

Hope!

Psalm 42:5-8

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A. A Cry for Help (v. 5):

1. Why are you in despair, O my soul (Psalm 42:2-4) – David asks himself why it seems like he will forever be feeling distressed, as if his life is going to remain low as if oppressed.

a) The psalmist is unquestionably and understandably struggling with a soul that is not well. This was not just in his mind; his soul was suffering. Thankfully, he not only noticed it, but he also decided to fight against it. He is not giving up. In reality, this entire psalm is a fight for a joyful and satisfied soul. It is as if the psalmist, feeling that he has fallen into what *Pilgrim's Progress* calls the "Slough of Despond," is clawing his way out of the pit. He refuses to stay there and wallow in his own spiritual depression.^[1]

b) The word *dejected* means depressed, bent low, or in despair (Ross, *Psalms 42–89*, 22). The psalmist goes on to ask why his soul is in so much "turmoil." *Turmoil* means "disquiet" or "anxiety." In other words, his soul is not well. There is no "peace, like a river" attending his soul. In reality, it feels like his soul is raging like a sea (42:7). There is no peace, no sense of God's presence, no joy, and no rest.^[2]

c) "By day and by night" God gives me His consoling grace to counteract "my tears day and night;" so I am enabled *by Him* (such is the meaning of "His song") to

exchange my tears for *songs of praise* both day and night. So Job 35:10, “God my maker ... *giveth songs in the night.*” As a sample of such a song, cf. Ps. 40:3. So Paul and Silas in the prison “sang praises unto God at midnight” (Acts 16:25).^[3]

2. Become disturbed within me – David’s spirit was very distressed and he could not figure out why (Ps. 11:12; 55:17-18).

a) Psalm 42:3 makes clear that he is not sleeping and not eating. No matter whether this is a cause or a symptom, such physical struggles affect our souls.^[4]

b) It could have also been relational pressures. There are those who are speaking against him (42:3) and those who are oppressing him (42:9). He has adversaries making life difficult for him (42:10). He also has enemies and deceitful persons coming after him (43:1–2). Few things can affect our souls more than relational tension and pressures.^[5]

3. Become disturbed within me—Hamah (#1993)—David’s spirit was so distressing that he had no idea why, and this feeling did not seem like it would disappear.

4. Hope in God - To hope in God is to demonstrate faith in His Word. Because He is a sovereign, powerful God who rules and judges all the earth, He is able to do all He said He would do.

a) One antidote for depression is to meditate on the record of God’s goodness to his people. This will take your mind off the present situation as you focus your thoughts on God’s ability to help you rather than on your inability to help yourself. When you feel depressed, take advantage of this psalm’s antidepressant: Read the Bible’s accounts of God’s goodness, and meditate on them.^[6]

5. Hope in God—Psalm 119 explains how David viewed God’s Word. David’s experiences of the faithfulness of God’s Word led him to expect God to do what He says He will do, so he commands his innermost feelings to move from this despair and put faith in God’s Word while expecting God to fulfill His promises.

a) His own command for his soul to “hope in God” is a call to put his confidence in God, to believe in him, to trust in him. The opposite of hope in God is desperation in self. When self-centered desperation sets in, we fight it with hope in God. We remind ourselves that we will once again praise him.^[7]

6. I shall again praise Him – David does not wait to feel good again.H. He willfully decides to endlessly publicly declare the nature and works of the Lord God.

a) The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God’s holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings. In his praise, the psalmist proclaims to the assembled throng God’s glorious attributes or his righteous (vs. 4) deed (22:22-31; 56:12-13; 61:8; 65:1; 69:30-33). To this is usually added a call to praise, summoning all who hear to take up the praise in the Psalms has rightly been called the OT anticipation of NT evangelism. (NASU, Study notes)

7. I shall again praise Him—In our despair, we must not bring God down to where we are. We must commit to continuously proclaiming who He is all that He has done for us and placing our hope in all we expect Him to do for us.

a) They reflected Israel's religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need – if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God's saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple (50:14-15, 23; 9:1).
(NASU, Study notes)

8. For the help of His presence, David viewed God as His salvation. No one else has His attributes, so the only person he committed himself to seeking is the Lord.
9. For the help of His presence – “*As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.*” (Psalm 42:1; NASU) David passionately desired to be in God's presence. This kept his hope alive and his spirit revived (Psalm 23:6; 27:4; 122:1).

