**Psalm 42 – Part 1**

As an introduction to this psalm, perhaps the lyrics to a popular song will help provide a sense of the psalm’s deep meaning:

**As the Deer**

As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength my shield.
To you alone may my spirit yield.

You're my friend and you are my brother even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other so much more than anything.

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

You alone are my strength my shield.
To you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.
As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you.

Psalm 42 begins with the words…

**Psalm 42:1 (NKJV) - 1  As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.**

**Psalm 42:1 (NCV) -** 1  As a deer thirsts for streams of water, so I thirst for you, God.

**Psalm 42:1 (NLT2) -** 1  As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.

**Various translators, have chosen to give this psalm various titles:**

* **KJV, YLT, ASV** entitle this psalm: David's zeal to serve God in the temple

Others translations have removed David’s name from the title altogether. Such as:

* **NASB:** Thirsting for God in Trouble and Exile.
* **NCV:** Wishing to Be Near God
* **ESV**: Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul?

Although some translations have referenced David in their title, the psalm is not believed to have been written by David. Nevertheless, the Psalm has characteristics which could be applied to David’s circumstances during his lifetime.

What these titles do help us to get is a sense of the writer’s desperate longing to be in the presence of God. Which, as we’ve seen from other Psalms, was one of David’s deep desires during the times of his own exile from Jerusalem, while fleeing once from Saul and then again while fleeing from his own son Absalom.

Added to these broad titles, translators have added subtitles:

* **NKJV:** To the Chief Musician. A ContemplationHebrew Maschil of the sons of Korah.
* **NIV:** For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah.
* **NLT2:** For the choir director: A psalm[1] Hebrew *maskil.* This may be a literary or musical term. of the descendants of Korah.
* **AMP**: To the Chief Musician. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *(instructive)* *or* reflective poem, of the sons of Korah.

Observe how each subtitle makes reference to the sons or descendants of Korah. Psalm 42 is the first of 11 Psalms dedicated to the sons of Korah. The other psalms are:

Psalm 44; 45; 46; 47; 48; 49; 84; 85; 87; and 88.

The relevance of this helps us understand the over-arching theme of these Psalms, in that the Psalms are believed to have been composed by the descendants of Korah during Israel’s Babylonian captivity.

These 11 Psalms being ascribed to the sons of Korah are in themselves amazing, when we review some of the background of the people of Korah. The fact that the entire tribe of Korah was not destroyed is a testimony of God’s mercy and justice:

**Numbers 16:1-50 (NKJV)**
1  Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of (PELL-eth) Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men;*
2  and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.
3  They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "*You take* too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation *is* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"
4  So when Moses heard *it,* he fell on his face;
5  and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who *is* His and *who is* holy, and will cause *him* to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.
6  Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company;
7  put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be *that* the man whom the LORD chooses *is* the holy one. *You take* too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"
8  Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi:
9  *Is it* a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;
10  and that He has brought you near *to Himself,* you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also?
11  Therefore you and all your company *are* gathered together against the LORD. And what *is* Aaron that you complain against him?"
12  And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up!
13  *Is it* a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?
14  Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"
15  Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them."
16  And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD--you and they, as well as Aaron.
17  Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each *with* his censer."
18  So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.
19  And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.
20  And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
21  "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."
22  Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?"
23  So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
24  "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.' "
25  Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.
26  And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins."
**27  So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.**28  And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for *I have* not *done them* of my own will.
29  If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the LORD has not sent me.
30  But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."
31  Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,
32  and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.

**NLT2 -** 32  The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the men, along with their households and all their followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned.

**YLT -** 32  and the earth openeth her mouth, and swalloweth them, and their houses, and all the men who *are* for Korah, and all the goods,

33  So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.
34  Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up *also!"*
35  And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.
36  Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
37  "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away.
38  The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel."
39  So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,
40  *to be* a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who *is* not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.
41  On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD."
42  Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.
43  Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.
44  And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
45  "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces.
46  So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it,* and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun."
47  Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.
48  And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.
49  Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident.
50  So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

Later, in chapter 26, the LORD speaks to Moses, and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, and instructs them to take a second census of the people:

**Numbers 26:7-11 (NKJV)**
7  These *are* the families of the Reubenites: those who were numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty.
8  And the son of (PAL-YOU) Pallu *was* Eliab.
9  The sons of Eliab *were* Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These *are* the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD;
10  and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.
**11  Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.**

So, these are the same descendants of Korah, to which Psalm 42 and the other 10 Psalms are credited.

During Israel’s Babylonian captivity, the LORD inspired the sons of Korah to writes these songs as a way of encouraging the Israelites. It was through the words of these Psalms that the people of God found comfort and consolation.

The Hebrew word **maskil,** which is used in the subtitle by many translators, is a word meaning: *“to make wise”, “to direct wisely” or “to give instructions.”*

In order to help the Israelite captives in Babylon find relief, the psalmist acknowledges the captives’ longing desire to return to their homeland, Jerusalem, and encourages them to in the meantime, maintain hope in God despite their exiled condition.

In the context of the psalmist being in exile, and wishing to return home, let us again look at the opening verse of Psalm 42:

**1  As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.**

To begin to comprehend the intensity of this opening verse, it would be helpful for us to understand the significance of the word “*pant*.”

What does it mean to pant?

What causes a person or an animal to pant?

If one is panting, how does the animal or person find relief?

**Dictionary.com** defines panting as:

1. Breathing hard and quickly; as after exertion (of energy)
2. Gasping; as for air
3. Longing with breathless or intense eagerness; yearning
4. Short, quick, labored effort at breathing.
5. Breathing with more effort than usual. *(The word Pant)* suggests rapid, convulsive breathing, as from violent exertion or excitement: *to pant after running for the train.*

Catching one's breath in a single quick intake, as from amazement, terror, and the like, or a series of such quick intakes of breath, as in painful breathing: to gasp with horror; to gasp for breath. To thirst or hunger.

Taking this definition and applying it to a deer, we have to ask ourselves the question, “What would cause a deer to pant for water?”

One logical answer would be that the deer has exerted a significant amount of energy in running, perhaps in a desperate effort to get away from a predator.

Unlike humans, who have sweat glands all over their bodies, animals do not have sweat glands in their fur. So whereas humans can release body heat by sweating through their skin, furry animals can only release body heat through the soft parts of their bodies such as the padding underneath their feet, their nose, or their tongue.

When humans or animals pant, it is generally done in an effort to draw in cooler air than their body temperature air. The quickest way for an animal to do this is through its tongue.

Adam Clarke, a late 17th Century and early 18th Century British Methodist theologian and biblical scholar, in his commentary on Psalm 42, shared insights from George Tuberville who lived and died in the 16th Century.

George Tuberville was an English poet, who in 1575 wrote a book entitled, *The Noble Art of Venerie (the art, sport, or practice of hunting)*.

