

Sermon Outline

“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”: FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD

“HOPE IN GOD”: ASSURANCE FOR THE GOD-LONGING HEART (PSALM 42:1-11)

I. Introduction

II. A Prayer of Wisdom

- A. Psalm 42 is a “Maskil of the sons of Korah.”
- B. The sons of Korah were descendants of Levi.
 - 1. According to 1 Chronicles 9:19-21, the sons of Korah were the custodians of the tabernacle.
 - 2. They were also put in-charge of the music at the temple.
- C. The Psalm is called a *maskil*.
 - 1. We are not quite sure what *maskil* means.
 - 2. Since the word is related to the idea of wisdom, a *maskil* might be a hymn/prayer of wisdom.
- D. Based on the content of the Psalm, the wisdom it imparts has to do with helping people who suffer.
—Specifically, Psalm 42 teaches sufferers how to express their suffering as well as their longing to be in God’s presence.

III. My Soul Thirsts for God (Psalm 42:1-2)

- A. The Psalm begins this way:
 - 42:1-2: “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?”
- B. Too often, we *don’t* in fact desire God to this extent.
 - 1. While we do desire God, there are so many things to soothe that ache in our hearts! (e.g. food, entertainment, shopping, work etc.).
 - 2. But Abba wants us to keep praying, to keep on asking.
 - 3. Just by praying these words, we are allowing his Holy Spirit to work in our hearts to create a desire for God.

- C. We should desire the God of Israel, because unlike the gods of the world, the LORD God is the “living God.”

IV. “Where Is Your God?” (Psalm 42:3)

- A. If we long for God, we can expect opposition.
- B. Longing for God is itself part of the spiritual conflict. The Enemy will use many things to get us to tire of our pursuit of God.
- C. In verse 3, the singer of the Psalm admits that he is wrecked with grief.
○ Ps 42:3: “My tears have been my food day and night...”
- D. But even as he is consumed by grief, he gets no rest. Instead, he hears taunting voices of his enemies.
○ Ps 42:3: “... all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’”
- E. “Where is your God?” That’s the question...
• believers in depression are hearing today
• many of our younger brothers and sisters wrestle with as doubts and questions plague their minds.
• our own consciences say to us when we are plagued with guilt.

V. The Glory Days (Ps 42:4)

- A. The singer of the Psalm remembers when he would lead people to the house of God.
○ 42:4: “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.”
- B. But those words may resonate with us as well.
1. Like the person described in this Psalm, we may look back to the days when we felt God’s presence keenly, when our faith was young and vibrant, and when rejoicing in God came so easily.
2. In those days, we would speak boldly and courageously about the Lord. We led people “to the house of God...” We guided people to Christ.
- C. But for various reasons, those days are long gone. Now, we are tired. Our souls are parched. We long for God. But we have the voices to contend with. And they show no mercy to us.

VI. “Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul?” (Ps 42:5)

- A. Instead of simply listening to the life-draining words of his opponents, the Psalmist speaks up to himself.

- B. As we listen to how the Psalmist responds, we are being taught wisdom. We are being taught how to stand up in our own seasons of spiritual dryness and depression—and, in one sense, reclaim our hearts for God.
- C. First: *Speak to your own mind; call the voices themselves into question.*
 - Ps 42:5: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?”
 - 1. Consider where the doubt will lead. While question “Where is your God?” isn’t exactly an overt temptation to sin, it calls into question God’s love for us, which could lead to discouragement, and a surrender to sin.

VII. “Hope in God” (Ps 42:5, 6a)

- A. Second: *Sing a new song, preach a new message, speak a new word of hope to ourselves.*
 - Ps 42:5-6: “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation⁶ and my God.”
- B. To hope in God is to trust in God. It’s to rest your life on God. It’s to entrust your destiny to God. It is to allow yourself to fall into God’s lap because that is still the safest place to be.
- C. To hope in God is to go back to the beginning: Salvation is by faith/hope in God alone.
- D. One can never outgrow simple faith in God and in Christ. If anything, the Christian life is a struggle to keep on hoping in Christ alone for our salvation.

VIII. Why Hope in God? (Ps 42:5, 6)

- A. Why should we hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the God of Israel? The reasons the Psalmist gives for hoping in God are also very important.
- B. First: “...for I shall again praise him...”
 - 1. The Psalmist is confident that God will pull him through this season of difficulty.
 - 2. Whatever challenges are arrayed against him, he is confident that those too shall pass.
 - 3. When you are feeling dry in your spirit, speak to yourself: “I shall again praise him...”
- C. Second: the Lord God is “my salvation and my God” (vv 5-6a).
 - 1. The singer of the Psalm is confident that he will praise God yet again, because the LORD God of Israel is his Savior and his God.
 - 2. The LORD God of Israel has committed himself to the singer of the Psalm.

3. The Lord will come through for him; provide for him; protect him; and bring him home to the temple once again. That is why the Psalmist has the assurance that no matter how dark the night gets, he will praise God yet again.

IX. I Say Again, “Hope in God” (Ps 42:11)

- A. We know that this is the message of hoping in God is the central wisdom of this Psalm, because the sons of Korah close the Psalm with the same refrain.
 - Ps 42:1: “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.”

X. The Lord Jesus Christ Is Your Salvation and Your God

In Christ Jesus, the almighty God of the universe, the holy God of Israel, has become “my salvation and my God.” Hope in God. Hope in Christ. He is your Savior and God. He will not let you go. He will bring you home. Don’t let the voices win.

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Is there anything about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. What kind of book is the Psalms? How can a believer read and use the book of Psalms?
3. What kind of a Psalm is Psalm 42?
4. What kind of wisdom does Psalm 42 impart to us—especially to sufferers?
5. “While we do desire God, there are so many things to soothe that ache in our hearts! (e.g. food, entertainment, shopping, work etc.)” Discuss.
6. Why, according to v 2, should we desire the God of Israel?
7. What is the tormenting thought that the Psalm singer has to deal with (v 3)? Do you or anyone else you know struggle with this question?
8. According to v 5, what is the two-pronged tactic that Christians can use to deal with the accusing, discouraging voices?
9. On what grounds can we hope in God (vv 5, 6)?
10. The Psalm closes in v 11 with an echo of v 5. What does this tell us about the Psalm's main message?
11. Ask God to give you grace to hope in him.