

mp3/53/PSALM 40.MP3

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[0 : 00] We're going to look together at a passage we read earlier from Psalm 40.

Psalm 40. Did you ever watch that program on television called 999? It ran for 11 years and it reenacted dramatic rescues that had taken place.

A group of boys go climbing the cliff face at the seaside. One boy falls to the rocks below and is badly injured.

He can't move. The tide is coming in fast. The rescuers can't reach him from the beach. The lifeboat can't reach him from the sea. The helicopter comes in with nerves of steel.

The pilot brings the helicopter within inches of the cliff face. The winch man is lowered and the boy is snatched from the rocks below. Snatched away to safety.

[1 : 04] That was the kind of thing that was shown on the 999 program. It had high audience ratings because people loved to hear about dramatic rescues.

This morning we're going to think about a dramatic rescue. Every true Christian knows about it. God has done a great rescue job in our lives.

A rescue far more amazing than anything ever shown on television. Once we were in terrible danger. But the Lord has rescued us and saved us.

And I want to look at that rescue with you this morning. To be honest, I can't think of anything better to do on a Sunday like this, when everybody else is thinking about sport, than we think about this great rescue that the Lord Jesus Christ has done in the lives of those who are believers.

Now David, who became the most famous king of Israel, describes this rescue in Psalm 40 verse 1. I waited patiently for the Lord.

[2 : 15] He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

He put a new song in my mouth, even a hymn of praise to our God. David describes himself as being at the bottom of a pit.

Obviously, he's speaking in poetic language. As far as we know, David was never in a literal pit. In those days, muggers would attack a man, rob him of his money, then throw him down a disused well shaft to die.

It was an awful thing. And David takes hold of that picture and uses it to describe his spiritual condition before he became a believer.

Down in a horrible, slimy pit. Can you think of anything more alarming than that? Than being trapped in a deep pit.

[3 : 22] It is used well shaft. The bottom of which is thick with slime and mud and you can't get out. That's how we were before we became Christians.

That's how you are, my friend. If you're still not a Christian. What does it mean? In the slimy pit. It means that before we became Christians, we were dirty in the sight of God.

The person who's fallen down or been thrown down a well shaft with a lot of mud at the bottom is bound to be dirty. And that's our spiritual condition if we are not Christians.

Spiritually dirty, defiled by sin and guilt. You may not like me for saying that, but that's the truth of the matter.

When someone told me way back in 1960 that I was dirty and guilty in the sight of God, I was very annoyed. Who does this fellow think he is talking about me like that?

[4 : 35] But in my heart of hearts, I knew it was true. I was dirty and guilty in the sight of God. I've broken God's laws many, many times.

I knew it was true. And so have we all. Not just blatant things like immorality and lust and filthy jokes and cursing and swearing and watching slimy films and things like that, but more subtle things like

pride and selfishness and bitterness and greed.

I look back on my life before I became a Christian and it fills me with shame. And one of the things I hate most was the bitterness I used to feel.

I desperately wanted to go into the sixth form at school, but my parents were so poor they couldn't afford another school blader.

My father worked hard to pay the rent to a crook of a landlord and there was no money left for school clothes. So I had to leave school and get some work while all those kids of wealthy families went on into the sixth form and had everything handed to them on the plate.

[5 : 57] I had to work 50 hours a week. And like a fool I became bitter and angry and rebellious and got into a load of trouble with a gang.

There I was in the mud and the mire dirty in the sight of God. And that's true of everyone by nature. You may not have done the things I did but if you're not a Christian your sin your pride your envy your jealousy most of all the way you ignore God makes you dirty and guilty in his sight.

Yes and in danger too the person down in the slimy mire at the bottom of the pit is in danger. He's sinking deeper and deeper into the mud and if something doesn't happen soon he'll die there of exposure or he'll starve to death or he'll just choke and drown in the mud.

He's in terrible danger. And that's how we were before we became Christians. That's the position of anybody who's not a Christian in terrible terrible danger.

You see this world is not all there is. You might have got that impression the last few days thinking that this world is all there is. To get a gold medal in this world that's everything.

[7 : 32] But this world is not all there is. One day we've got to die all of us and it may be sooner than we think. And beyond death there's a terrible judgment judgment of almighty God and all of us must face it.

All of us will face it. And beyond that judgment day there's an eternity to be faced. An eternity in heaven if we're Christians or an eternity in hell.

