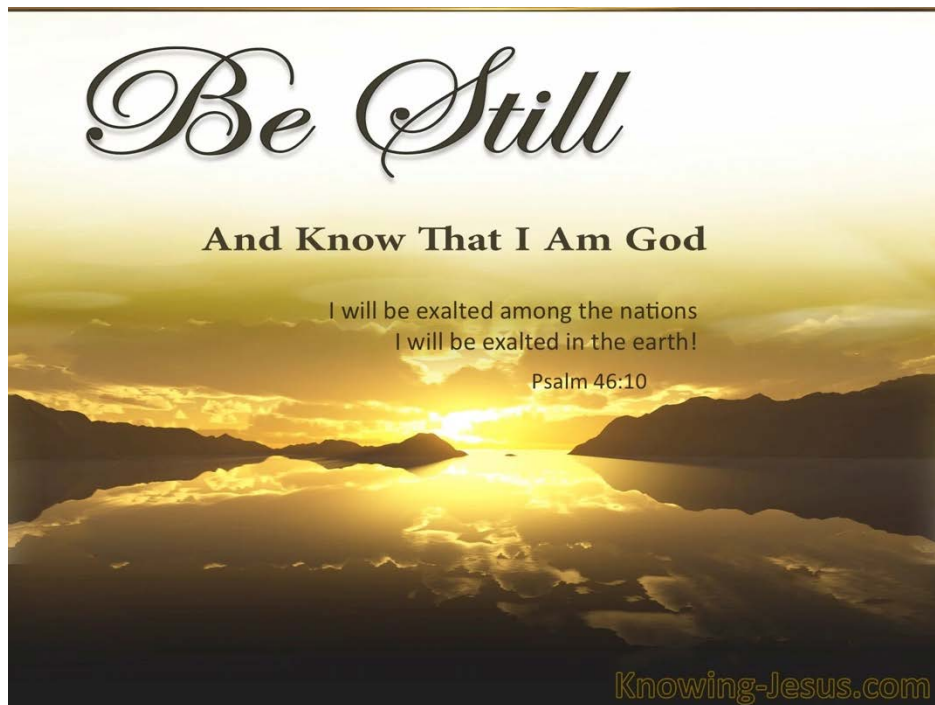


PSALMS OF THE SONS OF KORAH
LIVING TOWARD THE END:
PSALMS 42, 43



T. M. and Susie Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Living Toward the End

Psalms 42, 43

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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing

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Introduction to Psalms 42, 43

The Psalms of the sons of Korah begin, it seems at the end of their service; however, each of Psalms 42 and 43 ends at the beginning, with renewed hope, praise, and trust in the Lord.

Something has got the psalmists down. They know what it is, and they are determined not to give in to it. Instead, they will seek the Lord, thirsting for His Presence and grace, and longing to stand before His face.

They won't be disappointed.

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May the Lord bless your work in this study, that you may grow to know Him better, love Him more, and serve Him more joyfully.

T. M. and Susie Moore

1 Hold Fast

Opening Prayer: Psalm 43.3, 4

Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!
Let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your tabernacle.
Then I will go to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy;
And on the harp I will praise You,
O God, my God.

Sing Psalm 43.3, 4

(Hyfrydol: [*Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners!*](#))

Let Your light and truth precede me, bring me to Your holy hill.
To Your holy altar lead me, let me dwell within Your will.
Lord, my joy and consolation, You, Who grace to me impart,
hear my joyful adoration; I will praise You from the heart.

Read Psalms 42 and 43

Preparation

1. What seems to be the primary concern of these two psalms?
2. Where did the psalmists find relief?

Meditation

The writer of the book of Hebrews reminded his backsliding readers that only they who hold firm to Jesus and fast “to the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” will enter the promised land of salvation (Heb. 3.1-6, 14). Paul agreed with the need for perseverance in faith, as he wrote in Philippians 3.7-14, esp. vv. 10, 11). Holding on to faith requires vision, discipline, and obedience, because the challenges and obstacles to faith are many.

The sons of Korah understood this. We will take Psalms 42 and 43 together, even though Psalm 43 is unattributed, because their themes are so similar, and Psalm 43 is sandwiched between two other psalms by this liturgical band of brothers.

