

Psalm 42 & 43

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Preacher: Paul Meiners

[0 : 00] At the beginning of this psalm you find something which is actually a verse of scripture and that is to the choir master a mass kill of the sons of Korah.

Interestingly you don't find any heading at the beginning of Psalm 43 and in some Hebrew Bibles those two are gathered together in one psalm.

And as you can see just from Peter's reading it there's a lot of similarities. There's a lot of ways in which the same theme is repeated and like a piece of music as it is there's a chorus that repeats itself three times through that.

And there are phrases that are repeated and thoughts that are expanded. It's full of imagery like a piece of poetry can be. It's something that speaks to our heart and draws us out.

It says it's of the sons of Korah and that it's to the choir master. The sons of Korah were a group of a family group that was designated by David to sing praise to God in the temple.

[1 : 07] And so they composed songs and here is one that one of the sons of Korah who is unnamed writes it down and he puts a note on the top that says to the choir master.

Send it to this man so that it can be prepared and sung in the temple. As you listen to this you realize that he's dealing with certain issues that believers face.

It's called a maskel and that's a literary term that we don't often understand. Just like you get out a piece of music if you're in a choral group or you're playing an instrument and you think well I understand these words but what's all this Italian looking stuff here?

It's obscure to us but musicians understand what it is. And so the ordinary Israelite may not have known the musical terms. But the best we can do is understand that a maskel might be a teaching psalm.

Now in some ways that seems different to us because if we think of teaching we usually think of a lecture and somebody who has notes in a logical progression through things.

[2 : 12] If we think of a psalm we think of something which is more a literary style or a form of poetry. But what this is is it's a psalm intended to deal with issues in people's lives and teach them how do you deal with those things.

What do you do in your relationship with God when you feel thirsty? When you feel distant from God? When you're attacked by various different questions and you don't have the answers? What do you do in that situation?

And this psalm intends to teach about that. One thing, if you look at this you see that there are 11 verses in the first and five in the second.

And in the middle of the first psalm, the 42nd psalm, is verse 6 which I think is kind of the thesis of it all. We tend to put the thesis in the first paragraph and sum it up at the end of whatever we're writing or saying.

But in the Jewish literary style sometimes it's right there at the heart of what they're saying. And so you have things leading up to the thesis or the main idea.

[3 : 20] And then you have things following after that and reinforcing it. And in many ways that's the way it works out here. Verse 6 says, My soul is cast down within me.

Therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon. So the son of Korah is doing several things here. He's putting the situation in which he wrote this from the land of Jordan and from Hermon.

From Mount Mizo. The Jordan ran along the side of Israel. It was off from Judah, a distance from the temple. And if you went all the way up to the headwaters of the Jordan, you would find yourself where the water comes off of Mount Hermon.

And so here's this man writing from this place. And I suspect that he's probably writing in a time when he feels very distant. Here he is professionally, he should be at the temple. He should be leading worship at the temple. But instead he's way off in the end of creation, it seems to him. Instead of being where God is worshipped, he's up in the northern kingdom where for many years people have wandered away from God.

[4 : 31] So instead of being in Jerusalem where the temple is and God's worshipped, he's up there where people may be worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth and other gods. He feels very distant from God.

And he's becoming dried out as he's up there. And he says of himself, He's telling us that in that situation, what he's trying to do is to remember God and keep that connection with God.

And that's what this psalm is all about. If you think in terms of musical presentation, not just the simplicity that's good for congregational singing, but if you were the sons of Korah, you were working under the choir master and you were going to present this in the temple so that people could really understand what you're trying to teach them.

You would look at this psalm and you could say, OK, here's the chorus that's repeated in verse 5 and verse 11 and verse 5 of the next psalm. So we need to have the chorus in there and we need to bring out the progression of the thoughts of these things and the way in which the first part and the second part and the third part relate together.

We can connect those things musically with the instruments we use and the key we set it in. There are certain verses that need to be at a minor key and certain verses here that need to be in a light and arily key because of songs that go up to God and our prayers being heard.

[6 : 10] There are things that we can do in this psalm. And as we present it, the first time we present that chorus, it's going to seem rather bleak, but we're going to make it more triumphant in the middle.

And at the end, we're going to bring in the kettle drums and some other instruments so that people understand that we can come before God and God answers our prayer. So I'm not going to perform this or anything like that, but let's keep that in mind as we try to listen to this psalm and what the psalmist is communicating to us.

