

"Where Is Thy God?"

Psalm 42:1-43:5

These two Psalms begin what is considered to be "the second book of Psalms" – the entirety of the 150 Psalms are comprised of five separate books. They are given the title, "To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah." The word for "Maschil," for all intents and purposes, means instruction or teaching, and gives the purpose of the Psalms with this title. The questionable issue is in the preposition "for." The titles were not inspired but have been part of the manuscript evidence from the very beginning, so they are very accurate, and give detail that helps in interpreting and using the Psalm. (In fact, in some Hebrew texts, the first verse of the Psalm is the title.) With that said, considering the same Hebrew spelling markers are given here as are given in several other place for the Psalms "of David," he being the author of them, it would be most probable that this Psalm was written by the sons of Korah, not simply for them. But there is no way to be certain of this. Many gifted scholars consider David to be the author and point to evidence within the Psalms themselves to show this. Either way, what is essential is the message of the Psalm more than the author of it.

The enemies of the Psalmist were harassing him about his determination to trust in God for his every need. When he got to the place in his life that he could no longer go to the temple like he used to, his enemies were able to shake his faith to some degree and get him to question whether God was still there. What is seen in these Psalms is that our faith and trust in God is dependent on how much we want of Him and how close we are to Him. There is a certain

depression sensed in the writings of this Psalmist, and, to some degree, these Psalms is about dealing with depression and how to get victory over that depression

Notice the number of times the name of God is used – not Yahweh (the LORD), but Elohim God – that more personal, at-hand, presence of the Almighty.

Many will ask us in some way, "Where is thy God?" When we are going through trials and troubles and those around us look at us and we talk about how good God is, they will ask us, "Where is thy God?"

I. HE'S WHERE WE NEED TO BE – 42:1-2A

A. The Psalmist demonstrates, at the very beginning, his desire to be where He could meet with God in a very real way – the Temple was that place in the Old Testament, and without that physical presence in the assembly with the Lord there was something lacking in their relationship. Although we have the Person of the Holy Spirit of God indwelling us today, and the church is not the Temple in a technical way, there is the analogy to be made, the application we can draw from the Psalmist's desire to be in the presence of the Lord in the house of the Lord with the importance of church attendance today.

Psalm 84:2

² My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

B. We need to be to the place in our Christian life where we would die without the presence God on our lives –

just as a deer in a drought would die without water. The idea expressed here is that of longing for, or desiring intently.

1. The “hart” here is what we would know of as a deer, and this animal is seen “panting” after water. This word – תַּעֲרָגַת - עָרַג - is only found here and in Joel 1:20, and its uncommon usage seems to emphasize the point.
2. “The word properly means to rise; to ascend; and then, to look up toward anything; to long for. It refers here to the intense desire of the hind, in the heat of day, for water; or, in Joel, to the desire of the cattle for water in a time of drought.” (Barnes)

Joel 1:20

²⁰ The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

C. Vs. 2a shows it wasn't just any god that the Psalmist longed for, but "the living God" – demonstrating that the God we love and serve, and that loves us, is very much alive and approachable.

II. HE'S WHERE HE'S ALWAYS BEEN - VS. 2B-5

A. "When shall I come and appear before God?" - God hadn't moved, He was there all the time.

Malachi 3:6

⁶ For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye

sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Hebrews 13:8

⁸ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Psalms 102:27

²⁷ But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

James 1:17

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

B. Vs. 3 shows the desperation in the Psalmist's heart and mind – he was overwhelmed with the constant attack of his enemies, and their persistence in asking, as it were, "If your God is so powerful, and so alive, and so protective, Where is He?" We are confronted with that very same question today, especially in times of disaster or trial (whether personal or national or global).

C. Vs. 4 - "I went with them to the house of God" - he was remembering what it used to be like to be where God was, and he desired to get back there.