In these two psalms, some trouble had come upon the sons of Korah, and they are beset by a sense of spiritual aloneness, even feelings of uncertainty about the state of their soul. These psalms give the impression of one who is looking back on his life. We see this in such phrases as “used to go” (Ps. 42.4), “went with” (Ps. 42.4), “remember” (Ps. 42.6), and “yet” (Pss. 42.11; 43.5). By the time they composed this psalm, the sons of Korah may have completed their service as gatekeepers in the temple. But this did not mean they had gone into “retirement”. They were continuing to serve and continuing to be buffeted by enemies. Thus, they continued to look to God for help, vindication, peace, and joy.

When trials, temptations, or troubles assail, the sons of Korah show us to look up to God, back to His faithfulness, ahead to His promises, then around at whatever is troubling us. If we persevere like this, we will know vindication and redemption, peace and joy, certainty and hope to the end of our days.

Look up, look back, look ahead, look around – hold firm. Only by living from this vantage point will we be able to hold fast our confidence of faith firm to the end.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

As we “look up, look back, look ahead, and look around” we have a choice to make.

Jesus warned and comforted us with His words, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16.33).

Yes, we will have trouble. Jesus promised us we would. Yes, we will sorrow. The sons of Korah did too, and while they did, they wondered: “Why do I go mourning...?” (Ps. 42.9; 43.1) Maybe there is hope?

The choice we have is whether to succumb permanently, or to seek help from God. When we “look up, look back, look ahead, and look around” do we see Jesus the Overcomer? Or do we see only our sadness and grief. Is there hope? Or perpetual darkness?

Let us choose to say with the sons of Korah, “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.” “Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God” (Ps. 43.3, 5; 42.11).

Hold fast! Help is on the way!

Reflection

1. What does it mean to “hold fast” our confidence, firm to the end?
2. What can cause us to feel downcast in our soul, or separated from God, or that we have lost our way? Why?
3. When we feel shaken in our soul, what must we do? What choice is before us? How can we make sure we make the right choice?

Send your light and overcome my shadows. Send your truth and conquer my lying. Your light and truth lead me to your holy mountain and into your tabernacle. When I draw near, you lead me to the altar of God, where, although old, I become as a youth. Arnobius the Younger (fifth century), *Commentary on the Psalms 43*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 43.1, 2

Thank God that Jesus stands for your vindication, for the forgiveness of your sins and an assured place in the Presence of God forever! Call on His Presence and strength to guide and empower you for this day.

Psalm 43.1, 2

(Hyfrydol: [*Jesus. What a Friend for Sinners!*](#))

Vindicate me, Jesus, plead for me! Make my case against my foes.
Rescue me, do not ignore me, God of strength, relieve my woes!
From deceitful men and spirits, from oppression, mourning sore –
heed my prayer, receive and hear it, keep me to You forever more.

2 A Psalm of Rebuke

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.4, 5

When I remember these *things*,
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.
Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.

Sing Psalm 42.4, 5

(Nettleton: [*Come Thou Fount*](#))

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Read Psalm 42.5, 11; Psalm 43.5

Preparation

1. How do the sons of Korah describe the condition of their soul?
2. Where will they turn for help?

Meditation

Psalms 42 and 43 are a pointed rebuke to the composers. They convict their souls of giving in to the troubles and pressures threatening them and losing sight of the greatness and faithfulness of God.

This is a good exercise to go through whenever you feel your soul is downcast or disquieted. For if we are faithful in looking to Jesus, setting our minds on the things that are above and not on the things that are below (Col. 3.1-2), we will always be thrilled and overjoyed at the majesty, beauty, compassion, closeness, and power of our risen Savior and King. Nothing will cause us to fear or doubt or fall into despair while we are gazing on the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4.6, 16-18).

So whenever we, like the sons of Korah in these two psalms, find ourselves “cast down” or “disquieted” in our soul, the place to start is within, pouring out the contents of the soul (Ps. 42.4) to find out where the poison is that’s robbing us of our joy. Do an inventory of your thoughts, desires, and priorities. Look for anything harboring in your soul that might have the power to cut you off from the Lord (Ps. 66.18). Rebuke your soul for giving in to these contrary thoughts. Confess your downcast and disquieted condition; repent of any known sin; and turn to the Lord and His ways again.

None of us is above the need to keep a close watch on our soul (1 Tim. 4.16) and, when necessary, to rebuke it sternly.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

When we find ourselves in the same mindset as the sons of Korah, if we contemplate Jesus, we will surely find comfort there.

