

Psalm 42 (ESV): As the Deer Pants for Water

Main point: When your soul is downcast, turn to God.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Written by (or for) David as a song “to the choirmaster, a Maskil (probably a musical term) of the Sons of Korah,” a priestly family of singers with David in exile.

Focus of the study:

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?

³ 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.

Questions:

- David is in exile from his home and people – what would that mean? If you were exiled from your home and country, how would you feel? What would you miss?*
 - David is cut off, unable to worship God in community with his people
 - lonely, sad, confused, angry
 - missing your favorite foods; ease of life; not being chased; security; community
- But what is David’s primary need (not luxury)?*
 - v. 1: communion with God – like water to a thirsty deer – he must drink or die, have God’s presence or faint away
- What does it feel like when you’re thirsty?*
 - intense craving! not quite the same as hunger
- What does David thirst for?*
 - the living God, “living water”
- v. 3-4 (read again): What does David say he’s doing day and night?*

- a. Crying! Why?
 - i. feels cut off, heartsick, like dying of thirst
- b. “pouring out his soul” – I wonder what that means?
- c. *What and who does he miss in v. 4?*
 - i. the throng, the procession, a multitude
 - ii. glad songs and shouts of praise to God
- d. *Does he seem to miss the honor and glory to himself as the leader?*
 - i. No; misses leading his people in worship of God
- 6. *So what’s the overall mood of this psalm? Is it one of triumph and “everything is great”?*
 - a. complaint, sadness, yearning, heartsick, thirsty
 - b. *how often do we feel this way? why do we feel this way?*
- 7. *v. 5: What is his question to himself? He seems to come to his senses:*
 - a. “Why are you cast down? Why in turmoil?”
- 8. *What does he realize is coming in the future? Who is his sure hope?*
 - a. Puts his hope in GOD, that he will again praise him
 - b. Knows that his salvation and restoration are in God alone
- 9. *Who appears to have the power in David’s situation?*
 - a. the people pursuing him, his enemies, keeping him in exile
 - b. *But who really has the power? God!*
- 10. *When we are in distress, what is our temptation?*
 - a. complain, lose hope, try to work our way out of it alone, “pity party,” “why me”
 - b. and we’ve got company! Many of the psalms are psalms of *complaint*
- 11. *When we feel downcast, what should we preach to ourselves? Who is with you at all times, working to restore you?*
 - a. hope in and praise God; he is with you
- 12. Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- 13. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- 14. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace