

Renewed by Waiting (Psalm 40)
Rhythms of Renewal
Zionsville Fellowship | January 4, 2026 | Danny Strong

Intro:

Renewal

We are doing a series on “Rhythms of Renewal.” There are two key words there—“rhythms” and “renewal.” So let me say a few words about each.

First, “renewal.” What exactly is that? The easiest way I can put it is that it is what everybody is searching for.

Let me give you 5 marks that Christians have historically associated with spiritual renewal. Just so we are all understand what we’re talking about. These aren’t everything, but these 5 do appear in Psalm 40

Assurance of God’s love - Overwhelmed by a sense that nothing will separate me from the love of God.

Nearness of God’s presence - We have a sense of God acting and working directly in our lives.

Profound sense of our sinfulness - But in a way that it isn’t miserable. In fact, there is even a sense of joy because we see how much we need God and how much he is doing in our lives to change us.

Joy in becoming a better person - we are excited about the ways in which God is changing us.

Heightened, deeper living - Life becomes more joyful, more meaningful, every moment, no matter how small or simple, feels full of significance. Life becomes so much richer that we overflow and stop thinking about ourselves all the time and our joy spills out on everyone around us.

Waiting on the LORD

“Waiting” and “renewal” don’t seem like they should go together. But they do!

- **Isaiah 40:31** — “But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”
- **Psalm 27:14**— “Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

Waiting in Psalm 40 — This psalm has an upside down structure. Normally, in the psalms you will see the problems and troubles of the psalmist toward the beginning, and then as the psalmist sees God’s salvation it will climax in praise. But Psalm 40 begins with praise and ends in vs. 13 and 17 with David waiting. David is actually renewed in His waiting.

His previous experience is reshaping how he sees his present problems.

Two parts to waiting on the LORD

1. *Urgent Need* - vs. 17 “I am poor and needy... You are my help... do not delay, O my God!”
 - There is a gap between need and deliverance, between questions and answers, questions and answers, between desperate need and salvation. And in that gap is where waiting on the Lord happens.

- Really waiting on the LORD is about how to deal with our anxiety. And do it in a way that brings renewal rather than exhaustion.

2. *Confident Anticipation*

- *Example:* 2 passengers on a plane hitting turbulence. One is panicked, clutching the armrests, longing for the flight to end. The other passenger is taking a nap, talking to her neighbor, getting some work done. When they land, the first is exhausted. The second is ready to go. They are both “waiting” but they are waiting in very different ways. Waiting on the LORD is being in the midst of turbulence and yet confident in God’s care.
- *David is renewed in the midst of His desperate need, and so we are asking, “How did he do that? How did he get renewed by waiting?”*

Transition: In vs.1-10, David is renewed by waiting in three ways.

I. Renewed by Waiting with a Song (40:1-10)

A. Renewed by Remembering God’s past salvation (vs. 1-5)

1. *Personal* - he remembers his personal salvation

So prayer isn’t just about asking God for help. It’s about remembering.

David’s need doesn’t occur in a vacuum. He has a history. He’s been in desperate need before, waiting on the the LORD to act in the midst of his pit of destruction, and God not only pulled him out. He gave him a new song. He renewed him. He saved beyond anything David could have asked for.

David is waiting on the LORD, and the LORD has a history

We get tunnel vision in our problems. All the focus goes to the problems.

We’re waiting...but we aren’t waiting on the LORD. We’re waiting for our problems to go away.

2. *The deeper Christ sense.*

Actually, the New Testament book of Hebrews quotes vs.6-8 as the very prayer of Christ himself. If you are a Christian, that maybe all you need to see this through Christ. But if you are more skeptical of the Bible, or you just want to understand how the author of Hebrews got there.

C.S. Lewis tackles this in his *Reflections on the Psalms*. He says imagine a man who has never seen or heard of anything but England. He realizes that the tallest mountains in England have snow on them the longest. So he supposes that if there were mountains high enough, they would have snow on them all year. Now, if he then travels and sees the Alps or Himalayas, he doesn’t think, “Wow. What a coincidence.” No. He says, “See, what did I tell you.” By looking at the smaller mountains, the smaller truth, he intuited the greater ones..

Lewis points out that Plato actually did this. Plato says its hard to identity true righteousness, because acting righteously brings honor, recognition, appreciation, so you can it selfishly. To see it’s true nature, righteousness has to be striped naked.

Lewis' words, "He asks us to imagine a perfectly righteous man treated by all around him as a monster of wickedness. We must picture him still perfect, while he is bound, scourged, and finally impaled (the Persian equivalent of crucifixion). At this...a Christian reader starts and rubs his eyes. What is happening?" If the crucifixion of Christ was revealed to Plato, he wouldn't have said, "What a coincidence." No, he would say, "See. What did I tell you."

