

## **Psalms 42 and 43 – Week of May 1**

### **Memory Verse: Psalm 43:5**

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 and my God.”

Psalms 42 and 43 are psalms meant to help us in our time of need. The chorus of these Psalms reads, “Why are you downcast, O my soul?” When everything around us seems to fall apart, it is a time that we need to talk to God. Sometimes when we are discouraged or depressed we need to voice our concern or complaint to God. Sometimes we may need to cry out “Help Lord!” These Psalms will give you a voice.

The Bible does not shy away from clearly presenting to us great heroes of our faith who struggled with discouragement and depression. Consider Job, a man of whom the Bible says was blameless and upright. A man whose losses of his family, of his wealth, of his health, would lead him to say, “My days ... come to their end without hope...my eye will never see good again.” (Job 7:6-7) That is an expression of his despair.

Elijah, one of the greatest prophets of old, asked for his life to be taken. David, in his efforts to hide sin, made journal entries that speak of the total loss of strength, the ebbing away of all that is worthwhile in life, and groaning all day long (Ps. 32:2ff.). Jonah, the first foreign missionary, became deeply despondent when God did not destroy Nineveh. Jeremiah was so profoundly sad that he is known to this day as the weeping prophet and confessed that he wished he'd never been born. Then there's Nehemiah and Ezekiel and Peter and more in the pages of Scripture. None of us are immune to grief, despondency, discouragement, sadness, and depression. Great men and women of the Christian faith have experienced it, as will most, if not all of us.

What are we to do when we are downcast? These Psalms offer a few lessons.

#### 1) Thirst for God.

"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (42:1-2) When you are in despair, your main need is to seek God himself, not just relief. The psalmist's thirst for God seems to grow in intensity, not slacken. Matthew Henry puts it (3:394) that the psalmist thirsts “for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him.” Depression can either wet or dull our thirst for God. God allows suffering to drive us closer in dependence upon Him. The need for the depressed person is reality with the living God. We are to hope in Him; He is our help.

2) Rejoice in the past faithfulness of God.

"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...My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar." (42:4, 6) The Psalmist remembers past corporate worship experiences. How much could be said here about the importance of corporate worship in our lives. Don't take these times together lightly. What we do here is a real transaction with the living God. God means for these encounters with him in corporate worship to preserve your faith now and in the way you remember them later. If corporate worship were not a real supernatural work of God, it would be pure sentimentalism for the psalmist to remember his experiences. He is not engaging in nostalgia. He is confirming his faith in the midst of turmoil and discouragement by remembering how real God was in corporate worship.

3) Remember the sovereignty of God.

"Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me." (42:7) These waters symbolize trials and suffering. These waterfalls, waves, and breakers are continuous, relentless, and overwhelming. And the sound of this waterfall and these breakers is deafening. He is not only aware of the seeming absence of God, he is very aware of the presence of trials in his life. But notice where the breakers and waves come from...the writer says to God, they are yours. They are according to your sovereign plan. Even in the midst of these trying circumstances, he believes in the sovereignty of God.

4) Remember the love of God.

"By day the Lord commands his steadfast love" (42:8) Even though everything around him appears to say that God has left him, he knows that God still loves him. He holds on to these great truths of the sovereignty of God and the love of God.

5) Speak the truths of God's Word to yourself.

"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." (42:5, 11; 43:5) Martyn Lloyd Jones says of this verse, "Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, "Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you." And we will speak to ourselves the truths of God's Word.

Jesus told his disciples, "In this world you will have sorrow, but take heart for I have overcome

the world.” (John 16:33) This life is not trouble free. Jesus experienced more sorrow and trouble than any of us will. He experienced most completely the despair of Psalm 42. And he didn’t experience it in some partial way, like he was acting it out in a play. No Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully human, which means on the cross he fully experienced the trouble, the sadness, the ridicule, and the despair that Psalms 42 and 43 present.

Psalms 42 and 43 are examples of crying out in anguish to our powerful, merciful, and good God, and asking him to intervene in our circumstances. And as we do so we proclaim the day of Christ’s return, when all things will be set right and all will be made new. We show that we trust and believe that he will change the world. So as we live in this fallen world, and as we see and experience a world that is not as it should be, according to God’s will, we should cry out to God in lament. We should cry out in hope. We should expect God to move, in our circumstances and in ourselves. And we should always live in hope, trusting that our good, powerful, and just God is indeed sovereign, and worthy of our praise.

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