

Back when I was in college I was able to study for a summer in the Holy Lands. We spent about 5 or 6 of those weeks exploring places throughout Israel. Our base camp was the Institute of Holy Land Studies (now known as Jerusalem University) located just outside of the old city walls of Jerusalem. On one occasion, we took a break from our studies to visit a small chapel just outside of the gates of Old Jerusalem. Wheaton College groups had a long standing tradition of visiting and singing at this site. The structure was well known for phenomenal acoustics (perhaps the best I have ever heard in my life). Wheaton groups could generally sing pretty well and often times had several students from Wheaton's music conservatory. These two things combined would make for some really outstanding opportunities to praise God through singing...most years.

This particular year, our group visited Israel shortly after the Gulf War. Because of concerns related to the instability in the region, our group was only half the normal size. Also notable, not a single student on the trip was studying music at the conservatory. Neither of these factors deterred our professor. He was convinced we would rise to the occasion.

When we arrived, we were greeted by the most beautiful chorus I had ever heard. Inside the chapel, a group of very average looking people were on the platform singing. Their voices were far from average! With intricate precision, these well trained vocalists were singing an old Latin hymn acapella and in four part harmony. All conversation immediately ended as we sat in nearby pews and became immersed in the sounds of what just may have been angels come to earth to glorify God before men. We were in awe!

When their song ended we all longed for them to continue, but our nutty professor had other ideas as he vied for a turn on the platform. We pleaded for him to reconsider (was he deaf!!), but he would have none of it. Reluctantly, we walked to the platform, another average looking group who knew full well that our performance would fall short. We sang who knows what song - no precision, no harmony, and just barely in tune. Even the few of us that could sing reasonably well felt completely inadequate. It was pretty embarrassing.

Sometimes we see ourselves in similarly in our Christian walk don't we? So many around us seem to be singing through life with perfect pitch while our notes fall flat because of the sin that clings so closely. We know the lyrics, but we just can't seem to find our voice.

You might be surprised to know that King David on many occasions appears to have felt the same way. Take Psalm 40 for example. Verse 12 says this,

For evils have encompassed me  
beyond number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me,  
and I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head;  
my heart fails me.

David knew first hand that he was a decedent of Adam; he knew just how needy he was. But he also knew his God. If you look at the order of the Psalm, it is quite beautiful. Before he poetically recorded his human state (which is not a pretty picture), he proclaimed who his God is. Listen to the previous verse,

As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain  
your mercy from me;  
your steadfast love and your faithfulness will  
ever preserve me!

David didn't find hope in his humanity; he found hope in the steadfast love and faithfulness of his God. He knew just how great his sin was, but he chose to trust in God, believing that because of His love and faithfulness, He would not withhold his mercy. David knew and recorded in verses 6-10 that his or any other human sacrifice or offering could not save. He knew that God himself must save. Because of the book of Hebrews, we know that Jesus would mercifully act on David's behalf as a better high priest and a better sacrifice, offering his own body after having perfectly fulfilled the will of God (See Hebrews 10 where this Psalm is quoted). Jesus was this great salvation! As David trusted in the Lord, something so encouraging took place. God inclined (stretched forth) to David, heard his cry, drew him up, set his feet and secured his steps (vs 1-2).

We know the famous scene from scripture where David danced before the Lord with all his might (2 Sam 6), but remember that he also caused David to sing. Psalm 40:3 says, "***He put a new song in my mouth,*** a song of praise to our God" (v3a). When he remembered the work of God on his behalf, it appears that he also sang with all his might. Why, because his inadequacies paled in comparison to the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. He stood tall and sang out in praise to the Lord for the whole world, "to see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord." (v3b).

So brothers and sisters, stand firm upon the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, as granted to us in the person of Jesus Christ! Come join me today on the platform of life and sing boldly, that the watching world might see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord!

Pastor Brad