In his book, Tuberville provides us some insight into what may lead a deer to pant for water brooks. In Adam Clarke quoting from Tuberville’s book, Clarke writes:

*The hart is not only fond of feeding near some water for the benefit of drinking, "but when he is hard hunted, and nearly spent, he will take to some river or brook, in which," says Tuberville, "he will keep as long as his breath will suffer him. Understand that when a hart is spent and sore run, his last refuge is to the water; and he will commonly descend down the streame and swimme in the very middest thereof; for he will take as good heede as he can to touch no boughes (limbs of branches) or twygges that grow upon the sides of the river, for feare lest the hounds should there take sent (scent) of him. And sometimes the hart will lye under the water, all but his very nose; and I have seene divers lye so until the hounds have been upon them, before they would rise; for they are constrayned to take the water as their last refuge."*

I think Clarke’s extraction from Tuberville’s writings is a great illustration of the intensity of Psalm 42’s opening verse.

It is a picture of a deer who feels himself exhausted and after nearly being hunted down. The hunter and His dog have been in full pursuit of this deer, and now the deer’s throat is parched with thirst from having run long and hard. The deer’s body is burning with heat and the deer is desperate for water.

When the deer comes to the water, it plunges in, and finally finds relief. The cool water provides the deer a place of refuge and comfort.

In relating this to the psalmist, Psalm 42 is a picture of a person who feels, like the deer, that he has been pursued, spent, exhausted, and at the point of death. Out of desperation, he knows that his best and only refuge is God. He knows that only the living God can sustain his life and keep him from the claws of death.

And so, the psalmist’s soul pants for God, even as the deer pants for the streams of water.

**Psalm 42 – Part 2**

Last week, the LORD introduced us to the theme of this Psalm, which many Bible Translators have noted as subtitles to the Psalm.

Depending on which translation you have, you may see reference to this psalm being a “**Maskil**” of the sons or descendants of Korah. As we saw last week, the word “**maskil**” is a Hebrew word meaning: *“to make wise”, “to direct wisely”,* or *“to give instructions.”*

Also, you may see a reference to Korah in the subtitle. This implies that the Psalm was written to Israelite captives in Babylon.

The writer of the Psalm understands the captive’s desire to return to their native homeland, and he encourages them to, despite their exiled condition, maintain a confident hope in God.

The Psalm opened with a passionate simile in which the desperate panting of a deer for water, who has exhausted itself from running, is compared to the psalmist’s soul panting for the God.

Verse one reads: **Psalm 42:1 (NKJV) -** *1  As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.*

The deer, fleeing from the danger of a hunter and his hound dog, to the refuge offered by the water brook, reminds us of our need to flee from the predatory attacks of Satan, to the safety of Christ.

In fact, it is the Letter of 1 Peter which reminds us to be alert and on guard against Satan’s attempts to devour us. Peter reminds his readers (and us) that other followers of Christ are having to face the same challenges:

**1 Peter 5:8-9 (NLT2)**
**8** Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.
**9** Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

As Christians, our only safety and satisfaction from prowling attacks from the adversary, is to be in continual fellowship with Christ. He, and He alone is our refuge.

Verse 2, which is where we will pick up tonight, reads:

 **2  My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?**

**Psalm 42:2 (NRSV) -** 2 … When shall I come and behold the face of God?

Within the question of *“when shall I come and behold the face of God?”* are the words of a person who recognizes and feels he is a stranger and a pilgrim here in this world. Only a person who is inclined toward God and God’s eternal heavenly dwelling place can utter these words with a sense of deep longing.

Anyone who feels himself at home, here on this earth, will have difficulty relating to a soul’s thirst to behold the LORD face-to-face.

A Person whose soul does not pant after Christ will, alternatively, find himself panting for this present earth to be eternal and himself to be eternal within it. But, when a person pants after beholding the face of Christ, this world affords him or her no home and no real rest.

As the LORD shared with us last week, this Psalm is not credited to David, but is instead credited to the sons of Korah. However, the verbiage in the Psalm, which expresses a longing to return home, is verbiage that would be very applicable to the circumstances in which David found himself during his fugitive years.

We see one such incident of David’s longing to safely be back in the presence of God and the people of God, in 1 Samuel 26:

**1 Samuel 26:1-20 (NLT2)**
**1** Now some men from Ziph came to Saul at Gibeah to tell him, “David is hiding on the hill of (Hah-KY-lah) Hakilah, which overlooks (Jeh-SHY-mon) Jeshimon.”
**2** So Saul took 3,000 of Israel’s elite troops and went to hunt him down in the wilderness of Ziph.
**3** Saul camped along the road beside the hill of Hakilah, near Jeshimon, where David was hiding. When David learned that Saul had come after him into the wilderness,
**4** he sent out spies to verify the report of Saul’s arrival.
**5** David slipped over to Saul’s camp one night to look around. Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army, were sleeping inside a ring formed by the slumbering warriors.
**6** “Who will volunteer to go in there with me?” David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother. “I’ll go with you,” Abishai replied.
**7** So David and Abishai went right into Saul’s camp and found him asleep, with his spear stuck in the ground beside his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying asleep around him.
**8** “God has surely handed your enemy over to you this time!” Abishai whispered to David. “Let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t need to strike twice!”
**9** “No!” David said. “Don’t kill him. For who can remain innocent after attacking the LORD’s anointed one?
**10** Surely the LORD will strike Saul down someday, or he will die of old age or in battle.
**11** The LORD forbid that I should kill the one he has anointed! But take his spear and that jug of water beside his head, and then let’s get out of here!”
**12** So David took the spear and jug of water that were near Saul’s head. Then he and Abishai got away without anyone seeing them or even waking up, because the LORD had put Saul’s men into a deep sleep.
**13** David climbed the hill opposite the camp until he was at a safe distance.
**14** Then he shouted down to the soldiers and to Abner son of Ner, “Wake up, Abner!” “Who is it?” Abner demanded.
**15** “Well, Abner, you’re a great man, aren’t you?” David taunted. “Where in all Israel is there anyone as mighty? So why haven’t you guarded your master the king when someone came to kill him?
**16** This isn’t good at all! I swear by the LORD that you and your men deserve to die, because you failed to protect your master, the LORD’s anointed! Look around! Where are the king’s spear and the jug of water that were beside his head?”
**17** Saul recognized David’s voice and called out, “Is that you, my son David?” And David replied, “Yes, my lord the king.
**18** Why are you chasing me? What have I done? What is my crime?
**19  But now let my lord the king listen to his servant. If the LORD has stirred you up against me, then let him accept my offering. But if this is simply a human scheme, then may those involved be cursed by the LORD. For they have driven me from my home, so I can no longer live among the LORD’s people, and they have said, ‘Go, worship pagan gods.’
20  Must I die on foreign soil, far from the presence of the LORD?** …

The cause of David’s distress, and the cause of the Psalmist’s distress, in Psalm 42, is that they both feel they have been cut off from the presence of God, and therefore, from the worship of God. Consequently, the psalmist mourns his lack of time with God.

