

Psalm 42 • My Soul Thirsts for God

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Psalm chapter 42. And I want to remind you of something, and I'll put this up on the screen for you. This is The Five Divisions of the Psalms, which I've been showing you.

The 5 Divisions of the Psalms

- Book 1 (Psalm 1-41)
- Book 2 (Psalm 42-72)
- Book 3 (Psalm 73-89)
- Book 4 (Psalm 90-106)
- Book 5 (Psalm 107-150)

Last week we finished Psalm chapter 41, which is was the end of Book 1. And now we begin Book 2. We're not exactly sure when these divisions were made in the Psalms, but they are old. They're older than our oldest Old Testament manuscripts, actually. And in other words, we find those book divisions in them. And so anyway, we're beginning this, the second division, which covers the 42nd through the 72nd Psalm.

And let us begin with prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we dig into Your Word tonight, allow the ministry of Your Holy Spirit to move mightily among us. We give You this time and we ask You to fill it with Your presence, Your wisdom and insight. And we ask Lord that Your grace would cover our hearts to be able to receive and apply in Jesus name, amen.

Psalm 42 was written by the Sons of Korah. We're going to read through it and you're going to see why we did one of the songs that we did tonight.

Verse 1,

"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶ and my God.

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock: 'Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?'

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God." (ESV)

Well, this is an interesting psalm. Psalm chapter 42 is the Psalm, or I should say, a cry in this Psalm of a man who has been separated from his fellow believers and from the communal worship of God. It would be like if you and I were cut off from the body of Christ, maybe living in a place where there were no other believers, or maybe on a bed of sickness where we couldn't gather together with believers in the Lord.

And we learn from verse 6 here, that the psalmist is, seems to be located in the northern most region of Israel at that time, in and around Galilee and Mount

Hermon. But his heart longs to be on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem where worship is going on. In fact, you'll look again with me in verse 4, if you would please.

And he says, *"These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, and a multitude keeping festival."* He's thinking back on his time spent with other believers who together with this man worship the Lord together in Israel, and he's longing to be back with them.

Now you and I are going to look at this differently. And the reason we're going to look at this differently and we might even read these words and go, what's the big deal, I mean, where you happen to be located? But you got to remember back in the Old Testament, location was an absolutely enormous matter. Where you were located, where you went to worship, where you gathered with God's people, that was everything.

And we know that the worship of Israel was always centered around the Ark of the Covenant. And that was either in the tabernacle or the temple. And for most of its time it was in the city of Jerusalem, which was considered to be the chosen city, where God's people came and collectively worshipped the Lord.

Now that's not something that you and I think about a whole lot. We don't think about location. We don't think about going somewhere necessarily to worship. Because we can worship wherever. Believers get... Well, we can worship alone. But we can.. But wherever believers come together, we are together with the body of Christ. Doesn't matter really if we even know them personally.

I don't know if you've ever been traveling and stopped during your travels at a church. Maybe you just went through the Yellow Pages or Googled a church or something and thought, well, we're going to pick this one and we're going to go to this church here today. And you walked into a church completely unknown to everybody there, and yet you felt a sense of connectedness to those people because you had something in common, and that was Jesus.

But there's something else going on different in the New Testament sort of an idea. The Bible says that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Whereas there used to be a temple that existed in Jerusalem. And there was the Ark of the Covenant, and there went on the worship and the ministrations of the priests and so on and so forth.

Today it's quite different, isn't it? You and I are each a temple individually of the Holy Spirit. And so worship goes on wherever two or more are gathered the Lord has promised His presence in a dynamic way. And worship happens and it overflows. And it's a beautiful thing. But it was a very different sort of a thing in the Old Testament days.

But Jesus actually, interestingly enough, talked about the fact that worship would be decentralized, if you will. Do you remember His conversation with the woman at the well in Samaria? And as soon as Jesus began to speak to this woman in such a way as for her to recognize that He was someone special. She perceived Him to be a prophet. She immediately began to talk to Him about one of the age old arguments between Jews and Samaritans. And that was where to worship.

Let me put it on the screen so you can be reminded of it. It's from John chapter 4 and verse 20. And she says here,

John 4:20-21, 23 (ESV)

"Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."

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So, today our connection with God's people is on a spiritual level. But in the Old Testament it was on a geographical level. They came together in that way. And it is quite apparent through this psalm, that this individual is going through some painful trials that is keeping this individual from being connected with the rest of God's worshipping community. And it's so painful that some people are even asking him, *"Where is your God?"*

I don't know if you've ever had that question posed to you by an unbeliever who was watching your suffering. Pain and difficulty have always produced a challenging environment for people to embrace and put their faith in God.

Because pain causes us to wonder if God is who He says He is. And He's a God of love who is also all powerful, why is there so much pain? And why is there so much suffering in this world?

And that sometimes causes people to challenge us with the question, where is your God in the midst of all of this? And that can be a very difficult thing because when you're going through a difficult season and someone is challenging you about the presence of God related to that... I mean you're probably already dealing with your own issues, and temptations, and challenges about where is God.

Even the psalmist would cry out and say, Lord, why have you abandoned me? Why have you let me go, sort of. And you'll see that here. In fact, the psalmist repeats the same haunting question in verse 10. Look with me again in your Bible.

He says, *"As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me,..."* Now, they're actually taunting him with the question, *"Where is your God?"* Well, the psalmist knows where his God is. But even so, even though he knows where his God is, he admits to some pretty dark feelings related to the things that he's going through.