You may say I don't believe such nonsense. Richard Dawkins doesn't believe it and neither do I. But it doesn't really matter what Richard Dawkins thinks.

It doesn't really matter what you think my friend. What matters is this. What God has said. And God has said he's appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.

And every one of us will be there. And then beyond that judgment there's an eternity. And if we're not Christians we're in danger of an endless eternity in hell.

[8 : 57] But this poor fellow down in the well shaft is not only dirty and in danger he or she is desperate. In this sense they're trapped and they can't save themselves.

They're up to their knees up to their waist in thick mud it's got hold of them and they can't get out. And that's how we were before we became Christians.

Trapped by sin. Unable to save ourselves. I remember the sad days before I became a Christian. I knew it was wrong to curse and swear.

I knew it was wrong to lie and cheat and steal. I knew it was wrong to do those things. I tried hard to give them up but I couldn't.

I was trapped. I couldn't get out of the mud. And the more I tried to lift myself out of the mud the worse I became.

[10 : 01] and that is still the position of anyone who's not a Christian. Trapped by sin. It's one of the biggest problems confronting Great Britain just now.

The drug addiction the rise in binge drinking the collapse of morals the rise in sexually transmitted diseases the greed of the bankers the number of people on the field in business in politics the lust for pornography the salacious craving people have to read the sort of details of the lives of these film stars and football stars in the newspapers that's all indicative of the fact that people are trapped in sin and they cannot get themselves out.

Often the politicians announce some new measure they're going to take to improve things but many of them all of them are not Christians are trapped by sin.

You see what a desperate light it is? This man down this this youth well shaft he can't save himself he can't get out of the mire even if he could extricate himself from the mud he can't climb that well shaft he may make a little progress one day but then he falls back into the mud.

That's a picture of men and women who are not Christians the desperate hopelessness and helplessness of their lives sometimes they make a silver human effort to improve themselves but

that doesn't help in the long run.

[11:57] Dirty in danger and desperate some religious people will tell you to try your best try your hardest do your best try and improve your life and then God will be kind to you and he'll reward your efforts that's total nonsense that is totally false that's like standing at the top of a disused well shaft and yelling to the man down there to get himself out he can't he's trapped he's injured and the one thing he cannot do is lift himself out of the mud now that's the picture of the wretched rotten state we were in before we became Christians those 999 programs on television began by describing the terrible position in which the victim was the boy lying injured on the rocks the woman trapped in a burning building you won't understand the dramatic nature of the rescue until you first see the desperate plight of the victim so they showed you the shots from every angle well David has given us this vivid picture of the spiritual plight of those who are not

Christians down an old slimy well shaft dirty in the sight of God in terrible danger and desperate unable to help themselves but now having seen the pictures of the wretched state we were in we can now see the rescue the Lord has rescued us David says he lifted me out of the slimy pit out of the mud and out of the mire if we can if we're Christians we can say those words God has rescued us and if you become a Christian today you'll be able to say those words in July 2012 in Whitby God intervened and rescued me from terrible danger so let's look at the rescue first of all the Lord has rescued us from the grip of sin there we were down in the mire it had us trapped it was dragging us down we tried hard to get free all the resolutions we made

Sunday after Sunday we heard a sermon maybe and we resolved to live better lives but we were trapped we couldn't get free I went as a teenager to the kind of church where the minister told us Sunday after Sunday to do our best try our hardest live a better life pull yourselves up by your own bootlaces poor man he didn't realise how deep the pit I was in he didn't realise how helpless I was one day I heard a preacher who struck a different note a visiting preacher came to the church I used to go to and he told us of someone who had the power to lift us out of the pit what a day that was what a glorious day it was like being lifted out of a pit and the Lord can do the same for you my friend if you're not a Christian are you gripped by some sin pride maybe selfishness greed covetousness jealousy envy bad language bad behaviour are you stuck fast in the mud and able to get yourself free well the Bible tells us of a glorious saviour the Lord Jesus Christ it's my privilege to tell you about him he has the power to set you free from the grip of sin then he's rescued us from the guilt of sin as well there we were guilty and defiled and dirty because of sin when you're rescued from a pit you're pretty dirty but the Lord Jesus Christ has the power to cleanse away all our guilt he has the power to cleanse away all our sin all that filth all those years of ignoring God all those years of living for ourselves all those years of being proud and arrogant all those years of being selfish and self-centred he has the power to cleanse away all that guilt and all that filth no matter what you've done no matter what you've said he has the power to cleanse away all that dirt and then of course as Christians we've been rescued from danger we've been rescued from perishing we've been rescued from certain doom we've been rescued from hell