Desiring to spend quality time with God is a noble desire. How sad it is, that far too many professing Christians, today, who claim to love Jesus, feel little if any distress from a lack of time spent with Christ.

For many people, their **lack of attendance at church worship**, their **lack of time studying the scriptures,** and their **lack of time in prayer,** causes them no real discomfort. The tasks of daily life disrupting these times with Jesus, seldom produce a sense of void in the person’s life.

Such individuals can go for long extended periods of time, out of fellowship with Jesus and a local body of believers, and have very little thirst for God - until they are faced with a crisis. And, if it requires a crisis before a person longs for Christ, then the person’s longing is not really for Christ, but for the removal of the crisis.

If the person could be freed from the crisis without Christ, oftentimes the person would be perfectly content.

But, for the psalmist, his desire toward God is not precipitated by a desire to run away from a crisis, but a longing to run to something - the presence of God.

In these first three verses of Psalm 42, we see the magnitude of the psalmist’s distress in a two-fold way:

1. **In verses 1 and 2,** we see the panting desperation the psalmist’s soul has for God. The psalmist is passionate and emotional. Just as the deer is very thirsty and greatly desires water, so the psalmist is thirsty for worship with God. He has been without worship with God for a long period and this has made him even thirstier.

But notice, the psalmist’s thirst is not simply for the worship of any deity – his thirst is for “**the living God.”** The “living” God, is the God who possesses life within Himself, and has the power to impart life to the souls of His worshipers.

If we really think about it, this thirst for the “Living God” is not a thirst isolated to lovers of God. Every human being has been created, by God, with a God-size vacuum in them that can only be filled by fellowship with God.

Any human who has a desire for pleasure (and I believe every human does) has a built-in desire for fellowship with God. This desire for pleasure is a God-given desire given to us, in order that we might find pleasure and delight in Him.

The issue is not that humans are void of a desire for God, but that they try to fill that void with every kind of lesser pleasure than God. Too often, the God-given desire for pleasure is perverted by attempting to satisfy that pleasure by worldly means. And, when we consciously or unconsciously attempt to satisfy that thirst with something other than Christ, who is the fountain of living water, we will never find lasting satisfaction. Our satisfaction will be short-lived and very shallow at best.

This was the case with the Samaritan woman at the well. In her conversation with Jesus, Jesus revealed to the woman that she had a thirst for God, which she had been trying to quench by marrying 5 different men, on 5 different occasions. And, when neither of these marriages quenched her thirst, the woman decided she would shack with the 6th man and not bother to marry him.

Rather than endure the pain of a potentially 6th failed marriage, the woman decided she would share the man’s bed and his house, but not his last name. The two of them would play house and have an ongoing affair without making any real commitments to each other.

For both of them, this would give them an easy 50 ways to leave their lover, as sung by Paul Simon:

You just slip out the back, Jack
Make a new plan, Stan
You don't need to be Coy, Roy
Just get yourself free
Hop on the bus, Gus
You don't need to discuss much
Just drop off the key, Lee
And get yourself free

But despite the convenience of the arrangements this Samaritan woman made with her live-in lover, there was still a void in her life.

Then she met Jesus:

**John 4:9-15 (NKJV)**
9  Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.
10  Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."
11  The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?
12  Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"
13  Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,
14  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."
15  The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

When the woman finished talking with Jesus, her desire for physical water from an earthly well, which was the reason she had come to the well, was no longer a priority. Her encounter with Jesus ends with these words recorded by the apostle John:

**John 4:28-29 (NKJV)**
28  The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,
29  "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

1. **Secondly,** as we come to verse 3, we see the magnitude of the psalmist’s distress by the fact that Day and Night, he wept. By day, his face was stained with salty tears; and, by night his pillows were stained with tears.

And all of this because of a void in his worship time with God. The psalmist looks forward to the privilege of being reunited in public prayer and praise with the people of God. Again, I doubt that many people today (present company excluded) would cry if they were unable to worship in a local church.

In fact, there are many who probably look forward to their church having a “snow day”, so they can stay home from worship and not feel guilty.

In verse 3, the psalmist writes:

 **3  My tears have been my food day and night…**

**Psalm 42:3 (NLT2) - 3** Day and night I have only tears for food,…

**Psalm 42:3 (KJV) - 3** My tears have been my meat day and night,…

The word “meat”, in the KJV, literally means “bread.” And so, the Young’s Literal Translation takes this into account in its translation:

**Psalm 42:3 (YLT) - 3** My tear hath been to me bread day and night,…

Here, in an effort to find words to describe his great loneliness and sorrow, the psalmist paints for us a picture of his daily diet. He says his diet has not been food nor bread, but tears only.

His normal appetite for food has been lost, and day and night he is overwhelmed with uncontrollable tears and an intense longing for God. His soulish longing for God outweighs and supersedes any desire he has for physical food. While his soul is parched, his stomach cannot even think about food.

This is not a “voluntary” fast, but an “involuntary” fast. Day and night, constantly, without intermission, the psalmist weeps. He wakes up weeping; he goes throughout the day weeping, he cries himself to sleep at night weeping.

The thirst this psalmist has for God cannot be quenched with Gatorade or Sprite. If it were simply a physical thirst, Pepsi might even be the “right one, baby.” But, his thirst is not physical. It is spiritual. And when our spirit is thirsty, nothing but God “the living water” can satisfy our soul.

While this psalmist is continually crying, day and night, observe the cruelty of his adversaries. As the writer weeps bitterly about not being able to fellowship with God, part B of verse three says he has to endure all this…

**3  …, While they** (my enemies) **continually say to me, "Where *is* your God?"**

Few things can emotionally stab a person so deeply as to imply to him that he has been forsaken and abandoned by the very God in whom he has worshiped and trusted.

The sentiments we get from these words is that the psalmist’s enemies are badgering him with questions and comments of:

* Where is you God, now? You trusted in Him, and He has utterly forsaken you.
* What about your claim that God was your friend? You looked to Him for protection, and He has left you exposed to danger.
* If your God really is a God, then why is He treating you as if you are not one of His own?
* And, if your God loves you as much as you say He does, then why does He show no concern for your welfare?

This is the attitude with which the psalmist has to endure. It was bad enough feeling a deep sense of separation from God, by being in exile. But now, he has to put up with taunts from his enemies, suggesting that he has not only been physically abandoned by God, but that God has emotionally abandoned him.

I can only image the great state of depression the psalmist was tempted to sink into. He was shut out from temple worship in Jerusalem, shut out from the presence of God in that temple, and shut out from compassion from his enemies.

Such a state of deep emptiness, as sad as it was for the psalmist, ought to give us greater but opposite reason for gratitude and joy.

