

Psalm 42:1-5

Introduction: These two Psalms (42-43) begins the second book of the Psalms (42-72), which are characterized by the predominant use of Elohim instead of Yahweh. In Book 1 the ratio was 272 Yahweh to 15 Elohim, while in Book 2 the ratio is 164 Elohim to 30 Yahweh. These two psalms appear to have originally been united.

The superscription—*To the leader. A maskil of the sons of Korah.*

- 1) See Psalm 44:1; 45:1; 46:1; 47:1; 48:1; 49:1; 84:1; 85:1; 87:1; 88:1
 - a) See 1st Chronicles 6:33, 37
- 2) These were those men assigned to lead in the worship of God in the tabernacle/temple.
- 3) These two psalms were originally one:
 - a) Many Hebrew copies have them as one
 - b) Repetition of phrases
 - i) Questions for his soul—42:5, 11, 43:5
 - ii) Longing for the tabernacle/temple—42:4; 43:3-4
 - iii) Mocking by his enemies—42:3, 9-10; 43:2

Part 1: a longing to be in God's presence in light of drought—42:1-5

He has an intense longing for God in the face of prevalent drought—42:1-2

- 1) A comparison—¹ *As the deer longs [arag] for flowing waters, in this way my soul longs [arag] for You, O God.*
 - a) In a land where the riverbeds are normally dry.
- 2) Clearly stated—² *My soul thirsts [tsame] for God, for the living God.*
 - a) May our souls be yearning for the living God who alone can satisfy.
 - i) He is the invisible God who is the author and fountain of life itself
 - ii) See 14 Old Testament uses: Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1st Samuel 17:26, 36; 2nd Kings 19:4, 16; Psalm 84:2; Isaiah 37:4, 17; Jeremiah 10:10; 23:36; Daniel 6:20, 26; Hosea 1:10
 - iii) See 15 New Testament uses: Matthew 16:16; 26:63; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; Romans 9:26; 2nd Corinthians 3:3; 6:16; 1st Timothy 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Hebrews 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Revelation 7:2
 - b) We thirst because:
 - i) Our environment has been dry and dusty
 - ii) Our exertion has been demanding
- 3) Expressed in a question—*When will I come and appear before God?*
 - a) The Psalmist is apparently unable to lead worship in the tabernacle/temple in Jerusalem because of some enforced exile.
- 4) “His ‘deer-like’ thirst expresses not a worshiper’s love for God (as we often think of the phrase) but the agonizing, terrifying thirst of an animal wasting away in a time of drought. The psalmist is beside himself with grief. He is oppressed.”
(Chris Anderson, *Gospel Meditations for the Hurting*, # 25)

He has an intense sorrow in the face of prevalent mocking—42:3

- 1) ³ *My tears have been my food day and night,*
 - a) *while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”*
 - b) The discouraging talk of others can impact us in ways we don’t understand.
- 2) His enemies say, “You claim to worship the true God: is He real? We can’t see Him? Where is He now? Has He forsaken you in your exile?”
- 3) Sometimes there is a dry grief more terrible than tears.

He remembers past experiences in God’s presence—42:4 (“good old days”)

- Adverse conditions in life are an optimal context for reflecting on God.
- 1) ⁴ *These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me,*
 - a) His memories lead him to pray; this is the bias of his soul.
 - 2) Why? *because...* (these are the things he remembers)
 - a) Pilgrimages to Jerusalem—*I used to move along with the multitude, walking slowly with them, to the house of God with joy and thanksgiving,*
 - b) These were festive celebrations—*a festive crowd.*
 - 3) As a Levite, he may have even lead the procession into the tabernacle/temple.

He regards his grief and struggle with doubt—42:5 (cf. 42:11; 43:5)

- 1) He questions his soul with two questions
 - a) ⁵ *Why are you despairing/depressed, O my soul,*
 - i) Why are you sitting as a mourner?
 - ii) We mourn over our sin, but there is forgiveness with God!
 - iii) We mourn over our temptations, but there is help from God to overcome!
 - iv) We mourn over our circumstances, but God is sovereign over all things!
 - b) *and why are you restlessly grumbling/in turmoil/upset within me?*
 - i) We often grumble over our circumstances.
 - c) Pastor David Martyn Lloyd-Jones listed possible causes for these struggles:
 - i) Temperament or type of person
 - ii) Physical condition
 - iii) Reaction after a significant spiritual event, like Elijah
 - iv) Satanic or demonic activity
 - v) Christians who do not clearly understand the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith.
 - vi) Christians who do not see clearly that their heart is not fully engaged.
 - vii) Christians whose heart and will are divided.
- 2) He commands his soul—*Wait on God,*
 - a) Why? *because I will again acknowledge him (for) the salvation of His face.*
 - i) These are the saving acts of God’s presence/intervention.

Take-home truth: Talk (don’t just listen) to yourself in a Godward manner.