

Friday: *Fix it God!*

Read: Psalm 43:1-3 **43**¹ Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!² For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?³ Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

Reflect:

Here it seems the angst in the psalm picks up a bit. Earlier the psalmist talks about being “forgotten” (42:9), here he talks about being “rejected”. This same word is used to describe how utensils once used for worship were discarded (2Chron29:19). Just as those utensils had no say in the matter we can be sure the psalmist feels as if he has had little say in the exile as well.

Yet despite his past (and even present) helplessness, once again we see what the psalmist desires – to worship God in the Temple. However, he knows this desire alone is not enough – He needs God leading him if he is going to overcome the lies of his enemies (cf. v3- Your light and Your truth).

The idea of God being a “refuge” (or stronghold) is that of protection. It is easy to see how this word picture fits in with the deliverance talk in verse 1, which paints a picture of a defense.

Pray: Pray for *Emporia Christian School & Shiloh Home of Hope* – missions New Life supports. Ask God for His perception about your struggles; seek Him to see if changes need to take place within you. Pray for unity within the Body of Christ (including New Life).

Respond:

Read John 17:15-23 and ponder the connections between it and this psalm.

Are you more apt to pray to be led by God or to seek vengeance on your enemies? Read Romans 12:17-21.

When you are experiencing difficulties in life how do you seek relief? Do you turn to things of the world? Do you desire worship of God with your “family”? What?

Saturday: *Confidence*

Read: Psalm 43:4-5 ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Reflect:

It is once again made clear what the psalmist seeks, worship of God in His Temple. In fact, with the repeated words of verse 5 (cf. Wednesday) we see trust in God runs throughout this psalm. This confidence flows from the realization that God (called by the covenant name YHWH in v8) is always at work and is always faithful.

Just as the Hebrew concept of “soul” is different than that of many today (cf. Wednesday), so too is the concept of “salvation”. We often think of salvation meaning things will be OK in the future, like when we are in “heaven”. Yet for the Hebrew mind salvation had a very here and now sense to it (e.g., Exod14:13; 1Sam14:45; Isa56:1). In other words the psalmist is anticipating God doing something – tangible (Lord willing we will look more at this in August ☺).

Have you noticed the descriptors of God this week? He is the living God (42:2), my salvation (42:5,11; 43:5), God of my life (42:8), my rock (42:9), a refuge (43:2), and my exceeding joy (43:3). What an amazing list! God is alive, a place of safety, a source of action, all that I ultimately need – and that brings great joy (a defiant nonetheless in the face of all circumstances).

Pray: Pray for *Strong Tower Ministries* and *LCREF* – missions New Life supports. Ask God to bring to mind instances of His faithfulness toward you. Ask God’s blessing on our time of worship tomorrow at the church building – ask Him what you need to do in order to be prepared.

Respond:

How has God been faithful to you this past week? What stories of His faithfulness have you heard?

If you could pick one way for God to act on your behalf right now – what would it be?

What is the greatest source of “joy” for you of the descriptors to the left?

Why...

July 4 – 11

This week we look at a “lament psalm” – which can be defined as an outcry by the author (i.e., psalmist) while in a situation which God can change if He is willing and the psalmist is responsive (based on Bernhard W. Anderson’s definition in *Out of the Depths*).

Many laments follow a similar pattern and contain certain elements. Below is a way of breaking down Psalms 42 & 43 (which are together as one psalm in many manuscripts). I encourage you to evaluate how it is broken down – feel free to disagree, but also be inspired to compose your own lament for trying times (or while in them).

Address to God:

42¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

Complaint in distress:

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 say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴ These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

Confession of trust:

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶ and my God.

Complaint in distress:

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. ⁷ Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.

Confession of trust:

⁸ By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Complaint in distress:

⁹ I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” ¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”

Confession of trust:

¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Petition:

43¹ Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me! ² For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? ³ Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

Vows of praise/thanksgiving – based on trust:

⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Monday: *Longing*

Read: Psalm 42:1-2 ¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams, 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?

Reflect:

Sometimes the things we think go without saying need saying. Animals need water to survive (e.g., the deer in v1). Likewise humanity needs God to survive. Whether it is admitted by everyone or not, if God was not involved in our world we would cease to exist – left to ourselves we self-destruct. He is the source of all good things, even for those who do not (or will not) acknowledge Him.

Another “goes without saying” aspect of this verse is we all long for God. Every person who has ever lived, is living, and ever will live all have a longing for God in common. Sadly many find temporary fulfillment in the things of the world and not ultimate fulfillment in God (perhaps more sadly, all of us have/do at points too). Eventually the temporary thing(s) will leave a person wanting, so they search for either “better” of the things they have, different things altogether, or lasting fulfillment (i.e., God).

Notice the longing of the psalmist; he longs to “come and appear” before God. This is worship language in the Old Testament. The psalmist knows the “panting” of his soul can only be quenched by encountering the living God.

Respond:

What are one or two self-destructive patterns in your life that God’s Power has enabled you to overcome?