For, because of the work of Christ, we today have the blessed assurance that the God whom we worship, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Instead, He dwells in temples of flesh, which are our hearts.

We do not have to physically go to a structure (like a tabernacle of tent) or to a certain city (like Jerusalem), in order to worship God. His presence is not in tangible structures but is within us.

We do not have to fear abandonment. For He has promised He will NEVER leave us nor forsake us. As a child of God, in whom the Spirit of Christ abides, there is no place we can go and He not be there.

Wherever we are, regardless of the time of day, He is present for us to commune and fellowship with Him.

Any longing and thirst we have for Jesus, can immediately be mitigated (not permanently satisfied) by simply turning our hearts, minds, and spirits toward His inward presence.

The LORD emphasizes the words, *“not permanently satisfied”* because we should always be panting after and desiring to satisfy an unquenchable thirst for Christ.

The worship song, Breathe helps to convey this continual longing for communion with Christ:

**Breathe**

This is the air I breathe. This is the air I breathe. Your holy presence living in me

This is my daily bread. This is my daily bread. Your very word spoken to me

And I I'm desperate for you. And I I'm lost without you

**Psalm 42 – Part 3**

Psalm 42, which is a Psalm of instructions and encouragement to a group of exiled Israelites, opens with a reflection on better days in which the psalmist was able to freely worship God in the House of God. The psalmist is now in a foreign land and longs to return to the comfort of his native homeland.

The Psalm opens with an intense illusion to a deer panting for water after having exhausted itself, perhaps in the process of fleeing from a potential assailant. The deer has been running long and hard; and, with mouth wide open and tongue practically dragging, the deer pants for water to cool down its overheated body. Getting to streams of water also serves as an evasive maneuver to disrupt the deer’s scent which a hunter and his hound dog have been tracking.

The deer’s mouth is parched. The deer is dehydrated and it is extremely thirsty.

For the writer of the Psalm, this is an analogy to what the psalmist himself feels. We see this is the opening three verses of the Psalm:

**Psalm 42:1-3 (NKJV)**
1  As the deer pants for the water brooks, 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 continually say to me, "Where *is* your God?"

In verse 4, the psalmist continues his lament over memories of days gone by. Memories of how joyous life once was in the House of God as he fellowshipped with God and with other worshippers. As he reflects back on these better days, the writer is remembering, and hearing in his mind the joyous songs of praise he and others sang as they made their pilgrimage to the House of God.

Verse 4 reads:

**Psalm 42:4 (NKJV)**
4  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.

**Psalm 42:4 (NLT2)**
4  My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!

When the writer reflects on what he had, in the presence of God, in the House of God; and, what he has now lost, his heart breaks and his soul becomes as weak as water. In Hebrew culture, the belief is that when a soul is in grief, it seems to dissolve and lose its firmness, consistency, or power, and to become like water.

We see this same idea expressed by Job, during the time in which Job reflected on precious memories of how well things used to be. And then, in the very next chapter, he speaks of how all of that was lost.

It’s in Job 29 where Job remembers how good things once were:

**Job 29:2-25 (NLT2)**
2  “I long for the years gone by when God took care of me,
3  when he lit up the way before me and I walked safely through the darkness.
4  When I was in my prime, God’s friendship was felt in my home.
5  The Almighty was still with me, and my children were around me.
6  My cows produced milk in abundance, and my groves poured out streams of olive oil.
7  “Those were the days when I went to the city gate and took my place among the honored leaders.
8  The young stepped aside when they saw me, and even the aged rose in respect at my coming.
9  The princes stood in silence and put their hands over their mouths.
10  The highest officials of the city stood quietly, holding their tongues in respect.
11  “All who heard me praised me. All who saw me spoke well of me.
12  For I assisted the poor in their need and the orphans who required help.
13  I helped those without hope, and they blessed me. And I caused the widows’ hearts to sing for joy.
14  Everything I did was honest. Righteousness covered me like a robe, and I wore justice like a turban.
15  I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame.
16  I was a father to the poor and assisted strangers who needed help.
17  I broke the jaws of godless oppressors and plucked their victims from their teeth.
18  “I thought, ‘Surely I will die surrounded by my family after a long, good life.
19  For I am like a tree whose roots reach the water, whose branches are refreshed with the dew.
20  New honors are constantly bestowed on me, and my strength is continually renewed.’
21  “Everyone listened to my advice. They were silent as they waited for me to speak.
22  And after I spoke, they had nothing to add, for my counsel satisfied them.
23  They longed for me to speak as people long for rain. They drank my words like a refreshing spring rain.
24  When they were discouraged, I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them.
25  Like a chief, I told them what to do. I lived like a king among his troops and comforted those who mourned.

Then suddenly, in a matter of only a few days, Job’s joy turns to sorrow and grief.

In the very next chapter, in Job 30, out of anguish, Job speaks about how his previous honor and integrity before men, had turned to extreme contempt from men. He also speaks of how his prosperity had turned to calamity.

**Job 30:11-17 (ESV)**
11  Because God has loosed my cord and humbled me, they (his fellow men) have cast off restraint in my presence.
12  On my right hand the rabble (mob) rise; they push away my feet; they cast up against me their ways of destruction. *(****NCV*** *– They lay traps for my feet and prepar3e to attack me;* ***NIV*** *– they lay snares for my feet, they build their siege ramps against me.)*
13  They break up my path; they promote my calamity; they need no one to help them.
14  As through a wide breach they come; amid the crash they roll on.
15  Terrors are turned upon me; my honor is pursued as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.
**16  “And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold of me.** *(****NCV*** *– Now my life is almost over; my days are full of suffering;* ***NLT2*** *- And now my life seeps away. Depression haunts my days.)*17  The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.

So, like Job during Job’s suffering, the psalmist describes his own personal soul as being like water. The emotion is that in deep regret for what he lost, the psalmist’s soul is poured out within himself like water being poured out of a vessel. His grief has caused his soul to lose all firmness and consistency.

He thinks about how he once enjoyed participating in observing all the sacrificial ordinances of the LORD (watching the sacrificial animal being slaughtered, the blood poured out on the altar, the fat of the meat being burned along with the sweet aroma of incense unto the LORD) and now he has none of that.

He thinks about how he once sang songs of praise in four-part harmony with other worshippers, and now that joyous communion no longer exists.

There used to be a large crowd of public worshippers, and he used to not just be in the crowd, but he used to lead them in the processing. In fact, the **AMP** translates it this way:

**Psalm 42:4 (AMP) -** 4  … : how I went slowly before the throng and led them in procession to the house of God [like a bandmaster before his band, timing the steps to the sound of music and the chant of song], with the voice of shouting and praise, a throng keeping festival.