Through Jesus, God speaks to us (Heb. 1. 2).

Through Jesus, we understand suffering and the lengths to which He would go to comfort us. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2.9).

Through Jesus, we see sympathy, empathy, and compassion. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4.15).

Through Jesus, we learn how to cry out to God. “...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5.7, 8).

Through Jesus, we can contemplate a better way to calm our hurting and questioning hearts. “...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12.2, 3).

*Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.*
- Bernard of Clairvaux (1150)

Reflection

1. What can cause us to become downcast or disquieted in our soul?
2. At such a time, what would you do to “pour out” your soul before the Lord?
3. How does looking to Jesus in His glory help us to stand firm and hold fast our faith during such times?

As he had first turned himself to his soul, now he turns himself to his God, and he lifts up his eyes and sighs, as it were, to him, opening up to him the sorrow of his soul. And he pours out his carefulness and solicitude on his bosom. Whosoever is endued with the Holy Spirit, will, as this man, sigh to God in his affliction and sorrow. Robert Rollock (1555-1599), *Commentary on the Psalms 42*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 42.9-11

What threats against the wellbeing of your soul do you expect to encounter today? Use these verses to prepare for them by setting your soul squarely before the Lord, looking to Him for help in your times of need.

Sing Psalm 42.9-11

(Nettleton: [*Come Thou Fount*](#))

Lord, forget me not in mourning 'neath my foes' oppressing hand.
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

3 Downcast and Disquieted

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.6-8

O my God, my soul is cast down within me;
Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,
And from the heights of Hermon,
From the Hill Mizar.
Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.
The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night His song *shall be* with me—
A prayer to the God of my life.

Sing Psalm 42.6-8

(Nettleton: [*Come Thou Fount*](#))

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;
When distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Read Psalm 42.6-8; 43.3-5

Preparation

1. What were the psalmists feeling about their relationship with God?
2. How did they resolve to overcome that sense of separation?

Meditation

Throughout the course of Christian history, great leaders have written or spoken about times in their lives when they were uncertain concerning their relationship with God. They felt separated from Him and adrift in the darkness of their own soul. These “dark nights of the soul” are not uncommon. At such times we feel “cast down” or “disquieted” in our soul. We feel alone, forsaken by God, uncertain as to where to turn, and desperate – like a thirsty deer panting after the water of a brook – to reconnect with and be refreshed in the Lord. Our disquieted souls murmur, growl, and are filled with unrest (Hebrew: *הממה*. *hamamah*).

The sons of Korah were experiencing such a situation when they penned these two psalms. They described their souls as “cast down” (Ps. 42.5, 6, 11; 43.5). They felt as if God had cast them off (43.2) and forgotten them (42.9). It was as if they were being swept along in a tsunami of judgment, like Jonah, sinking into the deep (42.7; cf. Jon. 2.3). All they could do was mourn (42.9; 43.2) for their condition, weeping and sorrowing in their souls because of the pervasive disquietude that overwhelmed them (43.5).

Jesus experienced this as well. We will see this in another of the psalms of the sons of Korah (88), and we know it from His crying out in isolation from the cross. So what can we say about such times of soul darkness? Two things.

First, they are not sin. It’s not sin to feel separated from God. It would be sin to settle for such a condition, but experiencing it is not sin.

And, as we shall see, such a downcast and disquieting condition need not be permanent. At such times, we have a choice. We can fall through our disquietude into self-pity, pouting, resentment, anger, and other sins; or we can choose to grow through such times by eagerly seeking the light of God and His Presence.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Being cast down and disquieted is a place of familiarity. For a multitude of reasons, I go there. I have filled all the margins next to and above the words *dark* and *darkness* in my concordance with extra verses pertaining to the same. Is it just my nature? Is it because of pain and sadness? Real or imagined? That information admitted, I identify with the sons of Korah.

God is not afraid of the darkness, in fact, He seems to go there too. He said to Moses, “Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me...” “Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire” (Deut. 4.10-12).

“Then Solomon spoke: “The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud” (1 Kings 8.12; 2 Chron. 6.1).

“He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him was dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies” (Ps. 18.11).

God shows His power in the darkness; but He is also full of great and abundant light. There is also a difference between the darkness of power and glory and the darkness of doubt and depression.

“Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons...” were encouraged to “give thanks to the LORD *for* His goodness, and *for* His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two” (Ps. 107.10, 15). “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Is. 9.2).