Look at verse 7. Verse 7 is highly poetic, but he says, *"Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me."* Now that's an interesting sort of a poetic way of saying, I'm in over my head. I'm drowning in the sea of my trouble. And it's like the waves are just continuing to crash against my life and bring pain and difficulty.

I don't know if you... Have you played in the waves of the ocean before? They're a force to be reckoned with. You have to be very careful when you go to the ocean for the very first time. You need to... It's only helpful if someone's there to school you a little bit on the power of the waves.

Because the very first time Sue and I ever... I don't know if it was your first time. It was my first time seeing the ocean when we went to the Atlantic ocean actually. And my uncle and aunt, we were very young. We were in our early twenties. In fact, I'm not even sure you were even 20 yet. Because we got married very young, but I was 4, she was 2. Kidding!

But my uncle took us out to the ocean and he was telling us how to be careful. And the very first thing we came upon, was an ambulance out at the, on the beach. A girl had been picked up by a wave and slammed down on the beach

and dislocated her hip. And it was a very painful sort of a situation. But that was... But it was good for us. I'm sorry to prosper over her pain. But it allowed us to have a healthy fear of the water.

And so I learned that when you're out wading in those waves you got to either jump up and follow the breaker and let it take you back. Or you have to dive under it and let it roll over you otherwise you get caught in it. And to be caught in a breaker is a very frightening experience. Because it'll just take you to the shore head over heels and drop you there. And you're a sandy mess basically, after it's through with you.

And this is what I think about. I think about that. And it happened to me a few times. I dove successfully under several breakers and then I got... I didn't dive deep enough one time and I got caught in it. And suddenly I just felt myself literally tumbling over and over; lost my sense of up and down. And it just deposited me on the shore spitting and sputtering. And I remember thinking about that as the psalmist is speaking here about all of your breakers and your waves have just rolled over me. And I'm just... I'm helpless. I'm just helpless.

Have you ever been in a situation where it feels like trouble comes in waves? Not just one wave, but many waves; like ongoing waves. And is..., And you barely gotten yourself put back together from the last wave and you get hit with another one. And then you're sputtering and stammering and disoriented. And another wave hits you. And I'm talking about waves of trouble, waves of difficulty.

This is what the psalmist is talking about. "*Deep calls to deep...*," almost as if the waves are speaking to one another and collaborating to come and make my life miserable, one after the other. He's basically saying, my troubles have hit me repeatedly. And I'm in over my head and I've lost my footing. I'm not sure which end is even up anymore.

He also admits to feeling abandoned. Look at verse 9, "*I say to God, my rock, 'Why have you forgotten me?'*" And all these things together: the relentless pursuit of trouble hitting time after time after time. And the feelings of abandonment and being forgotten by the Lord. It can come together and cause anyone, and it certainly does this individual, to fall into an emotional depression.

Look at verse 11. "*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?'*" You'll remember earlier in the Psalms that this was the

same approach that David took. And that was speaking to his soul at a time of great difficulty and depression.

And you have to remember too, the human soul is made up of your emotions, your will, and your intellect. And now, he realizes how depressed he is. And so he challenges his soul, saying, "*Why are you downcast...*" And then he exhorts his soul, saying, "*Hope in God,*" or put your trust in God. And notice the statement of faith that follows that, "*...I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*"

It's interesting, isn't it, how the psalmist encourages his own heart. Speaks to his heart, why are you so bummed out? Why are you so depressed? Why are you so down? Put your hope in God! Put your hope in Him! And then that word of faith, I will yet praise the Lord. That's difficult to do when you're in a deep dark depression, isn't it? I mean, to speak to your soul and to have anything good to say.

Because I don't know about you, but when I'm feeling low and I don't struggle with depression, but like anybody else, I think I probably have my dips and then that sort of thing. But it's like, when I've gotten that way, it's like all of life is bad. Like you're looking at life through cloudy lenses and there's nothing that's good. Nothing's good.

And you might be looking at things that are even unaffected by your troubles, but they're not good anymore. Nothing's good because of your depression. And when nothing is good, or at least you see nothing that is good. It's very challenging to say anything positive, let alone speak to your own soul, trust in the Lord, I will yet praise him, my salvation and my God. And I love the fact that the psalmist tells his heart, his soul, to expect the Lord to bring him through this time. Isn't that's something?

Now we should be saying that to each other at the very least. Right? That's what you and I should be saying to somebody who is drowning in depression. We should say, Listen, I want you to expect the Lord to bring you through this time. I want you to have an expectation of God's deliverance and goodness. I know you can't see it right now. I know that everything you look at right now is ugly and grim, but expect the Lord's goodness.

Here's the question: The psalmist is saying that to his soul, expect the Lord's deliverance. Here's a question I have for you. Do you and I have any reason to do that? I've... I encouraged you just now, to say that to someone who's going through depression. But do you have a Biblical leg to stand on? In other words,

is there a promise in God's Word on which you can stand related to that exhortation? There is, and you know it. It's in Romans 8:28. Let me put it on the screen for you.

Romans 8:28 (ESV)

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

"And we know (I love the force of that) that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

And that is why you and I can have an expectation, and why we can encourage others to have an expectation of the goodness of the Lord. Because there's a promise in God's Word that you and I can stand on. And we need to stand on it. Especially during those times when the breakers, the problems, the troubles are hitting us one after the other.