It’s very likely that in penning this verse, the writer had in mind, what Psalm 68:24-26 expressed:

**Psalm 68:24-26 (NKJV)**
24  They have seen Your procession, O God, The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
25  The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; Among *them were* the maidens playing timbrels.
26  Bless God in the congregations, The Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

But, sadly, that is all gone now. There, in Jerusalem, we had our holy days and our appointed feasts to commemorate the wonderful works of God. But now, there are no thronging procession to lead, no sacrifices to offer, no joyous songs to sing, and no tabernacle in which to worship.

All that is left is misery in a strange land, mourning in captivity, and enemies taunting him with accusation of God having abandoned him.

Yet, despite his current state, the psalmist rekindles an expectation of one day being able to again join in a great procession of singing praises to the LORD. He’s hopeful that he will again enter the House of God.

With this small flickering remnant of hope, the Spirit of God strengthens the psalmist to press through his grief and despair, and to write verse 5:

With this faint strength, the psalmist engages in a pep rally with his own soul. He presents his soul with several questions that are designed to turn his soul’s focus away from what it **doesn’t** have to what it **does** have - and that is God. Notice what he says to his soul:

**Psalm 42:5 (NKJV) -** 5  Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? **Hope in God…**

**Psalm 42:5 (NASB) -** 5  Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? **Hope in God**,…

**Psalm 42:5 (NCV) -** 5  Why am I so sad? Why am I so upset? I should put my **hope in God...**

**Psalm 42:5-6 (NIV) -** 5  Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your **hope in God**,…

**Psalm 42:5-6 (NLT2) -** 5  Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my **hope in God!**

Observe again the words these various translators used to express the state of the psalmist’s soul:

* Cast down
* Disquieted
* In despair
* Disturbed
* Sad
* Upset
* Discouraged

Seven different adjectives were used to describe the writer’s grief. But then, in describing the answer to the writer’s grief, the translators all used the same solution - **hope in God**!

There is much we can learn from this. Because no matter what our emotional condition or state of mind may be, the one and only true solution is to **hope in God**.

The writer acknowledges his physical geographic location in foreign land, and the incarceration of his carnal body in enemy territory, but then he’s strengthened by the Spirit of God to fight his emotional depression with weapons that are not physical. He suddenly begins engaging in spiritual warfare.

And, although 2 Corinthians 10 had not yet been penned on paper, the Spirit who inspired Paul the write 2 Corinthians, came upon the psalmist.

Notice the parallels between what Paul wrote in about 57 AD, to what the psalmist felt about 600 years earlier, in 580 BC.

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV)**
4  For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
5  casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

One of the most common emotional ailments in human life is depression. The more we dwell on, and talk about, what we don’t have, the more depressed we can become. The more we focus on any problem, the larger it can seem to become.

This psalmist acknowledges his emotional state, but doesn’t let it define him and his faith in God. Rather than continuing to dwell on his soul’s grief, he turns his meditation toward God. Remembering God’s goodness to His people is the best antidote to a spirit of sadness. It takes the person’s mind off the despair of his present condition and refocuses it on thoughts of God’s ability to help rather than his own inability to help himself.

If we should ever find ourselves slipping into depression, there is no better anti-depressant than diving into the Word of God and allowing His Spirit to remind us of His unconditional love, kindness, tender mercies, and omnipotent power to work all things together for good, to those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose.

In his own pep-rally, the psalmist says to his soul, “Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him *For* the help of His countenance.

**Psalm 42:5 (NASB) -** 5  … Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.

**Psalm 42:5 (NCV) -** 5  … hope in God and keep praising him, my Savior and 6  my God….

**Psalm 42:5 (YLT) -** 5  … Wait for God, for still I confess Him: The salvation of my countenance--My God!

**Psalm 42:5-6 (NLT2) -** 5  … I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and
6  my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you— even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar *(MY-zar)*.

The psalmist had poured out his soul in sorrow, but now he is resolved to pour out his soul before God in prayer and praise. He understood that the way to be **relieved of our miseries** is to **remember God’s mercies.**

Notice, the psalmist’s external condition hasn’t changed.

* He is still in exile.
* He is still a captive
* He still can’t lead a precession in joyous singing
* He still can’t enter the House of the LORD
* He still can’t observe the sacrificial ordinances of God

But, despite all the **cant’s** in his life, he brings captive those depressing thoughts, and refocuses on what he **can** **do**. Although discouragement wants to keep knocking at his door, he knows that what he **can do** is remember God’s goodness and praise Him, despite his circumstances.

Just as this is the key for the writer of this Psalm, it is, and has been, the key for every believer throughout every generation. Praising God in the midst of our trials is the key to experiencing deliverance, freedom, and rest, even though our environmental circumstances may not change.

God may not remove our haters, but as He did with David in Psalm 23, He will prepare a table for us, in the presence of our enemies.

God may not deliver us from going into the fiery furnace, but as He did with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, He will be with us, in the fire.

Many people are waiting for their circumstances to change before they feel like praising Christ. But we can’t wait for our situation to improve before praising God. We must learn to do as Jonah did when he had been swallowed up by a great fish.

**Jonah 2:1-10 (NCV)**
1  **While** Jonah was inside the fish, he prayed to the LORD his God and said,
2  “When I was in danger, I called to the LORD, and he answered me. I was about to die, so I cried to you, and you heard my voice.
3  You threw me into the sea, down, down into the deep sea. The water was all around me, and your powerful waves flowed over me.
4  I said, ’I was driven out of your presence, but I hope to see your Holy Temple again.’ *(****KJV -*** *4  Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.)* 5  The waters of the sea closed around my throat. The deep sea was all around me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.
6  When I went down to where the mountains of the sea start to rise, I thought I was locked in this prison forever, but you saved me from the pit of death, LORD my God.
7  “When my life had almost gone, I remembered the LORD. I prayed to you, and you heard my prayers in your Holy Temple.
8  “People who worship useless idols give up their loyalty to you.
9  But I will praise and thank you while I give sacrifices to you, and I will keep my promises to you. Salvation comes from the LORD!“
10  **Then** the LORD spoke to the fish, and the fish threw up Jonah onto the dry land.

**Psalm 42 – Part 4**

**Psalm 42:7 (NKJV) - 7  Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me.**

**Psalm 42:7 (AMP) -** 7  [Roaring] deep calls to [roaring] deep at the thunder of Your **waterspouts**; all Your breakers and Your rolling waves have gone over me.

**Psalm 42:7 (NCV) -** 7  Troubles have come again and again, sounding like waterfalls. Your waves are crashing all around me.

**Psalm 42:7 (NLT2) -**
7  I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me.

These expressions are all metaphors of the psalmist’s deep anxiety. He felt his troubles were rolling over him like the thunderous sounds of many raging waterfalls. Under such conditions, the roaring sound of the water is deafening, while the constant down pour of water makes it a struggle to breathe. The desperate need for air points us back to how the psalmist began this psalm by comparing his desire for fellowship with the living God, as being like that of a deer panting for streams of water.

