

DSC Community Group
Sermon Summary, 02/19/2012

Title: "The Building Blocks of Prayer"
Series: "Pour Out Your Heart to Him: A Study Through the Psalms"

Text: Psalm 40
Preacher: Ron Giese

The building blocks of prayer are word pictures

- Word pictures paint an image in your mind, and they are found throughout the book of Psalms.

Picture #1: Salvation pictured using the idea of space (2-3)

- This is in all likelihood not a literal pit. Other verses tell us that the "pit" was enemies of David that surrounded him and threatened his life and kingship. This "pit" represents David's desperate situation.
- In the ancient Near East people dug pits for the purpose of collecting rain water called cisterns. These were deep pits with a wide base and a narrow hole at the top. When they went out of use, they became collection points for trash, animals, and even human waste. Since they were lined with plaster, and the lining was smooth, even if it was cracked these made great jail cells. Therefore we read in Jeremiah 38 that Jeremiah was lowered into a pit and sank into the mud. This is what David is imagining.

Picture #2: The cross pictured using the idea of sacrifice (6-8)

- V6: The sacrifice here is an animal sacrifice. Many ancient people groups did this. Outside of Israel, people make gods in their own image. And therefore these gods are like humans, just more powerful. Thus gods and goddesses can be jealous, can fight each other, and can even die. And they eat and drink. Therefore one way of pleasing a god was to offer him good meat by killing an animal and in some way giving the meat to the god. When God commanded the Israelites to do animal sacrifices, is this what He wanted? Food? No. Psalm 50:9-13 clarifies this.
- V13: This question is rhetorical, and the answer is "no." Why, then, did God command animal sacrifices? Three reasons: 1) The sacrificial system helped priests to teach people about the relation between heart and deed. 2) The sacrificial system was part of what it meant to be "in covenant." The covenant that God started in the days of Moses was started and maintained by a sacrifice. 3) The sacrificial system produced a longing for the end of all sacrifices, that is, Jesus.

1. An act by itself is meaningless; it's the heart that matters. This is the active part of a sacrifice.

- Jesus treats this idea in extended fashion in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chs. 5-7. Doing right, Jesus says, is not right done for the wrong reasons. So, Psalm 40:6 would read, "In sacrifice and offering (as acts in and of themselves) you have not delighted."

2. The body by itself is incomplete; it's a broken spirit that matters. This is the passive part of a sacrifice.

- This is perhaps best described Ps 51:16-17. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 speaks of a king who will come who will truly obey God. In writing Psalm 40, David has this text in mind.
- Psalm 40 is quoted in Hebrew 10:5-7 referring to Christ. When David said, "it is written of me in the scroll of the book," he meant the words of God written about the coming king of Israel.

Sample Questions

- In the course of his sermon, Ron referenced a number of word pictures for God, for salvation, and for us. What are some images from Scripture that you've found particularly helpful in prayer? What word pictures should we use, but often neglect?
- David uses the imagery of a pit to relate his own situation to God in prayer. What has been/is your pit, your miry bog?
- Reminder: Ron encouraged us to read through the Bible every year, and when we do to make a running list of word pictures which we can use in prayer.