

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.11.2024

PSALM 42 - HOPE FOR THE DISCOURAGED SOUL

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 42

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.

- Psalm 42 opens Book 2 of the Psalter.
- We are introduced to new composers—the Sons of Korah.
- They were descendants of Levi, therefore priests, who David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the Lord when the ark was brought into Jerusalem.
- Psalm 42 and 43 are closely connected.
- The refrain repeated twice in Ps42 is repeated at the end of Ps43.

- The context of the circumstances at the time of the writing of this psalm are not mentioned, if it was written at David’s direction it could have been during his exile when he was on the run from his son Absalom and had to flee Jerusalem.
- Some of the priests would have left with David and would have been exiled as well.
- It’s possible it could have been written during the time of exile to Babylon.
- I personally favor this psalm as being written during David’s time.

- Book 2 closes with “the prayers of David ,the son of Jesse, are ended” (Ps 72:20).
- Psalm 42 is a Psalm of lament, the cry of grief of one who is experiencing distance from God, deep sadness and discouragement of soul, desiring the good old days, and yet expressing deep confidence and a rich hope that God will deliver them out of their soul despair and situation.
- More than that, the psalmist models how to respond when the circumstances that have brought about the deep sadness and discouragement do not change.

II. FRUSTRATED LONGINGS

- Psalm 43 opens with an often quoted image depicting a deep soul thirst and longing for God.
- The simile likens this deep thirst as that of a deer panting for streams of water.
- The second line interprets the simile, the imagery evoked, “So pants my soul for you, O God.”
- The psalmist expresses this deep longing and desire, not for something natural, like water, but for God.
- “My soul thirsts for God, the living God.”
- God is the object of this urgent desire and longing.
- God, who is the source of life, God, who is very life himself, is the satisfaction he seeks.
- The psalmist wants to drink from the infinite reservoir of living water that is God!
- The last line of V2 brings this longing for God into sharper focus.
- “When shall I come and appear before God?”
- “Appear before God” is language tied to attendance at the tabernacle for the feasts that God had commanded his people to observe.
- What the psalmist longs for is the presence of God experienced during public worship with God’s people at the tabernacle.
- He wants to appear before God, perform his duties with God’s people, and join in the festal celebration of God’s covenant people.
- This is truly a remarkable picture of a longing heart.
- Do you long for God like that?
- Do you long to be with God’s people in public worship?
- When you are going through discouraging times, seasons of sadness, spiritual drought, difficult situations that mentally, emotionally, and spiritually drain you, what do you turn to satisfy the deep longing and yearning of your soul?
- Too often we turn to sources that will not satisfy what our souls need.
- The psalmist in v3 expresses this all-consuming grief he is walking through.
- He has lost his appetite over his distress, and “my tears have been my food day and night.”
- Some of you have experienced the depth of emotion the psalmist is expressing.
- The problem for the psalmist is that his longing is frustrated.
- He can’t be where he wants to be.
- The second half of v3 introduces a point of frustration.
- “They say to me all the day long...”
- Later, “they” are identified as the oppressing enemy in v9 and adversaries in v10.

- They are the reason the psalmist can't be with God's people in Jerusalem in festal celebration.
- All day long, the psalmist faces the mocking jeers of his enemies, "Where is your God?"
- Maybe you've faced that question from others who are watching you go through your dark times and sad seasons.
- "Where is your God?" Is the arrogant taunt faced in every age by the people of God.
- What I see as encouraging here is that the psalmist is not joining those who taunt him about the perceived absence of God.
- He doesn't turn to false idols to try to scratch the itch for soul satisfaction.
- He doesn't seek comfort in worldly things and sinful pleasures.
- The tears show that he is remaining faithful to God.
- He longs for God, for God and God alone can satisfy the longing of his soul.

REMEMBERING THE GOOD OLD DAYS

- The psalmist is at a very low point in his life, he is far from Jerusalem.
- His enemies taunt him about God's absence, and he feels it.
- He begins to remember the good old days when he would be leading the procession to the house of God, leading the people in joyful worship, hearing the glad shouts and songs of praise being sung by the multitude gathering to keep festival.
- "These things I remember, as I pour out my soul..."
- The recollection of these happy memories when all was right with the world sparks prayer to God.
- He pours out his soul.
- How we need to pour out our soul to God when we are struggling with present circumstances that don't mimic what we might think to be the good old days in the Lord.
- Especially when you are going through a sustained, dry spiritual season, where God feels distant, where you don't want to pray, you don't want God's Word, you want to stay away from public worship with God's people—that's the time to pour out your soul to God.
- That's the time to be around the people of God.
- What most people do is retreat into their sadness and discouragement.
- They isolate themselves from fellowship with other believers. They don't gather with the saints.
- But the psalmist doesn't take that approach. He longs for communion with God and his people experienced in public worship.

SELF-TALK

- In v5 we have the first of the three-fold refrain that is repeated twice in this psalm and then at the end of ps43.
- The refrain has two parts.
- "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?"
- Now, we already know the reason for the sadness and the discouragement.
- What's happening here is the psalmist is admonishing his soul.
- "Soul, why are you at unrest? Why have you allowed these circumstances to bring you to this low point?"
- The second part is an exhortation to place his hope in God—God will see him through this.
- "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."

- This answer shifts his attention away from the reasons for his sadness and discouragement and lifts his gaze to the future hope guaranteed by God himself.
- How many of us have allowed our emotional state to rule over us in times of distressing situations?
- The psalmist is sad. The psalmist is discouraged. He feels beaten down.
- But he's not allowing that to take all of his attention away from the future hope God has promised.
- He believes that he will again join with all of God's people in praise of God.
- God's presence will guarantee his deliverance. God will restore his lost joy. He is assured of that.
- We talk about preaching the gospel to yourself.
- Tell your soul how to feel. Proclaim the truth over your troubled soul.

