

Psalms 42

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Psalms 42

Like a deer longing for the stream

Psalm 42

The first poem in the second book of Psalms is a hymn to the Levites; Matthew 1:11 says, "When the people were moved to Babylon." Just as the prodigal son fell to the point where "he couldn't get it if he wanted to eat beans", he remembered his father's love and the richness of his father's family. At this time, the remnant of Judah, who was protected by God and was in Babylon, was like a prodigal son who fell into an idolatrous place for the Gentiles to realize his sin and foolishness. Repented from the bottom of my heart, and my heart began to yearn for the Avenue of Zion. The Levite, who led the choir, because he had no God's presence, used images to express his spiritual thirst. The content of this psalm focuses on feelings, which are how we interact with God. The psalmist in this article teaches us that there is no shortcut to waiting on God. "Looking" means waiting, and we have to wait for God and express our inner feelings to God.

This section begins with a familiar metaphor to describe the psalmist's longing for God. He said, "My soul longs for you, O God, as a deer longs for a brook." There is an endless stream of news of successful people who commit suicide because of depression. There is a famous women's fashion brand in the United States called Kate Spade, which is also the name of the founder of this brand. Kate had everything in the human eye: beauty, talent, success, money, status, family, daughter, but she chose to end her life in her Manhattan apartment at the age of 55. There is no shortage of such people around us. Many people develop an emptiness in their hearts and suffer from depression or mania as a result. The hunger and thirst of man's heart can only be filled by God, and everything else is temporary, ethereal, and fragile. Only when our hearts are satisfied, will people truly not be hungry and thirsty, and will not be affected or knocked down by the surrounding environment, because our satisfaction is not in the material, not in this world, but in God.

The psalmist turns from his own predicament to seeing God's marvelous works. The sound of the waves roaring in the upper reaches of the Jordan River during the flood season, like a response between "the abyss" and "the abyss", sets off the great sadness in the poet's heart. We often feel like the waves that are going through us and almost destroy us, but these are God's "waterfalls" and "waves." These difficulties may appear to come from the enemy or circumstance, but in fact they come from God, the waves that God has measured for us in order to accomplish His best will for us. The LORD will show us mercy by daylight. Therefore, the psalmist can still sing praises to God in the midst of difficult times. When we are in trouble, praise is the secret of our victory. When we worship and praise God, the enemy will flee. We need to believe that God is still showing us mercy in times of trouble.

Korah's descendants did not lose their trust in God. They look forward to experiencing God, to feel God's presence, and instead of succumbing to spiritual depression and discouragement, they speak to themselves, reminding themselves, "Look to God!" Yes, they have good reasons to be discouraged, but there are even more reasons to keep their hopes alive. They know that those who look to God will not be ashamed. In Jonah 2:4, the prophet Jonah said, "I say, 'Though I am cast out from your eyes, I will look to your temple.'" The descendants of Korah knew that God's judgment was just; God has afflicted me with truth in His suffering. God must be faithful to what He says, and they are being taken into exile to a Gentile to receive what is worthy of what they have done. This is because they do not obey God's commandments, nor do they listen to God's words that God has warned them about through the prophets. But God has a righteous judgment and a promise of love.

The psalmist complains to God about why the loving and rock-solid God forgets him and causes him to mourn at the oppression of his enemies. And the enemy did not cease to reproach and ridicule, saying, "Where is thy God?" The psalmist is so troubled and depressed that his heart hurts, but he still exhorts himself to look to God and praise Him all the time. Even though he was struck and almost dying, and his heart was in great sorrow, the psalmist did not lose faith and believed that God was his rock and a strong refuge. After a fierce inner battle, the poet finally overcame his disappointment with faith. Again, the psalmist rebukes himself for being discouraged, and then encourages himself to trust and praise God, for only God can help him and will always be His God.

Let's pray together

Lord, may you use today's message to build up our hearts that desire you and make us rejoice in you alone. People who don't know you will never be able to understand this longing, and their hearts are alienated from you. But thou hast stirred up thy Spirit to desire thee and seek thee. Help us not to be so busy with ministry that we neglect to desire ourselves and enjoy our fellowship with you. To prevent our spiritual lives from falling into the condition of the Laodicean church requires you to stand outside the door and knock. May you use today's message to speak to our hearts and awaken the longing for you in our hearts.

Pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen..

Psalm 42

Book Two

Thirsting for God in Trouble and Exile.

To the Chief Musician. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of the sons of Korah.

42 As the deer pants [longingly] for the water brooks,
So my ^[a]soul pants [longingly] for You, O God.

2

My soul (my life, my inner self) thirsts for God, for the living God.
When will I come and see the face of God?

3

My tears have been my food day and night,
While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

4

These things I [vividly] remember as I pour out my soul;
How I used to go along before the great crowd of people and lead them in procession to the house of God
[like a choirmaster before his singers, timing the steps to the music and the chant of the song],
With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a great crowd keeping a festival.

5

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become restless *and* disturbed within me?
Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall again praise Him
For the help of His presence.

6

O my God, my soul is in despair within me [the burden more than I can bear];
Therefore I will [fervently] remember You from the land of the Jordan
And the peaks of [Mount] Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7

Deep calls to deep at the [thundering] sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.

8

Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night His song will be with me,
A prayer to the God of my life.

9

I will say to God my rock, “Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

10

As a crushing of my bones [with a sword], my adversaries taunt me,
While they say continually to me, “Where is your God?”

11

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
Why have you become restless *and* disquieted within me?
Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall yet praise Him,
The ^[b]help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 42 is a deeply emotional and spiritual psalm that expresses the psalmist's intense longing for God's presence, his struggles in times of distress, and his unwavering hope and trust in God despite the

overwhelming circumstances. This psalm is often attributed to David, written during a time when he was separated from the temple, possibly during his exile or while fleeing from enemies, which made him feel spiritually desolate.