There's three different things here. The first five verses, I think we could say, is longing for God's presence. And then the last five verses of 42 is practicing God's presence.

And then 43 is God's presence brings us home. So it's all about God's presence and all about God satisfying that longing. If you look here in the first part, longing for God's presence in verses 1 to 5, He presents this picture and begins the whole idea of things that flow.

He talks about the deer pants for the flowing streams. So pants my soul for you, O God. He's like a man who is out in the wilderness. And he comes down, as you would do if you were in a desert place.

[7 : 37] You see a ribbon of green and you think, there's things growing there. There must be a stream. And you come down to that stream and all you find is rocks and sand. And so the deer goes on looking for another place.

Where can he satisfy his thirst? This man goes looking for God. He's thirsty for God. Where can he find that? And so he finds himself living in a desert place.

But he says in verse 2, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? I don't want these dead gods that these people up here in the north are worshipping. Baal is not going to answer my prayers. The Asteroth is not going to give me what I need. They don't care about me. What I'm looking for is the living God. The God who gives life.

The God who gives life in this dry place to me. The God who gives life to my soul. And he asks, when shall I come and appear before God?

[8 : 39] That's one of the questions that comes through this psalm. It's been a long time, Lord. It's been too long since I've been away from you. It's been too long since I've heard your words.

Since I've sung your praises. When is this going to end, Lord? And so he is longing to stand before God. In verse 3, that whole idea that goes through here of flowing is reflected in his sorrow.

My tears have been my food day and night. So instead of finding a stream that's flowing like the deer is looking for, I find the stream flowing from my eyes.

It's my tears, Lord, that have become my food day and night. Not just from time to time. But he says it is persistent and it's day and night that his tears are flowing.

And why is it that he is weeping? Because he says, while they say to me all the day long, where is your God? So in this context with unbelievers all around him, that's the thing that he hears.

[9 : 44] So here's another question. The first is when? And this question is where? Where is your God? It's the taunt of people who don't believe. You may find yourself in that kind of situation where you're trying to have a testimony, but you feel very alone.

You don't feel like there's other students in your school who believe in the Lord Jesus. You believe that people are making fun of you when you talk about him. When you try to express in your place of work or your neighborhood or wherever it might be, when you try to express your faith in God, people are saying, well, when such and such happened, where was God?

When this tragedy happened, where was God? When this earthquake happened, where was God? And that's people's questions. Most of their life, they're just saying, God, stay away.

I don't even believe that you're there. I don't want you in my life. But when something bad happens, they turn to us and they say, where is your God? And the son of Korah, the psalmist, is reflecting that in his own heart.

One of the things that he misses is the opportunity to worship God. There are other psalms in which the psalmist talks about seeing the wicked prosper and seeing the struggles of the righteous and saying, Lord, this doesn't seem right.

[11 : 09] And he's wrestling with this before God. And then he says, then I went into your sanctuary. Then I went where I heard your word, where I saw your people and they were worshipping you.

I went to your sanctuary and then it made sense. And the Lord answered his question. And that's what he does when he comes to verse 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 fast of me.

This word remember is an important covenantal word. God wants us to remember his covenant. And often in the scriptures it will go back and say, remember how God did this, remember how God did that, remember how God has done all of these things.

Now look at your situation. Why are you so afraid? Because we have a God who has done these things. If God has led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and across the Jordan, can't he give the deer a drink in a dry, thirsty land?

If God has done all of these things, can't he provide for you in this situation? And so this man who used to lead in worship, he looks back and he remembers and he says, yes, I remember.

[12 : 31] I remember as I pour out my soul that I used to be there in the throng and we were singing praise to God. But what he's hungry for in the midst of people saying, where is your God, is being with God's people who are singing, here is our God.

That's what refreshes us. And that's the reason we come to worship together. In verse 5, he has this conversation with himself.

Now there are a lot of people who say if you're talking to yourself, it's a sign of insanity. And people who do that ought to get their head checked out or something like that. But actually, the psalmist says, talking to yourself is a way to be healthy.

He talks to his soul and he says in verse 5, Why are you cast down, O my soul? His soul is the innermost part of him. He's not just dealing with the outer circumstances.

He's not just saying, well, I just missed that great restaurant in Jerusalem. I remember when I used to go with my friends and get coffee in this sidewalk cafe. That's what I really miss.

[13 : 39] How I long for these things. He doesn't even say, I miss my family. He says, how I long for God. He speaks to the innermost part of his being.

