

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 2nd February 2025 am

TITLE: "Hope in God" TEXT: Psalms 42 and 43

Scripture references from the ESV

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?"

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.

Psalm 43: 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!

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.

We have been created for God and by God. Paul tells us (Colossians 1:15-16): **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**

all things were created through him and for him.

- We exist, not through some random act of evolution, but by the creative power of God, who, by Christ, created us from the dust of the ground and breathed his own breath into our souls, all for his glory.
- We exist, not to find our ultimate satisfaction in the physical things God created, but to find our ultimate satisfaction in God himself.

We exist to have our souls satisfied in God, enjoying daily fellowship and bringing him glory by delighting in him.

- Our journey ends with God, when, stripped of everything from this life, we will be the most joyful we have ever been.
- It is the height of sin to live life for your own sake, with no thought of God, and to satisfy the longing of your heart in everything God gives, but not in God.

Those of us who have been purchased from a life of slavery that belittles God have a double responsibility to seek our ultimate joy and satisfaction in him. Christ not only created us for himself, but also shed his own precious blood to lift us out of slavery to sin, Satan and death.

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you

(St Augustine)

What happens, though, when we go through seasons when God seems to be absent?

- We pray but it feels as if there is no answer
- We try to find joy in God, but our hearts remain cold towards him
- We seek his presence, but we feel abandoned

How do we fight for joy when our hearts are cold towards God, or it feels as if he has abandoned us?

We find help in these two psalms. The psalmist laments the apparent absence of God (Ps 42:1-3 above). There is a thirst for God in his heart, which cannot be satisfied with anything else, but he is unable to come to the place where God is worshipped. It feels as if God has rejected him (Ps 43:2), though he is a man who has made God his place of safety.

- This is a common experience for God's people.

The very fact that God has given us this psalm teaches us that

There will certainly be times when we experience this kind of darkness

However, the psalms also teach us two things to use to fight for joy when we are in this turmoil of the soul.

1. **The Psalm teaches us to pray to God** (see also notes: **Ps 43 Joy in the darkness is possible**). Throughout both psalms, this man prays.

He does not let the darkness keep him from lifting up his voice in prayer to God. He shares with God how he feels, in a lament to him (42:9, 43:1-4), telling God what is going on in his heart, what he wants God to do and what he himself will do when God acts.

When we feel rejected by God, we often find it hard to pray. Our minds are in turmoil, and we are so distracted by our troubles that we cannot find words to express our thoughts to God as the psalmist does.

- It is then that we need to make use of the prayers God has given us in his word, especially the Psalms.

In the Psalms, God has given us language that enables us to express every human emotion from ecstatic joy to deep sorrow and he wants us to make use of them. When God feels absent, for example, we are offered the prayer in **Psalm 43:3-4** to cry out to him. Over the centuries, God's people have meditated, memorised, and prayed through the Psalms so that, when prayer became hard, they had a resource to draw on. Even if their hearts did not feel like it, they could find words to speak to God.

- This is a good habit for us to follow. We can also make use of devotional books on the Psalms. (see footnote)

2. **The Psalm teaches us to preach to our self.** The psalmist is having a conversation with himself (42:5,11; 43:5).

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones wrote this: *Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] 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 moment, I will speak to you.*

When we listen to the voice of self, we will be plunged into a world of despair. Our minds are shaped by a worldview that excludes God, so our self will tell us that life should be different and better, or that we can just please ourselves in all we do. When we begin to believe what our self says, we will become cast down.

- Instead, we need to preach to our self, (a) confronting and (b) exhorting our soul.
- a) This man asks his soul two 'why' questions (43:5), which could be asked in three ways.
- Rebuking his soul – why are you behaving in this sinful, unthankful way?
- Diagnosing his soul – why am I like this? He reflects on what is going on that is causing him to feel as he does
- Encouraging his soul – God will come through for you so why are you discouraged?

All three ways are valid for us at various times. We may need to rebuke and encourage our soul, but there are also times when we need to reflect on why we are in such turmoil. How the Psalmist uses this diagnostic way is helpful for us.

He asks his soul what the real reason is for feeling in turmoil and rejected by God, chewing it over in his mind. We see the answer to his reflection in the psalm.

He has a deep and good desire for God that is being frustrated by the miseries of this world.

