

## CAST DOWN, PANTING FOR YOU, O GOD

Psalm 42: 1-11 and Psalm 43: 1-6

Many years ago, Jinny's Mom, Gertrude Piatt, my mother-in-law gave me a book entitled, "The Poetic Interpretation Of The Psalms," by Isaac Watts. Prior to the 17th century, the use of songs in the English language, whether in public or private worship was almost exclusively limited to the Psalms without the benefit of rhyme or metre. Although the literal sense of the Psalms was preserved, the expression of them in song at times was awkward, and the melody and rhythm were very unsatisfactory. In 1720, this great hymn writer, Isaac Watts finished 19 years of writing all 150 of the psalms into metre and rhyme for singing. His book immediately sold 4,000 copies way back then and with praise to God, he said in the flyleaf of the first printing, "And, if an author's own opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest work that ever he has published, or ever hopes to do for the use of the churches." In tribute to Jinny's mother, my own mother, and to Jinny, mother of our seven children, and to each of you as mothers, I come to this message on Psalms 42 and 43 to say, "You mothers are one of the greatest reasons why our nation is as godly as we are today in the face of our rapid apostasy." I thought you all might enjoy hearing these two psalms as Isaac Watts put them to rhyme and metre and as in the form that they were sung in the early 1800nds. Here is his interpretation of the two psalms, from the father of English hymnology.

"With earnest longings of the mind, My God, to thee I look; So pants the hunted hart to find And taste the cooling brook. When shall I see Thy courts of grace, And meet my God again? So long an absence from Thy face My heart endures with pain. Temptations vex my weary soul, And tears are my repast; The foe insults without control, "And where's your God at last?" 'Tis with a mournful pleasure now I think on ancient days; Then to Thy house did numbers go, And all our work was praise. But why, my soul, sunk down so far Beneath this heavy load? Why do my thoughts indulge despair, And sin against my God? Hope in the Lord, whose mighty hand Can all thy woes remove, For I shall yet before him stand, And sing restoring love." My spirit sinks within me, O Lord, But I will call Thy name to mind, And times of past distress record, When I have found my God was kind. Huge troubles with tumultuous noise Swell like a sea, and round me spread; Thy waterspouts drown all my joys, And rising waves roll o'er my head. Yet will the Lord command His love, When I address His throne by day, Nor in the night His grace remove; The night shall hear me sing and pray. I'll cast myself before His feet, And say, "My God, my heav'nly rock, Why doth Thy love so long forget The soul that groans beneath Thy stroke?" I'll chide my heart that sinks so low, Why should my soul indulge her grief? Hope in the Lord, and praise Him too; He is my

rest, my sure relief, They light and truth shall guide me still, Thy word shall my best thoughts employ, And lead me to Thine heav'nly hill, My God, my most exceeding joy." What an awesome rendering of Psalms 42,43!

Sometimes, the key to rearing our children is learning to know them. I wonder what might have happened to Isaac Watts had not God intervened in his early youth when he began to speak naturally in poetry. He was born July 17, 1674 to Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Watts, Sr. and was the oldest of their nine children. Isaac Watts Sr. was imprisoned as a deacon who served in the Independent Congregational Church because of his strong convictions about Jesus. Unwilling to conform to the dictates of the Church of England, Isaac Sr. was imprisoned. His precious wife would go and sit on a stone near the prison door, as close as she could get to her husband and there she would teach her son, Isaac, Jr. Yet, when Isaac's father got out of prison, he noticed all too quickly that his son Isaac was speaking in rhyme and metre, something his mother allowed. His Dad got so provoked at his son at all his verse making that he set out one day to discipline the rhyme and metre out of him. Young Isaac turned to his father imploringly and said, "Father, do some mercy take And I will no more verses make." Isaac's Dad had to laugh and learn what Isaac's mother already knew. She knew her son had a God-given gift of poetry God would soon greatly use for His glory. God's gift of poetry was thus preserved in one of the greatest hymn writers of all time, who wrote such hymns we love, as "O God, Our Help In Ages Past," "Joy To The World," "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross," "At The Cross," "We're Marching To Zion," and "Am I A Soldier Of The Cross?"

