truth in our hearts even if it makes people hate us.
  - We must not pretend that people are innocent before God or that anyone can be saved apart from Jesus.
  - We must not pretend that the things God declares to be sinful are not sinful, even if it makes the world angry.
  - Most of all, we must proclaim the good news of God’s righteousness.
- C. Jesus is the greatest of all preachers.
- Yes, we have seen that He did not hold back in proclaiming the message, but there is something more to His preaching!
1. Jesus not only *spoke* the gospel, but He also *was* (and *is*) the gospel of righteousness.
- He made God’s righteousness known by what He actually did.
  - He actually purchased righteousness by coming here as the Son of God from heaven and shedding His blood on the cross.
2. When we preach the gospel rightly, we proclaim *Him* because He is the gospel.
- We proclaim who He is and what He did to make sinners righteous.

### **III. What a compassionate priest He is!**

- A. A compassionate person takes other peoples’ problems as his own.
1. God saw that we were helpless—we were consigned to the horrible pit.
- And God the Son was sent here and came here with the intention of making our problem His own. That’s compassion!
  - He came declaring that He would take care of it, and He did.
  - Even though He was personally righteous, He came into the pit of sin and misery into which we had fallen so that He might rescue us.
    - We have a hard time taking on someone else’s problems, especially if they brought it on themselves, but how fully He did this for us!

2. He associated Himself so fully with us that He was in a place (the horrible pit) from which He had to cry out to God for deliverance.
  - He became our federal head so that He took responsibility for our sin
  - It was truly overwhelming for Him.
    - You can see His vehement cry for deliverance, loaded down with our sin and guilt, in verses 11-13.
- a. In verse 11, He holds the Father to His promised love and truth.
  - He says: **“Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD; let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.”**
  - Having gone to the horrible pit for His people as God’s righteous Son, the Father is covenantally bound to save Him and His people.
    - Jesus is holding the Father to His promise in His urgent prayer for deliverance—the promise to Him that if Jesus went to the cross He would deliver His people from their sins.
    - He uses God’s lovingkindness (hesed—covenant love) and His truth as an argument for receiving mercy for Him and His people.
      - If God does not show mercy, He would violate His covenant promise and be guilty of false dealing.

➤ Yet, the penalty had to be borne.
- b. Jesus describes the horror of the pit in verse 12...
  - v. 12: **For innumerable evils have surrounded me;**
    - The very pains of hell completely enveloped Him—think of it! The righteous Son of God, bearing His peoples’ sins.
  - He continues: **My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head;**
    - *Iniquities* can refer to sin or to penal affliction for sin.
      - Isaiah tells us that all of our iniquities were laid on Him—and the word *laid* means that they were pressed down upon Him with brutal force.
      - He, the mighty Lion of the Tribe of Judah, says that these penal afflictions have overtaken Him.
        - He is unable to look up.
        - They are more than the hairs on His head.
  - The compassion of our Saviour brought Him to do this. He took our problem to be His problem.
    - He concludes with the words, **“My heart fails Me,”** or literally, **“My heart has left me.”**
    - These are not the words of a weak man—these are the words of our mighty Saviour bearing the load of our sin because of His compassion for us.
      - Men, if you want to be a true man, this is what you do.



- You take the responsibility for others.
  - You treat your wife's problems as your own problems, and so with your children and with others, so much so that you take whatever pains are necessary to deliver them.
    - There is no one like our Lord Jesus Christ!
- c. In verse 13, He cries out for deliverance.
- **v. 13: Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to help me!**
  - If He is delivered, understand that the whole church is delivered because He is bearing our sins.
    - He truly put Himself into our pit.
    - Because He did and because He was heard, we are pardoned through faith in Him.
    - God accepted what Jesus did for our sake.
- B. See how, in vs. 14-15, He prays imprecations upon those who want to destroy Him.
- Verse 14-15: **Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life; let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor who wish me evil. 15 Let them be confounded because of their shame, who say to me, "Aha, aha!"**
1. Think of it!
    - Those who oppose Christ and try to destroy Him are so full of malice against God that they want to stop the One who came to reconcile us to God!
      - Here is this gracious Saviour who came to bring hopeless helpless sinners out of the horrible pit and they say,
        - "Stop Him! Crucify Him! Get rid of Him. Such a fellow is not fit to live. He will take away our place."
      - And not only that, but they also take action against Him—against the One who came to save sinners!
  2. It is necessary that our High Priest pray against those who oppose Him because it is necessary that they be stopped if we are to be saved.
    - If Satan were to have his way, Christ would have been stopped from saving us.
    - And if he had had way, Jesus would be stopped in His present work of gathering people into His kingdom. Not one of us would be saved.
      - Our compassionate priest prays that Satan and his minions will be utterly frustrated.
      - To oppose Jesus is to oppose Him and all the people of His kingdom.
  3. The enemies of the gospel will not succeed.
    - The day will come when the kingdom of Christ will fill the whole earth.
    - He who was once surrounded by mocking jeering enemies and by innumerable evils will be surrounded by holy worshippers, praising and adoring Him.

- C. See how He not only prays *against* those who oppose His salvation, but also *for* those who love His salvation!
- In verse 16, He says: **“Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!”**
    - Do you see the outcome that He prays for? the outcome for those who love His salvation?
      - That these who were once in the horrible pit of sin will rejoice and be glad in the Lord.
  - He wants us to become those who are so enamoured with our glorious God that we cry out continually that He will be magnified!
    - That they who seek Him, who love His salvation, who want to be rescued, will see the glory of God and cry out that He would be magnified!
    - What a transformation! From the pit to the throne of glory!
  - He came in order to make that happen!
    - As our compassionate priest, this is the outcome that He came to bring about.
    - And you can be certain that it will happen.
    - His prayers for us will not fail.
- D. But alas, until the end comes, the battle continues, and Jesus continues to intercede as He sees His people struggling against sin and against their enemies.
- He continues to identify with our struggle.
  - **v. 17. But I *am* poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You *are* my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.**
    1. He can say that *He* is poor and needy because He continues to associate with us in our need.
      - Though He is in heaven, when we are persecuted, He is persecuted; when we are needy, He is needy.
      - We do not yet see all things put under His feet, but we see Jesus, reigning at the Father’s right hand, crying out for His deliverance (that is, for the deliverance of His people) until all His enemies are made His footstool.
        - He is with us all the way to the end.
    2. As we saw last week, He is ready and able to help us.
      - As our sympathising priest, He has set up a throne of grace.
      - He invites to the throne of grace where He is ruling for our help.
      - He says to His Father, “Do not delay, O my God,” and we say, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” Hasten your kingdom.
    3. Deliverance will be complete and full.
      - The entire body of Christ that is now persecuted, and afflicted with remaining sin and with many sorrows will be delivered and brought to glory forever and ever.