He is thirsty, not for anything in this world, but for God alone. His turmoil is not because he cannot have things that are seen but because he cannot have that which is unseen (Ps 42:1-4)

He is thirsting for God because God is his exceeding joy and because he has experienced the joy of having his soul satisfied through vibrant worship amongst God's people.

He is troubled too because he recognises that God has hidden his face from him because of his sin (Ps 42:7). There are echoes here of Jonah's words when he had disobeyed God: **For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.** (Jonah 2:3). On top of that, people are mocking him (Ps 42:10), saying that clearly God does not want him.

At the heart of his turmoil is not the loss of anything physical, but the loss of fellowship with God, the God in whom he delights.

When our hearts are in turmoil, it is good to ask ourselves 'why'? It exposes what our hearts are delighting in.

- Is this grief because the treasure of my heart is something other than God and it has been taken from me?
- Is this grief because God is my exceeding joy and at the moment, I cannot feel him near or come to praise him? At the moment, have I grieved him through my sin?

This confrontation with our self is to bring into the light the deep longings of our heart so that we can come again to experience the joy in God that we have lost.

b) The Psalmist gives us the key to fighting for joy in God (Ps 43:5), as he exhorts his soul to

Hope in God

This is not a vague hope for something good to happen for us in some temporal way.

This is the hope of confidence in God.

It is the confident expectation that God will do what he has promised because of who he is

The Psalmist knows that God will not leave him in the place of turmoil. He knows that God WILL send his truth and light, and WILL lead him to God's dwelling, so he WILL come to God his exceeding joy and he WILL praise God. How can he be so confident when everything seems against him? He speaks about:

- **God's steadfast love (Ps 42:8).** God will not reject him forever, because he has committed to love this man forever. God will be his God forever, and he will belong to God forever. It is his covenant love. This is true for us.
- **The altar of God (Ps 43:4).** He knows that God has made provision to atone for his sin through sacrifice, and so he is now free to have fellowship with him. This is true for us.

The basis of our hope is that God is faithful

He is faithful to his covenant of love and faithful to forgive through sacrifice.

We counter the despairing thoughts our self says to us by preaching to our self the truth that God speaks about himself and what he promises. We can have absolute confidence that God will not reject us forever.

We need to ask who is the true singer of this Psalm, and the only one who can sing it with any integrity?

- He is the only one who has perfectly delighted in God, perfectly worshipped and trusted him
- He is one who experienced the rejection of God, drowned under the guilt of sin, and experienced the cruel mocking of enemies who asked 'where is your God'?

He, too, asked his soul: 'why are you cast down, why are you in turmoil within me' and yet his soul was sinless.

Jesus is the true singer of this Psalm

He experienced the darkness of this psalm with the confidence that he would come into the joy of heaven, face to face with his Father. He lived this Psalm so we can know that

**To truly hope in God means that we will look to Jesus
who walks with us when we are in our own place of darkness.**

When we say to God:

- I am thirsty for you; Jesus comes to us and says: I am the living water. Drink and have your thirst quenched.
- Why have you rejected me? Jesus comes to us and says: I was truly forsaken so that you would **never** be forsaken.

- I feel drowned under the waters of my sin and guilt. Jesus comes to us and says: I drank the cup of God's wrath for you, and now there is forgiveness and acceptance.
- Send out your light and truth to lead me to you. Jesus comes to us and says: I am the true light, and I am the truth. As you follow me, so I will lead you to God your exceeding joy.

We fight for joy in God by praying to God and preaching to our self. We confront our soul by asking 'why' and we exhort our soul to hope in God.

- Trust Christ for all that he has secured for you and that he is your light, truth and Saviour
- Trust Christ that he will bring you to God your exceeding joy and that he will lead you in praise of your God

How often do we need to have this fight for joy?

The Psalmist ends with the refrain he has used twice before, and it would seem that he is encouraging us to continue that refrain until the words of **Revelation 22:4** are true for us, that is until the time when we **will see his face, and his name will be on [our] foreheads.**

This is the Christian life and this journey ends with Christ in glory in the praise of him in heaven. Meanwhile we must fight for joy throughout our short time on earth. However much we feel in turmoil through the years, those of us who are truly hoping in God will always be able to say:

For I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

That is what he has promised to those who love him and seek him.

Devotional books on the Psalms:

My Rock, My Refuge by Tim Keller

In the Lord I take refuge by Dane Ortlund