

Psalm 42

Introduction – The psalm-singer is far removed from the corporate worship of God. This may apply to David when he had to flee Jerusalem because of the persecution of his son, Absalom. The troubles in his life seem to be overwhelming and there is no way to get back to 'normal' including getting back to the house of God. This is the voice of the believer under depressions, longing for the renewal of God's presence, struggling with questions, doubts, and fears, yet holding steady to faith in the living God. Sound familiar? *"Most of the Lord's family have sailed on the sea which is here..."* – Spurgeon. Who sent you those trials? The same One Whose lovingkindness and song will bring you through them. Talk to Him. Talk to yourself about Him.

Overview - Like a hunted deer yearning for refreshing waters, the psalmist longs to be back and refreshed in the presence of God (vv1-3). His enemies taunt him in his trials and he complains to God of that, remembering how he used to join with the multitudes in joyful worship (vv3-4). Then he speaks to himself, to not remain down, but to trust God (v5). But he *is* downcast and remembers times of past victories (v6). Today, however, troubles cascade down upon him like unforgiving and unending waves (v6). He remembers God's lovingkindness and song, day and night, and they are like a life-belt in this rough sea (v7). He complains to God, his Rock, that the enemies' questions and taunts have a bite of truth to them, so where is He (vv9-10)? And so he ends, speaking to himself again to hope in God Who will deliver him (v11).

The Psalm-singer Talks to Himself – The repeated refrain in v5 and 11 (and the end of Psalm 43) is so instructive for us during times of doubt and depression, trials and the scorn of others because of those trials. We all have a running commentary going on in our heads during difficulties, and left untethered, those thoughts take us low. This psalm teaches us to stop listening to ourselves and start talking to ourselves. David lectures to himself the truth about the trials, about God and His promises and lovingkindness. He probably sings psalms (and writes more). We must not doubt in the dark what we knew in the light, and we must deliberately speak to ourselves in terms of what we knew in the light. *"The way of folly is to sit in the dark giving full credence to whatever thoughts drift into your head"* – Wilson. And you will find that you must do this often and over and over again (hence v11, 43:5). And probably more so when you find yourself providentially removed from the Covenant Renewal Service of Worship that God provides for His people.

The Psalm-singer Longs for Corporate Worship - Which brings us to our next point. It is a mark of grace when one has the most intense craving after the highest good (v2, 4). When your soul is cast down, remember the times of God's previous gracious acts and moments of His presence in your life; David remembers the stories of crossing the Jordan river, of Hermon where Og and Sihon were defeated, and Mizar, where (possibly) he had met with God (v6). There are sweet times of personal devotion (Isaiah 26:8-9), but proper personal devotion increases the longing for the corporate body of Christ to be together in a public holy day (Psalm 27:4). He wants to be in God's house, seeing His beauty *"all the days of my life."* Worship is central for it is the ground of his confidence; it is where we meet with the living God. It is the best hiding place from all that threatens us, and it sets us above and over all trials to give us the right view of all things (Psalm 73:12-14, 17). This beauty carries forth *"all the days of my life"* and is not a serene, sentimental peace, but rather the beauty of the Lord's war-song and victory over enemies. Remember: We sing here in God's house, and the heavens and the earth are shaken (Heb 12).

The Psalm-singer Knows How to Question God – Nevertheless, troubles are all around, and often come in crashing waves (v7) or like sparks from a fire (Job 5:7). We are told to use the psalms in prayer and song and this includes asking God, *"where are you?"* The ungodly see the troubles of the world and blaspheme with that question, *"Where is your God?"* (v3, 10). They are not looking for an answer, they are simply making a point (Matt 27:39-43). We are instructed to ask the same question, but in a faithful way (9, 13:1), pouring out our soul before God. This is a part of His song and *"a prayer to the God of my life"* (v8). We are to take our fears, our doubts, our questions, our concerns, our disappointments, all of it, to God – and sing. And then we are to speak to ourselves again (v11).

The Psalm-singer Knows Who Sent the Troubles – Frequently we know who brought us to the troubles in our life: our enemies, our spouse, our children, our boss, the rain, the dishwasher, the consequences of our own sins, etc. But central to this psalm is remembering Who sent the troubles. *"Deep calls unto deep at the noise of YOUR waterfalls; all YOUR waves and billows have gone over me"* (v7). David says that *"all"* of God's waves had gone over him, and this is hyperbole. But it wasn't for Jesus; He took the full brunt of God's wrath for the sins of the world. And Jesus didn't go through that trial like a stoic; He sweat drops of blood in agony of soul (Luke 22:44) and put His hope in His Father (John 12:27).

And He (Jesus, Psalm-singer, You) Knows Where to Place His Hope – We are learning that our hope is an anchor "*behind the veil*" (Heb 6:19). We are not to just sit back and "take it" when trials come. God sends troubles to you for the same reason teachers give you tests: to see if you are learning, growing, sanctifying. If you think you can go through life without trials, then you don't understand why God has us still here. He isn't simply interested in populating heaven. He wants to fit you for heaven. He wants us to become His people who, in the midst of whatever trial, sings, "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*" And then we watch God do His thing – in our souls, and over the world.

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