

In today's society in this country and other western countries, **celebrity** is the thing isn't it? Television shows, glossy magazines, all the hype and glamour of becoming and being celebrities. This is the great idol of our time – people **worship** celebrities. These people are put on a pedestal and are idolised because they show some talent in an area of life, whether it's singing, dancing, sport, or just because they have a talent for making money. They're idolised.

But what are they **really** like themselves? Are they **really** the super-people they're made out to be? How are these celebrities at home with their families? What really makes them tick? What goes on in their minds? What drives them?

It's often been written that these so-called celebrities are very different when they're off screen, off stage or off the pitch. Comedians who make us laugh, often have severe bouts of depression. Great actors who communicate well when working from a **script** often have difficulty getting on with people in real life. Others seemingly - very pleasant people when in the spotlight - can sometimes turn violent behind closed doors. Who knows the **real** man? Who knows what the woman is really like? Who knows the **heart**?

When God was showing Samuel who he'd chosen to be king of his people in the Old Testament, he told him, *'The Lord does not look at the things **man** looks at. Man looks at the **outward** appearance, but the Lord looks at the **heart**.'* 1 Samuel 16:7. God looks at the heart. We can't hide our motivations from him. He sees **exactly** what's going on inside there. He knows whether we're doing things for the right reasons or not. He looks at the heart, and what's going on in our **hearts** is what is important to God.

I want us to look at one of David's Psalms this morning, because David is described by God in the Bible as a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). So when he's **right** with God, what's going on in David's heart must be **pleasing** to God. I want us to consider the heart of a man who is after God's own heart. And we can see this in Psalm 40. [Read]

What I want us to think about follows on from what I was saying earlier about the 'Explore' Bible notes, that we need to search the Scriptures and discover the God who is there.

Last time I preached, you'll remember I was talking about David's great grandson Asa, who did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord. He sought God and found God and he was given rest in knowing God was with him and his people. And the important verse there was, *'If you seek him, he **will** be found by you.'*

This is the starting point for the man, woman or child of God. A **seeking** heart. A searching heart. A heart that wants to know God. If God is there, they want to know him. Because God will be found by the seeking heart, that's God's **promise**. The Bible tells us that God is looking around for the people that are seeking him because he wants to be found. So seeking is the starting point. Those who seek will find. If you haven't found God yet, keep seeking, keep looking, don't give up. *'If you seek him, he will be found by you.'*

There are echoes of this seeking and finding in this Psalm. Verse 4 tells us that you have to look in the right place. It says, *'Blessed is the man who makes the **Lord** his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.'* We don't look to man for help, we don't look to false gods, we don't idolise or lift up other things and make them our 'gods'. We look to almighty God, the Creator of all things. We seek **him**.

And the end of verse 3 tells us that many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Those who seek – and there'll be many of them - will find him. A seeking heart is the beginning.

But the heart doesn't stop seeking once it's **found** God. We **continue** to seek God, and our Psalm starts with David seeking God. But in a particular way. Not in a **physically** active way, but in a **mentally** active way. Verse 1 tells us, *'I waited **patiently** for the Lord.'* David waited patiently for the Lord. **Waiting patiently.**

But this isn't a sitting in a nice comfy armchair, twiddling thumbs getting bored kind of waiting. It isn't a standing at a bus stop in the freezing cold getting frustrated kind of waiting. It isn't a standing at the front door ready to go looking at your watch wishing your wife or husband or child would hurry up kind of waiting, oh no.

The two Hebrew words here translated as 'waited patiently' are actually two words that are parts of the same word – I waited waitingly. The Latin title for this Psalm is 'Expectans expectavi' and shows us that this waiting has more to do with **trust** that God will **act**, expectantly expecting God to act. Waiting for God in his wisdom and love to **act** to answer our prayers, or lead us on.

Waiting isn't easy, though, is it? When I was a youngster, we didn't have credit cards and we had to save up to buy things; we had to **wait**. And only getting 6d a week pocket money, it took a lot of waiting sometimes. Out of that 6d I had to buy a comic for 3d, buy some sweets, but I still had some change! Today people want - people get. People don't **know** how to wait. And they certainly know very little about waiting **patiently**. Waiting patiently isn't easy.

But the heart of the man of God needs to learn to **wait patiently** for the Lord.

Why should we wait? Well, Isaiah says, '*.. the Lord **longs** to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. **Blessed** are all who wait for him!*' Isaiah 30:18. And in Proverbs we read, '*Wait for the Lord and he will deliver you.*' Proverbs 20:22. We're clearly told that blessing and deliverance come to those who wait for God. He's **gracious**, he's **compassionate**, he's **just**. Wait for him and you'll be blessed.