When we are downcast, disquieted, and in the darkness, we are not alone, “...even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” “...the darkness and the light are both alike to You” (Ps. 139.10, 12).

When we find ourselves dwelling in the wrong darkness, we, like the sons of Korah, have hope, for we have been called “out of darkness into His marvelous light...and have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2.9, 10) and have found grace “to help in time of need” (Heb. 4.16).

Reflection

1. What kinds of things can cause you to be cast down in your soul?
2. Why is being cast down or disquieted in your soul *not* a sin? What choice do we face at such times?
3. Why can we look with confidence and hope toward Jesus at such times?

If we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports, when we want spiritual delights. He never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever fears they may have had of their own state. We need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favor, and is included in his promise. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 43

Closing Prayer: Psalm 43.3-5

Seek the light of God's Word for the day ahead. Call on Him to keep you close, to praise Him and call on His mercy throughout the day, that His Presence and power may continue with you.

Sing Psalm 43.3-5

(Hyfrydol: [Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners!](#))

Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Psalms 42, 43

Let Your light and truth precede me, bring me to Your holy hill.
To Your holy altar lead me, let me dwell within Your will.
Lord, my joy and consolation, You, Who grace to me impart,
hear my joyful adoration; I will praise You from the heart.

When my weary soul is troubled, when despair upon me falls,
let my hope in You be doubled, let me on Your mercy call.
God, my help, my great salvation, I will praise You to Your face;
In Your care my soul I station; let me know Your glorious grace!

4 Two Kinds of “Why?”

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.6-8

O my God, my soul is cast down within me;
Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,
And from the heights of Hermon,
From the Hill Mizar.
Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.
The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night His song *shall be* with me—
A prayer to the God of my life.

Sing Psalm 42.6-8

(Nettleton: [*Come Thou Fount*](#))

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;
when distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Read Psalm 42

Preparation

1. What was causing the psalmists to be downcast in their souls?
2. How were they able to resolve the disquiet in their souls?

Meditation

When we feel downcast or disquieted in our soul, there’s usually a good reason. Hence, the first “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” (Ps. 42.5) The psalmists are seeking an explanation for the sense of separation from God they were feeling. Two explanations suggest themselves.

First, it seems to me the psalmists were experiencing a sense of loss. It appears they were no longer performing their service as gatekeepers (v. 4, “For I used to go with the multitude...”). They missed the crowds going past them into the temple, the sounds of joy and praise, and seeing pilgrims from all over the land. There’s a sense of loss here.

Second, compounding this, either some uncouth wags among the people, seeing them downcast, began to mock their faith “continually”: “Where *is* your God?” (v. 3) Or their disquietude had become noticeable and other believers called on them to buck-up and have faith.

Either way, their loss and their being confronted by others concerning their distress seems to have led to their first “Why?”

The second “Why?” is the “why” of self-reproach, the “why” that reminded them that, given God’s grace and availability, they didn’t need to languish in their disquietude. God would shed light on their path from His Word and lead them to His Presence (43.3). All they had to do was hope in Him and praise Him for His help and His countenance (42.5; 43.5).

The first “Why?” identified the problem; the second pointed the way out of it. Whenever you hear yourself lamenting “Why?” about some low point in your life, don’t stop with the first “Why?”.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Suffering that comes from the hands of fellow-believers or family is the most difficult to bear.

The sons of Korah may have been dealing with something akin to that. “My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, ‘Where *is* your God?’” “I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God...” (Ps. 42.3, 4) Fellow worshipers. Enemies in the house. These are the ones causing the pain.

David also experienced this, “For *it is* not an enemy *who* reproaches me; then I could bear *it*. Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me; then I could hide from him. But *it was* you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked to the house of God in the throng” (Ps. 55.12-14).

And Jesus. “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26.56).

It is no wonder that the sons of Korah, David, and Jesus felt betrayed by those closest to them. But they all found hope in God. “For I shall yet praise Him...” (Ps. 42.11; 43.5)

And when we ask “why?” we too can plead with God to “send out Your light and Your truth!” (Ps. 43.3) For we are “persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8.38, 39). Not even fellow-believers or family.

Reflection

1. What are some things that might cause you to become downcast in your soul?
2. What should a fellow believer who was experiencing this expect from you?
3. How can we use prayer – for ourselves and others – to deal with a downcast soul?