WHY HAS GOD FORGOTTEN

- Now it seems like the psalmist has resolved his soul trouble, but he's still in his sunken state.
- V6 My soul is cast down within me..."
- That's the way life is. Our circumstances don't often change quickly.
- He knows the truth. He has the right theological answers, but that has not changed his physical circumstances or lifted him from his emotional low point.
- Knowing the truth and having the right theology matters. But that doesn't mean your circumstances will immediately change.
- So what does he do? He keeps on praying. He persists in prayer. He keeps calling out to God.
- The psalmist is modeling for us how to respond when the darkness doesn't lift.
- He's still not in Jerusalem. He's still not with God's people at festival.
- He's at the headwaters of the Jordan river near the sea of Galilee.
- He's many miles away from the tabernacle. He's still in an emotional funk.
- But he says, "therefore I remember you."
- Many times, when our emotions do not change after seeking God in prayer or reading His Word, or if our circumstances don't change after praying, we can be tempted to think that doing that doesn't work.
- Sometimes the quick change of circumstances or a quick lift in your emotional state may not be what God intends for us.
- The long night of seeking, the long night of yearning for God, the long night of waiting on God, may be the very means God will use to bless us.
- Is the one for whom we long for worth the wait?
- V7 seems to indicate that God met the psalmist at his low point.
- "Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me."
- The word "deep" speaks of the terrifying deep of Genesis 1:2. It is a word with dark connotations.
- It may be that he senses that he is under God's judgment; like the flood waters.
- He is in the deep waters of God's disciplining judgment.

- Notice this, the psalmist says, “Your waterfalls...Your breakers...your waves.”
- What he is enduring, even if it is God’s judgment for his sins, is from God.
- V8, he invokes the covenant name of God for the first time, Yahweh.
- Because God is a covenant-keeping God, he will show his steadfast love to the psalmist in the midst of his trouble.
- And even in the night seasons, he will sing songs of praise to God.
- This is the reason for his hope in the midst of the long night of his soul distress.
- He persists in prayer, “A prayer to the God of my life...”
- He clings to the Lord as his stronghold, his rock.

- And he continues in this even though he feels forgotten.
- “Why have you forgotten me?”
- “Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
- The taunts of the enemy cut him to the heart, they are still mocking him, “Where is your God?”
- This is like the Christian life.

- Hence the need to continue to preach the gospel to our soul.
- Psalm 42 closes with the familiar refrain.

III. PRAYER AND HOPE

- Read: Psalm 43:1-5
- The tone of this psalm is more hopeful.
- We have the content of the psalmist’s prayer to God. It is for vindication, defense, and deliverance.
- He wants God to render righteous judgment and defend his cause against the ungodly and deliver him from the deceitful and unjust man.
- He declares that God is the one in whom he takes refuge, it’s an expression of faith.
- But his troubles are still present and he is still experiencing the feelings of rejection, sadness, and mourning.

- He asks for God’s light and truth to lead him back to what he longs for, to be with God’s people, at God’s holy hill, the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God among the people of God.
- If God answers that prayer, it will prove that God is not absent, that God has not forgotten him, it will lift his cast down soul, it will vindicate him before his enemies, and lead him back home to Jerusalem to approach the dwelling place of God and worship at his altar.
- That is what he longs for!
- Truly God is his “exceeding joy” and the only one who can satisfy his soul’s longing.

- Yet this psalm, filled with faith and confidence, and hope in God still closes with the familiar refrain of self-talk.
- God has not yet answered his prayer. His soul is still weighed down.
- He is still waiting on God to save him. The triumph he longs for is still in the future.

- It is a reminder that the struggle of faith continues.
- It reminds us that we are not yet home.
- We live our Christian faith and hope out in the context of a broken and sinful world where we will wrestle with discouragement.
- But what this psalm points to gives us a reason to hope in God and be confident that he will come through for us and we will praise him again.

CHRIST CONNECTION

- The grief portrayed in this psalm is one felt supremely by Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38).
- Yet it was a grief accompanied by a rich hope, that his Father would not only deliver him from death, vindicate him before his enemies, but that all whom he would ransom by his sacrifice, would be delivered as he had been delivered.
- Because Jesus has gone before us, because he is our faithful high priest, he can sympathize with our struggle and weaknesses. (Heb. 2:17-18)

- Jesus expressed to his disciples, when he went with his disciples to Gethsemane to pray, he said to them, “my soul is very sorrowful.” His soul was cast down.
- He prayed for deliverance from what he was about to endure, he waited on God, and he was submitted to his Father’s will.
- He endured the crashing waves of grief that is common to all believers.
- He felt forsaken by God in his humanity, he faced the mocking jeers of the ungodly, crying out, “Where is your God?”
- He endured the deep waters of God’s wrath and judgment against sins as he was drowned in the righteous fury of the terrifying waters of judgment, becoming the altar of sacrifice for sins.
- Yet God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead; triumphing over his enemies.
- He ascended to the right hand of the Father, he is the promised anointed Davidic king, whose reign is forever and ever.

- He is the light of the world. He is the way, the truth, and the life.
- He is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant types and shadows.
- And he is the head of his Church, the one who is present with his gathered people in Spirit, Word, and sacrament.
- He is the only one who can fill the deep longings of our soul as our exceeding joy.

- Place your hope in Christ alone.
- Faith is a struggle. We will feel discouraged.
- We must preach faith to our feelings, proclaim truth over our souls, and we must remember whom our faith and hope rests in—Jesus Christ our Redeemer, Rock, and Refuge.
- May the words, “hope in God for I shall again praise him,” become a motto we return to again and again and again, until we are at last face to face with the One whom our souls long for.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?