

August 31, 2025 God's Presence

Session 14, Psalm 42:1-11

Intro: Do you ever ask yourself what the real reason for being upset is? Why am I so angry? Why am I so lonely? I find myself asking these questions when the focus is on me and not on my Sovereign Lord. At times I uncritically justify my own action, make assumptions about other people's motives, or grovel in my own self-pity. I need to ask God to clear my head of unproductive thoughts. I/we must boldly confront ourselves, and, by an act of will through God's grace, place our hope in God both for our present circumstances and for the totality of our lives as well.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 *"Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness,' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

Psalm 42 Nearly one third of the psalms are laments, cries to God from people who were discouraged and seeking God's help. God understands our feelings of despair, and is ready to comfort and help those who seek and trust Him in times of adversity. The writer and specific occasion of psalm 42 is unknown, other than the reference to the "sons of Korah" (11 other psalms have the same reference). Korah incited a rebellion against Moses and paid for it with his life. In God's judgment of Korah, the ground literally opened up and swallowed him and his household. **Numbers 26:10-11** *"And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign. Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die."* The sons of Korah are mentioned as Levites in **2 Chronicles 20:19** *"Then the Levites of the children of Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high."* In the first part of the psalm, the writer expresses his longing to be with the people of God, worshiping the Lord in His temple. Have you felt this way before? I have. Next, the writer feels like a metaphorical flood has washed over him. Finally, the writer acknowledges his depression compounded by the added oppression of his enemies, but he also recognizes that God is with him, even if he does not understand why he was suffering.

In Times of Longing (Psalm 42:1-5) p. 124

Water is an absolute necessity for sustaining biological life. However, Jesus Christ, the Living Water, is the only way to sustain our spiritual life. The psalmist's thirst was a spiritual thirst. He longed for the living God.

We all have had dry times, when we suffer due to our strong spiritual thirst that seemingly cannot be quenched. Our belief in the living God stands firm in those lifeless times, but sometimes the reality of the presence of the living God in our lives seems missing. God is so much more than a feeling. We stand anchored firmly to the truth: that God is the absolute, infinite Lord over creation and history (Elohim). God is the Source of life. His life does not come from something else. It is uncaused, underived, and eternal. God is life, and He gives life. The phrase “When can I come and appear before God?” is relevant to the sons of Korah, who were referenced for this psalm (mentioned in the intro). As Levites, members of the Israelite tribe responsible for the worship of Yahweh at His temple, they were typically assigned times of duty at the temple. They were not there all the time. This psalmist desired to appear before God. Do you look forward to Sunday? When we gather together to study God’s Word, worship and praise Him, do you get spiritually reinvigorated? Do you experience God’s manifest presence among His covenant people?

Vs. 3 During this time of isolation from the temple of God and His people, the psalmist’s enemies continually taunted him. The spiritual depression that the psalmist experienced affected his eating and sleeping. Tears were his only food, which indicates a lack of appetite. Day and night he experienced this grievous depression. Jeering enemies asked the question, “Where is your God?” There was a time when David felt like God had abandoned him. **Psalms 22:1-2** *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.”* Do you hear Jesus cry the same words from the cross? Except Jesus actually experienced abandonment by His Father. God the Father could not look upon Jesus, His own son, who took all our sin and our punishment upon Himself. When tempted to feel like we have been abandoned by God, we must remember His comforting words to us. **Isaiah 43:1-3a** *“But now, thus says the LORD who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”* We participate in the Lord’s Supper not just to remember what Jesus did for us but to acknowledge that He will never abandon us and that He will return.

Vs. 4 The psalmist had lost something dear to him: his (church) community. He remembered happier times when he would gather together with his (church) community and attend one of the pilgrimage festivals where everyone would celebrate God. We celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning and have a fellowship festival (pot luck) this evening. We need to be intentional about what we choose to remember and think about. Reflecting on God's goodness in the past helps us find encouragement in the present and have hope for the future. There are many believers today whose great desire is to be able to attend church but can't because of health reasons. Praise God for our homebound ministry. For the encouragement of our family in Christ, it is essential for us to be active members of our church. Building relationships with other believers is one way to receive encouragement in our walk with God. We were created in Christ Jesus for fellowship with Him and with one another. There is a crossing over in worship. It is an intentional departure from our normal day-to-day existence. We gather with other believers at a place and time solely for the purpose of worshiping our God.

Vs. 5 Periods of spiritual dryness are normal in the lives of believers. Such times of dryness can range from being rather short to lasting for a long time. During these periods, believers can be tempted to ask God where He has gone or why spiritual vitality has vanished. For people who are in search of the reasons for their present situation, the psalmist directed the question to asking oneself. "Why, my soul, are you so dejected and in such turmoil?" We sometimes can't control the circumstances of our lives, but we can determine how we respond to the situations. It is important to make a distinction between what the psalmist experienced and what is known today as clinical depression, which is an ongoing type of depression that requires professional help. I had clinical depression, and God healed me through medical services, medication, counseling, and understanding what was happening to me. I was my own worst enemy, and God pressed upon me to hang on to His truth. His truth was and is my lifeline. "I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God."

In Overwhelming Times (Psalm 42:6-8) p. 127

Depression is a condition experienced by all human beings to one degree or another. It is real, and for whatever the reason, the degree of depression can range from momentary sadness, to spiritual depression (like the psalmist experienced), or ongoing clinical depression mentioned earlier. The reality is that a depressed Christian is not an oxymoron. The psalmist provided important clues indicating he was geographically removed from

the people and the location where he used to worship. Mention of the peaks of Hermon placed the psalmist in northern Israel near where the Jordan River begins. He was probably about 100 miles away from Jerusalem and the temple. The psalmist describes a sense of helplessness and panic, like rushing water that is about to sweep him away to a watery grave. I thought of Camp Mystic, the youth camp in Kerr County, Texas, where a quickly flooding river took so many lives, and did so much damage. Metaphorically speaking, the psalmist was barely able to keep his head above water as the waves of despair incessantly crashed against him. One setback followed another, and he was physically, emotionally, and spiritually overwhelmed, drowning in his own despair. Waterfalls, breakers, and billows all refer to the psalmist being overcome by what he was experiencing.

Vs. 8 The psalmist recognized God's faithful love for him at all times, and was determined to sing a song of prayer to the God of his life in his darkest hour. I like the saying, "Don't forget in the darkness what God has shown you to be true in the light." God sends His faithful love by day to protect and to provide. God's song is with us in the night as He expresses His delight in us. **Zephaniah 3:17** *"The LORD your God in your midst, The mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."* God sings to us! Don't you love to sing to Him?

In Seasons of Waiting (Psalm 42:9-11) p. 128

The psalmist referred to God as his rock. This is an indication that he still clung to his faith, even when circumstances caused him to doubt, and his enemies taunted him. At times, words can do just as much damage as physical violence. The psalmist's adversaries' taunts were equivalent to the physical crushing of his bones. The verbal abuse lasted all day long. One particular aspect of the taunts of his enemies was the question, "Where is your God?" For those who mock God and His people, there is often hatred for God Himself laying underneath their words. The psalmist's soul was in anguish; he was at war with himself. Have you ever felt like that, and wrestled with your feelings? This leads to having to make a choice: to place our hope in God or not? The psalmist faced his turmoil head on and chose the way of hope in God. He had praised God in the past, and he would continue to praise Him in spite of his current despondence. The term for Savior can refer to help, deliverance, victory, and salvation. The psalmist believed and trusted that he had a front row seat to see firsthand God's deliverance in his life. I pray we are in the front row experiencing and watching God's deliverance in your life.