These words are the refrain of this and the previous psalm (see 42:5, 11). In time of doubt and stress, the poet urges his inner being, by the power of God, to keep believing. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), *NKJV Study Bible Notes on Psalm 43.5*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 43.3-5

Seek the light of God’s Word to prepare you for the day ahead. Express your hope in God, and praise Him for the help He will give you.

Psalm 43.3-5

(Hyfrydol: [*Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners!*](#))

Let Your light and truth precede me, bring me to Your holy hill.
To Your holy altar lead me, let me dwell within Your will.
Lord, my joy and consolation, You, Who grace to me impart,
hear my joyful adoration; I will praise You from the heart.

When my weary soul is troubled, when despair upon me falls,
let my hope in You be doubled, let me on Your mercy call.
God, my help, my great salvation, I will praise You to Your face;
In Your care my soul I station; let me know Your glorious grace!

5 Change Your Pants

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.1-3

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
“Where is your God?”

Sing Psalm 42.1-3

[\(Nettleton: Come Thou Fount\)](#)

As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,
while my foes add to my sorrow, saying, “Where now is your God?”

Read Psalm 42.1-3

Preparation

1. For what did the psalmists thirst?
2. What caused this thirst to arise within them?

Meditation

We have seen that the sons of Korah were downcast and disquieted in their soul because they were no longer serving in their familiar role (v. 4: “I used to...”), and they were being either mocked by real enemies (v. 10; cf. Ps. 43.1) or rather coldly encouraged by believing friends who were acting like enemies. This brought them to tears (v. 3) and mourning (v. 9), because they felt that somehow God had forgotten them (v. 9).

Either way, it wasn’t what they were “panting” after. Their lives had been upset; they experienced a longing for “the way things used to be”, for their enemies to back down, or for their believing “friends” to be a little more sympathetic.

If they had continued panting after that lost lifestyle and for more caring counselors, they would have fallen into sin. They would have been investing their happiness and wellbeing in something other than God.

But the sons of Korah knew what to do when they were feeling downcast in their soul: Change your pants. That is, check the desires of your soul. Make sure that you’re hungry and thirsting for God and His Kingdom and glory above all things. Look to Him to slake the thirst of loss, to buffer you against the unkindness of others, to dry up your tears (v. 3), and set you squarely before Him in all His glory.

Pant after God at all times. Look full in His glorious face; (cf. 2 Cor. 4.6), and you’ll end up hoping in and praising Him, and resting in the strength of His Presence and love (Pss. 42.11; 43.5).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The psalmists begin with correct thinking. “Yes, I should be panting after God in my soul and with all my being in the same way that a thirsty deer seeks water from a brook. Yes, I know I’m sad and disappointed and sorrowing.”

Then they veer off into incorrect assumptions and ideas. “Yes, I will assuage my thirst with my salty tears.”

No. That won't work.

How often do we do the same? We think to fill our souls with things that we assume will help, yet they too, always disappoint.

There will always, always be things, people, and circumstances that plunge us into sadness, sorrow, depression and defeat. We will never lack of those things. It is what we decide to pant over that ultimately matters.

We can try to slake our thirst with tears, or we can search out the living water of life. Jesus Himself has said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (Jn. 7.37, 38). Or as He told the woman at the well, if you drink this water you will "thirst again...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn. 4.13, 14). And Jesus instructed the Spirit to tell us, "And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22.17).

The water is free. The help offered is free. The hope is free. As are the light and truth!

We can resonate with this scene from Samson's life: "Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, 'You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?' So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi (*Spring of the Caller*), and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived" (Jdgs. 15.18, 19).

Samson changed his pants. And so should we.

Reflection

1. How can you keep a close watch on your heart, and the desires that guide it?
2. Jesus said that He could give us living water. How would you explain that idea to an unbelieving friend?
3. How would you encourage a downcast Christian friend to "slake his thirst" at the living water of Jesus?

The verb "to pant" is unusually expressive of a spiritual thirst for God. The poet describes his experience of being cut off from the worshiping community. He feels distant from God's presence among His people and he longs for intimacy with God (see v. 4). Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on Psalm 42.1-4

Closing Prayer: Psalm 42.4-11

Use this time in prayer to "check your pants" – to let the Lord review your strong desires. Walk through the day ahead, asking yourself at each step, "What do I most desire for this time?"