How much more could David do having God's revelation to Israel, the OT. The stories of God's salvation. The promises that he would have a greater dependent bringing in a greater kingdom. His wisdom and experience. And the inspiration of the Spirit.

Psalms 40 is about the small mountains of England. It's about David and us. But at its deepest, truest level it's about Christ.

This is the prayer of the resurrected, ascended Christ. He waited on the Lord. He cried out from the pit of destruction. A deeper pit than anything we will ever know. And the Father heard His cry and raised Him out and set His feet on a rock. He gave him a new song that we sing all the time. And many have seen and heard and put their trust in the LORD.

3. *Thirdly, remembering in a Communal sense* — he remembers God's salvation for his people. We remember that this is the story of God's people through history (vs.5).

Read Scriptures and seeing how God delivered his people over and over again.

Read Christian biographies on how Christ has worked in the lives of others. God has done amazing things in the midst of agonizing and impossible situations all over history that you can relate to.

B. Renewed by Delighting in the Greater Salvation of a Changed Heart (vs.6-8)

Feels like a weird detour, but it's not. I think David is telling us how God delivered him from the pit of destruction. And it's about a changed heart.

The salvation David sings about is the salvation of a changed heart. Instead of offerings, David has "an open hear." Literally, you dug out my ears to hear you. I delight to do your will.

Hebrews 10 quotes vs.6-8 as an actual prayer of Jesus himself, then adds

Hebrews 10:8-9 "When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offering and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law)—in other words, the whole sacrificial system isn't what God wanted—then he added, 'Behold, I have come to do your will.' He does away with the first in order to establish the second."

Jesus became the final, ultimate sacrifice to bring sacrifices to an end, but to change our core desires to the desires of God's heart.

Jesus didn't just come to provide a way out of our troubles. He came to provide a way to put into us His goodness.

How has God changed your heart?

- Delight in these things in your prayers. How God has changed you over the past year, five years, 10 years, 30 years.
- In God's book, if you are in Christ, this is what it says. You open to "Danny Strong," and it reads, "He delights to do God's will. God's instructions are on his heart."

C. Renewed by Telling People About It (vs.9-10)

This is emphasizing what he's said throughout and began in vs. 3, but just in case we are missing it, David reminds us five different times. Basically, all saying the same thing.

It's not just remembering that brings renewal. It's recounting it. It's praise.

The most natural thing to do with joy — In a way we are most inauthentic as Christians when we don't tell others about what God is doing in our lives.

EX: A guy gets nice new pants and he is telling everybody. It's just naturally what we do.

Not sharing the thousands of salvation stories that God has given us is cutting ourselves off from joy.

Application: Parents, we can do this with our family at the dinner table. Pick part of your story and share it. And it doesn't have to be just your conversion story. There were hard times God delivered you from. Sin patterns that God is changing in you.

Or we can do this with a group of friends or small group.

II. Prayer in the New Reality (vs.11-17)

A. Conclusion about God's Character (vs.11)

Leading us to Two Conclusions — The new song should lead us somewhere. Here it leads to two conclusions: 1) Who God is ("as for You" vs.11), and 2) Who I am ("as for me" vs. 17).

EX: We are in trouble if the sun stops coming up tomorrow. Not only will we have an energy problem, a food problem, a life sustainability problem, but that means the laws of nature are breaking apart. But no is concerned, because everyday of our lives the sun has come up. There is zero percent of the sun not rising.

There is a history here. Darkness has fallen on God's people over and over again, and every single time the sun rises. There is a 0% chance tomorrow that God will fail His people.

B. My problems

1. Evil inside of me hurting me (40:12)

If you are thinking, "Well, I'm sure there are some who are confident in God's love for them, delighting in their change of heart, but I'm looking at my life and I'm not seeing things change."

So you are loosing heart — so was David. His was overrun with sin.

Perhaps, your discouragement is because you are waiting on you. Waiting on you to get better. That's exhausting

But David is waiting on the LORD — David's sin pushes him that much more into the mercy and steadfast love of God.

2. Evil outside of me hurting me (40:14-15)

Some of you have faces come to your mind as you hear these words. People who want to dishonor you. Who hear of hard things in your life and delight in it.

NT teaches us that “we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but cosmic powers and authorities over this present darkness.” You have real enemies right now plotting your shame, delighting in your hurt.

These aren't small problems — These are the biggest problems of all.

C. Conclusion

1. So here is who I am - “I am poor and needy”— it's ok to be poor and needy this morning. In fact, its not ok to think you aren't poor and needy. Having problems beyond your capacity isn't something new. It's where we live all the time. If you think you aren't poor and needy, then you are going to wait on yourself—to fix things, to grow in competence, to get more lovable, to worry things into existence, and you are going to be exhausted.
2. Who God is—“but the Lord takes thought for me” — urgent need with confident anticipation.
3. There is 0% chance that tomorrow God fails His people. 0% that God will fail me. I have my problems, but I have something greater—God takes thought for me