

Where Deep Calls to Deep

Reflections on the Deer Panting for Living Water



Psalm 42:1 *To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.*

(Stanza 1)

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.

(Refrain)

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.**

(Stanza 2)

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?"

(Refrain)

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.**

(Stanza 3)

Psalm 43:1 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.

(Refrain)

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."**

Psalm 42-43

Sentimentalism, Suffering, and Ceremony

TWO EVENTS TOOK PLACE THIS PAST PALM SUNDAY that I think can be looked at in light of our psalms today. **First**, in the middle of worship services in a Coptic Orthodox church, a **bomb** planted by ISIS hidden under a pew explodes killing at least 27 and injuring 78 more. One moment they are singing the liturgy. The next, blood and body parts are sprawled all over the sanctuary, people running in mass hysteria, crying, screaming, not knowing what has happened. Meanwhile, a few miles to the north, another bomb goes off, this time from a suicide bomber who blows himself up outside of a second Coptic church. Eighteen civilians and four police officers are murdered. The cowardly and demonic Islamic State on one of the most holy

days of the year, perpetrates unspeakable evil against Christians. What can you say to such evil? How could ever begin to speak truth to suffering such as this?

The **second** story involves a famous Christian celebrity and a **defection** from Evangelicalism. In a move that will long bubbling wake behind him, **Hank Hanegraaff**, known more famously as *The Bible Answer Man*, was Chrismated in a formal ceremony into Eastern Orthodoxy. Like the same parting thirty years earlier of **Frankie Schaeffer**, son of **Francis**, Hanegraaff has deep ties to Christian apologetics, meaning simply that he is no slouch when it comes to knowing his stuff. He is intelligent, articulate, and knowledgeable. Yet, for reasons yet unknown, he has felt the need to abandon Protestantism (perhaps even at the cost of his job, who knows) in favor of a mystical and mysterious Eastern version of Christianity.

I present to you these two events that took place this past Palm Sunday in light of our text today. That text is Psalm 42-43, which in many Hebrew manuscripts are presented as **a single unit**, and at the very least need to be looked at together. I'll get to more of that shortly. For now, notice the

first line of the song portion of Psalm 42: *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.*

In the early '80s, **Martin Nystrom**, penned one of the most famous *CCM* worship songs of all time. Based on this opening line of Psalm 42, the lyrics read:

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longeth after Thee
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

(Chorus)

*You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee*

You're my friend and You are my brother
Even though You are a king
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

(Chorus)

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy

You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye
(Chorus)¹

Like most music of this genre, the song is simple and the tune is uplifting and lighthearted. It is easy to sing and to memorize. While the opening line comes from Psalm 42, some of its other lyrics are inspired from other places such as, “The LORD is my strength and my shield” (Ps 28:7); “The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Ps 119:72); “There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Ps 73:25); “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise” (Heb 2:12); “Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye” (Prov 7:2); and “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings” (Rev 19:16). Those are good, biblical ideas.

Nevertheless, there is something about this song. It isn't what it says, but **what it doesn't say**. There is a context to Psalm 42 that is very, very different from anything you hear in “As The Deer.” In this way, this praise chorus is

¹ “As the Deer.” Copyright: 1984, *Maranatha! Music*. Words and Music by **Martin Nystrom**.

emblematic of an epidemic that has spread through Evangelicalism these past several decades. This epidemic has exposed a weakness in our theological immune system. At the same time, it has increased our susceptibility to contracting a contagion. The contagion is what I'm calling **sentimentalism** or the being drawn in to a faith that loves the romanticism of a life full of happiness on this earth, but seems incapable of dealing with a life of pain and suffering head on. We just don't know what to do with it. We can't sing about it. We can't preach about it. We can't talk about it. And people are fleeing our ranks because it seems that even though we sing about being satisfied, we no longer have anything but fleeting sentimental feelings that satisfy for a moment and then like a shooting star vanish in an instant.

To make this more concrete, I'm not the only person who has noticed this about this song. Back in 1998, **Bert Polman** wrote a piece on it for *Reformed Worship* magazine. He called it “a decent praise song with a respectable tune in its own right,” but complained that the song “turns the lament of Psalm 42 into a simple but shallow chorus of

praise.”² He was not alone. Two hymnals commissioned another writer to add some stanzas from Psalm 42 so that they could feel justified putting the song—which they wanted—in their collections. This made the song much better!³ Here is what’s so crazy about it. The powers that be denied permission for *Reformed Worship* magazine to publish the new lyrics, and the two hymnals were “requested” to change their next printings back to the original text! So, even when a problem is seen and fixed, we have come to such a place where it’s all about the money and the copyrights anyway, so who cares.