And in our Psalm, this is what David experienced, isn't it? God heard his cry and verses 2 to 4 tell us of God's **reply** to that cry: there's a picture here of David being up to his waist in a muddy and slimy pit; he can't get **himself** out –he's stuck; but then God reaches down and pulls him out and puts him on solid ground so that he's not going to slip back in. God pulled him out of the mess he was in. We're not told what difficulty he was in at the time, but God lifted him out of the slimy pit and set his feet on a rock.

What would have happened if he **hadn't** waited patiently for God to act? Well, it would have been no use crying out to God, if he was then going to take matters into his **own** hands, would it? Wait and he'll deliver you, Proverbs says. It's no use scrabbling away trying to get out of a slimy pit yourself, getting more and more desperate because you're not getting **anywhere** except deeper into the mud.

Sometimes we have to realise that we have to wait patiently for the Lord to act. God knows the right time for **everything** – we don't. God knows what's **best** for us – we don't. We could well miss out on blessing and even **deliverance** at all, if we're not prepared to wait patiently.

The 17th century bishop, Jeremy Collier said "Patient waiting is often the highest way of doing God's will." It's always God's will that we do things **his** way, he's **God**, we're his creations. God's will never means rushing round doing things in our own strength, and we need sometimes to wait patiently for him to act.

You may say, ‘That’s OK, waiting for God, but **how long** will I have to wait? How long do I have to wait patiently? How long will it be before God acts?’

The answer is very simple – only God knows. Only God knows. We aren’t given that information. We’re not told how long David waited patiently. But that shouldn’t put us off. The Bible is **full** of people who waited for God to respond to their cry and act:

- How long did the Israelites wait for release from Pharaoh in Egypt?
- How long did Simeon wait for the Messiah before he saw Jesus in the temple?
- How long did the disciples wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts?
- How long will Jesus’ followers wait before he comes again to take them to be with him?

Only God himself knew, only God knows. We’re not **told** how long we need to wait, we’re just told to wait patiently.

How do we know we can afford to wait? David remembers in verse 5, ‘*Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no-one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.*’ God has done so many good things for his people and David in the past, so many that they can’t be counted. As David looks back, he **learns** that he can be patient in future. And so when he faces **new** troubles in verses 11 to 15, he **knows** he can wait patiently for God. He knows he can wait for God to hear his cry – he’s done it **before**, he can do it again.

Someone once said that “The only thing we learn from history, is that we don’t learn from history.” That must **never** be true of the believer. The Christian **learns** from what God has done for us in the past. There’s that old song, isn’t there ‘Count your blessings, count them one by one,’ and that’s what we need to do. We need to remember how God has helped us in the past while we cried out to him and waited for his response. David learned – and **we** must learn – that we **can** afford to wait patiently for God, in fact we can’t afford **not** to wait for him if we want to know his blessing and deliverance.

Our experience of God’s grace, his undeserved love, his faithfulness, his patience and long-suffering with us shows us that we can look to him with **trust** for the present and the future. If we’re believing in the salvation brought by Jesus’ death and resurrection, then we **are** his people; and if we are his people we’re in his hands; and if we’re in God’s hands, we can trust him for all that’s **to come** because we’ve seen what he’s done for us in the past.

We rest in him, we **trust** in him. *'Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.'* v4.

'I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.'

We're thinking about the heart of the man of God, of the believer, of the Christian. So far we've mentioned that the heart of the man of God **seeks** God, he waits patiently for God, he rests and trusts in God. And all these show the desire of his heart, which we read of in verse 8: *'To do **your** will, O my God, is my desire; your law is within my heart.'* To know the will of God we have to do these things – seek him, wait for him, rest in and trust in his love and willingness to bless his people.

The heart of the man of God **desires to do God's will**, he wants to **serve** God. The attitude of our heart is **vitaly** important – David recognises that here in verse 6, where we read, *'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.'* The reference to ears being pierced, some commentators say, refers back to the practice of piercing the ears of the good and willing servant (Exodus 21:5,6 tells us of this), but others say it's more likely to mean that David's ears were opened to hear God's truth.

You may think there's some contradiction here; in verse 6 David says 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,' but in verse 8 he says, 'your law is within my heart.' For generations, the people of God had been offering sacrifices and offerings as God had said they should in **Moses'** time, part of God's law for them. So how can David say that God's law is in his **heart** but then say that part of God's law – sacrifices - isn't what God requires?

There's no contradiction: as God has pierced David's ears, he has made him aware of what's **really** required: what's really important is an obedient heart, not meaningless outward symbols. Where the outward show represents what is **truly** in the heart, then it **is** pleasing to God. God doesn't want outward symbols that mean nothing. He wants an obedient heart, a heart committed to him, a heart whose only desire is to do the will of God.

David has remembered this and learnt from something that Samuel said to the king before him, king Saul. We find it in 1 Samuel 15, verses 22, 23: *'Samuel replied: Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice,'* David has learnt that God doesn't want meaningless sacrifice, he wants a heart that will listen to him and follow his voice.

The law is within David's heart – David **knows** what God wants, and his **desire** is to do God's will.