As I turn to this psalm on Mother's Day, it is a prayer for vindication and restoration. Evidently, the author was unable to go up to the temple to praise the Lord, so his grief found expression in these words. The name of the author of these two Psalms is unknown, and the closest we can get to knowing is found in the title, "To the Choirmaster, A Maskil of the sons of Korah. Remember a maskil is a suggested memory psalm in the heart of Hebrew parents training their children. Why are these two psalms so vital as to be placed among the 13 maskils in the 150 psalms? Remember, four different writers wrote these 13 maskils. David wrote 6 of them, 32, 52-55, and 142. The sons of Korah wrote four as well 42/43 seen as one maskil, 44, 45, and 88. Asaph wrote 74 and 78. Ethan the Ezrahite wrote 89. Maskil comes from the Hebrew word **sakal**. Sakal means to understand. Typically, the word maskil has come to mean a liturgical or worship term or a musical tune or beat for singing a psalm. But most scholars have long understood a maskil as suggested memory verses—or psalms to memorize for both adults and children. As I turn to these two psalms that historically have always been seen as one psalm, I

want to acknowledge that this psalm comes from an unknown Levite, one of the sons of Korah, a man who was hurting. Did you know that what you don't know can hurt you? A friend of mine, Steve Rogers, the son of Adrian Rogers, for a time served with me on the board of RIMI—Reaching Indian Ministries International. He wrote about a time in Maui, Hawaii when he was wiped out. Steve loves to bodysurf. He knew that if you catch a wave just right, you can ride without a board all the way to the beach. So Steve worked his way out to where the waves were breaking. He picked a big wave that he saw building, knowing this would be a great ride, if he could catch it just right. At the perfect moment, he put his head down and gave a kick. The monster wave didn't take him to the beach. Rather the wave picked him up like a rag doll and body slammed him to the ocean floor. The lights went out for him. Soon he regained consciousness and knew he was numb. He checked. He could move his arms and legs. Nothing seemed broken. Carefully he fought his way to shore. Back on solid ground, he looked back out at the ocean to see for the first time a big sign posted, "No bodysurfing. Serious spinal injury may result." So much for the lie of the old proverb, "What you don't know can't hurt you." He didn't know about these killer waves off Maui, but they hurt him.

Psalm 42 and 43 are here to tell us—Don't Take Depression Lightly. Serious Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Injury May Result. Millions today ignore the Word of God—they never read it, and its precious helpful warnings. Serious injury is resulting as we speak. Romans 1 with its warning signs have already been ignored by eleven of our fifty states, forgetting the time-honored eternal Word of God. Many states are calling the warnings of the Word of God "hate" speech. America, watch out—our future as a nation is on the line. As marriage is systematically being attacked and destroyed before our eyes, go back and read Romans 1. Don't give yourself over to dishonorable, unnatural, forbidden passions, lusts and impurity, don't be disobedient to parents—don't exchange the truth of God for a lie. Don't let our awful moral crisis in America make you depressed to the point of giving up or giving in to the big killer waves. Hear the warning words of Jesus in Luke 21: 28, "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up, raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." In a book entitled, "Deeply Troubled People," statistics show that in America, half of the hospital beds today are filled with depressed, deeply troubled people. Psalm 42/43 give us a warning about how to deal with deep depression. This Spirit-led son of Korah gives us four steps to take when depression hits us full force with killer waves.

**SEEK COUNSEL ON WHY YOU ARE DEPRESSED, STARTING BY ASKING YOURSELF SOME KEY QUESTIONS.** (1.) Three times in these two

Psalms, this son of Korah asked himself “Why are you depressed?” This Levite many commentators believe may have been with David during his fleeing from Jerusalem during the conspiracy and coup of Absalom. I agree with them. Turn to II Samuel 15: 13-16, 30. “And a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom.” Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.” And the king’s servants said to the king, “Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides.” So the king went out, and all his household after him...But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.” Do you think you would have been like this son of Korah, depressed along with King David? Most of us would have, I am certain. Yet, knowing the obvious reason for his depression, this psalmist talks to himself, asking almost the same question three times. In 42: 5, “Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you in turmoil within me?” In 42: 11, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” And again the same words in 43: 5. Before going elsewhere to seek counsel, take counsel within your own soul. Let me suggest three questions: (1) **Is there something between you and God? Is something separating you from Him?** This separation produces a passion stronger than thirst. Notice 42: 1,2. “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” The psalmist recalls seeing a deer, an ayyal, usually and literally, a big buck or stag, perhaps wounded, searching for water in a dry and barren wilderness, while being hunted. Yet, the verb is feminine so the picture is rightly of a doe deer seeking some illusive water-brook—a flowing stream. In Israel, occasionally there are brooks, but often there are many water holes, wadis, that are usually dry. The word for pant is arag, meaning to bray—a plaintiff sound. Something about a deer in trouble was so imprinted on this psalmist’s soul that the picture reminded him of his own plight—and his own earnest longing of his soul after God. What has caused this separation? Do we know at times what sin or what struggle has come between us and God. Another question—(2) **Is the separation because of something others have said? Have we been hurt or grieved?** Notice 42: 3--My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” The psalmist uses the word Elohim for God, 16 times in these two psalms. Elohim, the plural of majesty, means the triune holy holy holy holiness of the Supreme God. Four times El, the singular of Majesty speaking of his oneness is used. But once, Lord, or Adonay—meaning Lord over all or Lord of Lords is used. It is hurting the psalmist