Not the external things. Not his mouth and his senses and his memory. He speaks to his soul. Why are you cast down, my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me?

Notice he doesn't paint it over to make it look good. He doesn't use that green paint that I had in my bag and try to make things look good. Instead, he comes before God as he speaks to his soul and he says, I'm really discouraged here.

I'm cast down. I'm in turmoil. And he says to his soul, why are you that way? Another question. Why are you that way?

Put your hope in God. For I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. In the ESV it says, I shall again praise him.

[14 : 43] And the NIV says, I shall yet praise him. And that word yet reminds me of something that we talk about. Sometimes we talk about the now but not yet. We talk about the fact that now we have the work of resurrection in giving us a new heart.

But not yet do we have the resurrection of our body. Our bodies are still weak and get sick and are frail. Now we have fellowship with God.

But yet, we are waiting yet for the time when we will be in God's presence together. Now we have the word to hear.

The written word. But in the future we will be in the presence of Jesus, the word of God. So we have now a foretaste of the things that we will have. And that's what he's saying.

He's saying, hope in God. For I shall again praise him, my salvation and God. To remember, I said, is a covenantal word looking back to what God has done in the past.

[15 : 46] And hope is a covenantal word looking forward to what God has promised to do in the future. And that's what we do when we are discouraged and cast down. We take hold of the promises of God.

And we say, I don't have it in full now. But it is coming. And God is going to give that to me. When he says, hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, he says, my salvation and my God.

The NIV says, my Savior, with a capital S. If you look at the footnote in the ESV, it says, the salvation of my face. Now, we don't use that kind of terminology.

That sounds like, you know, somebody would say when they're putting on their makeup. You know, I look so bad this morning, but this stuff I'm putting on on the tube on the way to work is the salvation of my face.

Well, that's not what he's talking about at all. What he's talking about is my own person. God is the one who is very personal to me. Baal and the other gods, or your money, or your bank account, or your education, or your connections, or all those things, he says, are a dead God, not the living God.

[17 : 03] And also, they could care less about you. Those gods are not your God. Your God is the salvation of your face. God is right there face to face to us.

He's the one who brightens our face. He's the one who works in our hearts. He doesn't say, my salvation and the God.

He says, my God. Because we have a God who calls us mine. And a God that we can call my God. In the second section, we see practicing God's presence from verse 7 to 11.

And I'll read 6 along with it. My soul is cast down within me. Therefore, I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon from Mount Nizar. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls. All your breakers and your waves have gone over me. So here he is, so far away from Jerusalem. But he's at the headwaters of the same river that comes down that way.

[18 : 06] And here he is at the headwaters of this river. He's been calling out to God and saying, I just want a little stream with water in it. Enough for a deer to satisfy his thirst.

And God says, you want a stream? I'll give you a stream. And God, here's how he describes it. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls.

All your breakers and your waves have gone over me. Kids, have you gone someplace and you find a stream? And you're like my children always were. Whenever we were traveling someplace and we would be driving along a stream, they wanted to find someplace we could stop, they could build a dam.

They wanted to wade in the water and it was cool and refreshing after being in the car too long. They wanted to throw rocks in the water and get wet and accidentally fall into the water when their mom wasn't looking.

It was so refreshing. And so they wanted to get into the water. And so what have you done sometimes? Have you waded out into the water and it seems so great? And so you want to go in a little deeper and you go in a little bit deeper.

[19 : 15] And then you go in and then you find the water is pretty fast. And the rocks are slippery. And next thing you know, you're splashing. You've fallen down and you're splashing in the water. And your dad has to come and grab you and rescue you.

Well, that's exactly what happens to the psalmist here. He says, I wanted a little stream to refresh me. And what did God do? He took me up to where the mountain water comes off of Mount Hermon and begins the Jordan River.

And instead of a small stream, I have waterfalls and water crashing over the rocks. I can't even hear my friend talking because of the roar of the water. I wade out in the air to wash my clothes off and the dust off of my body and to be refreshed.

And I slip on the rocks and I fall and I think I'm going to drown. Because when God provides for us, he provides abundantly. And sometimes God answers our prayer.

We're asking for something small. And God says, I don't do just small things. Sometimes I'm going to overwhelm you with the answer to your prayer. And you're going to realize how dependent upon me you are on me.

[20 : 27] How much you need your Father to put his arms around you, your Heavenly Father, to rescue you from the answer to your own prayers. The language which he uses here is very reminiscent language.

