

Psalms 42:0 ¶ To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

The term “Maschil” indicates an instructive poem. The “sons of Korah” seems to be indicative of the temple singers and musicians.

Many commentators believe that Psalms 42 and 43 are a unit; note that there is no identifying preface with Psalm 43. Though David is not identified as the author, it certainly sounds like he is.

Psalms 42:1 ¶ As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalms 42:2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

This song issues forth from the heart of one who intensely desires close fellowship with his God, the God of Israel; he paints a word picture of a thirsty deer searching for water with which to quench its thirst. He is deliberate in identifying his God as “the living God,” not an impotent idol or false god. The following verses show the last half of verse 2 as an expression of desire to go to the temple, “the house of God.”

I think Jewish people of faith in “Israel” had a special connection with the temple as God’s dwelling place on earth. When they went to the temple, they were making a personal connection with God. We as believers could greatly benefit from that mindset and recognize our churches as that place—a place of personal connection with the LORD—not just a place of fellowship or a part of our weekly routine.

Psalms 42:3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

The psalmist is so emotionally distraught that he can’t hold back his tears. This is a powerful picture of despondency when I think of this author as possibly David, or any other “man” for that matter; men are not usually so transparent with their emotions. The psalmist is being taunted by his enemies about the apparent impotency of “his God.”

Because of their lack of spiritual insight, people often wrongly interpret the circumstances of people of faith in relationship to the sovereignty and power of Almighty God and/or the reason He is allowing one of His children to endure that time of trouble. Job is by far the prime example of this truth.

Psalms 42:4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

The wording of this verse in the KJV is a bit confusing; I like the CJB: “*I recall, as my feelings well up within me, how I’d go with the crowd to the house of God, with sounds of joy and praise from the throngs observing the festival.*”

When the psalmist says he is pouring out his soul, he is expressing the intensity of his emotions. His sorrow is multiplied in direct relationship to how much he had enjoyed worshipping at the temple.

It is very sad but true, that we often don't truly appreciate what we have until we lose it. We are so blessed in America to be able to gather together with other believers and to have the right to worship as we choose, but I fear that we are on the fast track to losing that freedom.

Psalms 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.

It seems to me that in this verse the psalmist begins to give himself a pep talk. He realizes that he is focusing on his circumstances rather than on God. It's at this point that he needs to remember how God has provided for him and his people in the past. He needs to trust that God is sovereign and is allowing his circumstances according to His purposes. I can't help but be reminded of my life verse.

Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Psalms 42:6 ¶ O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

Psalms 42:7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Still, the psalmist is honest in expressing his discouragement before God even as he determines to remember the times when God had showed up on his behalf. He is remembering how God went before the people as they took possession of the Promised Land.

Verse 7 seems to be the psalmist's expression of his understanding that his circumstances have been allowed by God—"thy waterspouts...thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." "Deep calleth unto deep" may be a reference to the tears that surface as a result of the despair in his heart, the depths of his being.

God is so gracious to give us so many examples in scripture of men of faith who struggle during hard times—times when it seems as though God has forgotten them or turned His back on them. David is by far the most transparent through the psalms. These mighty men of faith struggled with despair and doubt at times just as we do, and God is always faithful to "show up" on their behalf in His time.

Psalms 42:8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

In this verse the psalmist is giving voice to God's constant provision for him—both in day and in night. I thought of the day in reference to the good times and the night in reference to the hard times. It's easy to recognize God's blessings when things are going well, but we often have to find sustenance through remembrances of those provisions (as expressed in song for the psalmist) and through prayer. Those times of prayer allow us to praise God for who He Is and increase our faith as we meditate on that truth—His character, His power, His authority, His love, etc.

Psalms 42:9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

Psalms 42:10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Psalms 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The psalmist is transparent regarding the spiritual roller coaster of his emotions. He is fighting with discouragement because he doesn't understand why God is allowing his enemies to prevail at this point. He seems to be struggling the most because he has been so vocal about the faithfulness of God's provision on his behalf, and now they are mocking him for that faith. Then he once again pulls himself up by the bootstraps and once again takes the focus off his circumstances and refocuses on the faithfulness and provision of God—even if he must be patient as he waits for deliverance. As declared so often throughout the psalms, he knows that God is the rock of our salvation.

Psalms 61:2 "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Psalms 62:7 "In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God."

Psalms 94:22 "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge."