



Praise Him in the Chaos

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

—Psalm 40:1-3

Chaos can be defined as a situation in which one is uncertain about what to do or unable to understand something clearly, usually with unmet expectations. Have you been there? Lost in this horrible pit, this place of loose footing? A place of waiting on a God you know to be good but does not always show His goodness as you had expected? After we surrender our confusion to Him, how do we go about praising Him?

A King's Story - A New Song

Exploration and Interaction

Read Psalm 40. What does this psalm tell you about God?

What does it tell you about man?

What does it tell you about God's relationship to man?

David probably wrote this after he ran for his life. He was running from his enemy—his son, Absalom, who was intent on killing him in order to usurp him as king (see 2 Samuel 2:15-18 for full story). In this Psalm, David reflects on a terrible situation he had been in and then praises God for his deliverance. He ends the Psalm with another cry for help. This horrible pit was a place he could not see his way out of, his own sins confronted him, he lost his courage, had countless troubles, and an enemy had forced him into this place of despair (verses 12-14). This is a physical and spiritual wilderness where he waited patiently for God to help.

This place of darkness is where he hoped in God. The whole Psalm is not a lament in the pit (a pity party) but rather a song of praise, a new song many will hear and believe, a song about God's rescuing him. It is also a song of belief that He will do it again. As verse 6 through 8 states, God does not look for sacrifices; instead, He looks for us to take joy in doing His will. This is the sacrifice of praise.

Verses 9 and 10 describe the new song David sings about God's faithfulness, saving power, unfailing love, and good news of His justice. This, too, is our purpose for suffering in the pit—praise. Chaos is the perfect and necessary backdrop for peace, resulting in praise. We surrender to God by trusting in the chaos, after deliverance, praise is used for the benefit of others.

Reflective Questions

Can you relate to David? Have you been running from the enemy? Are you in a pit, surrounded by uncertainty and fear? Are you waiting on God to rescue you?

Once you surrender to Him in this hopelessness, how can you praise Him?

Write a psalm of praise—not just about the depression, the whirlwind of stormy struggles, the sins, and enemies too many to mention, but focus on the wonders God has done and praise Him for who He is. Make this your new song and share this psalm, your story, with others.

A Prophet's Story - A New Mission

1 Kings 19:1-18

Elijah, like David, is running for his life. After two mountain-top miracles, why would he be so afraid? God's prophet had just killed all the prophets of Baal and had witnessed a powerful display of God answering prayer. First, God answered Elijah by engulfing the water-drenched altar in flames and then God answered the

prayer for rain. So why did he run? A threat came from Queen Jezebel after these miraculous displays, and he found himself in a 'pit of despair' in the desert (verses 1-3). Unlike David, he did not cry out for rescue but he cried for God to let him die (verses 3 and 4). God did not answer him as he had hoped (verses 5-8). Instead, He sent an angel to bring him back to life under the desert broom tree. After He steadied him, God gave him a new mission.

Exploration and Interaction

Think about Elijah and the wonders he saw God perform. Like David, he had plenty of reasons to praise God for the miracles he not only participated in, but also witnessed. Like the king, this prophet stated how he had been faithful and yet, his enemies were hunting him (verse 10 and 14). What does this say about God?

What does this passage say about man?

What does it say about God's relationship with man?

God did not answer Elijah's prayer (1 Kings 19:15-18). What did Elijah believe to be true (see verse 10) that God proved wrong in verse 18?

What was God's will for Elijah instead (2 Kings 2:11)?

What did God do instead of allowing death to come to his prophet?

Reflection and Application

Think about the tactics of the enemy and how he uses confusion, unexpected encounters, lies, and threats to send us running. What are some examples in your own life?

Have you ever been in a place where death was the easiest answer? If so, think about this broom tree experience and list the provisions, supernatural care, friends, or other means God used to nurse you to health?

Can you see His purpose for this pain? How is He using the experience?

What is He asking you to do with this gift of life now? Write down your "new mission" from this desert time and as David did, praise Him for it and wait on Him (it may come in a whisper) to show you what to do now.

A Prophet, Priest, and King's Story - A New Way

Hebrews 10:5-10

Psalm 40 is also known as a messianic psalm as it references Jesus Christ. Verses 6 through 8 are quoted in Hebrews. Verses 8 through 10 explain why this quotation was used in the New Testament. As seen in Luke 22:39-45, Christ also had an enemy threaten and he went away into the wilderness and cried out for help. This horrible pit was the darkest trap of the enemy ever experienced. In his prayer, Jesus struggled with the uncertainty of impending death he had to face and cried for God to let there be another way. He ended his prayer in acceptance

of carrying out God's will. As seen in both Elijah and David's stories, help came. Like Elijah, an angel strengthened him. However, God did not rescue Jesus from death; instead, He allowed the enemy to kill His Son in order to carry out His will. This was done for all humanity. Out of this dark confusion came the greatest praise song ever sung, a new song—an ultimate sacrifice of praise. Praise His glorious name through Jesus Christ! God turned the old way of burnt offerings and sacrifices upside down and brought in a new way, a new promise, therefore rendering the trap of death powerless.

Exploration and Interaction

Compare David, Elijah, and Christ's prayers. What was different? What was similar? How did God answer each one?

Read Hebrews 10:11-14. What role did Christ carry out in Hebrews 10:11-13? In verse 13, through this sacrifice, what does Christ do to our enemies?

What does this story tell us about God?

About man?

About God's relationship to man?

We can see four things from these passages. First, there is a real enemy, a predator, who sends us running or hiding, who wants to destroy and shipwreck our faith in God. Second, there is a real struggle with the horrible pit. A pit symbolizes an enclosed place where uncertainty, confusion, and chaos have us trapped in fear

This can be a place of waiting, of crying out to God for help, or turning to death as an escape; a place where we cannot do anything in our own power or ability to save ourselves, where we recognize we are poor and needy. We could arrive there by our own sins, troubles, or a trap of the enemy. Third, there is a Proponent, the Great

Rescuer—a trustworthy God. This One helps us, turns to us, hears our cries, and lifts us out of the pit of despair. Not only that, but He places us on sure footing and steadies us. Lastly, He gives us a gift—purpose, our response of praise for His wonders and His very character. Therefore, in the darkness, we can wait because our God did the same through Jesus. This is our sacrifice of praise, because it is hardest to praise without seeing. We can hope in hope and wait in the waiting, cry out to Him, and know He will deliver as He has always done and will continue to do again and again. Then, we can go out singing a new song of praise, so many will believe.

Interaction and Application

How can this final story help you to not only surrender the uncertainty you are facing in the darkest pit but to wait on Him and praise Him instead?

Imagine what God's answered prayer may look like and praise Him in advance. Spend time meditating on and praising God for this Priest-Prophet-King who offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Your chaotic situation will be put into right perspective.

We can praise Him in the confusion, when the enemy is out to destroy us, when plans fail, when expectations are unmet, when death beckons, when evil wins, when faith is blind. To praise Him is to know who He is, our true hope, in a God who is in charge and has all of His plans in order, out to give and to love. He may not have reconciled David and his son, but He reconciled us through His own Son. To Him we can bring the sacrifice of praise, because of the sacrifice of the body of Jesus who makes us holy once for all. To the praise of His glory "so many will see what He has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord."

About the Writer: Alicia Crowe lives in Asheville, North Carolina with her husband Josh and three beautiful daughters. She ministered in Toyko, the largest metropolitan area on earth, to bring the hope of Christ to the Japanese people.