What lessons have you learned of seeking fulfillment in places other than God? Have you shared them?

Do you long for Sunday morning gatherings?

Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and 33 Church in Olathe, KS (who is supported by the CEA, a mission New Life supports). Just like last week, be honest with God about your wants; ask Him for them – but also pray for a heart that desires what He wants more. Pray people (specific people) will be not only dissatisfied with everything, but also restless until they “find” God.

Tuesday: *What is Missing*

Read: Psalm 42:2b-4 When shall I come and appear before God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴ These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

Reflect:

Here we see more clearly the reason for this song of lament. The psalmist has been involved in times of worship at the Temple of God in the past...and he misses it. In fact he misses it so much he has either completely lost his appetite or is purposefully fasting.

It is unknown why the psalmist cannot be at the Temple of God. Perhaps he is unclean (for some reason) and therefore is not allowed into the Temple. Perhaps this is during the time of exile when (most of) the Jewish people were physically removed from the land of Israel. Regardless of the source of separation, the desire is still the same, being in God’s Temple (i.e., His presence).

Yet we should also notice the psalmist is not seeking merely an individual experience (i.e., he is not wanting to encounter God by himself), but a communal one. This is much different than our culture. Ours is one of individualism first and community second. Theirs was one of community gave you your identity – the difference is huge.

Respond:

Do you fast? Why or why not? There seems to be three main reasons to fast **1)** to mourn over sins (personal and national), **2)** to appeal to God, **3)** to show the body who is boss (physical cravings will not dictate actions).

When was the last time you felt far from God’s presence? Why?

Would you rather experience God by yourself or with others?

Pray: Pray for LCS, MCC, and OCC – missions New Life supports; pray for the staff and faculty as they both relax and prepare for the upcoming year of school. Pray Brent McCrory – the Preaching Minister of New Life – will submit more and more to God. Thank God for some uplifting experiences of worship you have had.

Wednesday: *A Common Thread*

Read: Psalm 42:5 ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Reflect:

These words are repeated three times in these two psalms (Ps42:5,11; 43:5). This is another reason why many scholars think the (now) two separate psalms were originally one. These repeated words help us to see that despite present circumstances, ultimately the psalmist trusts in God (in fact he seems, possibly, disappointed in his cast down soul).

For the Hebrew mind the “soul” was not some formless entity trapped in a physical body (this is more Greek in thought; which has influenced much current understanding and belief of the soul). By “soul” the psalmist meant his entire being – hence the (apparent) fasting in v3. It is not only something “internal” that is affected by this longing for God, but indeed the entire being of the psalmist.

The word for “turmoil” is a noisy word. It depicts “howling” dogs (Ps59:6), “growling” bears (Isa59:11), and the “roar” of water (Jer51:55). The imagery of “cast down” brought out by the LXX (Greek Septuagint) is that of surrounded by grief. Clearly there is a great deal of unrest within the psalmist.

Pray: Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp – a mission New Life supports. Pray Bob Griffin & Larry Hayes – elders of NLCC – will find peace in the word “for” and be comforted by their resolve to serve God no matter what. Confess to God some of the things which cause turmoil in your life – seek His perspective on them.

Respond:

When was the last time your “inner” disconnection with God impacted your “outer” appearance?

What things of the world make it “too noisy” for you to concentrate on God?

Notice the little word “for” in verse 5. How much difference does that word make in the psalm? How much can it make in your life?

Thursday: *Irony*

Read: Psalm 42:9-10 ⁹ I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” ¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”

Reflect:

If this psalm originates during a time of exile it contains a great deal of irony. First off the psalmist asks why God has forgotten him. In reality it is not that God has forgotten, but in fact remembered. God was very upfront with His people, ‘you serve and worship Me and I will bless you...if you turn your back on Me you will be punished’ (e.g., Deut27-28). Therefore the exile being experienced by the Hebrew people was due to God’s perfect memory, not His forgetfulness.

Similarly, the oppression by “the enemy” in reality is God working out His purposes of seeking to bring His people back to Himself (e.g., Isa45; Dan1:2). The mocking of “Where is your God?” likely infers an attitude of superiority. E.g., since the Babylonians conquered the Hebrews their god (e.g., Marduk) was more powerful than YHWH (the only true God, God of the Hebrews) – or so they thought.

We need to keep in mind the words of trust in God found in 42:5,11, and 43:5. Despite the dire circumstances the psalmist really did trust in God. Perhaps he was one continually seeking to call the Hebrew people back to covenant faithfulness despite their current circumstances in exile.

Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills – a mission New Life supports. Pray Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, & Mike Haag – deacons of New Life – will continue to live out the implications of a citizenship in heaven. Ask God to remind you of His faithfulness whenever you feel abandoned.

Respond:

When was the last time you felt as if God had forgotten you?

While we are not in exile, we are foreigners because our citizenship is in heaven (cf. Phil1:27; 3:20; 1Pet2:11) – right?

Note v8; God is working all the time. How is this comforting to you?