Taking this back to the two events that happened last Sunday I must wonder, if this is endemic of what we have

² Bert Polman, *Reformed Worship* 20 (June 1991), 35. Cited in Bert Polman, “Songs for the Season: Songs for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany,” *Reformed Worship* 49 (Sept 1998), <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/september-1998/songs-advent-christmas-and-epiphany>.

³ Here are those lyrics by Lydia Pederson. Published in the *Covenant Hymnal* (Evangelical Covenant Church, 1996) and *Voices United* (United Church of Canada, 1996). I found the lyrics in a bulletin PDF that someone had put up on the internet:

1. Day and night I cry, my heart is breaking tears my only food;
while my enemies jeer and taunt me, saying: “Where is now your God?”
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.
2. Why am I so sad, so troubled; why must suffering be so long?
I will hope in you, my God and saviour, praise you with a song.
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.

become, is it a wonder people are leaving the ranks in droves? What of substance do we have to offer? Compare this with the 1,700 year old liturgy of Chrysostom in the Orthodox Church and their claims to be tied directly to the Apostles (the same things are true of Rome), and it shouldn't surprise anyone to see people leaving.

On the other hand, consider the Coptic Christians. Can you imagine going to them this week saying, “Here, I have a song for you from Psalm 42 that I think would really help you in the aftermath of the bombings.” Assuming that they would ever sing anything we gave them, they might say, “Yes, this is a great Psalm and could really help us.” That would in fact be correct. It would. But you then hand them this praise chorus. In point of fact, immediately after the bombings, those Christians gathered together outside the destroyed building and began singing. There were a lot of them there. They did not sing “As The Deer,” but the Nicene Creed in defiance of the Islamic State's attempt to put an end to their faith. Nevertheless, when we look at Psalm 42-43 we will see that it is anything but sentimental Christianity, and when put into context it makes those

precious words at the beginning of the song leap like a fawn off the page in a most remarkable way.

Book II and the Sons of Korah

Psalm 42-43 begin what is called *Book II* of the Psalter. This collection of songs ends in Psalm 72 with a doxology, “Blessed by his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!” (Ps 72:19), then with a concluding remark, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (20). Going back to the Rabbis, interpreters have noticed that this collection of songs focuses on Israel’s ruin and redemption and thus, can be related to the Book of Exodus.⁴

The collection is curious compared to the other four in that it’s favorite term for God is *Elohim* rather than *Yahweh*. For example, in Book I, “*Yahweh*” outnumbers “*Elohim*” by about 18 to 1 (272 to 15 occurrences), but in Book II, it is over 5 to 1 the other way (200 vs. 43).⁵ It is not

⁴ Danny Akin, “The Book of Psalms,” p. 1, *DannyAkin President, Southeastern Seminary*, no date, at http://www.danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/old/Resource_620/1%20The%20Book%20of%20Psalms.pdf.

⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 29.

known with certainty exactly why this is. Perhaps it is because it is King David who had a very direct covenantal relationship with Yahweh who wrote all the songs in the first book, while here it is a mixed collection.

Psalm 42 is “*To the choirmaster [For The End, LXX]. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.*” It is possible that this is a song of David (there are some versions that have David attached to Psalm 43). But the sons of Korah gave the song its final form.⁶ Given their history, maybe these men didn’t feel as comfortable using the divine name. Perhaps it is because they had great fear of Yahweh and the Divine Name. Why? Their ancestor was **Korah**, the rebel in the wilderness vs. Moses and Aaron in Numbers 16. The story goes like this.

Korah was a cousin of Moses and Aaron. All three are descended from **Kohath**, son of **Levi**, son of **Jacob** (**Ex 6:18-21**). But Moses and Aaron came from Amram, while Korah comes from Izhar who is Amram’s brother. Now, God had clearly chosen the Levites to serve before him as priests. We learn that the three sons of Levi: Gershom, *Kohath*, and

⁶ See **Michael Goulder**, “The Social Setting of Book II of the Psalter,” *The Book of Psalms: Composition & Reception*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, ed. Peter W. Flint & Patrick D. Miller (Boston: Brill, 2005), 349-67.

