



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Psalm 40:1-7

“‘And Today,’ the Inexhaustible Theme”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Will you turn with me now to the 40th Psalm and this will be the subject of our study later this morning. Psalm 40, David writes,

“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. Blessed is that man who maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are toward us: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened, (it’s a rather interesting translation and a rather interesting text. That clause means something like, ‘Mine ears hast Thou digged,’ literally, evidently a reference to the creation of the body of the individual. And what makes it even more interesting is that this passage is cited in the New Testament in the 10th chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews and instead of reading, ‘Mine ears hast Thou digged,’ we read there, ‘A body hast Thou prepared me.’ And the reason for this

difference is that the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews cites not from the Old Testament Hebrew text but rather from the Old Testament Greek translation which has at this point, ‘A body hast Thou prepared me.’ So it raises a very interesting question, what is the relationship between the text here, ‘Mine ears hast Thou digged,’ and the New Testament citation, ‘A body hast Thou prepared me.’ Is there any connection at all? Well later on in the message we’ll try to harmonize the differences between those apparently quite variant interpretations of the text. Continuing verse 6,) Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, (that is perhaps better translated as prescribed of me,) I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not restrained my lips, O LORD, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy loving kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation. (Now, the Psalmist says, ‘I have not restrained my lips,’ then in verse 11 he says, ‘Withhold not Thou Thy tender mercies from me, O Lord.’ There is a much closer relationship between these statements and the original text.) Let Thy loving kindness and Thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”

You’ll notice in the reading of this, incidentally, that if you happen to turn over to Psalm 70 you would see that the remainder of this psalm appears in Psalm 70 also, and it has been the contention of some that this part of the psalm does not belong to this particular psalm. But you can see from the use of terms in the preceding section and the repetition of them here and the relationship between them that this is very closely connected with what has preceded. Just above he has spoken about mercies that cannot be numbered and now he speaks here about evils that cannot be numbered. He has said

above, “I delight to do Thy will or Thy good pleasure, O Lord.” And then in verse 13 he says, “Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me.” And then above he has said, “Thy thoughts which are toward us: how wonderful they are.” Then in verse 17 he will say, “The Lord thinketh upon me.” So there is a very close connection between the words that follow and the words that have preceded and we conclude, then, that these verses do belong to this particular psalm. Verse 13,

“Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and confounded together who seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame who say unto me, Aha, aha. Let all those who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me, (incidentally, that expression, which I wont say much about in the message, but that expression, ‘The Lord thinketh upon me,’ means more than, ‘My name happens to pass before him lightly.’ It really has the idea of, ‘Thinketh upon me with intention to bless me.’ Then he concludes with,) Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.”

May God’s blessing rest upon this reading of his word.

[Message] The subject for the message today is one that is really grounded in a text that is not found in Psalm 40, it is the text from the Epistle to the Hebrews: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. And our subject is “‘And Today,’ the Inexhaustible Theme.

“The Bible is the book that understands me,” someone has said, and that is beautifully seen in this 40th Psalm, which is a psalm of the triumphs and the trials of the faith life. One of the things that we learn after we have come to faith in the Lord Jesus is

that saints, that is the biblical name for us in spite of the fact that it may seem strange, saints do not live under unbroken, blue skies. They live beneath changeable April ones. But in the sunlight and in the storms he learns to trust, that is the saint, and I think that's the primary point of Psalm 40. He says in the 4th verse, “Blessed is the man who maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.” And then in the 16th verse he says, “Let all those who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.”

Psalm 40 is one of the Messianic psalms. That is, it's a psalm that looks forward to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we don't have any question about that because in the New Testament the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes a passage from this psalm, verses 6, 7, and 8, and in the 10th chapter of his epistle he applies those verses to the Lord Jesus. So we have in a sense the word of the Holy Spirit that this psalm in some way refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a psalm written by David and David was the king of Israel and that does give us a little bit of a clue as to how it should be understood. But we could understand it in two ways as referring to Christ. We could understand it as a prophetically Messianic psalm. That is, as a psalm which prophesized concerning the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But if we say that this psalm is a prophesy of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and if we say that when the psalmist speaks about the cry of himself and how he was delivered out of the miry clay, and how he has been sat upon a rock, we would refer this to the experience of our Lord on the cross at Calvary. But how would we understand those words in verse 12, “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” How is it possible for us to speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as one saying, “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me,” because the New Testament with one voice proclaims that the Son of God was the sinless Son of God.

Over and over again the New Testament pictures him as a sinless Savior, how then could he say, “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.”