The visual, of surging tides and billowing waves, takes us back to how our lesson ended last week, with a discussion about Jonah’s troubles inside the belly of the great fish.

There, you may recall Jonah having prayed to the LORD, while yet in the belly of the fish, with seaweed wrapped around his head. In his prayer, Jonah says…

**Jonah 2:3 (ESV)**
3  For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.

In a spiritual sense, this is what the psalmist is experiencing in his separation from God. To compound his distress, his enemies are taunting him with accusations of God having abandoned him.

Here’s how **Adam Clarke,** a 19th Century **(**1760 or 1762 - 1832) British Methodist theologian and Biblical scholar, describes the psalmist’s situation, in his commentary of Psalm 42:

*“The psalmist seems to represent himself as cast away at sea; and by wave impelling wave, is carried to a rock, around which the surges dash in all directions, forming hollow sounds in the creeks and caverns. At last, several waves breaking over him, tear him away from that rock to which he clung, and where he had a little before found a resting-place, and, apparently, an escape from danger. "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" he is then whelmed in the deep, and God alone can save him.”*

The **AMP**, **KJV**, and **YLT** all use the word “waterspout” in place of the word “waterfall”, used by some other translators. When we study this text, with an understanding of the geography of the east, “waterspout” seems to be a more appropriate description.

According to the National Weather Service:

Tornadic **waterspouts** are tornadoes that form over water, or move from land to water. They have the same characteristics as a land tornado. They are associated with severe thunderstorms, and are often accompanied by high winds and seas, large hail, and frequent dangerous lightning.

Below are three images of waterspouts:

  

The original Hebrew word which has been translated “waterfall” or “waterspout” is a word which means to be hollow; like a gutter which gathers water and funnels it to a drain.

These waterspouts have a particular circular motion formed as water is drained down toward the earth, from the large upper spout.

Historians have reported having seen such waterspouts in Syria and the Mount Carmel area. No doubt the psalmist had often seen them as well in his day. He had also observed how ravaging they were, and images of these waterspouts may very well have been in his mind as he searched for words to describe how he was feeling inside.

When the writer says, “deep calls unto deep”, the expression implies that it seemed one wave was calling to another wave, and the waves respond to each other. The idea is that waves are coming in rapid succession of each other.

We saw a similar expression when we studied Psalm 19:

**Psalm 19:1-2 (NIV) -** 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2  Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

The **“day after day”** and **“night after night”** implies uninterrupted continuation. This is how the psalmist, in Psalm 42 felt about his personal troubles.

J.J Hopkins, in his inspired hymn, entitled **Lord, Thy love has sought and found us,** applies the imagery of Psalm 42:7, and with good reason, to Jesus’ death at Calvary. Hopkin writes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Lord, Thy love has sought and found us  Wand’ring in this desert wide;Thou hast thrown Thine arms around us,  For us suffered, bled, and died.Sing, my soul! He loved thee,Jesus gave Himself for me. |
|  | Hark! what sounds of bitter weeping  From yon lonesome garden sweep;’Tis the Lord His vigil keeping,  While His followers sink in sleep.Ah, my soul, He loved thee,Yes, He gave Himself for me. |
|  | He is speaking to His Father,  Tasting deep that bitter cup,Yet He takes it, willing rather  For our sakes to drink it up.Oh, what love! He loved me!Gave Himself, my soul, for thee. |
|  | Then that closing scene of anguish:  All God’s waves and billows rollOver Him, there left to languish  On the cross, to save my soul.Matchless love! how vast, how free,Jesus gave Himself for me. |

After figuratively describing his distress as billowing waves calling to one another and drenching waterspouts, the psalmist then writes, in verse 8:

**Psalm 42:8 (NKJV) - 8  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.**

**Psalm 42:8 (NIV) -** 8  By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me-- a prayer to the God of my life.

**Psalm 42:8 (NLT2) -** 8  But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

**Psalm 42:8 (NCV) -** 8  The LORD shows his true love every day. At night I have a song, and I pray to my living God.

One commentator interpreted this verse as:

*“Every day the Lord will give an especial commission to his loving-kindness to visit me. During the night I shall sing of his mercy and goodness; and alternately mingle my singing with prayer for a continuance of his mercy, and for power to make the best use of these visitations.”*

Despite the hopeless and horrifying picture the psalmist painted, in verse 7, verse 8 lets us know that he is not in complete despair. There remains with him a remnant of hope, in verse 8.

Observe his references to “day” and “night”:

By day, he says the LORD commands His lovingkindness *toward him* (**NLT2** – the LORD “pours his unfailing love upon” *him.*

The word “daytime” seems to refer to times of prosperity, suggesting that the psalmist is still hopeful for the day when he will again return to a state of prosperity. A time in which, as a bandmaster, he would be able to lead a procession of worshippers up to the temple for worship.

His confident hope and assurance of this is expressed in the second part of the verse in which he uses the phrase, “night.” The figurative usage of “night” seems to be in contrast to the figurative usage of “daytime.” Therefore, since “daytime” is the time of prosperity, “night would be the times of calamity, such as what the psalmist is currently experiencing.

As we progress through this Psalm, by now we’ve noticed the writer, like many of us, goes through alternating periods of optimism and pessimism; joy and distress; hope and despair.

In each of our lives, there are seasons in which we feel as if we are on the mountain top. And then, there are seasons in which we feel we are in the valley of despair.

But, despite his current circumstance, the psalmist says in the night (in the midst of his calamities), God’s songs will be with him; and that he will pray to the God who gives life.

Job spoke of God giving songs in the “night” of oppression.

**Job 35:9-10 (NKJV)**
9  "Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.
10  But no one says, 'Where *is* God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night,

In the Book of Acts, Paul and Silas found themselves in the *night* of oppression. After casting the spirit of divination out of a young girl, the young girl’s masters became angry with Paul and Silas, because now that the girl no longer had the spirit of divination, these soothsayers could no longer profit off her.

So, in retaliation, the girl’s masters caught Paul and Silas, drug them into the public marketplace and falsely accused them before the Roman magistrates.

**Acts 16:20-26 (NKJV)**
20  And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;
21  and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."
22  Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods.
23  And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.
24  Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.
25  But at midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God,** and the prisoners were listening to them.
26  Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

There is something freeing and liberating when we are able to worship God in spite of, and because of, our troubles. When times are good, it easy for us to remember God’s unfailing love and His tender mercies.

But, should we fail to remember His goodness during times of prosperity, we will not have a reservoir from which to worship and sing songs to Him during times of despair.

For the writer, in Psalm 42, in the dark night of sorrow and trouble, he was determined to not cease calling on God. Knowing God is the one who had given him life, and that God is the one who is able to sustain and defend life, the psalmist is compelled to go to God in song, prayer, and supplication for mercy.

The psalmist is determined to not let afflictions drive him from God, but to let them drive him to God. As strange and as unwelcomed as they seem, afflictions allowed by God are often the very means God uses and allows to turn our hearts and minds back toward Himself.

