

Reorienting Hope

Psalm 39 and 40

Reading the Psalms

- Psalms 1 & 2 form the introduction
- Psalms 146-150 form the conclusion
- The five books of the Psalms:
 - Books 1-2 (Psalms 3-72)- focus on Davidic kingship
 - Book 3 (Psalms 73-89)- reflections on the experience of Exile
 - Books 4-5 (Psalms 74-145)- looking forward to the arrival of the Messiah and the coming of God's kingdom.

Four main categories of Psalms:

1. Praise
2. Lament/Petition
3. Thanksgiving
4. Messianic

But remember, the Psalms are dynamic!

Psalm 39: A psalm of disorientation

Psalms of disorientation are ones of lament; the author's stable worldview is cracked or crumbling in the face of adversity: the world no longer seems ordered and the psalmist wonders if God truly cares about their suffering.

Psalm 40: A psalm of reorientation

Hebrew words for "Hope":

- Yakhal: "to wait for"
- Qavah: "to wait"
 - This comes from the root word "Qav" which means "tight." It gives the verb a sense of "tense expectation."
- Psalm 39:7: "And now, Lord, what can I 'qavah' for? You are my 'yakhal.'"

Psalm 40:1: "I waited patiently for the Lord..."

- This uses the infinitive absolute form of the verb "Qavah"
 - The infinitive absolute is a verb conjugation which intensifies the meaning of a verb. So, David did not just wait, he really, really waited!
- Eugene Peterson translates the verse like this: "I waited and waited and waited for God. At last he looked; finally he listened!"

Reoriented Lament

Why does Psalm 40 end with petition?

- David's experience of God's help has "reoriented" him. He now continues to bring his requests before God in light of his hope.
- "The thanksgiving of the psalm reorients the lament and petition," - Walter Brueggemann
- Rather than leading us to blind optimism, hope instead gives us the ability to bring our requests before God again and again, because we wait and hope and trust that God will move on our behalf, as he has done before.

What Now?

1. The Christian story is one of hope in the face of suffering— Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension demonstrate this.
2. Be honest before God, he can handle it!
3. We were not meant to remain in lament— there is always a movement towards hope!