**Desire for the Living God**

***Psalm 42:1-5***

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Introduction: Psalms 42 & 43 combine to provide the words of a Jewish exile, longing to be back in Jerusalem & able to worship at the Temple. Some suggest the two psalms were originally one & then later divided. The title reads, “To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.” The word “Maschil” suggests contemplation, a lesson, or a skillful psalm of understanding. Korah was the grandson of Kohath (Numbers 16) who was killed for his rebellion against God. Yet his sons escaped judgment (Numbers 26:11) & some of them became worship leaders in the sanctuary (& later the Temple – see I Chron. 9:19; 26:1-19). The lesson to learn here is that “God does not hold the sins of the fathers against the children” (RSB). Though some (like Spurgeon) suggest David wrote these Psalms, it seems best to conclude it was an exiled Levite, now living (held captive?) among the Gentiles far North of Palestine. He is oppressed & questioned by these Gentiles who taunt him concerning his faith in God. He longs to return to Jerusalem & asks the question *“Why?”* 10 times in these 2 psalms. There are 3 notice-able divisions, marked off by the refrain in 42:5, 11, & 43:5. I suggest these divisions give us: (1) the psalmist’s desire for the living God; (2) his despair at the absence of worshiping God in the Temple; & (3) his declaration of praise to God even where he is at the time. Let’s consider just the first division tonight.

I. The **thirsting** of the psalmist (:1-2)

A. The metaphor (or simile) > *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks…”*

1. As a thirsting deer (*“hart”* – female “hind”) seeking water in a time of drought?

2. As a chased deer pursued by dogs (or coyotes, wolves) or hunters, to the point of exhaustion?

3. As a wounded deer, seeking water after being shot?

B. The message > *“so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”*

1. His quest:

a. Consider that water is necessary to sustain physical life [“Hunger can be endured for a time

but severe thirst is intolerable; every effort will be made to quench it” (RSB).]

b. Compare that fellowship with God is necessary to maintain spiritual life (Philippians 3:10).

2. His question:

a. When will he be able to make the pilgrimage again to Jerusalem?

Application: “Vain are all pretenses to religion where the outward means of grace have no

attraction. David was never so much at home as in the house of the Lord; he was not

content with private worship; he did not forsake the place where saints assemble, as the

manner of some is” (Spurgeon). Lesson learned from COVID?

b. When will he be able to meet with the living God?

Application: “Alas, how many appear before the minister, or their fellow men, & think that

enough! ‘To see the face of God’ is the nearer translation of the Hebrew; but the 2 ideas

may be combined – he would see his God & be seen of him; this is worth thirsting after!”

(Spurgeon).

Summary: Consider Matthew 5:6 & ask yourself, “How is my thirst?”

II. The **“eating”** of the psalmist (:3a)

A. The metaphor (or simile) > *“My tears have been my meat day & night…”*

1. This speaks of his grief since he is not able to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

2. This shows the outward expression of his grief – tears night & day.

B. The meaning >

1. His tears have taken the place of his daily food; he has no appetite.

2. His tears offer some relief – Psalm 80:5.

III. The **taunting** of the psalmist (:3b)

A. *“They”* – his tormentors, enemies; the Gentiles surrounding him.

B. “The bitterest ingredient in his cup of sorrow is the taunt of the heathen that his plight

demonstrates the impotence or indifference of the God Whom he serves” (Kirkpatrick).

(Compare the taunts by Christ’s enemies as He hung on the cross – Matthew 27:39-43.)

IV. The **remembering** of the psalmist (:4)

A. He remembers his custom of conducting pilgrims to Jerusalem for the feast days. To

*“remember”* suggests “to think about in a focused manner, a fuel for faith” (RSB).

B. “Memory can be either a blessed medicine for the troubled heart or it can open new wounds &

keep the pain fresh. The writer poured out his soul in prayer, pleading for the Lord to set him free

& take him back to Jerusalem” (Wiersbe).

Application? *“Multitude”* – “What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole

congregation by the theatrical prettinesses of a quartet, the refined niceties of a choir, or the blowing

off of wind from inanimate bellows & pipes! We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it”

(Spurgeon).

V. The **questioning** of the psalmist (:5a)

A. This refrain is found 3 times in these 2 psalms.

B. The psalmist questions his own soul – “His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with

his sorrows” (Spurgeon).

C. The psalmist is *“cast down”* (depressed) & *“disquieted”* (restless, disturbed).

VI. The **praising** by the psalmist (:5b)

A. His hope in the Lord – an expression of his faith.

B. His help from the Lord – an expectancy of his faith:

1. *“Countenance”* – the face of the Lord, indicating His favor (cf. Numbers 6:24-26).

2. “His face is what he seeks & hopes to see & this will recover his low spirits, this will put to

scorn his laughing enemies, this will restore to him all the joys of those holy & happy days

around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer” (Spurgeon).

Conclusion: Consider again Matthew 5:6, *“Blessed are they which do hunger & thirst after righteous-ness: for they shall be filled.”* How is your hunger & thirst for the things of God – for the presence of God? “True believers can only be satisfied by the presence, grace, & comfort of God. Experiencing God’s presence should be like a desperate thirst that must be quenched. If depressed, we need to preach to ourselves, even to argue with ourselves, to hope in the Lord & keep seeking Him. In times of spiritual exhaustion, to what lengths are you willing to go to find your satisfaction in the Lord?” (RSB).

Spurgeon suggests that verse 5 is comparable to the singing of Paul & Silas while in the Philippian jail. It loosened their chains & shook the prison walls. Is this the testimony of your hope & your help tonight?