Non-believers would suppose that God’s permission of afflictions should drive a person from a “so-called” loving God. But for those who have truly experienced the love of God, afflictions are humbly received from God. They know that all God permits in their lives, springs forth from His love, including afflictions.

Such trials and tests, we know, are not designed to destroy nor demote us, but to promote us to a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

Verse 8 is another antidote for anguish and misery. In this one verse, the LORD reveals three prescriptive pills to help cure distress:

1. The Sympathy of God
2. The Song of God
3. The Supplication to God

Let’s **first** look at **The Sympathy of God.**

**Psalm 42:8 (NKJV) -** 8  The LORD will command His lovingkindness…

Part of the cure is the sympathy or compassion God has for His own children. Notice the psalmist refers to the loving-kindness as being His (The LORD’s) lovingkindness. It is not the writer’s lovingkindness toward God, but God’s lovingkindness toward the psalmist.

In God’s lovingkindness toward His children, God reveals not only His compassion for His children by being kind; but He also reveals His passion in that his kindness is a passionate **loving**-kindness.

We also see His passion in that the command of His lovingkindness toward us is a Divine command - a Divine **command** with Divine **passion** and Divine **compassion**.

So, the first antidote for distress is God’s sympathy, itself. And this sympathy may also be translated, “mercy” or “grace” – God’s unmerited and undeserved favor.

**Secondly**, in verse 8, we see as an antidote for distress, **The Song of God:**

**Psalm 42:8 (NKJV) -** 8  … in the night His song *shall be* with me—

God’s songs, which He gives to us, are the melodies for the miseries we experience. Such songs are particularly keyed for the nights we sometimes experience. Certainly there are many “daytime” songs in which we sing about being happy in the LORD, but then there are songs in the night in which we sing, “I will trust in the LORD until I die.”

In the *nights* of life, worldly songs don’t truly soothe our souls. Country songs about a man’s woman leaving him and taking his dog and his pick-up truck with her, may remind us of how bad off someone else is, but they don’t soothe our soul.

Blues songs about a man’s girlfriend kicking him out for new man, and the new man has now moved in and is drinking the ex-boyfriend’s beer and wine, might make us feel sorry for the ex-boyfriend, but they won’t soothe the aches and pains in our own hearts - **Only Jesus and the songs of God can bring rest and relief.**

Finally, we see the **third** prescriptive antidote for distress, **The Supplication to God:**

**Psalm 42:8 (NKJV) -** 8  … -- A prayer to the God of my life.

**Psalm 42:8 (NLT2) -** 8  … , praying to God who gives me life.

**Psalm 42:8 (NCV) -** 8  … I pray to my living God.

Without question, prayer is also part of the cure for the Christian’s distress. Deliverance from distress is the work of God, but it does not exempt us as saints from praying for the endurance to allow His will to be accomplished in and through our distress.

And, when we pray, we must remember that we pray to the living God, not some dead human, whose sainthood was determined by a committee of other flawed men.

We don’t pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus, for her to intercede in our behalf; we don’t pray to deceased Apostles nor popes in hopes that they will intercede for us, but we pray directly to Jesus Christ, the living Savior, who Himself gives life and sustains life.

**Psalm 42 – Part 5**

**Psalm 42:9-11 (NKJV)
9  I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me?...**

This metaphor of God as a ‘Rock”, is not an unfamiliar metaphor. As the LORD revealed to us from previous lessons, although this Psalm is not credited to David, its verbiage and style has David-like traits.

When we studied Psalm 18, we saw David use this metaphor when David declared God to be his “rock” and his “fortress, and his “deliverer.” In Psalm 18 we read:

**Psalm 18:2 (NKJV)**
2  The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

When David used these words, David was saying that because the LORD was his rock, David was prepared to take refuge in the LORD. The LORD would be David’s defense and strong hold against David’s enemies. The Hebrew word David used was **“sela”** (sell-ah)**;** not to be confused with the Hebrew word **“selah”** (see-lah) which means to pause, meditate on what has just been said, and in the meantime, re-tune your instrument before continuing to play.

The word **“sela”** which David used in Psalm 18, signified those stony, rough clefts in the sides of mountains that afforded shelter to men and wild animals. We see evidence of this usage in the context of the verse, when David uses the word “rock” as a parallel with the words “fortress” and “deliverer.” Together, these three words (rock, fortress, and deliver) indicate a place of refuge and protection.

The Hebrew Scriptures also have another word which is translated “rock” and that is the word **tsûr** (tsoor – pronounced like sure, but with a “t”).

The word **tsûr** means a rock or a boulder, and is used to express a solid foundation on which a person could stand. We see this second meaning of “rock” in:

**Exodus 17:6 (NKJV)**
6  Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Exodus 17 is the account of the first incident in which God instructed Moses to satisfy the people’s thirst by striking a rock. These instructions were given to Moses in response to the people’s complaint about a shortage of water. In their complaint, they asked Moses why he (not God) had brought them out of Egypt to kill them and their children and livestock with thirst.

Verse 6 of Exodus 17 is God’s answer to Moses, after Moses cried out to God, complaining that the thirsty Hebrews were “almost ready to stone” him. This event occurred relatively soon after they left Egypt, perhaps within the first 3-6 months.

Later on, toward the end of their 40 years in the wilderness, the people again complain to Moses about being thirsty. Moses and Aaron again seek the LORD, and the LORD tells Moses:

**Numbers 20:8-12 (NKJV)**
8  "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. **Speak to the rock** before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."
9  So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.
10  And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he **said to them,** "Hear now, you rebels! Must **we** bring water for you out of this rock?"
11  Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.
12  Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

This rock in the desert, from which the children of Israel and their livestock drank, was symbolic of the LORD Jesus Christ. In Exodus 17, the LORD told Moses to “strike” the rock; in Numbers 20, God told Moses to “speak” to the rock.

God’s instructions to Moses (in both Exodus 17 and Numbers 20) were a shadow and type of Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus once being crucified (struck) never again needed to be struck in order to redeem mankind. This was why on the second time the people thirsted, God told Moses to **speak** to the rock rather than strike it. When Moses rebelled and struck the rock, he failed to glorify God in the presence of the assembly, and perverted the symbolism of the crucifixion.

We know the rock symbolized Christ by what Paul says to the church at Corinth:

**1 Corinthians 10:4 (KJV)**
4  And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

So again, the psalmist says that he will say to God, his rock…

**9  … , "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" (NIV -** 9 … Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?")

In Hebrew, the word used for “mourning” is a word which carries the idea of a person being bowed down, mad, or sad, as a person who has been forsaken. It suggests an ashy appearance or darkened skin as a result of having sat in sackcloth and ashes. It’s a portrait of a person who is deeply afflicted,

In fact, the word rendered “oppression” also carries with it the idea of being distressed and afflicted.