Sing Psalm 42.4-11

[*\(Nettleton: Come Thou Fount\)*](#)

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;
when distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Psalms 42, 43

Lord, forget me not in mourning 'neath my foes' oppressing hand.
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

6 Hope in God

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.9-11

I will say to God my Rock,
“Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
As with a breaking of my bones,
My enemies reproach me,
While they say to me all day long,
“Where *is* your God?”
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.

Psalm 42.9-11

[\(Nettleton: *Come Thou Fount*\)](#)

Lord, forget me not in mourning ‘neath my foes’ oppressing hand.
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

Read Psalm 42.9-11; Psalm 43.3-5

Preparation

1. Where did the psalmists turn for relief from their disquietude?
2. What did they look to as their great “help”?

Meditation

The sons of Korah knew where to turn in their time of disquietude: the Presence of the Lord. God alone was their Rock – not their changeable circumstances (42.9). They could ask Him “Why?” and expect that, by the light of His Word, He would illuminate their distress and lead them into His Presence and glory (42.10; 43.3). Then, seeing God in His beauty, and being renewed in hope, they could wonder aloud why they had ever asked “Why?” in the first place, when all along the help of God was with them (42.11; 43.5).

God alone is our hope – of glory, joy, everlasting peace and wellbeing, and unbroken fellowship of love. He is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28.20). We may become distracted from Him, and feel like He has forgotten us (42.9); but that is never the case. He calls us to dwell in the light of His Word and His face (Ps. 16.8, 11), for only in His unchanging Presence and glory can we grow through the changing circumstances of our lives, so that we can praise and enjoy our God more and more.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Asking good questions is a skill set; as is asking the right questions.

God asked Job a good question: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” And Job eventually answered, “. . . I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (Job 38.2; 42.3). A good question and a good answer.

The sons of Korah asked, “When shall I come and appear before God?” “Why are you downcast, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the

oppression of the enemy? Why do You cast me off?” And God would answer them, “Hope in Me.” Again, some allowable questions with a good answer.

Zacharias asked the angel Gabriel, “How shall I know this?” And for that doubting question Gabriel told him, “...you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time” (Lk. 1.18, 20). Buzz. Not a good question because it was leveled without a shred of faith, and the response was well-deserved.

Mary asked the angel Gabriel a question too, but it was more about logistics than a lack of faith: “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” The answer she received was explanatory and without condemnation. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1.34, 35). It was understood that the information given to her was mind-blowing at best, and she was allotted at least one free question.

A really good question that we’re always allowed to ask is this one:

*“And can it be that I should gain
An int’reast in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”
- Charles Wesley, 1738*

And the answer: “Because I love you.” Our hope is not misplaced.

Reflection

1. What does it mean to hope in God? Hope for what?
2. How do you experience the countenance – Presence – of God? Does this encourage you?
3. What is one question that you think we should bring to the Lord day by day?

Do not despair of salvation, O soul, he is saying: you have God as Savior; in him you gain sound hope. Quench your discouragement and receive consolation. Theodoret of Cyr (393-466), Commentary on Psalm 42.7

Closing Prayer: Psalm 43.3-5

Let the Word of God lead you into the Presence of King Jesus, until you see the glory in His face, and feel your hope in Him renewed. Rejoice, give thanks, praise the Lord, and commit your day to Him.

Psalm 43.3-5

(Hyfrydol: [*Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners!*](#))

Let Your light and truth precede me, bring me to Your holy hill.
To Your holy altar lead me, let me dwell within Your will.
Lord, my joy and consolation, You, Who grace to me impart,
hear my joyful adoration; I will praise You from the heart.

When my weary soul is troubled, when despair upon me falls,
let my hope in You be doubled, let me on Your mercy call.
God, my help, my great salvation, I will praise You to Your face
In Your care my soul I station; let me know Your glorious grace!

7 End at the Beginning

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.1-5

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
“Where is your God?”
When I remember these *things*,
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.
Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And *why* are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.

Sing Psalm 42.1-5

[Nettleton: Come Thou Fount](#)

As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,
while my foes add to my sorrow, saying, “Where now is your God?”

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Read Psalms 42, 43; meditate on Psalm 43.

Preparation

1. In what state or condition do we find the psalmists at the beginning of these two psalms?
2. Where do we find them at the end?

Meditation

The psalms of the sons of Korah form a kind of *inclusio* within the book of Psalms. That is, their psalms begin at one point and return to that point at the end.

Almost.