David puts it like this in a dramatic way he lifted me out of the slimy pit out of the mud and the mire the Lord has saved me the Lord has rescued me and can I tell you how he did that did you notice what David said in the NIV it says he lifted me out of the slimy pit some versions of the Bible have a slightly different translation he brought me up out of a horrible pit David doesn't say he told me how to get myself out of the pit David actually says he brought me up out of the pit and the picture there is of a rescuer going down into the pit to save him being lowered down the well shaft taking hold of the poor helpless victim and bringing him up out of the pit that's a wonderful picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ did in order to rescue us he came down into the filthy pit where we were and brought us up out of it let me explain that in the New Testament in a book called Hebrews in chapter 10 and verse 5 this Psalm 40 is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming into this world in other words it tells us that Christ left heaven and came into the sinful foul evil world he came down from heaven into the pit where we were other religions all other religions stand at the top of the well shaft and they shout instructions down to us they tell us to try harder they tell us to be more religious they tell us to do more good works they tell us to do our best they stand at the top of the well shaft shouting instructions go to the temple more go to the mosque more go to chapel more go to church more that try your hardest do your best that man who was the minister of the church when he went as a teenager that was the kind of thing he did he stood at the top of the well shaft shout he didn't shout he was too polite to do that whispering instructions to us try harder my friends try harder my

friends and I say he didn't realise how deep the pit was that I was in but the Lord Jesus Christ did something far more amazing he actually left heaven the throne of heaven the son of God left heaven and came down into this pit where we were and took hold of us and rescued us brought us up out of a horrible pit that's the wonder of the Christian faith that Christ left heaven and came to this world

[20 : 45] I said reverently God lowered him into the pit in order to rescue us and how he suffered when he came down to this pit of sin to save us any rescuer being lowered down the well shaft will get bruised and injured as he's battered against the sides of the well shaft and our Lord Jesus Christ when he came to this world to deal with our sin was bruised and injured he actually bore the punishment of our sins in our place that we might be forgiven he was bruised for our iniquities he was wounded for our transgressions as he came down into this world to save us he endured terrible suffering he died and bore the punishment of our sins in order that we might be saved we used to sing a hymn

I think it's in our new books in loving kindness Jesus came in mercy my soul in mercy to reclaim and from the depths of sin and shame in love he lifted me that's what Christ has done for us he's rescued us by coming down into the pit to deal with our sin but thank God the Lord has done more than that for us he's not only rescued us if we're Christians he's put us in a very safe and secure place David says he set my feet upon a rock now if you rescue someone from a deep pit and bring them up to the surface after they've been trapped down there many many days they'll be a bit unsteady on their feet I tell you they've been there at the bottom of the pit shaft for days they're very weak very shaky so the first thing you do when you bring them up out of the pit is to put them in a safe place else they'll fall back down as soon as you turn your back and this phrase is telling us that the Lord

Jesus Christ having rescued us from sin has put us in a safe place as Christians although we are Christians we're still very weak people and my friend if you become a Christian this morning you wouldn't suddenly become perfect you'll still be a weak person but when the Lord Jesus Christ rescues us he puts us in a safe place and he'll take care of us and watch over us day by day he'll put our feet as it were on a rock and he'll watch over us if it hadn't been for that I would have fallen back down the pit years ago but the Lord Jesus Christ puts our feet in a safe and secure place the moment we become Christians he does more than that for us David says he gave me a firm place to stand and there's a suggestion there that he set our feet in the right direction now when you bring someone up out of the pit after they've been there many days and they're very weak you stand them on the firm piece of ground but you also face them in the right direction in their sort of haziness they might walk straight back down the pit again so you bring them up you rescue them you set them on a firm piece of ground and you set them facing the right direction that's what David means here and the Lord has done that for us as Christians he's rescued us and he's now putting us in the right direction I was rushing headlong to hell but now the Lord has rescued me he's put my feet in the direction of heaven and now if we're Christians we're on our way to heaven if you become a Christian today the moment you become a Christian you'll be on your way to heaven he'll put you in the right direction and then he does more than that the Lord Jesus Christ David says he put a new song into my mouth a hymn of praise to God those 999 emergency programs they often ended with an interview with the rescued person and how the rescued person sang the praises of the emergency service the fire brigade how wonderful they were the lifeboat men how amazing they were the ambulance men how marvelous they were they sang the praises of the rescue services and when we become Christians the Lord puts a new song into our mouths even praise to our God we spend the rest of our lives singing the praises of the