Merari would become the Levitical “deacons” if you will, taking care of the physical aspects of the tabernacle (**Num 3**). This made Korah think that Moses and Aaron were doing something of their own volition when they set themselves up as leaders of the people. He is a Levite too. Why can't he have a say in leadership? Never mind that God chooses whom he will and Korah was not their brother, but only their cousin.

Moses gets furious, and so there is a showdown in the desert. God will prove whom he has chosen. He does it by making Aaron's staff bud flower blossoms, while all the others remain dead branches. Then, Moses calls upon Yahweh to punish Korah and his rabble host. The earth opens up, fire spews forth, and 250 men are devoured (**Num 26:10**). “**But the sons of Korah did not die**” (**11**). That would probably make me a little frightened of the Name too! At any rate, we have clearly moved into a new section of the Psalter, and God's grace to these sons (the sons shall not be put to death for the fathers) becomes evident now in the next several psalms.

Psalm 42-43

As I said, we will look at Psalm 42-43 together today. Why? Notice **vs. 5-6a**, “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” Like “As The Deer,” this forms a chorus which is repeated in **vs. 11**. Curiously, the exact same thing occurs again in the last line of **Psalm 43 (vs. 5)**! Thus, the two songs together have one chorus repeating three times. But unlike “As The Deer,” we have a very different thought that repeats, even though that song supposedly comes from this one.

Again like “As the Deer,” you have three stanzas between the chorus. But these stanzas teach something different from “As The Deer.”

Lament	(42:3-4)
<i>Refrain</i>	(42:5)
Lament	(42:3-4)
<i>Refrain</i>	(42:6-10)
Lament	(43:1-4)
<i>Refrain</i>	(43:5)

While that song begins with a great *sentiment*, the song itself becomes *sentimental*. An opposite of sentimentalism is **lamentation**. These two songs are filled with lamentation: tears, weeping, the breakers of life, being forgotten, deadly wounds, and so on. This is what I'm talking about when I say that the theology reflected in many contemporary songs just doesn't cut the mustard. They turn the thing they are supposedly singing about into the exact opposite. This hurts everyone, though we don't even know it or know why. Curiously, there is no chiasm to be discovered in Psalm 42. However, when you take it together with Psalm 43, you find one!

- 1a) [Psa 42:1-5](#), The psalmists' plea/ doubt cast on God/ remembrance/ encouragement to hope
- 1b) [Psa 42:6-8](#), Because my soul is cast down, I will remember God in my distress
- 1c) [Psa 42:9a](#), I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me?"
- 1d) [Psa 42:9b](#), Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 2d) [Psa 42:10a](#), As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me
- 2c) [Psa 42:10b](#), While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
- 2b) [Psa 42:11](#), Why are you cast down + disquieted, O my soul? Hope in God
- 2a) [Psa 43:1-5](#), The psalmists' plea/ doubt cast on God/ assurance/ encouragement to hope

This structure helps us greatly, because in it, we discover that the psalmist has fallen prey to the very thing he doesn't

want. And in seeing that he does this, he finds the answer to his problem.

Stanza 1

What is a Christian? They are people who desire God more than anything. They have been given new hearts and minds and affections such that the inner core of their being pants for God. The Psalm begins with that beautiful illustration of this. “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Ps 42:1-2a). Whether a blazing hot afternoon with no shade for hours, or being hunted by men or wild game and running tirelessly to save your life, when you come to the cool streams of running water that gets its source high up in the colder mountains, you stop and drink to have your fill. God is the Living Water, the freshly cooled streams of Life to whom our souls come to assuage our thirst in a parched and dry age.

But just as surely as we know this truth we wonder, “When shall I come and appear before God?” (2b). This is a plea, a cry of the heart. Sadly, many people deliberately keep

themselves from going to worship. They get up too late. They have their job to do. They have other things that are more important. They don't understand the Psalm at its core. The Psalmist has been prevented *by others* from worshiping God in his temple, and now he feels like that deer panting without even a sound of running water. It is his only wish to appear before God like a deer before the water. This is how his thirst becomes satisfied. Thus, he remembers, "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" (4).

It reminds me of the Israelites in Babylon, far away from the temple, unable to worship. It reminds me of the many times that David was on the run, unable to go up to the ark of the covenant to worship. It reminds me of the cries of Israel in Egypt, unable to go out and worship their God. It reminds me of my own slavery to the things that keep me not only from worshiping, but from even realizing that I have great thirst that can be satisfied only by worshiping the living God. This last one is a worse state to be in than the Psalmist is in. For it is self-imposed deception.