that in his distress, many are saying—“Where is your holy of holies God?” Bringing the psalmist to tears, instead of eating or drinking, he cries all day and all night, v. 3. Another question is **“Is our separation from God due to an unfulfilled desire?”** Compare verse 2 with verse 4—“When shall I come and appear before God?”...“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.” The psalmist is remembering the joy of corporate worship and he longs for it again, but in fleeing Jerusalem, the longing goes unfulfilled. Millions in America know nothing of this longing for the house of God, but prefer sports, sleep, or anything else but worship with other believers in the sanctuary. Does that describe any of us? Before we go to any counselor, our friend or our pastor, God help us first talk to ourselves and seek God the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the cause of our depression. Step # 2:

**ACKNOWLEDGE TO GOD YOUR DEPRESSED CONDITION.** (II.) As the old hymn says, “Tell it to Jesus.” Notice verses 6, “My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember You...from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.” It is normal for believers to be depressed. Don’t be embarrassed to admit that what the psalmist and Job and Elijah and John the Baptist struggled with, you struggle with too. The psalmist was in anguish, but the road to recovery begins in verse 6—“But I remember You—looking back to Your presence with me in the Hermon Hills or around Mt. Hermon. Notice this son of Korah speaks specifically of his condition. (1) **I am oppressed, cast down as from a flood or waterfall or an ocean storm—a waterspout.** Verse 7 explains. “Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.” Steve Rogers on Maui—Oppression was like a bodyslamming. One fast wave rolling over the other and calling to another after it to cover him—what a vivid picture of grief—being body-slammed by a flood, waterfall or waterspout! (2) **I sense You have forgotten me, Lord. Tell Him.** Notice verse 9. I say to God, my Rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” The psalmist calls God his Rock, but where is He. In verse 8 he acknowledges what he know is true, but doesn’t feel at the time. In verse 8 we read “By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.” Depression is a mixture, beloved. We know the truth and the truth is battled by how we feel, and we can feel forgotten. (3) I am taunted daily by those who say, “Where is your God?” Verse 10 states, “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?” Step one begins with asking ourselves questions as we speak before God. Step 2 is telling the Lord the truth we believe about Him, which is battling with our feeling He has forgotten us. Step 3:

### **REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US, DELIVERING US**

**BEFORE.** (III.) This step is a catch up looking back at Psalm 42. Notice verse 4. “These things I remember as I pour out my soul.” Back in verse 6—the psalmist spoke of God’s deliverance of him back in Jordan in the Hermon hills. Back in verse 4, the psalmist spoke of the way God blessed him in the sanctuary worshipping Him with his brothers and sisters. For you and me, when we are depressed—can you recount what God has done for you? May 10<sup>th</sup>—Friday for me was so depressing. It was the 47th anniversary of my Dad’s home-going—way too early. I remembered Dad being gone in 1966, and I began public ministry in 1967. We never got to reflect and discuss ministry together. The waves of grief that have come before, tried to body slam me once again. Then I remembered what God has done for me. My sons, Aaron and Nathaniel often call me and ask for counsel as they lead worship and preach. Both of them are leading worship and preaching today—in Manson, Iowa, and in Phoenix, Arizona. Both of them called me on Friday asking for help on their sermons and for counsel. I needed their calls to remember God’s goodness to me. Dad never got to see one of his grandchildren. I have lived to see 18 and # 19 is on the way with Aaron and Molly. Don’t pass up step # 3. Remember! Beloved. Mothers, on this special day, remember! Step # 4.

### **HOPE IN GOD WHO RESTORES JOY AS OUR SALVATION AND OUR**

**GOD.** (IV.) Go back to verse 5 and verse 11. Now go to Psalm 43 which is step 4. Who do we hope in? (1) **We hope in our Judge, our Vindicator, our Defender.** Verse 1 states, “Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!” (2) **We hope in God our strength and refuge even when we sense His rejection and we can’t quit mourning.** Verse 2 continues, “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” Notice that gaining hope can be mixed with dipping back into despair. (3) **We hope in the God who guides us with His light, mercy and truth back into His sanctuary to rejoice that God is our God.** Verses 3,4 say, “Send out 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, O God, my God.” Now go to 43: 5 and see the psalmist double back. He has leveled with God and he is trusting Him for victory.