Full Description of Psalm 42

Psalm 42 is a beautiful and poetic lament, often categorized as a "desire for God" psalm. It begins with an intense expression of longing for God and then moves into the depths of the psalmist's despair due to being distant from the Lord. However, even in the darkest moments, the psalmist wrestles with his faith and chooses to hope and trust in God.

The psalm is split into two sections that reflect different emotional tones: the first expresses yearning and sorrow, while the second transitions into a declaration of hope and encouragement.

Verses 1-5: A Longing for God Amidst Despair

- **Verse 1-2:** *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"*
 - The psalmist begins with the powerful metaphor of a thirsty deer searching for water. This expresses the depth of his longing for God's presence. It's a picture of desperate thirst that can only be quenched by the living God.
- **Verse 3:** *"My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"*
 - The psalmist's sorrow is so great that he feels as if tears have become his constant nourishment. The mocking voices of his enemies make his situation feel even more hopeless. Their question, "Where is your God?" reflects their doubt and ridicule, adding to the psalmist's emotional burden.
- **Verse 4:** *"These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng."*
 - The psalmist remembers the joy of worship in the presence of God, emphasizing how distant and alien that joy feels now. He recalls the communal worship he experienced with fellow believers, which deepens his current feeling of isolation.
- **Verse 5:** *"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."*
 - Here, the psalmist speaks to himself, questioning why his soul is so depressed. This self-reflection becomes a call to hope in God, as he reminds himself that he will praise God again, even in the midst of his troubles.

Verses 6-11: A Struggle with Sorrow and Faith's Resurgence

- **Verse 6:** *"My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar."*
 - The psalmist feels emotionally defeated, but he recalls past experiences of God's faithfulness, particularly from places he associates with encountering God's help (such as

the Jordan River and Mount Hermon). These memories provide spiritual sustenance in his sorrow.

- **Verse 7:** *"Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me."*
 - This is an image of overwhelming turmoil. The psalmist compares his emotional and spiritual distress to the crashing of waves and waterfalls, symbolizing the vastness of his suffering.
- **Verse 8:** *"By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life."*
 - Despite his sorrow, the psalmist expresses his confidence in God's constant love. By day, he experiences God's guidance; by night, God's song fills his heart, offering comfort and hope in prayer.
- **Verse 9:** *"I say to God my Rock, 'Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?'"*
 - The psalmist feels abandoned by God, though he calls God his "Rock" — his steadfast protector. His enemies continue to taunt him, deepening his sense of mourning.
- **Verse 10:** *"My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"*
 - The repeated taunting by enemies takes a physical and emotional toll on the psalmist. The persistent mockery challenges his faith and causes him immense pain.
- **Verse 11:** *"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."*
 - Once again, the psalmist speaks to his soul, urging it to hope in God. He reaffirms his commitment to praise God, despite his struggles. This verse mirrors verse 5, showing the psalmist's resolve to maintain faith.

Important Verses and Their Meaning

- **Psalm 42:1-2:** These verses express the longing for God and emphasize the deep spiritual thirst that can only be quenched by God's presence. It invites believers to reflect on their own longing for God.
- **Psalm 42:5, 42:11:** Both of these verses capture the psalmist's self-encouragement and declaration of hope. In the midst of distress, the psalmist chooses to trust God and look forward to praising Him again. These verses are crucial in understanding how to combat despair through hope and faith in God.
- **Psalm 42:8:** "By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me"—this verse is a beautiful reminder of God's constant care, even during the darkest times. God's love is unceasing, offering comfort and strength to the believer.

Spiritual Influence and Lessons from Psalm 42

1. **The Reality of Spiritual Longing and Despair:** Psalm 42 acknowledges that spiritual dryness, longing, and despair are part of the human experience. It validates the reality of feeling distant from God and expresses a longing for His presence. This recognition can be comforting, as it shows that even the most faithful people experience times of spiritual struggle.
2. **Encouragement to Hope in God:** Despite the psalmist's anguish, the repeated message is to put hope in God. This psalm teaches us that even in the depths of sorrow, there is always a call to trust in God's faithfulness. Hope in God can sustain us through difficult times, as it did the psalmist.
3. **The Importance of Remembering God's Faithfulness:** When in distress, the psalmist recalls the times when he experienced God's presence. This remembrance brings strength. For believers today, remembering past experiences of God's faithfulness can offer encouragement during periods of doubt or struggle.
4. **Spiritual Reframing Through Prayer and Self-Talk:** The psalmist speaks directly to his soul, encouraging himself to trust in God and to look forward to praise. This can be seen as a model for how we can fight negative thoughts and emotions by focusing on God's character and promises.
5. **God's Presence in Both Day and Night:** Psalm 42:8 emphasizes that God is always present, both in the daylight hours and in the darkness of the night. This truth provides assurance that God's love and care are constant, no matter our circumstances.
6. **Endurance Through Suffering:** The psalmist's perseverance in his faith through extreme suffering demonstrates the importance of enduring despite overwhelming feelings of abandonment or despair. By choosing to continue trusting in God and praising Him, even when distant from God's apparent presence, believers are encouraged to endure hardships with faith.

Conclusion

Psalm 42 is a powerful expression of longing, struggle, and hope. It teaches us that moments of spiritual dryness and emotional pain are part of the journey of faith, but they also provide opportunities to deepen our reliance on God. By reminding ourselves of God's past faithfulness, encouraging our hearts to hope in Him, and persevering through the difficulties, we can find the strength to praise God and experience His comfort, even in the darkest times.

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