Yet, look at him now. Look at how bad a state his is in. “My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (5). It is worse to be deadened to your need to go to worship the Lord than to be like this. Consider this. He can’t stop crying. Day and night, day after day, those around him mock him about the presence of his God. **Doubt** is being cast upon God. It sounds like Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD that I should let them go?” (Ex 5:2). It sounds like Sennacherib, “Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” (Isa 36:20). It sounds like the people at the foot of the cross mocking upwards, “He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him” (Matt 27:42). And thus, we are left in just this place as we contemplate the chorus which is a word of encouragement and hope, “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” (Ps 42:5-6a).

Stanza 3

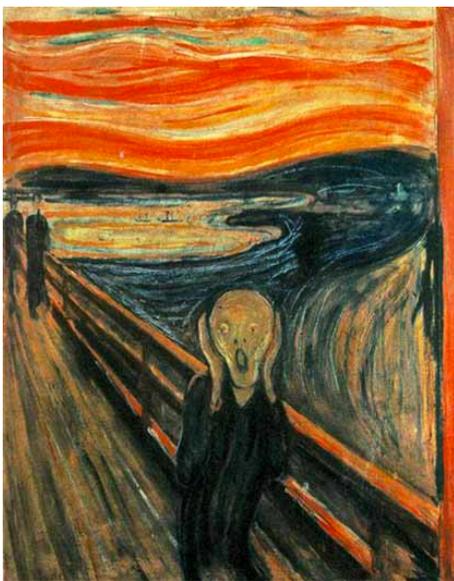
This same format (plea, doubt, remember, encouragement) is paralleled in Psalm 43. It begins with a plea: “Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!” (43:1). He is not out in the wilderness far from God’s presence because of his own doing. He has been forced here by something outside of himself.

But it can use him to doubt: “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?” (2). “Where is your God” is now internalized and becomes, “why have you rejected me?” The outward foil becomes the villain of the inward flesh. Have you ever experienced this? You let what others say and do get the best of you so that you start believing and thinking it too? Even about God!

A slight change occurs next. Previously, he remembered being close to the sanctuary, with its sights and sounds and throngs of people that he led in worship. What a sight it must have been. Now he takes the past and assures himself

of the future. “Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling” (3). The theme of the temple is the same. But he can’t get close to it. So, what he needs are God’s Light and Truth to lead them back to it even though he is not able to get them himself.

This is why reading, writing, and singing the Scripture *in its context* is so important. As an example, while there is *truth* in “As The Deer,” because it is wrenched so badly out of context, the *light* of the word in what it is actually teaching you can’t shine down on those dark places where we so often stumble and fall. It just pretends that there are no dark places. Everything is happy, sentimental, romantic. But when the truth is void of the light, you can’t see it for



what it really is. The fact is, this is Van Gogh’s *Scream*, but we act like we are living in a Norman Rockwell painting. We lose more and more ability to have



lasting answers to difficult questions. People eventually fall away from religion like that. It has no substance.

But when the truth resounds and the light shines upon such difficult questions as, “**Why have you rejected me?**”, when we are able to ask and find answers to those questions, “**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**” (4). And suddenly, those sentiments that are true become infinitely more meaningful! God is my exceeding joy, my heart pants for him, not because I’m *Stuck on a Feeling*, but because he has acted in my life to take me from the dark places and put me in the light, from sinking in the quicksand to having my foot set upon the rock.

“**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**” (Ps 43:5). The song ends on the chorus that is deep with honesty, transparency, and assurance in the midst of being low, cast down, and in the dark.

Stanza 2

Those ten verses (the first stanza—42:1-5 and the third stanza—43:1-5) form the bookends to middle verse. Like many good songs, the meat is found sandwiched between the bread. (Why do so many churches skip verses of songs, usually the third? This is my personal lamentation).

