

God. It is the experience of the fullness of his redemption (Psal 36:9; Isa 58:8,10; 60:1,3). Truth is the covenantal fidelity of God (Ps 40:10; 57:3). It is God's light and truth that leads the Psalmist to God's presence, to the altar of God, to Worship.

Apply: As much as the psalmist seeks the presence of God, it is ultimately God himself who brings him back according to his light and truth. It is not ultimately a human project. God must act from the beginning. The psalmist realizes his alienation, but must come to God with the help of God. "Where is your God?" taunts our enemies. He is right here and even while I seek him out, he has already sought me out and found me (Luke 15).

Pray: Give praise to God today for working his light and truth in you through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Saturday, 7/21 **Read:** Psalm 43:5

Examine: The Psalmist's refrain is repeated a third time, but now is a shout of triumph, not despair. The questions which were evidence of doubt and turmoil have now become self-derisive. Why should I be downcast? Why should I be disturbed? My hope is in the faithfulness of my God! And for this I will praise him! Despite all appearances to the contrary, the confidence of the Psalmist is no longer in the circumstances (he no longer lives by sight) but in the God who has been with him in the past, is with him in the present, and will be with him in the future...he lives by faith! (Hab 2:4)

Apply: Luther wrote in the Heidelberg Disputation, "He deserves to be called a theologian...who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross." That's to say, those who look on the immensity of creation and think that God can be sufficiently described by words such as "majestic" and "all powerful" are only half right. According to Luther, God proved his majesty by becoming human, and his splendor is best illustrated not by the magnificence of a mountain range, but in the humiliation of the cross. Time and again we are closest to Christ during episodes of suffering. It's not just because he draws near to comfort me in my grief; it's also because when I grieve I'm most like Christ, who was broken for our sins. In suffering I recognize the reconciliation that grows out of pain, the new life that emerges from death. I experience the gospel in an extraordinary way.

Pray: for a renewed vision of God's grace, or Christ's presence, of the Holy Spirit's work in your life.



Taking Gathered Worship Home

Family and Individual Devotions

Meditations in the Psalms

Week of July 15, 2007

Derek Kidner calls Psalms 42 and 43 "the most sadly beautiful in the Psalter." These Psalms stand in stark contrast to the comfortable spirituality of our own age. When you read these Psalms and the anguish of the Psalmist's heart, you will find resources for a deeper spirituality which really meets the stark and often painful realities of our present experience. The Psalmist deals with the difficulties of life, and he pours his soul out to the living God. As we read through and study these Psalms (which can really be considered one Psalm), look at the following structure: Consider this as a song or poem with stanza one being verses 42:1-4, stanza two being 42:6-10; stanza three being 43:1-4. Now look at 42:5, 42:11, and 43:5 as the refrains. Psalm 42:8 seems to be stuck in the middle of this symmetric structure, and for a very good reason as we shall see. All three refrains have the same wording, but because of the Psalms' structure they do not carry the same meaning.

Sunday, 7/15 **Read:** Psalm 42: 1-4

Examine: The Psalmist is crying out because he cannot be in Jerusalem for corporate worship. His very being longs and pants like a thirsty deer. But it's not just the worship service that he misses, he misses God. He understands that the means of grace are just that, they are means to get us to God, to get us into fellowship with God, to get us a taste of God, to get us the experience of God in His promises and in His person and in His glory.

Apply: Augustine says in his Confessions, "For you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." See also Psalm 63:1-2; 143:6, Isa 41:17, and 55:1. While God is always present, we meet him especially in corporate worship, with His body, His Word, His Sacraments. Do we long, like the Psalmist, for being in God's presence in corporate worship?

Pray Thank God this Lord's Day for the opportunity we have to meet with him in corporate worship. Ask that he will instill in our hearts a thirst and desire to see him face-to-face, in the company and fellowship of believers, and through the Word and Sacraments.

