

# Tuvalu Sinking

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*Psalm 40:1-11*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. “Help! I’m sinking!”
  - 1. That’s the classic cry in an action—adventure movie when someone, usually the villain, steps into a bog—quicksand—and slowly disappears under the thick, brown, gooey slop.
  - 2. Gurgle. Glop. And then the person is gone.
- B. Something like that may be happening to Tuvalu.
  - 1. It’s a tiny island nation in the South Pacific—actually a string of islands.
    - a. You’ve probably never heard of Tuvalu—don’t worry, I’d never heard of it, either, until I started researching for this sermon.
    - b. Only Ken Jennings, that record-breaking-Jeopardy-genius guy would have known about Tuvalu until it became public knowledge that the little-known nation is sinking into the deep blue sea.
  - 2. The contention of the people of tiny Tuvalu is that the nation may well be the first nation that is victim to the effect of global warming, particularly drastic climate changes that cause worldwide rising sea levels.
    - a. There is a lot of debate in the scientific community about global warming, and personally, I’m not at all convinced that global warming is occurring, and even if it is, I’m quite dubious that it’s man-made.
    - b. But, the people of Tuvalu aren’t at all skeptical of the claims, for the sea level on the low-lying islands is rising about 5.5 meters a year.
    - c. In a few years, the entire nation will be flooded.
    - d. At the September 24, 2003 meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, the Tuvalu prime minister said the following: “We live in constant fear of the adverse impacts of climate change. For a coral atoll nation, sea level rise and more severe weather events loom as a growing threat to our entire population. The threat is real and serious.”
    - e. Many people are beginning to flee the islands because of the inevitable doom.
- C. One can hardly imagine a fate worse than sinking to the bottom of oblivion.
  - 1. Yet, I am confident that each one of us has had a similar feeling at times.
    - a. Perhaps the phone rang, life changed in an instant, and we felt like we were sinking into oblivion.
    - b. Perhaps the boss called us into his office to tell us we no longer had a job, and we were sinking in the miry depths.
    - c. Perhaps it was a visit to the doctor or realizing we felt powerless to overcome or something else altogether that caused the waves to swirl about us.
  - 2. David, in the psalm before us this morning, had such a feeling—a feeling of sinking into oblivion.
    - a. We do not know the circumstances under which David wrote this psalm, but there were multiple times in his life when he had to feel as though he were sinking.
      - 1) There was, of course, the time when he had committed adultery which brought the promise of judgment.
      - 2) There was also the time he spent fleeing from Saul, with his own life in jeopardy.
      - 3) There was the time that Amnon raped Tamar and Amnon ended being murdered by Absalom; Absalom tried to seize the kingdom from his father and then he himself was killed.
      - 4) David was a man who knew the heights of a close walk with God and the depths of despair which come to all in this world.
    - b. David here praises God for remembering him and helping him through the difficulties of life. David tells us of HIS LIFTING, HIS LAWFULNESS, & HIS LAUDING.

## HIS LIFTING, vv. 1-5

- A. David waited patiently for the LORD; he turned and heard his cry, v. 1.
  - 1. There is in this verse a strong implication of being persistent in prayer.
    - a. Why would David need to wait patiently for the Lord to hear his cry if the Lord heard it and answered him immediately?
    - b. There is a need for us to be persistent in prayer when we are facing difficulty.
      - 1) “Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Lk. 18:1).
      - 2) “Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years” (Js. 5:17).

2. Could we pray just once and God come and answer our prayers?
  - a. Of course! God has incomparable power, and he could do anything he desired, but the Scriptures indicate that God wants us to keep coming and keep coming and keep coming before him in prayer.
  - b. The Scriptures never expressly say, but I'm convinced it has to do with what God wants from us:
    - 1) God wants us to trust him, and as I pour my heart out to God, I'm learning that trust, I'm learning to wait expectantly for him to act.
    - 2) God wants us to learn that he will answer our prayers, but he will do so on his terms and in his time, not ours.
- B. The LORD lifted David out of his distress, v. 2.
  1. As mentioned earlier we have no way of knowing the specific situation to which this refers, and that's probably a good thing—Because we don't know the specifics of what caused David to write these words, we can easily take them and apply them to ourselves.
  2. God has a long history of delivering his people from distress.
    - a. He delivered Noah from the flood that was coming upon all the earth.
    - b. He delivered Lot, for Abraham's sake, from the destruction of Sodom.
    - c. He delivered Joseph when sold into Egypt by his brothers.
    - d. He delivered Jesus from the grave. He delivered Peter from prison. He delivered Paul from certain death when shipwrecked.
  3. The same God who delivered his people in the past is the same God who can deliver us.
    - a. I know what you must be thinking. "Justin, I prayed for this loved one earnestly and patiently, and he or she still died" or "Justin, I prayed that the company would not close, but I still lost my job" or "Justin, I prayed that whatever wouldn't happen, and it still happened—why did it happen if God still delivers?"
    - b. God doesn't always deliver the way we want, but he still delivers.
      - 1) Evil is going to come, no matter how hard we pray.
        - a) "No man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them" (Eccl. 9:12).
        - b) "Man is destined to die one, and after that to face judgment" (Heb. 9:27).
      - 2) Can God deliver me even if I am surrounded by trouble?
        - a) Of course!
        - b) I have no doubt but that if I were to become ill and die this very day that God would deliver me.
          - i. He would deliver me from the gates of hell, he would deliver me from this world of sickness, sin and sorrow.
          - ii. "I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them'" (Rev. 14:13).
      - c) But, what about the family left to carry on?
        - i. There is great comfort—even joy—in knowing that loved ones who die in the Lord rest from their labors.
        - ii. After informing the Thessalonians of the fate of those who die in Christ, Paul wrote, "Encourage each other with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).
- C. In verse 4, David declares, "Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust."
  1. We are blessed as we put our trust in the Lord. for it is he, and he alone, who can lift us from the miry pit.
  2. Are you putting your trust in the Lord?