C. S. Lewis, who was not an interpreter of Scripture primarily but nevertheless has given many very worthwhile insights into the word, wrote a little book on the psalms -- Reflections on the Psalms, or Meditations on the Psalms, I have forgotten the exact title. But in that very helpful little book Mr. Lewis takes the position that a few interpreters have taken, but only a few: that when the psalmist speaks about, “Mine iniquities,” he’s speaking about the imputed iniquities that the Lord Jesus bore on the cross. That is, he’s speaking about him as the one who took our iniquities upon him and they are his iniquities in the sense that he has taken them to bear them on the cross. We might think of 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, in verse 21, where the Apostle Paul writes in connection with the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and I better take a look at it because the opening word of it has escaped me for the moment. “He hath made him to be sin for us, him who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” So he hath made him to be sin for us, therefore mine iniquities would be the iniquities of us, which have become his for that moment on the cross when he bore our sins. That’s a possible interpretation but it labors under some difficulties and the primary one is this: never does any writer of the New Testament, never does any gospel writer, never does any apostle, never does our Lord himself, sanction the application of any passage of the Old Testament to him, to Christ, in which that writer confesses and deplores his own sinfulness. So this would be absolutely unique. It would be a situation in which the Old Testament writer speaks of the sinfulness of himself and that passage would be referred to the Lord Jesus, and it would be the only illustration of that. Therefore, it seems to me, it is much better to take another interpretation and regard David here as a type of the Messiah in his experiences.

So personally, I take this psalm a typically Messianic psalm. David is a typical figure; he is the king of Israel. And in this he represents the Lord Jesus who is the king,

not only of Israel but also of all who shall reign with him in the kingdom that is to come. Being a typical figure, he does not illustrate our Lord perfectly. No type ever perfectly represents the anti-type. So David illustrates him in his life, in his office as king, in his life, and in his words but he does not illustrate our Lord in his whole life, nor in all his words. What David does is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, at certain points in this psalm and particularly in that section, utter words that go beyond his own personal experience and ultimately are true only of the Messiah. In that sense, this psalm is a Messianic psalm.

Now we're going to look at it and we're going to lay our greatest stress upon the experience of David and how that applies to us today. He opens this great Messianic psalm by expressing the joyous regard that he has for the Lord who has accomplished for him such a great deliverance. Now we're not sure of the kind of deliverance that David experienced, he doesn't tell us precisely what it was. It was some singular deliverance from the jaws of death. Whether it was from some illness or whether it was from some danger that came to him, some peril along the way, he doesn't say. But we know it was some singular deliverance because he says in verse 1, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." So it was a cry that David threw up to the Lord out of an experience that was a very serious one for him.

Now personally, I'm rather glad that David doesn't tell us precisely what experience he had. Perhaps he was delivered from a bear. We know that David was able to handle wild beasts just like Samson, that was true of his experience, but if he told of how he received a marvelous deliverance from encountering a bear, well that wouldn't be a great deal of help to me in Dallas Texas because I don't encounter too many bears. That is, literal bears. Typical bears, yes [Laughter], but literal bears, no.

It's very much like the Apostle Paul's experiences. You know, he speaks about the fact that the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him in order that he might not be exalted over much. It would have been great to be an apostle,

you know, and so the Lord gave Paul this thorn in the flesh in order to remind him that even though he was an apostle he still was just a man and therefore he needed the Lord. He doesn't tell us what it is, we've reasoned a great deal about it and we think we've put our finger upon it. He had some form of eye trouble, but we're not absolutely certain and it's really good that we don't know because just as in Paul's case, just as in David's case, we can reasonably apply these experiences to all of the difficulties in life in which we may find ourselves. So the fact that he is not specific means that this has a general application for us, "I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined unto me and he heard my cry."

By the way, he says he waited patiently. Now that's very instructive. That rendering, incidentally, is a little too placid. The Hebrew text is a little bit more intensive. Literally it's, "Waiting, I waited," or I think the new English Bible renders it something like, "I waited, waited for the Lord." Stress resting upon the fact that he did wait. We are so inclined to take hasty action in the difficulties of life and therefore, we tend to lean upon the flesh in the experiences of life. There's a great lesson in this, suppose you do have a business difficulty. Suppose you do have a problem in your family. Suppose those teenagers finally have gotten under your skin, they have been known to do that. Children love to become teenagers: now I can get my ears pierced. [Laughter] And parents begin to tremble when that happens. Don't take hasty action, David says, "I waited patiently for the Lord." That's one of the first lessons we must learn as believing Christians. Incidentally, this text is written for believers, that's what David was. He was a believer; he was a person who already had his relationship to the Lord. If you're in our audience this morning and you don't have that relationship then, of course, your responsibility is to not wait patiently for him but to flee as fast as you can to the cross of Jesus Christ and claim the blood that was shed for the forgiveness of your sins and for the new life that God freely offers to you through faith in him.