As we have seen, Psalms 42 and 43 were composed at a time when the psalmists were experiencing loss and pressure from enemies and perhaps cold-hearted friends. They were out of sorts and feeling as if God had forgotten them. People were mocking or rebuking them. Tears and mourning filled their days. Their sense of disquietude was so great that it seemed to be crushing them bodily (42.10).

They knew they could not continue in this state; they were seeking an end of their upset. So they took an

inventory of their soul (v. 5), identified what was troubling them, and sought the light of God to lead them back to Him in worship, hope, and praise (43.3-5). This is where the sons of Korah began their service as gatekeepers in the temple. They were part of a large company appointed by God to help people who were entering the temple and to guard it from being entered by anyone who did not belong there. Undoubtedly, they began this work in the Presence of God when they were young. By the time they composed these two psalms, their service may have been at an end (42.4), and they were depressed.

What to do?

Certainly not linger in their disquietude! Instead, like a thirsting deer lapping from a refreshing brook, they hastened into the Presence of God, sought the face of their Lord, poured out their soul before Him, and renewed their hope in His promises and Word. Their disquietude ended at the place they had begun – in the Lord’s Presence, praising and thanking Him, gazing on His beauty, and awaiting His help for whatever they must do next.

Their collection of psalms will end at a similar place of disquietude (Ps. 88). *Similar*, but not the same. Here we see hope expressed and experienced. That will not be the case at the end of Psalm 88; instead, we will need to infer such hope against the backdrop of the entire *corpus* of the psalms of the sons of Korah.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The sons of Korah give us great instruction in how to “talk yourself off the ledge”. When we are about to fall right into a good bout of depression, disquietude, and discomfort, we can follow their example to find respite from the thirst that plagues our soul.

First of all, they “remember these *things*” (Ps. 42.4). What things?

Well, they thought about all the truths that they knew about God, His faithfulness to them, and His mighty works which they could see everywhere. They contemplated His beauty. They pondered in their hearts all the love they had experienced through the years. They also remembered how many times they had been “thirsty” before, and that “changing their pants” really did help.

Then the light and truth that they prayed for turned on in their minds. Ahh. “I will go to God Who is my exceeding joy, and I shall yet praise Him!” (Ps. 43.4; 42.11) Hope in God!

Paul also helps to guide our hearts through disappointment and troubles: “...but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5.3-5).

Remembering God leads us to praise Him. Then comes “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4.7). And finally hope for a brighter tomorrow, “because His compassions fail not. *They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness*” (Lam. 3.22, 23).

Reflection

1. Becoming downcast and disquieted in your soul is not sin. But it could become sin. Explain.
2. How can the light of God’s Word help to lead you out of your times of disquietude?
3. How can believers help one another to grow through such times, rather than fall through them into self-pity and sin?

Let us burn together with this thirst; let us run together to the fountain of understanding. Let us ... long rather for it as a hart

Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Psalms 42, 43

yearns for a spring ... let us long for the wellspring of which Scripture says, "With you is the fountain of life." ... Long for the fountains of water. With God is the fountain of life, a fountain that can never dry up. Augustine (354-430), Expositions of the Psalms 42.2, 3, 5

Closing Prayer: Psalm 43.3-5

Spread your day out before the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to shed His light on how you can best serve Him in every situation. Express your hope that you will know His Presence and live for His glory. Give Him thanks and praise as you meditate on the beauty of Jesus' face (2 Cor. 4.6).

Psalm 43.3-5

(Hyfrydol: [*Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners!*](#))

Let Your light and truth precede me, bring me to Your holy hill.
To Your holy altar lead me, let me dwell within Your will.
Lord, my joy and consolation, You, Who grace to me impart,
hear my joyful adoration; I will praise You from the heart.

When my weary soul is troubled, when despair upon me falls,
let my hope in You be doubled, let me on Your mercy call.
God, my help, my great salvation, I will praise You to Your face
In Your care my soul I station; let me know Your glorious grace!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What was causing the sons of Korah to become downcast? What causes you to become downcast and disquieted in your soul?
2. The sons of Korah poured out their soul before the Lord. Why? How would you pour out your soul in a time of disquietude?
3. How did the sons of Korah describe their desire to be in the Presence of God? Is that your desire as well?
4. How did the sons of Korah rebuke themselves? To what did that lead? What can we learn from this?
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from our study of Psalms 42 and 43? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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