When he says deep calls to deep, it goes all the way back to Genesis 1.1. Where we're told that the creation of the world, the waters are called the deep.

And the Holy Spirit of God is hovering over the deep. That's what the waters are. They are not just something flowing on the surface, but they go very deep. Turn with me to Jonah chapter 2.

And you'll think that these two have borrowed from each other. On page 774, since Jonah is a little bit harder to find than some things.

774, Jonah chapter 2. Jonah was a little bit different than the psalmist. The psalmist feels like, I'm far away from God. I wish I could find God here.

[21 : 29] I wish God would give me some water to drink. Jonah is saying, no, God wants me to go to Nineveh, and I don't want to go. So I'm going to go the other direction. And God says, okay, you want to go out onto the sea?

I'll give you the deep. You want to run away from me? We'll see how that works. And Jonah, remember, gets thrown overboard. He goes down into the bottom of water, and he gets swallowed by a big fish.

Jonah says in verse 2, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol. I cried, and you heard my voice.

For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me. All your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I'm driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.

The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped about my head. At the roots of the mountains, I went down to the land whose bars closed over me forever.

[22 : 41] Yet you brought up my life from the pit. O Lord my God, when my life was fainting away, I remember the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Those who pay regard to vain idols, forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed to you, I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord. God took this psalmist like Jonah into the deep.

He showed him how strong his power was, and how well he could answer prayer. And God brings him through. So God takes us through trials.

God takes us through them, and he protects us. And you notice the psalmist doesn't say, he doesn't say, the roar of the waterfalls, the breakers, the waves have gone over me.

[23 : 41] He says, your waterfalls, all of your breakers, your waves, have gone over me. Lord, it's your hand on me, answering my prayer in a way which is greater than I ever anticipated.

So how do we rest in God? We're practicing God's presence here in verse 8. And here's where the music goes from the kettle drums, and the thundering of the waterfalls, and the breakers.

It goes to something much quieter. Day by day, in verse 8, the Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night his song was with me. Before, in verse 2, or 3, which compares to this, my tears have been my food day and night.

Now God has powerfully washed away his tears, and by day, and by night, the Lord is with him. The Lord commands his steadfast love. That's the Hebrew word *chesed*, which is hard for us to translate.

If you read the Children's Storybook Bible, it uses a whole string of words to explain that. It says something about God's overwhelming, never-ending, unending love that never quits.

[24 : 57] Something like that. It just piles up the words. This is not, oh, I love that new shirt you have. This is not, my boyfriend and I love each other, so therefore, this is a love which is committed.

It's God's love for us, which never fails. And that's the love, he says, he experiences. The Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night, his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. Because the Lord answers him in the midst of his struggles, he can sing, he can pray. But it's not all over. God didn't eliminate all of his problems, but God met him in the middle of them.

In verse 9, in verse 9 and 10, I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning?

Because of the oppression of the enemy. As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me. While they say to me all day long, where is your God?

[26 : 02] God, he calls his rock, not a rock, but my rock. But he also recognizes that he feels forsaken by God, and pours out his complaint to him.

Some people feel that if you believe in God, then everything is going to be easy. And if you don't see everything as easy, then maybe it's because you don't believe in God. But here is a psalmist who calls God his rock.

And yet he can come to God and say these things. He can say them because his belief is not on the surface. It's a deep enough belief that he can come to God and say, Lord, I don't understand what's going on.

It's like having the kind of relationship to your parent or your good friend, so that you can come to them and not just talk about banter, not just talk about surface things, but you can talk to them about the agony that you feel in your heart, because you know that they will listen, and you know that they will answer.

They will respond even if they don't take it away. And so he comes to God and says, I still feel this mourning. I still feel the oppression of the enemy.

[27 : 11] I still hear them saying, Where is your God? But I come to you as my rock. And then the chorus again, Why are you cast down on my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. This turmoil that goes on in us is something very real, and something we can't deny.

It's something that comes from us. It's part of our nature. But also Calvin says that our heart is like this devil's workshop, and sometimes the devil stoves the fire in that workshop, so that he can create doubts, and fears, and all these kinds of things.

And so the psalmist speaks to his soul, and he comes in with a bucket of water to throw it on the fire, that the devil is fanning to try to create these things in his workshop.

He throws water on that fire to say, No, hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. And then in this last part, he comes with things which parallel the first parts.