And so coming to him and receiving life, then you become a member of the body of Christ, one of the saints, and that gives you the ticket of admission to the trials of life that David is speaking about. Now that's a great ticket because the trials of life are designed by God to strengthen his saints and build them up. Now of course, it's great to have that initial relationship with him in which you have the forgiveness of sins and justification, you're a child of God, you can call upon God as Father, you're actually a priest of God yourself but then life doesn't end then for the Christian, that's the beginning and everything thereafter is the experience of the relationship with the lord. So David says, "Don't take hasty action, you Christians. He heard my cry, he brought me also out of the pit of destruction, and out of the miry clay," because any experience which we have in which the Lord is no part is an unstable experience, like the miry clay. "And he set my feet upon a rock," now there is no question in the language of the Old Testament who the rock is; it is the Lord Jehovah, "And he established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth." Here is a deliverance, the establishment upon the rock, "He has established my goings," and now as a result of that he worships the Lord with a new song.

Now the result of the fresh experiences of the Lord is a new song. I'm afraid that many Christians have one song. They play one tune and it's the experience of their initial salvation and they know very little of the Lord's deliverance beyond that. Now it's great to have an experience like that. It's great. It is the beginning of life to know that you are a genuine Christian, by the grace of God. You belong to the family of God. You do have the forgiveness of sins. And it's always good to go back to that and think about it. But after you've been a Christian for a little while you ought to have some new songs of deliverance, some new experiences of the grace of God, the result of fresh experiences with him.

In South America there is a tribe of Indians called the Wy-Wys [phonetic]. Some Dallas Christians have gone to the Wy-Wys and have established Christian work among

them. A few years back I was listening to one of the missionaries who had gone to the Wy-Wy tribe or the Wy-Wy people in South America and he pointed out to us in the course of his message to us that there was no word in that language before Christianity came for singing. They didn't do any singing. Now they had a word for chanting but it was the kind of chanting that a witch doctor might do. And they recognized that when they came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and experienced the salvation that he brought that that old word for chanting that the witch doctors used would not do for Christianity and so they invented a new word for singing in that language and it is the result of the coming of Christianity. That's one of the characteristics of Christianity: that it does produce a song. So here is the new song and it's the new song of David who's known probably many songs before that, but this is a new one which indicates a new experience.

One of the men that I have enjoyed reading through the years, he's still living and preaching the word of God though I think he's in his 80's now, is Vance Havner. He has said in one of his books that, "Somebody ought to write a fitting tribute to rocking chairs. Everybody takes them for granted and few have ever pondered how many worries have been mastered, how many problems solved, how many grieves were swayed somewhere between the first and rocks in a good old rocking chair. Of course a whole business of riding a rocking chair is rather silly; you travel all the time and you get nowhere unless," he says, "you're a passenger in one of those wandering designs that starts in one corner of the room [Laughter] and ends up in the other. It's sort of senseless and maybe that's why its ministry is so helpful." But I think that there's another application we might make of that: there are Christians who are really busy about a whole lot of things but they never seem to get anywhere because they don't have these fresh experiences of the grace of God. So David says, "He's put a new song in my mouth."

Someone said to Gipsy Smith, who was one of the best known evangelists in the Western world in the earlier part of this century, what was the secret of his Christian life

and the ebullience that he seemed to manifest wherever he was. He said he never lost the wonder. That's good, that's good advice. Never lose the wonder and once you have come to know Christ as your savior, that's the beginning of the Christian life, the beginning of the great experiences. Now he says in the 4th verse that as a result of this -- the 3rd verse -- “Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” In other words, the experiences that we have are the means for the blessing of others and we are often touched by the experiences that others have of the grace of God in their lives.

I think it was about eight or ten years ago I was reading a report of the British and foreign Bible society of some of the sales of the Bible in South America. And there was a man by Antonio Pereci who was in Argentina selling Bibles, he was a Bible colporteur, and he sold Bibles in Northern Argentina. He told some experiences he had and a couple of them were very interesting to me and they were repeated, retold, in this magazine that I was reading. He was near a little village of Figualo in Northern Argentina and he stopped at a very humble hut near the village of Figualo and he went in with his Bible seeking to sell some of the biblical literature to the people and through that means witness to them concerning the Lord Jesus.