So what does this say to us, to you and me? Well, the same things it said to David: God doesn't want our meaningless outward expressions, no matter how well-meaning they are. If they aren't an expression of a truly obedient heart to God, they're **meaningless**, and not pleasing to God. God is pleased with the heart that loves him and desires to do his will.

What this means in practice is, we have to look at what we say and do, and we have to examine our motivations. As I said earlier, other people can't see what's going on in our hearts – but **God** does, and **we** know why we do things.

Why do we come to church? Why do we attend prayer meetings? Why do we go to conferences? Why do we pray the way we do? Why do we enjoy singing worshipful songs? Why do we invite people for meals? Deep down, **we** know our motivation. Is it because of our love for God and our obedience to him? Is it because we desire to do God's will? Or is it really all meaningless, just for appearance?

We have to be very careful here. We must examine our motives. Our actions must be an outward expression of the truth within us. God is **pleased** with the person who desires to do his will. David was a person like that. Is God pleased with the attitudes of **our** hearts?

David says in Psalm 13, *'I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me.'* David rejoices and sings to the Lord because he's experienced God's **unfailing** love. He worships his Lord in song, and that's true of the Christian, isn't it? We want to give **expression** to our feelings verbally, firstly to God. In the Bible we constantly see believers singing and praising God. The Bible's **full** of it, and it's an important part of **our** meetings together, of course. We **sing** because of what God has done for us.

But as well as **wanting** to do God's will, we actually **do** God's will – we **serve** him – by speaking of our experiences of God. David says in verse 10, *'I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.'* King or no king, David tells others about his God. He tells everyone about God's love, faithfulness, truth and salvation. He doesn't **hide** that his trust is in God, not in man's strength, or other gods. He doesn't conceal what God has done, and what he can do.

This reminds me of the apostles in the book of Acts, who couldn't help speaking about salvation through Jesus – they couldn't **stop**, they had to speak out.

The heart of the person of God is a serving heart, a rejoicing and praising heart, a speaking out heart – this is our service. We sing and tell about the wonders of God's unfailing love. How is **your** heart? How is **my** heart? OK, some will find this comes more naturally than others – we're all different, some are more vocal than others. But the bottom line is, this should be the **desire** of our hearts – to do his will, to serve him, to rejoice in him, to speak out for him. How do we measure up?

Someone once said 'Christians should be springs not sponges.' Christians shouldn't just be **receivers** of God's blessing, they should be gushing forth like a fountain of water, sharing blessing with others. Are we sitting and soaking up, or are we serving and soaking others? Are we shining like stars, like it says of Christians in Philippians? Or are we like solar-powered torches, not working in darkness?

This Psalm, then, tells us about the heart of a man of God who is after God's own heart. It tells us what the attitude of our heart needs to be: a seeking after God, a waiting for God, a trusting in his unfailing love, a serving heart desiring to do God's will in praising him and telling about him.

But we can't leave this Psalm without considering One who fulfils these attitudes on a much **higher** level. Like so many of David's psalms, there's ultimate fulfilment of what he writes about in Jesus Christ.

People may say, 'Oh, you can make up connections with whatever you want to in the Bible, you're bound to find things to connect together.' But there is no contrived link here, this is a link reaching down through the centuries which is so **clear**. Follow me in this, if you would:

1. New Testament, Acts 13:22, 23 - Paul says, '*After removing Saul, he [God] made David their [Israel's] king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart, he will do everything I want him to do.'* From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised.' The link here is clear, isn't it? God made David king, because he knew David would do his will. Paul then makes the jump from David to Jesus, the promised Saviour, the One who would do the will of his Father in bringing salvation to man.

2. Jesus said in John's gospel 4:34, *'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.'* Desiring to do God's will, desiring to be obedient to God the Father, even to death on a cross. Obedience to the will of God for **Jesus** meant bringing forgiveness for sins, making us right with God, us who were stuck in the slimy pit. But it involved his death. Jesus was obedient to death on a cross.

3. Look with me at Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5: *'Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will.'*' Jesus applies these words directly from our Psalm to **himself**. Still think the link is contrived? **I don't think so.**

Jesus came to be obedient to God's will. This obedience led him to his own sacrifice on the cross, and if we read on in Hebrews 10, verse 10 says *'And by that will [by Jesus doing God's will] we have been made **holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'* Jesus has done **away** with the need for sacrifice for sins by becoming the one and only sacrifice necessary for sins. **Once for all.** God sent Jesus to finish the work of salvation; on the cross as he died, Jesus cried out *'It is **finished**.'*

What we see of the heart of the man of God in Psalm 40 is epitomised like **no other** in Jesus, the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. We can do no better than to follow Jesus, God became man, a man after God's own heart.

So where do we stand this morning? How is the attitude of your heart? You know. Be honest with yourself and God. We need to be seeking, waiting, trusting, serving, proclaiming God.

Verse 16, *'may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The Lord be exalted!"*