

Depression (Psalm 42)

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Notes

1. The Sons of Korah were a group of Priests charged with the ministry of song (2 Chronicles 20:19)
2. The heading to the Psalm probably implies that it was used in Worship and was sung. (Think of how much music – even country music-can help us)
3. The word “maskil” comes from a Hebrew verb which means “to make one wise.

Quick Overview

Externally, this guy's circumstances were crushing. Look at verse 3. Look at verse 10. There must have been much internal emotion in this turmoil. In verses 5 and 11 he says he was “cast down” and “in turmoil.” In verse 3 he says “my tears have been my food. In verse 7 he says he feels like he is drowning. Yet, in all of this, he is fighting for hope (verse 5 and verse 11). This psalm leaves me fighting for the joyful experience of hope and freedom from constant turmoil.

Six Ways He Responds to Discouragement

1. He asks God “why?” Verse 9. The word “forgotten is an overstatement. In verse 8 we find that he knew certain things to be true. But in it all, he means he thinks it LOOKS like God has forgotten him. It feels that way. If not, why would all of this be happening to him? In trouble, we are not very careful with our words – but God knows our heart and the struggle we feel. In Job 6:26 there is an interesting phrase “words for the wind.” Job told his friends, “Do you think you can reprove words, when the speech of a despairing man is wind?” He is saying “now is not the time to worry about the words. Even if you don't say some of the ones you think, they are there because of the hurt. Why is a legitimate question? We are all still asking it and will till the day we die.
2. He affirms God's Sovereign Love verse 8 and verse 5. He says that even if it looks like God has forgotten him, He will not let go of God. Verse 7 describes the crashing circumstances surrounding him. However, he never loses his grip on the absolutes that he knows are true about God – even in trouble.
3. He sings! It is not a great song of jubilant hope (verse 8). Jubilant hope is what he is seeking. But is it not just a little amazing that he “sings his prayer?” The hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote these words to be sung:

How long will you conceal your face?
My God, how long delay?
When shall I feel those heavenly rays
That chase my fears away?

How long shall my poor laboring soul
Wrestle and toil in vain?
Thy Word can all my foes control
And ease my raging pain

This is definitely not a jubilant song, but it is a song of faith.

4. He preaches – to himself Notice verse 5. Learning to preach the truth to ourselves is one of the best things we can ever do. The great preacher M. Lloyd Jones said this:

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are LISTENING to yourself rather than TALKING to yourself? This man in Psalm 42 knew he needed to talk truth to himself. “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” he asks. You see, on this side of the cross, the greatest hope we have is Christ crucified for our sins and His triumph over death. Preach to yourself! “Listen, self: If God is for you, who can be against you? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for you, how will he not also with him graciously give you all things? Who can bring any charge against you as God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the One who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who is interceding for you. Who shall separate you from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:31-35)

5. He remembers God’s Past Help Verse 4. Thinking about what has been done for you in the past is a great step toward future assurance. It may not take away the hurt, dull the pain, or remove the sorrow. However, it will remind you that God is faithful – always.

6. He thirsts for God verses 1,2. What makes this so beautiful, and so crucial for us, is that he does not ask for relief from his sorrow. He is not longing primarily for escape from his enemies.. It is not wrong to want relief. It is normal to want to get rid of hurt. But the best thing we can do for the accomplishment of these purposes is to seek refuge in the heart of God.

Conclusion

A translation of the end of verse 2 is: “When shall I come and see the face of God.” The final answer is found in 1 John 14:9 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. When we see the face of Christ, we see the face of God. We see the glory of His face when we hear the gospel. His death and His resurrection.

* Notes taken from a sermon by John Piper