As you know, Bible colporteurs in many lands sell passages from the Scripture, Bible's testaments, very cheaply in order to have an opportunity to evangelize for the Lord. And there was another of the family who wanted to have one of those Bibles very badly but she didn't have any money with her and she said her little boy had some money and he was coming home from the village soon. And Mr. Pereci said that he waited and waited and waited and finally he had to be somewhere and so finally he said, in spite of the imploring of the mother, that he had to go on. And he went out and put his foot on the starter of his jeep and it wouldn't start. He tried it a number of times and he couldn't get anywhere and he said, “There I was just standing out in the heat.” And a few moments later the little boy came and he had the money and he sold the Bible and well it was just as you might expect, he went out and he put his foot on the starter and it

started the first time and he thought, I know why I was not able to start the car. It was just shortly after that that he pulled up in front of a fill-in station which had a general store connected with it, gasoline was put in the car and he put his foot on the starter and it wouldn't start. He turned to his wife, he said, "I know what I've got to do," and he got out of the car, went in, and sold a Bible who ran the general store. Came out, put his foot on the starter, it started, and they went off [Laughter]. That's what's called guidance from the Holy Spirit [Laughter].

So four years later he said he was in a meeting, a Christian meeting, and at that particular meeting one of the young people, it was in a Bible school, and one of the young people in the meeting stood up and said, "Mr. Pereci, I'm the little boy who had gone to the village and to whose mother you sold the Bible. And as a result of the Bible we have become a Christian family and I'm here studying the word of God in this Bible institute." And just about two days later in the same community Mr. Pereci said he was having a meeting in a church and at the conclusion of the meeting in the church a man came up to him and said, "Mr. Pereci, do you recognize me?" He said, "No." He said, "Well I'm the man that you sold the Bible to in the general store." He said, "I was too embarrassed to say anything in the meeting but I want you to know that when you sold me that Bible you said, 'Make it your lifelong guide,' and that's what I've tried to do. And through reading the Bible I've come to be a Christian and I'm now a deacon in the local church here in the city." You know, the experiences of life are often the experiences by which others come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. So, "He's put a new song in my heart and praise to our God: and many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

I've noticed a rather interesting thing recently, several people have come to talk to me, well in fact a number of people have come to talk to me, that I did not know. And invariably I will say to them, "How did you find out about Believers Chapel?" And it's interesting; many of the cases are just chance acquaintances, chance meetings. In one particular instance a young man was sitting at a counter in a restaurant and a young lady

came in, sat down nearby, they engaged in some kind of conversation about spiritual things, and she said, “You ought to go to Believers Chapel,” and as a result of coming to Believers Chapel he has come into a deeper experience of Christian truth. In fact, in one case this man was looking for a particular church, didn’t know a great deal about what he was really looking for but found it through the experiences of someone else.

“Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are toward us: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” Well, at this point David, just as any Christian, would think and is thinking, how can I express my gratitude to the Lord for what he has done for me? In what way can I please him by what I do?

Now he first of all speaks of this from the standpoint of the negative side of things. For he says that, “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire.” Now there is a very important principal here, and of course David is not arguing that the Old Testament ritual is not a valid thing. God gave Israel the Old Testament ritual of sacrifice and priesthood and offering in order that they may be prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus. And so when he says, “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, mine ears hast Thou digged: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required,” he’s not saying that God made a mistake in giving the Old Testament ritual, he’s simply saying that in the performance of a person’s duties to God the attendants at a meeting or the observance of ritual sacrifices is insufficient in itself. In other words, God was very pleased when men brought the sin offering, when they brought the trespass offering, it was an act of faith ideally for them to do it.

But if they thought by just treading the courts of the temple or by attending meetings that they were pleasing God without any deep desire in their innermost being to please him by obeying him, that does not please him. That has great application, incidentally, for us today. Do not think for one moment that on Sunday morning if you

attend a meeting such as this that you have pleased God by having your body physically present in this auditorium. That does not please God. He does not want sacrifice and offering only. What he desires to have is the worship and praise and submission of the heart. “They that love him are they that keep his commandments.” And so I say a very serious word to you, if you think that by attending the services in Believers Chapel that you have thereby pleased God, that is not so. It does not please God for you to attend a meeting where the word is preached if there is no desire to respond to the Scriptures. It does not please the Lord if you sit at the Lord’s table and take the bread and take the wine. When your thoughts are far from him and you have no desire whatsoever to submit to him as a believing, obeying submissive Christian, he is desirous of the heart, that’s what David is speaking about and so to express his gratitude for this great deliverance he’s saying, “Sacrifice and offering are insufficient.” You may offer them but they are insufficient of themselves.