Monday, 7/16 **Read:** Psalm 42:5

Examine: In this refrain the Psalmist is struggling with his spiritual despair. The Psalmist reminds himself that his only hope is in God, in "my Savior". I will praise him YET for his saving help amidst my current afflictions and alienation. The struggles of faith that we all feel drives the Psalmist to worship, not from it.

Apply: Those who have an understanding of their real thirst are indeed blessed, because it is that thirst that brings us to the justifying presence of God (Mat 5:6; John 4:14; 6:35; Rev 21:6). Spiritual depression and doubt are not uncommon to the Christian life. The difference is that the Christian pours out his anguish, doubt, emptiness, and heartaches to God himself and holds firmly to God's promises. Reflect on Heb 4:14-16.

Pray Look in faith to Christ, who bore your infirmities, in the midst of your doubts and struggles and not in spite of them. Lay your afflictions at the foot of the cross and let them be swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection.

Tuesday, 7/17 **Read:** Psalm 42:6-10

Examine: The water of life that the Psalmist seeks in verse 1 is contrasted by the parallel imagery in verse 7 of the "deep" (waves, waterfalls, and breakers). Water is not only a symbol of life, but of chaos and judgment (Gen 1:2). Instead of the life-giving water he seeks, the Psalmist has found waters of destruction. Is this God's judgment? Why has God forgotten me?

Apply: On the cross Jesus not only cries out that God has forgotten him, but has forsaken him. His enemies jeer and taunt him, calling, "Where is your God?" The cries of the Psalmist are taken up by Jesus. Our Savior has taken on all of our infirmities and eternal isolation from God because of our sins (Matt 27:46 quoting Psalm 22:1). At the cross, where God seems to be the most absent, He is most near for His people. This is the ultimate reflection on this Psalm from a New Testament perspective.

Pray When we feel downcast, the crests of life's waves washing over us, look to "God my Rock" and "My Savior" who has taken all of our burdens on himself and given to us his peace and fellowship with God.

Wednesday, 7/18 **Read:** Psalm 42:8-11

Examine: This verse sticks out like a sore thumb in the middle of the Psalm, breaking the symmetry. While the Hebrew word "Elohim" is used for "God" throughout the Psalm, the covenantal and personal name of God "Yahweh" is used only in this verse. In the midst of his turmoil, the Psalmist is remembering the covenantal faithfulness of his God in his saving acts in history. It is not in the strength of his own faith, but in the faithfulness of his God, in whom he has faith, that is his hope and salvation.

Apply: The word for "love" in verse 8 refers to God's loving-kindness and faithfulness. A great spiritual exercise is to record how God has been faithful to you in the past and review this in times of discouragement. Then you can look with the Psalmist's confidence: Just as God has been true and faithful to his promises in the past, he has promised to be with you in the present ("by day and by night" in verse 8), and will surely be with you in the future.

Pray Ask God for strength and perseverance. True faith is clinging to his faithfulness, not our own strength. Pray through Phil 1:6.

Thursday, 7/19 **Read:** Psalm 43: 1-2

Examine: Confident in his Covenant-keeping and faithful God, the Psalmist is now bold enough to plead his case before God. The Psalmist trusts in God's righteousness and his promises toward his people. God will ultimately judge rightly. God's justice will prevail. Yet there is still doubt amidst this confident trust. Why is it I continue to suffer unjustly?

Apply: Modern "sentimentalism" has made the Gospel into a "feel good about me" message that destroys faith when we confront the painful suffering realities of this earthly life. But Scripture teaches us that the faithful will suffer as Christ has suffered. As the world rejected Christ and treated him unjustly, so to it will reject us and treat us unjustly. But those who are united to Christ in his sufferings and death will also be united with him in his resurrection and glory. This is the hope in the midst of suffering and persecution that grows and strengthens faith.

Pray for those suffering in our Church that their faith would be strengthened and proved through their suffering, and that the blessings of the Holy Spirit would shine as a witness to others.

Friday, 7/20 **Read:** Psalm 43:3-4

Examine: The Psalmist now pleads to God to send forth his "light" and his "truth." Light in this context is that which emanates from the face or presence of