I believe this verse shows us, for today in the New Testament church, the importance of assembling together, and the principle reason that the church is now, and has always been, under attack. There are those that call themselves "Christians" that say they don't need to go to church to fellowship with God. That may be technically true, but just as the

Psalmist here points out, and as the New Testament writers often pointed out, God has designed a purpose in us, a distinct "draw," if you would, to want to be with other believers – we call it the "fellowship of the believer."

Hebrews 10:24–25

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

D. Vs. 5 ends with the phrase "for the help of his countenance" – this indicates the author wasn't where he should be, seen in the third person wording.

1. The question, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" is found three times in these two Psalms (showing them to be connected) – in fact, it's the only time in the Bible they are used – vs. 5, 11; 43:5.
2. He's asking himself a question – both rhetorically but with the intent of needing an answer, albeit knowing the answer would come internally, spiritually, emotionally. He wanted to know why he felt this way, and he knew the only One with the answer, the only One that could help, was His God – "Hope thou in God." The Psalmist is desperate and is crying out in that desperation to put his hope in the only place help can come – "in God."

Psalm 39:7

⁷ And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

Psalm 71:5

⁵ For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

Jeremiah 17:17

¹⁷ Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

3. The word for "hope" – **יָחַל** – means, in the verb stem used here (**הוֹחִילִי**), cause to have hope, to stay, to wait patiently.

There will be times when we don't get the response we would like out of the Lord, and in our desperation for help we may lash out, as it were, but remember, as the Psalmist did here, that sometimes the hope we have, and the answer we are seeking with that hope may not come when we think it should nor in the way we think it should. Hence, "Hope thou **in God**" – not the government, not the church, not the preacher, not your parents, not your children – "Hope thou in God."

III. HE'S WHERE WE ARE WHEN WE NEED HIM - vs. 6-11

A. *The first step in getting back to where God is is to recognize where we are - "will I remember thee from..." - vs. 6*

Jonah 2:7

⁷ When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

B. He's there for us when we recognize where we are even if where we are is in the midst of a violent storm in our life - vs. 7

The psalmist seems to represent himself as cast away at sea; and by wave impelling wave, is carried to a rock, around which the surges dash in all directions, forming hollow sounds in the creeks and caverns. At last, several waves breaking over him, tear him away from that rock to which he clung, and where he had a little before found a resting-place, and, apparently, an escape from danger. "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" he is then whelmed in the deep, and God alone can save him. (Clarke)

Waterspouts: A water-spout is a large tube formed of clouds by means of the electric fluid, the base being uppermost, and the point let down perpendicularly from the clouds. It has a particular kind of circular motion at the point; and, being hollow within, attracts vast quantities of water, which it frequently pours down in torrents upon the earth. These spouts are frequent on the coast of Syria; and no doubt the Psalmist had often seen them, and the ravages which they made.

C. The Psalmist seems to recognize that there were times in his life when his relationship wasn't right with God, and it seems that in those times he remembered where he needed to be in order to restore that relationship - he needed to get back into the presence of his Lord - vs. 8 - "the God of my life."

Question: Is He "the God of [your] life?"

Psalm 27:1

¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

D. The last verse shows the author has gotten to where he needs to be, to where God is, seen in the phrase "my countenance and my God" - changes from the third person in verse 5 to the first verse here.

Conclusion: When the world asks us, "Where is thy God?" just tell them He's where He's always been - where He's needed.

There is an ancient tale from India about a young man who was seeking God. He went to a wise old sage for help. "How can I find God?" he asked the old man. The old man took him to a nearby river. Out they waded into the deep water. Soon the water was up just under their chins. Suddenly the old man seized the young man by the neck and pushed him under the water. He held the young man down until the young man was flailing the water in desperation. Another minute and he may well have drowned. Up out of the water the two of them came. The young man was coughing water from his lungs and still gasping for air. Reaching the bank he asked the man indignantly, "What did that have to do with my finding God?" The old man asked him quietly, "While you were under the water, what did you want more than anything else?" The young man thought for a minute and then answered, "I wanted air. I wanted air more than anything else?" The old man replied, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you will find him."