[28 : 19] He comes this time not to say to God, Where are you? I'm thirsty, and I can't find water. But instead, he knows that God is there.

And he doesn't ask God to eliminate all of his problems, but he says to God, Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause. He doesn't say, Remember me, or cleanse me, or something, but show that I am cleansed.

Vindicate me, and defend my cause, because I'm being attacked, Lord. And I can't mount my own defense against an ungodly people. For deceitful and unjust, from deceitful and unjust men, deliver me.

For people who are telling lies all the time, who are fanning the flames of the devil's fire to create doubts and fears in my heart, Lord, defend me, protect me from them.

From those who are unjust, who do what is wrong, and I can't oppose that. Lord, I can't make justice myself, but vindicate me, and bring justice, because you give it.

[29 : 21] 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. So we have something in verse 2, which is almost identical to verse 9.

9 says, I say to God, my rock. Here in verse 2, he says, For you are the God in whom I take refuge. In verse 9, he says, Why have you forgotten me?

Here he says, Why have you rejected me? And concludes with the same words, Why do I go about mourning? Because of the oppression of the enemy. Who is our rock?

Who is our fortress? Who do we turn to when we feel oppressed by the enemy? When we feel that God is somehow distant to us. We turn to the one who was closer to us than a brother.

We turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Paul says that that when the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, there was a rock that went with them.

[30 : 29] That rock was Jesus Christ. And it was from the rock, that rock, that they drank water in different places in the desert. Now, it wasn't, what they needed was not that geological rock that stayed in one place, but what they needed was the rock of Jesus Christ who traveled with them in the desert.

And that's what the psalmist is turning to as his rock and his fortress. The New Testament also tells us that Jesus is the cornerstone of God's church. He's the rock that he has given to us for our salvation and for our defense.

He's the one that we call out to and we pour out our heart. And we say, why are we still mourning? Because he is the one who hears us. He's the one who came to suffer in our place.

He's the one who came to be thirsty, to be overwhelmed, to have people call out to him, where is your God when he's on the cross? Why doesn't he come and save you? If the Lord delights in you, let him deliver you.

From this death. He's the one who went to that cross and took it for us. The psalmist says, here is God leading us home. Because this last part is that God's presence brings us home.

[31 : 47] The psalmist says, send your light and your truth and let them lead me. I'm in the dark here, Lord. I'm attacked by deceitful people.

Send your light and your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Then I will go to the altar of God. To God my exceeding joy.

And I will praise you with the lyre. Oh God, my God. At the beginning, he's longing to go back and to worship with God's people. He wants to be at the temple.

And here he uses that same language. Now let your light and your truth lead me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. I will go to the altar of God. But it's not the altar.

It's not the temple. It's not the hill he's looking for. To God, my exceeding joy. And I will praise you with the lyre. Oh God, my God.

[32 : 43] Jesus is the one who leads us in this way. Turn with me to John chapter 4. We're over to 8.

8. 89 here. Come to John. John chapter 4. Jesus is talking to someone else who's thirsty.

He's talking to a woman who is partway out toward Mount Hermon. Someone who is in a dry place. And Jesus says to this woman at the well, let me start with verse 10.

Jesus said to her, no, that's not 10. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

The woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself as did his sons and his livestock.

[33 : 51] Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst again. The water that I will give him will become to him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, sir, give me this water. So that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to drink and draw water. A few chapters later in chapter 7, Jesus says to the people coming to the temple that if you come to me, I will give you living water and streams of living water will flow out from you.

And John says, he said this, speaking of the Holy Spirit who is to be poured out on them. Later in this chapter, Jesus speaks not just about the thirst and the living water, but from 19 to 26, the woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

[35 : 17] For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know the Messiah is coming. He who is called the Christ when he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. The psalmist longs for a drink of water and Jesus promises us living water. The psalmist says, where can I go and meet with God? And Jesus says, the spirit and the truth, the light, they will lead you to God.

They will lead you to his holy hill. It is great for us to go and worship with God's people. But this is the now. The not yet is worshipping with thousands upon thousands of angels gathered together and worshipping in God's presence.

Right now we encourage one another as we come and we sing to each other, here is our God. And we are refreshed when we come together. But what we are doing is anticipating what God is going to do.

[36 : 23] So the psalmist says, why are you cast down my soul? Why are you troubled within me? Hope in God for I shall again praise you.

My salvation or my savior, the Lord Jesus and my God. Let's pray.