

The 150 Psalms which comprise the book of Psalms has been divided into five books:

Book #1 - Psalm 1-41

Book #2 - Psalm 42-72

Book #3 - Psalm 73-89

Book #4 - Psalm 90-106

Book #5 - Psalm 107-150

Each book ends with a doxology that “Blesses or Praises God” and three of the five books end with the words—“Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel” (41:13; 72:18; 106:48).

The Psalms were collected over a period of time and were systematized and organized for the worship services of Israel. The Psalms are the prayer and praise book for the worship services for Israel.

The earliest manuscript evidence of this fivefold division came from the scrolls found in the Qumran caves, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. So this division of the Psalms existed before the N.T. age began.

Now we may notice that **Psalm 42** begins with a superscription—“For the choir director, a Maskil of the sons of Korah.” Now a “maskil” was a designation of a specific type of Psalm. The Hebrew word from which “maskil” is derived is one that means to carefully look at something for the purpose of understanding it so that the end result may be success and happiness (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 790). A “maskil” superscription means that the Psalm needs to be very carefully studied and understood because it is one that can bring success and happiness to an individual.

Now the “sons of Korah” were descendants of Kohath, the son of Levi (I Chron. 6:22) and they were also descendants of the rebel Korah, who conspired against Moses (Num. 16:1-3, 13). So this is pure grace in having them be involved in God’s leadership.

These Levites had been appointed by David and specifically were given the responsibility to lead the singing and playing of the instruments at the worship services (I Chron. 6:31-47; 15:16*). There were 4000 musicians appointed by David who were responsible to offer musical praise to the Lord every morning and every evening (I Chron. 23:5, 30) and obviously the “sons of Korah” were part of this.

Now we do not specifically know whether the “sons of Korah” actually wrote these Psalms or whether they were specifically written for them. They were obviously a family that was very musically skilled.

What we do know is that one Psalm in Book 2 was written by Asaph (Psalm 50); twenty Psalms in Book 2 are written by David (Psalm 51-70); three Psalms in Book 2 are anonymous (Psalm 43, 67, 71) and one Psalm in book 2 is written by Solomon (Psalm 72).

Many scholars believe that even though Psalm 42 and 43 are different chapters in both the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Septuagint, they should be considered as one Psalm. The reasons are as follows:

- 1) There is no superscription before Psalm 43;
- 2) There is a repetition of the same words (42:5; 43:5);
- 3) There is a flow of thought from despair of worship to an expectancy to once again be restored to worship (42:4-6/43:3, 4);
- 4) There is a consistency of the lament in both Psalms (42:5-6/43:5);
- 5) Some of the Hebrew manuscripts list this as one Psalm.

It is no wonder that many commentators treat both of these Psalms as one. In our analysis, we will expound them independently—Psalm 42 this week and Psalm 43 next week.

It is very possible that this Psalm was actually written by David for the choir director. Charles Spurgeon believed this. In fact, he said this Psalm “is so Davidic that it swells of the son of Jesse.”

The main point of the Psalm is this:

WHEN WE FIND OUR SOUL IS DEPRESSED BECAUSE ENEMIES ARE OPPRESSING US BY MOCKING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WE MUST KEEP OUR HOPE IN HIM FOR IN HIS TIME HE WILL HELP US AND TURN OUR SORROW INTO PRAISE.

Now this Psalm may be understood by breaking it down into three key laments:

LAMENT #1 – The lament for corporate worship. **42:1-5**

When we are depressed, the most urgent need of our soul is for intimate communion with God.

It is obvious from these verses that the author of this Psalm had a real hearts’ desire to know God and worship God. The writer longed to “appear before God” (**42:2**) and he longed to “lead Israel in procession to the house of God” to worship God (**42:4**).

Look at the description of how much the writer wanted to go to the house of God and worship:

(Description #1) - His soul panted for it like a deer for water (**42:1**).

David had lived in the mountains and he had literally seen deer panting for water and he would certainly be in a position to use the analogy. This is what the soul really thirsts for—a relationship with the “living God.”

(Description #2) - He wept because he could not go to worship services day and night **(42:2b-3)**.

It is clear from **verse 3** that the writer was being mocked by his enemies and it wasn't safe for him to go worship.

There are a couple of things to observe from these verses:

- 1) God's presence is very real in corporate worship. **42:2**
- 2) Those really right with God desire to have corporate worship. **42:4**

Just as a drunk is drawn to a bar; one who is godly is drawn to worship services.

Frankly, we live in a time when many members of the church could care less if they even go to church. They have no real heart for God. They have no real heart to want to know God's Word. When one is right with God, he will have a soul that desires to know God and worship God.

Verse 5 informs us that the key to getting out of this state of depression is to maintain hope in God and wait on Him for His help. God wants His people to worship Him and He will make that possible.

LAMENT #2 – The lament for deliverance . **42:6-8**

Again we think this could be an indication that this is a Davidic Psalm because David often found himself in a geographical location that was far away from the temple of Jerusalem and the corporate worship of God.

Carefully notice **verse 6**—when our soul is in despair, it is good to remember how God has previously and powerfully worked. This is precisely what the writer of this Psalm was doing. He was remembering the power of God from the land of Jordan.

Now this specific area was an area that David crossed into when he was being pursued (II Sam. 17:24). David spent a lot of time in the Jordan River valley and obviously moved north toward Mount Hermon and was able to look at its impressive peaks from Mount Mizar **(42:6)**. David did a lot of his hiding in the mountain regions and he was thinking about the fact that God had protected him.

However, **verse 7** reveals that David was experiencing deep trouble and trials. God, in His sovereignty, had allowed the threatening waves to roll over him. Although David never literally felt the waves like Jonah, he did find himself in similar life-threatening situations.

David's hope was totally and completely in God (**verse 8**). David's hope was that God would deliver him. In His grace and in His mercy and in His lovingkindness, David knew that God could give him a song in the night. He was praying to God for Him to preserve his very life.

When we find ourselves in deep despair in our own soul; there are two critical things needed for survival:

- 1) Remember the times you have dramatically seen God care for you and provide for you.
We need to “store up some memories” of times we have seen God provide dramatically;
- 2) Pray and ask God for His help.

LAMENT #3 – The lament for enemies . **42:9-11**

In any age, people who love God will have their share of enemies. Godly people can expect to be oppressed and persecuted by those who are ungodly.

One of the major causes of David’s depression was evil opposing enemies and adversaries. What made David even more depressed is that some of his enemies were his own constituency.

Enemies can make life miserable for you, especially when you thought they were your friends. I have never lost sleep over some unsaved enemy who has it out for me; but I have lost sleep over some who were in the church who turned against me. That is what David experienced.

David was being oppressed by enemies (**42:9**). These enemies were mocking him and his relationship with God. They were laughing about his trouble and saying, “where is your God?” (**42:10**). Their verbal assaults were relentless.

But there were three steps David took:

Step #1 - He talked openly and honestly with God . **42:9a**

Step #2 - He talked openly and honestly and theologically with himself . **42:11a**

Step #3 - He continued to maintain his hope in God and wait for help from God. **42:11b**

There are some great lessons to learn from this Psalm:

- 1) When our soul is depressed we need to continue to corporately worship.**
- 2) When our soul is depressed we need to remember times God has cared for us.**
- 3) When our soul is depressed we need to talk with God.**
- 4) When our soul is depressed we need to continually hope in God and wait on God.**