“Lo, I come: in the volume in the book, it is prescribed concerning me, or of me.” Now he’s talking about coming to the temple and he’s talking about the fact that the Old Testament requires that he come in the spirit of obedience. “I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.” This is the thing that pleases God. How easy it is in the Old Testament times and in New Testament times and especially among Bible believing Christians to lapse into the perfunctory worship that characterized Israel in the Old Testament and it characterizes so many of the professing Christian churches today. You can attend the meetings and even when the Bible is opened there is no real spiritual life there whatsoever. The Spirit is gone, it’s dead.

David’s speaking about something that’s far more significant than attending a meeting: opening the Bible, looking at the Greek text, looking at the Hebrew text, thinking about theology. Fundamentally, the relationship with the Lord is to be a submissive, obedient, relationship to him. Now that cannot be accomplished apart from the grace of God and the enablement of the Holy Spirit and if you sense deep down

within that you don't have that kind of response to him a solution to your problem is not attending more meetings, the solution to your problem rests in the personal relationship with him. Go home, get down by your bed, confess the coldness and indifference and lethargy of your heart and call upon God to give you warmth and obedience and submission to the word of God, and then maybe in a few weeks or a few days you'll have a new song in your heart and there'll be blessing for others too.

“Lo, I come,” is the language of a servant to a master or a superior. “It is written concerning me, prescribed of me.” Incidentally, that's a beautiful illustration of the importance of the word of God to the Old Testament saints. As David expresses this he says, “It's prescribed of me, according to the law of the word of God.” Now when he says, “I delight to do Thy will, and Thy law is within my heart, and I have preached righteousness, and I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest,” he now, carried by the Holy Spirit, speaks of experience that is beyond him, for it's the experience of a man who is perfect.

When he says, “My ears Thou hast digged,” and in the New Testament we read, “A body hast Thou prepared me,” the New Testament is really a very free but yet true to the significance of the Old Testament text rendering, for the body is the instrument of fulfilling the commands of the Lord just as the ear is the instrument for receiving the commands of the Lord. And so the harmony of the two rests in the response to the word of God. The ear to hear the commands, the body for the doing of them, and the writer of the New Testament senses that that is the essence of the meaning of David's passage here.

Now having looked at it negatively, he says in verses 9 and 10 something very positive, “With a burning heart,” he heaps words upon words to express zeal for the proclamation of the God which he has learned before his fellow believers. He says, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, Thou knowest. I have not hidden Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy loving kindness

and Thy truth from the great congregation.” It was a Scott who said about salvation that, “It was better felt than telt.” Well it’s really best if it’s both felt and telt. We should have some kind of understanding of the thing that makes us happy. But we shouldn’t restrain our expression of the joy that has come to us. God has created us with a mind and with a soul, with a spirit, and it is proper for a Christian to have an intelligent comprehension of his faith and also an expression of it from his soul. We want to have an intellectual faith, but we also want to have an intellectual faith that is expressed in the emotional life. The only kind of Christian that is pleasing to God, ultimately, is the one who is a full-fledged Christian in the mind first and in his heart and soul, secondly.

Someone has said, “Happy is the singer who has an inexhaustible theme.” David is just heaping word upon word, it’s as if a man is looking at a giant diamond and he’s turning it in his hands, looking at the facets of that diamond. And he speaks about the righteousness of the Lord; he speaks about his loving kindness. He speaks about his faithfulness. He speaks about his salvation, he speaks about his truth. All of these things he has come to experience in his personal life.

Now you would think that after all of this, well life is going to be just one happy experience until we enter into the presence of the Lord. If you think that the Christian life is just an experience of happiness and that’s all, then you really do not understand the salvation that we possess in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because there are experiences that we have after some of our greatest experiences that are not the kinds of experiences that we would want to have at all.

I am looking for an Arab proverb, I had it in my notes, and here it is, “Life is a pendulum, twixt a smile and a tear.” Here is David, he’s just sung about this great deliverance that he’s had and he’s spoken about all of the results of it and now, in verse 11, he has to turn again to the Lord and ask for deliverance again because that’s life; it’s up and it’s down, and it’s up, and it’s down. We live on the mountaintop of some mighty deliverance and then we live in the valley of great need.