Verse 10 goes on to say…

**10  *As* with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me,…**

**Psalm 42:10 (NIV) -** 10  My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me,…

**Psalm 42:10 (NRSV) -** 10  As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me,…

**Psalm 42:10 (AMP) -** 10  As with a sword [crushing] in my bones, my enemies taunt *and* reproach me,…

The last part of verse 10 says…

**10  … (NKJV) While they say to me all day long, "Where *is* your God?"**

When the psalmist says, *“all day long”,* he conveys the idea that he is reproached continually. His enemies begin reproaching him early in the morning and continue until nightfall; they begin the week reproaching him on Sunday, and they continue their reproach until Saturday night. There was never a day in which the psalmist felt he could be in the presence of his enemies without them chiding him.

As we look at verses 9 and 10 together, we see three complaints the psalmist makes:

1. ***The complaint about God’s memory.*** *"Why have You forgotten me?”* It seems to the Psalmist as if God has forgotten about him. The same delusional feeling can overcome us when we feel God has not removed our troubles as quickly as we want them removed.

But, in spite of what seems slow to us, God has not forgotten us in our troubles and afflictions.

1. **The *complaint about mourning.*** *“Why must I go about mourning, (****NIV*** *- oppressed by the enemy***)**?"

This complaint from the psalmist, is actually against the Psalmist, himself, and cannot justifiably be against God. The mourning experienced by the psalmist is a reflection of the psalmist’s lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the wisdom of God.

Out of His own infinite wisdom, God acts according to His own will in all matters, and not according to our personal wishes. And, this acting out of His own will includes His Divine providence in the trials of His creatures; and the duration of those trials.

1. ***The complaint about mocking.*** *“As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;”* As his enemies reproach and mock him, all day long, they ask him, *“Where is your God?”*

The metaphor, referencing “a sword” in his bones, is to indicate just how cruel his enemies are in mocking him. The psalmist is already under tremendous distress, and mercilessly, his enemies aim to hurt him even more by trying to turn him against God.

The question of *“Where is your God”* is designed to imply that God has forsaken him. His God, they imply, in whom the psalmist had boasted was his friend, is now nowhere to be found. Because, if He were, He would have relieved the writer’s distress.

The psalmist had previously mentioned the nature of his reproach in verse 3, and now he mentions it again. And again, as in verse 3, the reproach about, *“Where is your God”* is intended to discourage the psalmist’s trust in God.

Although the writer’s enemies use the cruel question of *“Where is your God”* to increase the writer’s anguish, the question itself reveals the enemies’ ignorance about God. What the psalmist’s enemies don’t know, is that the lack of immediate deliverance by God, does not mean God is not around or that He does not care.

God has His own time table in which He delivers His people, and when He does deliver them, He will put all enemies to silence.

Verse 11 concludes this Psalm:

**11  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.**

As the LORD shared with us last week, the mood and spiritual well-being of the writer has a certain rhythm to it. And, the rhythm it has, is similar to the rhythm of life many people experience in their Christian walk.

Like the psalmist, there are probably times in each of our lives when we experience the roller coaster effect of our fellowship with God. If we are not experiencing it in the present, then perhaps we’ve experienced it in the past.

We often refers to these rhythmic swings as **“some good days and some bad days.”** There are times in which we feel the power and the presence of God flowing through us, and then there are times in which we feel dry and empty.

When things are going smoothly, we feel the flow of God, but when things are unstable and unpredictable, we may wonder if God even knows our situation and how desperate we are for a solution.

But, in the “ups and downs” in life, God ultimately teaches us to maintain a steady trust in Him; and to delight in Him, no matter what the circumstances of life may be.

Paul, the apostle learned this during his experiences with “some good days and some bad days.” In describing a high spiritual experience in his life, Paul writes about his experience in Corinthians 12. In that chapter, Paul reluctantly talked about his credentials as an apostle:

**2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NLT2)**
1  This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord.
2  I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don’t know—only God knows.
3  Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know
4  that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell.

A few verses later, Paul wrote about a “down” time in his life; and he told how the LORD taught him to cherish both the peaks and valleys of life:

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NLT2)**
7  even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.
8  Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away.
9  Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.
10  That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul’s appreciation for how his personal weaknesses made him strong in the LORD, teaches us a lesson about how the “ups and downs” of life work together to strengthen our trust and fellowship with Christ. It’s almost like this:

* No thirst, no search for the living water, who is Jesus
* No enemies, no taunts from enemies which drives us to deliverance from Christ
* No memories of how well things used to be, no hope for the return of better days
* No sorrows, not real understanding of joy

In a sense, **God uses the distresses and disappointments we experience to keep us dependent upon Himself.** They each call our hearts back to the awareness that God cares for us.

But, despite the psalmist’s emotional movement back and forth between despair and praise, he ends the psalm on a note of praise. He began the Psalm with intense words of distress:

**Psalm 42:1 (NKJV)**
1  As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

He ends the Psalm with hope and praise, as he says to his soul:

**11  … Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.**

The psalmist is well aware of how his inner state effects the appearance of his outer countenance. He knows that when his inner soul is stressed, his face is stressed; when his inner spirit is at rest, his facial expression reveal this rest. This is why the psalmist turns to God as the Helper of his countenance (facial appearance).

There’s much we can all learn from this. Subconsciously, our facial expressions, or, our countenance, often reveal what we’re feeling inside. If we are sad, we have a sad face; our eyes are darkened and sad; and our body posture is droopy and sad. If we are joyous, we smile; our eyes are opened wider; and we tend to look up rather than down toward the ground.

The lesson to learn is that, if people tend to shy away from us at times, it could very well be because our countenance suggests we don’t want to be bothered. If people are drawn to us, it could very well be because our countenance communicates openness and approachability.

Few things turn people away as quickly as a “supposedly joyous” Christian who looks like they’ve been eating sour dill pickles, or sucking on lemons every time you see them.

Yes, like this psalmist, we will from time to time experience ebbs and flows in life; increases and decreases; sadness and joy, but in the end, may we all conclude as the author of a popular song, entitled I Won’t Complain does:

**I Won’t Complain**

I've had some good days, I've had some hills to climb
I've had some weary days, And some lonely nights
But when I look around and I think
Things over...all of my good days,
They outweigh my weary days - I won't complain

Sometimes my clouds hang low, I can hardly see the road
I ask the question-"Lord...Why so much pain?"
But He knows what's best for me, Although my weary eyes cannot see
And I say, Thank you Lord - I won't complain...

He dries all my tears away, Turn my dark nights into days
And I say, Thank you Lord - I won't complain...

God has been good to me. He's been so good to me
Better than you or this old world could ever be
He's been so good, He's been so good to me...

When my friends turn their backs on me, Thank you, Lord
When the bills are due, Thank you, Lord
In the midnight hour, Thank you, Lord. I won't complain