It follows a similar pattern. Instead of a **plea**, there is a **statement** of sadness: **My soul is cast down within me (6b)**. *Why? Why am I so down? Why can't I get out of this rut? Why do these feelings continuously overwhelm me? I feel so low, worthless. Everything seems pointless, meaningless. Depression has sunk in, grief, and sorrow.* Do you feel this way? Have you felt this way? It keeps you from panting after the living water, for all you can think about is the scorching heat and the beat of your heart as you run, run, run from the dangers only to find yourself more lost, more beat down, more helpless, more alone. **The thoughts in your head keep you from hearing the stream up ahead.**

The solution again is to **remember**. This time, the remembrance takes place in this high country of Israel: **The land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar (6b).**⁷

⁷ Literally, “From the land of Jordan, from the Hermons, from the little hill” (Goulder, 350). Dahood has, “From the land of descent and of nets, from the mountains at the rim; where deep calls to deep...”

This is today's Golan; Bashan of old. Hermon is the highest point in Israel, and Mt. Mizar seems to mean "little hill." Is Mizar a false summit of Hermon? Is it a new term for Hermon? Is it purposefully juxtaposed with Hermon—tall and little? Does the psalmist want to go to Hermon or is he trying to get somewhere else because he is in exile near Hermon? We don't know. But we should remember that in Psalm 43 we have already seen that the truth and the light will bring the psalmist to God's holy hill. Therefore, there is some kind of a relationship going on with these mountains.

What is that relationship? The Holy Hill is where God dwells. More specifically, it is where the Son of God dwells. Deliberately taking our thoughts back to the introduction of the Psalms we remember, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'" (Ps 2:6-7). Wherever the psalmist is and however these images are being used, he wants to get to that place where the Son who is the Light of the World and the Way, Truth, and Life dwells. This is what he pants for.

But he can't get there. He can't see the hill. He is overwhelmed by the flood. "Deep calls to deep at the roar

of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me” (7).⁸ God has put him here. They are his breakers, and his waves are crashing over his head. This is fascinating because earlier, he was panting for water. Now, he can’t get enough of it. It is overwhelming him, drowning him, crushing him. Though the imagery is terrifying, someone points out something worth noting before we think too much more about it. “I love these verses in Psalm 42 because it shows how the Lord sovereignly ordains even these dark nights for His glory and our joy ... By withdrawing His sensible presence for a time, the Lord often stirs up our affections for Him and reveals the sincerity of our faith. However, these are still dark times. How are we to cope in the midst of them?”⁹

⁸ **Going Deeper:** There is more going on with the geography and water imagery than meets the eye. In the Gospels, this is the rugged area, the untamed land, where demons and the unclean dwell. Hermon is the place where the Watchers “descended” in Genesis 6 (see 1 Enoch), thus bringing about the Flood. Bashan was the land of the serpent. The goat demon Pan had a shrine at the base of the mountain. To this day there is a worship center called Tel Dan, a place that may go back to the days of Jeroboam I and his unacceptable worship innovations. The only place in Israel where there are waterfalls is in the Hermon massif. The Jordan reaches to the lowest point in Israel and is related to a word meaning “underworld.” So, the imagery seems to mingle watery chaos and flood motifs with the demonic outskirts of the Promised Land and the strangeness associated with it. He longs to get back to God’s holy hill. Instead, he is stuck here in a place of true outer darkness. See Mitchell Dahood S.J., *Psalms I: 1-50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 16, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 258.

⁹ Chris Powers, “Psalm 42:1-2,” *Full of Eyes*, <http://www.fullofeyes.com/project/psalm-421-2/>. (Jared seems to be an elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis).

As we try to get to the bottom of this question, let's think of one instance of a flood and drowning story in the Bible. Recall for a moment [Jonah](#). The reluctant prophet is told to go and proclaim repentance to his great enemies whom he hates. God wants to have mercy upon them. So he runs. He runs and runs and runs like a scared deer frightened by the sound of the dogs. He hops a boat hoping to travel to the very edge of the known world. *Surely, God won't find him there.* He is the opposite of the psalmist who longs to get back to God's holy hill. Jonah can't get far enough away from it!

But God knows. God knows. And he hurls Jonah into the sea. The waves crash over him until he is submerged. Then a giant fish swallows him. He is alone, in the dark, in the belly of a whale. Jonah composes a song. And this is what he sang:

*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.
Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight;
yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.'*
(Jonah 2:3-4)

This is Psalm 42-43! In fact, he has taken the very words of vs. 7 and made them his own as he goes through his own **dark night of the soul**. He is being baptized into death. God is judging him. Jonah's, "all your waves and billows passed over me" is identical in the Hebrew to **Psalm 42:7's**, "all your breakers and waves have gone over me." This means, Jonah is a kind of inspired commentary on the Psalm.¹⁰

One day, the scribes and Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus and asked him **for a sign** to prove to them he was the Messiah. Jesus answered, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" (**Matt 12:38-39**; cf. **16:4**; **Luke 11:29-30**). And what was that sign? "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (**40**). Jesus was predicting his death and resurrection and telling them that because of it, they must repent of their sins now before they are judged. He would take their judgment in their place if they would turn to him in repentance.