Have you ever noticed that in reading the psalms? In one moment David is praising the Lord for what has happened to him, the next he's crying out for God to save him in the midst of difficulties. Christians know what that means. They know that life is not one level, even, happy experience thereafter in the sense that there are no trials, no troubles, no difficulties. So he praises God and he asks for deliverance from the consequences of his sins, for deliverance from his enemies. Christians have enemies too. And he asked the Lord for deliverance from them and then he asks for the faithful in the final two verses. And I want to close with just a couple of comments.

It is clear that in this psalm there is a tremendous exhortation indirectly to us to praise the Lord for the experiences of life. If you've just come from the heights, express your gratitude to the Lord. And incidentally, it's a good idea to express your gratitude to those who live around you to whom you are indebted and for whom you are grateful. Husbands, express your gratitude for your wife. She'll be surprised, but nevertheless do it. Express your gratitude for her.

I love that story of the man who heard a sermon where his wife was not present. He realized that he had not given her the kind of gratitude that she should have had and so he determined to rush home and express it. And he burst home into the kitchen where she was and he began to unfold all of his gratitude for all of the things that she had meant to him. And when he finished this outburst she looked at him and said, “This caps the climax, I broke my favorite plate this morning and I've had a splitting headache all day long and now you've come home drunk.” [Laughter]

So it may surprise her but go ahead and express your gratitude. And first of all express your gratitude to the Lord. And you know, this is a tremendous encouragement to this petition too. If you're in the dumps, remember the past and petition for the future. Erma Bombeck has a new title out, it's a bestseller, *If Life Is A Bowl of Cherries, What Am I Doing in the Pits?* [Laughter] Well, Christians are often in experiences just like that.

One of my favorite parts of the United States, I don't like to stay this with Carolyn Custus here because she's from the Northwest, or organist, but the Northwest is one of my favorite parts of the country. And one of the reasons is its nice and wet and rainy and cloudy. And I've lived in Texas longer than I've lived anywhere else and I must say, Lord forgive me, I get a little bit tired of the sun down here, everyday from month after month, and I love to go up there and just bask in the clouds and the mist and the rain [Laughter]. Now they have some beautiful scenery up there, everything is green and in Seattle for example you can live and if you live in the right spot you can look out over a beautiful bay and then on those rare occasions when you can see, you can look out and in the distance see Mount Rainier. And what a magnificent sight, that snowcapped peak that is.

Most of the time, however, it seems the mist is there and the fog is there, but nevertheless you know that Mount Rainier is out there. You know, pilots, that's usually the easiest way to catch a view of Mount Rainier is to be in a plane taking off from the Seattle International Airport because you do come by that mountain. Pilots have a word for a cloud around the mountain, they called it a stuffed cloud. You know the mountain is there. There is a text of the Bible, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Now we don't have a great deal of problem with Jesus Christ, the same yesterday.” We can think of what he did for us when he died for us on the cross. And we like to speak about tomorrow when we shall be in heaven, and forever. But it's that, “And today,” that we often have difficulty with because today we live often in the midst of the clouds and mist and we don't see our Lord as we often do with reference to the past and the future. The Lord Jesus once said to Thomas, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” And yet have believed. And then Peter said, “Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” And yet have believed, yet believing. George Muller had a little plaque on his desk always and it had just two words on it, “And today.” Jesus Christ, the same

yesterday, and today, and forever. What an inexhaustible theme: and today. And so I call upon you, if you're a Christian, to remember: Jesus Christ, the same today. And you can have fresh experiences of the grace of God as you wait patiently for him and cry out to him in the midst of the trials and difficulties of life. If you are not a Christian, again, we invite you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus who offered the great sacrifice by which we have the forgiveness of sins. May God help you to come to him. And if you're a believer, may the Lord give you the experiences that will put new songs in your mouth and lead to the obedience submission that pleases the Lord. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee, Lord, for the experiences through which David the king passed and for the gifts that Thou didst give him of utterance. We thank Thee for the psalmist but most of all we thank Thee for the things of which he has written, the forgiveness of our sins, the greatness of our great God, Jehovah, for the goodness and for the mercy that Thou dost extend to the saints, for the faithfulness with which Thou dost deal with us. Lord, we expressed to Thee our gratitude for our salvation and we pray that in the experiences of life that our cries shall be heard. And we know that even when the answers are “no”, that our petitions still reach Thine ears. And so Lord, we remember Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today. And we give Thee thanks and praise and gratitude...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]