## **HIS LAWFULNESS, vv. 6-8**

- A. The LORD pierced David's ears, v. 6.
  1. Yes, I am aware that the NIV reads differently from the KJV at this point.
    - a. The KJV reads, "Mine ears thou hast opened."
    - b. There is some discussion among scholars as to how this passage should be translated. The Hebrew actually reads, "My ears you have dug."
  2. What is meant by "dug"?
    - a. It could quite possibly be that the KJV is correct at this point, and David means to say that God has opened his ears. Any impediment to hearing the Word of God had been removed, and David now stands ready to hear and to obey the Law of God.
    - b. It could also be that the NIV is correct, and David means that God has pierced his ears.
      - 1) Granted, a man with pierced ears is not generally looked upon with favor in our modern culture. What would you think of me if I had a couple, three earrings in my ears?
      - 2) But, in biblical culture having pierced ears was a sign of allegiance to a master.

- a) “If your servant says to you, ‘I do not want to leave you,’ because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life” (Deut. 15:16-17).
- b) If this is David’s allusion, he means to say that he has pledged himself to God for lifelong service.
- c. Which understanding is to be desired?
  - 1) Both understandings are allowable by the Hebrew, and it’s really impossible to choose between the two. However they render it in English, most translations have a footnote to say it could be rendered the other way.
  - 2) Really the exact translation here is irrelevant, for the same idea comes through either translation—Because God has delivered him, David wants to do the will of God.
- 3. We need to be people who desire to obey the will of God.
  - a. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).
  - b. “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (Jn. 14:15).
- 4. Let us always be those who obey the will of God!
- B. David closed this section of the psalm with these simple words: “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart,” v. 8.
  - 1. It’s one thing to obey because we must, but it’s an entirely different thing to obey because we desire to do so.
    - a. How many of us look forward to filling out those 1040’s every April 15, or do we do so because we know we must?
    - b. How many of us as children enjoyed the chores our parents gave us around the house, or did we do them because we knew we had no other alternative?
  - 2. David declares that he didn’t obey God because he had no alternative, but because he desired to do his will. Why should we desire to do the will of God?
    - a. God is the Sovereign of heaven and earth—“At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it” (Rev. 4:2).
    - b. God’s laws serve our own best interest.
      - 1) Deut. 30:15-16.
      - 2) God never expects us to do anything which isn’t for our own good.
    - c. God’s laws bring liberty—“The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” (Js. 1:25).
  - 3. Let us ever be those who delight in the will of God and do it!

## **HIS LAUDING, vv. 9-11**

- A. David will not keep quiet in the great assembly, v. 9.
  - 1. In this verse, David clearly speaks of honoring God in the public assembly, for he mentions the “great assembly.”
  - 2. We also have an opportunity to praise God for his great works in the assembly.
    - a. As we sing hymns, we declare to God and those around us our thankfulness for his wonderful acts.
    - b. As we listen to the Word proclaimed, we declare to God and those around us our faith in that living word and our desire to obey that Word.
    - c. As we take the Lord’s Supper, we declare our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus and our thankfulness for those events which procure our salvation.
    - d. As we give of our means, we declare our realization that all good gifts come from God and we thank him by giving to his work.
    - e. As we pray, we declare our faith that God can hear our prayer and that he has the power to help us.
- B. David did not his God’s righteousness in his heart, but he spoke of his faithfulness and salvation, v. 10.
  - 1. Again, David makes special mention that this occurs in “the great assembly.”
  - 2. Let’s take this passage out of context for a moment and think in a broader context—There is a need to speak of God’s righteousness, his faithfulness, and his salvation to those who are lost.
    - a. We need to praise God in the assembly, but we also need to be active in sharing our faith outside the assembly.
      - 1) “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mk. 28:19).
      - 2) “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom. 10:14).
    - b. Fritz Kreisler, the world-famous violinist, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions, but he generously gave most of it away.

- 1) So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he wasn't able to buy it.
  - 2) Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller, hoping to purchase that beautiful instrument.
    - a) But to his great dismay it had been sold to a collector.
    - b) Kreisler made his way to the new owner's home and offered to buy the violin.
      - i. The collector said it had become his prized possession and he would not sell it.
      - ii. Keenly disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave when he had an idea. "Could I play the instrument once more before it is consigned to silence?"
      - iii. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso filled the room with such heart-moving music that the collector's emotions were deeply stirred. "I have no right to keep that to myself," he exclaimed. "It's yours, Mr. Kreisler. Take it into the world, and let people hear it."
  3. Will we take the message of God into the world?
- C. In context, this passage has to do with David's recounting how God had delivered him from his troubles.
1. What a wonderful message we have to tell the world of how God has delivered us from our troubles!
  2. Almost all of us, like David, could tell how God had helped us through difficult times in our lives, and in so doing, we can provide hope to those facing such struggles.
  3. There's not a one of us who could not tell of the salvation God has provided to each of us through Christ!
  4. Will we tell of God's faithfulness or will we be silent?