¹⁰ See **Chris Powers**, "Psalm 42:7," *Full of Eyes*, <http://www.fullofeyes.com/project/1768/>. The picture at the beginning of the sermon is from this page.

A little later, Jesus was talking to his disciples. He told them, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50). He had already undergone his baptism in the Jordan. Now, he referred to his death as a second baptism he had to undergo (cf. Mark 10:38-39). This is in league with the sign of Jonah—*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

Thus, we come to the one verse that is cited from our Psalms today in the NT. It is Psalm 42:5. And 11. And 43:5. The true chorus of these psalms. Three times: *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me*. Three times in the Gospels: *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death* (Matt 26:38; Mark 14:34). Do you hear the refrain? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose I have come to this hour (John 12:27). You see, the hope of the psalm is that the Lord Jesus is its singer. And because he sings it, you have one who is able to sympathize with what God is bringing you through. Not only so, but you have one who is able to save you, for he was raised to life on the third day so that you might have life in him. The sign of Jonah is the resurrection! Jesus has been raised from the dead this day!

We can put this another way:

The agony of being cut off from God's presence is one that Jesus experienced to its infinite limit in His dying hours on Calvary, and His suffering was intensified by the knowledge that ... it was *God's waves and God's breakers* that passed over the beloved Son as He died. Might this not give us an idea of what is bound up in the call of "deep" to "deep" in Psalm 42? "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" – **Matthew 27:46**.

At the cross the eternal Son is lifted up, exalted as the bearer of our curse, and is drowned under the sea of wrath that we deserved. And in that moment of greatest conceivable agony, the infinite Deep of the Son's heart cries out in dereliction to the infinite Deep of the Father's heart, and the Spirit—the bond of their union—resonates between the two as love embraces wrath; the harmony of our redemption (**Hebrews 9:14**). "Deep calls to deep" and we are saved.

The center of the Psalm brings us to the end of ourselves and makes us able through the gospel to believe this good news. "Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me" (**Ps 42:9b-10a**). The psalmist sings for himself. How will he make it through? The Lord Jesus sings

for himself. He made it through. They did not break any of his bones. Now he is alive. Therefore, he sings it for you.

“I say to God, my Rock: ‘Why have you forgotten me?’” (9a). The psalmist sings to himself. This is similar to Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” This was the prayer of our Lord on the cross. He was forsaken for you. But the psalmist realizes that he is expressing the very sentiment of his enemies. He has come to believe their taunts: “While they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (10b). “He realizes that he himself is casting doubt upon God in agreement with his enemies, the wicked and the ungodly! This is his turning point.”¹¹

He takes his cast down soul in hand, and tells himself, ‘Wait a minute. What am I saying? I have a reason to hope instead of being disquieted. God is my help who is going to come through for me!’ He remembers the last time he was in God’s presence with the *ekklesia* at the feast day, and his great joy and praise for all God’s goodness toward him [Stanza 1]. He assures himself that he will be there again, rejoicing in God [Stanza 3]. When we are in distress, we might hear doubting, accusing thoughts. We might even speak

¹¹ Christine Miller, “Psalm 42 and 43 Chiastic Structure,” *A Little Perspective* (Mat 7, 2014), <http://www.alittleperspective.com/psalm-42-and-43-chiastic-structure/>.

some of them in our distress. But the way back to faith, is to realize that we do not have to agree with everything we hear. We can “take that thought captive” and speak the truth to ourselves instead, just as the Psalmist has done.¹²

Thus, *By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life (42:8).*

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

This message is satisfying biblically, intellectually, and emotionally. You could sing it after a bombing of your brothers in Christ.

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.

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.

¹² Ibid.

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* (Ps 42:5, 11, 43:5).

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Reversing the Center of the Chiasm (Stanza 2)

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- 42:8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to **the God of my life**.
- 42:9a I say to God, my Rock: ‘Why have you forsaken me?’
- 43:9b Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 42:10a As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me.
- 42:10b While they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’
- 42:11 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**