

INTRODUCTION

Christians (followers of Jesus) are joyous people and joy should characterize the lives of people transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, life on this side of Heaven is lacking and can be dark. Sin and the fall have blemished our experience of the life God intended for us. And we feel that ache inside us that longs for everything to be made right, because for now it is not.

So, it is not a matter of if, but when—and when suffering takes place in your life, the next big question is, “*How will you face it?*” *Will you wallow in it? Will you be devastated by it?* Or will you sing with Horatio Spafford – hymn writer, “*Whatever my lot, you [God] have taught me to say: ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’*” You can—but you need God’s Word to train your heart.

It has been said that there is a Psalm for every season of life. Let’s once again turn to God’s word for help. Please turn in your Bible to **Psalm 42**. We need Scriptures like **Psalm 42** to plant our feet in, so that when we hurt, we can do it well (in a way that pleases the God who has given us hope). So, let’s learn from the words of the psalmist today.

Psalm 42 is the classic psalm for spiritual longing. Helps us give voice to what we may be feeling right now. This psalm is considered a lament, not a complaint (though both words can be used synonymously).

What is the difference? “*The difference between complaining and lamenting is this: complaining is a cry _____ God; lamenting is a cry _____ God.*”

The psalmist, identified as one of the sons of Korah, knew the experience far too well. While opinions vary on the background of this pair of psalms, at the very least, we know that he felt isolation from the normal fellowship and worship of God’s people. The superscript (or ascription) identifies it as a **Maskil**, one of thirteen with that identity, implying a psalm to make you wise or prudent. So, this psalm instructs and teaches. While recounting his own experience of despondency by his acute feeling of God’s absence, the psalmist seeks to teach others as well.

Sermon in a sentence: _____ may pursue us, but it does not have the final word. _____ does.

But how do we move from despair to the kind of confident hope in God that we find in this psalm?

I. Keep it _____ before the Lord (42:1-4)

The subject “*is the cry of a man far removed from the outward ordinances and worship of God, sighing for the long loved house of his God; and at the same time it is the voice of a spiritual believer, under depressions, longing for the renewal of the divine presence, struggling with doubts and fears, but yet holding his ground by faith in the living God.*” C.H. SPURGEON

Like **Psalm 63**, these psalms picture intense longing for the Lord. They rebuke the casual religion practiced by so many, where occasional nods toward God substitute for daily passion and longing to know Him and enjoy Him. Through the psalmist recounting his struggle, he also offers glimpses of what it looks like to long for the Lord’s presence in spiritual growth.

Please note that...

A. This longing is _____ felt. (42:1-2)

The writer does not use a camel for this model of longing for the Lord. Camels seem to carry their own water cooler with them. While we can only last a few days without water, camels have the capacity, especially in winter, to go months without water. **But not so with deer—finding water takes precedence over everything for its survival.** Do you know that inward desire for the living God?

B. This longing is _____ . (42:2)

He had no desire for a cheap, emotional religious experience. No, he thirsted “*for God, for the living God.*” The feeling of absence of the Lord and the inability due to exile of gathering in corporate worship spurred more intense aim.

C. The clearly aimed longing caused him to _____ the Lord. (42:3-4)

What does he remember? **His longing for God makes him think about _____.**

In his soul desperation and despondency, the psalmist teaches us the need for corporately seeking God, for worshiping Him together. It was not in further isolation that he would emerge from the pit of despair but in the gathering of fellow believers, renewing their love for Christ through passionate worship.

So, as we endure this momentary crisis and experience the separation be honest...be real with the Lord. The psalmist is honest about his circumstances and the state of his soul—he longs for nearness to the Lord and to be back in that place, praising Him in the midst of the assembly, and he keeps it real in the midst of the hurt.

What next? Glad you asked...

II. _____ to yourself the _____ about God (42:5-7, 9)

The Psalmist does not wallow in despair; the Psalmist begins to preach to himself. **The key to avoiding depression is talking to yourself much more than listening to yourself.** Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his book, **Spiritual Depression**, talks about **Psalm 42**. *“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself and not talking to yourself? ... this man’s treatment was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul?’ he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: ‘Self, listen for a moment. I will speak to you.’”*

A. The psalmist asks _____ questions

So as the psalmist reflects, he looks inwardly, asking some difficult questions. *‘Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me.’ Psalm 42:5a, 11a ‘I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” Psalm 42:9*

B. The psalmist preaches the answer _____

Here’s some God-glorifying, Christ-exalting self-talk! What’s the message? What does he tell himself?

1. God is _____

- **Psalm 62:5**, *“My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.”*
- **Psalm 121:1-2** *“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? [He answers himself] My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”*

2. God is _____

- **Psalm 139:7-12:** *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,’ even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.”*

3. God is _____

- **Ecclesiastes 7:14:** *In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.*

How do we move from dealing with isolation and possible despair to confident hope in God? *First, keep it real with the Lord. Second, preach to yourself the truth about God and lastly...*

**III. When overwhelmed, _____ to the Lord;
when overjoyed _____ the Lord (42:8-11)**

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? Here are my two encouragements as we wrap:

- Place your _____ in the God of hope

- _____ to your soul