Lord Jesus Christ for this wonderful thing that he's done for us he has saved us he's rescued us he's put us on the way to heaven the songs I used to sing in my unsaved days were crude and wretched the songs we sing now as Christians are glorious how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear it soothes his sorrows his wounds and dries away his fear immortal owners rest on Jesus head my God my soul my living bread full of praise to our God and to our Lord Jesus Christ for all that he's done for us praise my soul the king of heaven to his feet thy tribute bring ransomed healed restored forgiven who like thee his praise should sing full of praise to our

[27 : 25] God have you been rescued my friend can I ask you that this morning have you been rescued from the guilt and the biblical sin have you been rescued from dirt and danger and your desperate state if you have then praise God sing this new song and seek to show what the Lord

Jesus Christ has done for you did you notice that the Lord has put a new song through my mouth many will see it and fear and put their trust in God can people see that we've been rescued can people see that we've got a new song in our mouths can people see that the Lord Jesus Christ means everything to us can they see that we're down right with God and our way to heaven a new song into our mouths there was a famous

Keswick preacher many many years ago called Guy King he died in 1956 I think it was and he had a sermon on the psalm and he entitled his sermon this out of the mire into the choir what a great title for the out of the mire into the choir he brought me up out of a horrible pit he put a new song in my mouth can people see my friend that the Lord Jesus Christ means everything to you if you haven't been rescued you haven't been saved if you're just religious and know nothing about being saved from hell then plead with God plead with the Lord to save you David did that read what he says I waited patiently for the Lord literally waiting I waited for the Lord he turned to me and heard my cry

David realized he was in dire straits he realized he could do nothing to save himself nothing so he cried to the Lord plead with the Lord God to save him and to rescue him in other words my friend if you're not a Christian realize you're in dire straits realize you're dirty in the sight of God realize you're in terrible danger realize you're desperate you can't save yourself never in a million years can you put yourself right with God cry to the Lord Jesus Christ to look in mercy upon you and to save you and to forgive you if you like use the words of our last hymn which we'll sing in a moment or two the author Augustus

Toplady was walking through Burrington Coombs so they say in Somerset and was caught in a violent storm and he sheltered in a cleft in the rock that inspired him to write this hymn Rock of Ages a title for the Lord Jesus Christ Rock of Ages cleft for me let me hide myself in thee let the water and the blood from thy riven side which flowed be of sin the double cure cleanse me from its guilt and power my friend that's your great problem not only the guilt of sin but the power of sin cleanse me from its guilt and power not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy laws demands could my zeal no respite no could my tears forever flow awful sin cannot return thou m'er safe and thou alone nothing in my hand

I bring simply to thy cross I cling naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul I to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die let me tell you a man who did cry out like that in Burrington Coombe in Somerset there's an inscription engraved on the rock informing passers by about that hymn now that inscription was carved by Orlando Dennis a first class stonemason who had a very prosperous business advising repairs of buildings in Florence and Venice and Rome now one Sunday in 1990 Orlando Dennis came to a church in Clevedon in

[32 : 47] Somerset where the gospel is preached he was an elder he was a member of another church in that town where they didn't preach the gospel but he decided one Sunday to come and sort of spy out the land in this gospel church in Clevedon out of curiosity and he heard that Jesus Christ was the only one who could save from sin and he was angry he stormed out he refused to shake my hand at the door and stormed out livid and angry just a few weeks later he collapsed in terrible pain in the hallway of his house he thought he was dying he was scared and he cried out to the Lord as he lay on the floor in his house Lord he said if that preacher was right if what that preacher said is true if you are the only person who can forgive and save vile sinners then please please please have mercy on me and save me then he said then he quoted the words of the hymn that he'd read so many times when he was carving that inscription nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross

I cling he realised he was a spiritual bankrupt nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul out of the fountain fly wash me saviour or I die and the Lord heard his cry and the Orlando Dennis became a Christian if you're not a Christian my friend plead with the Lord to save you and he will serve and this day will turn out to be remarkable in your life and for the rest of your life you'll praise God for that day when Jesus Christ rescued you from a horrible pet let's sing that hymn by Augustus Toplady may the grace of our

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the love of God our heavenly father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all this day and forever amen