B. Deep Waters (vs. 6-7):

1. My God—Even though God is mighty and sovereign over all the earth, David still views God as having a very personal relationship with him.
2. My God – Even though God is everywhere, He is fully willing to be in every part of our lives. He pours Himself completely into us (Titus 3:4-8) so that our bodies become His dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19) so that we receive all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3-4) to be “filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:15-21). This is all done so that we can all be sons of God (Romans 8:12-17; take on His character and characteristics; Galatians 2:20). Because of this, we can live every day in His presence (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) surrounded by angels (Hebrews 1:14) who encamp around us (Psalm 34:7-10).

3. My soul is in despair within me – Deep within David’s spirit, he feels distressed as if brought very low by a powerful oppressor, leaving him feeling powerless. He needs hope because his life is on the edge of plunging into depression.

4. My soul is in despair within me – This is why David cries out,, knowing that the Lord has not left or forsaken him because of this personal relationship with the Lord God.

5. My soul is in despair within me – David trusting in his relationship with God moves him to pray, crying out to God who is ‘my God.’

6. Deep calls to deep at the sound of Thy waterfalls: It is interesting that in Psalm - 42:7, the psalmist says, “Your breakers and your billows have swept over me.” It implies God has led him to this place to draw him nearer. Every disruption in our lives is an invitation to greater intimacy with God. Every time a soul pants for God, it’s an invitation to drink and be satisfied. So when our souls are not well, we sing (42:8) and go to God’s Word (43:3–4). We don’t wallow in despair; we fight for our joy. We run after God.^[8]

a) In Near Eastern mythology, however, the “deep” has echoes of the forces of chaos which threaten orderly life (see 29:3; Gen. 1:2), and the whole verse may be no more than a highly poetic way of saying that the psalmist now feels overwhelmed by the chaotic forces of despair threatening to destroy him.^[9]

C. Out of the Valley (v. 8):

1. Lord will command—David decides that he cannot wait for his feelings to rescue him. He must continuously make an inner commitment to submit his will to the Lord as

his supreme leader because of God's superiority. He must view God's Word as his marching orders.

2. Lord will command – David purposefully switches from God to Lord because he knows the Lord does not forsake His covenantal relationship with His people. Denying himself, viewing the Lord's Word as his marching orders (putting his faith in the Lord), he will experience what is already in place to bless him.

3. Lovingkindness – Once David obeys the Lord's commands God's mercy and steadfast love will be faithfully executed. God's love is steadfast because He always maintains His promises to those who choose to keep His Word (John 15:7-10). Even in the dark times of our lives ('with me in the night'), God will steadfastly execute His favor upon us.

4. Lovingkindness—The difficult circumstances we encounter in our lives are not representative of what God is doing or not doing. They only expose whether we will trust Him or allow difficult circumstances to define us.

a) *unfailing love* – The Hebrew for this phrase denotes befriending. Appeal to God's "(unfailing) love, kindness, mercy" is frequent in the OT since it summarizes all the Lord covenanted to show to Israel (T. 7:9, 12) as well as to David and his dynasty (89:24, 28, 33; 2 Sa. 7:15; Isa. 55:3). (NASU, Study notes)

5. Daytime - The word "*daytime*" here refers evidently to prosperity, and the psalmist expected that a time of prosperity would return, that he might hope for better days, and that the loving-kindness of God would again be manifested to him. He did not wholly despair.

6. Prayer – No matter how David felt, it did not deter him from praying to the Lord while he played his music.

7. Prayer to the God of my life – David viewed God as close to him, as his salvation, the One who rescues him so that all his blessings are sustained.

a) Again the psalmist becomes downcast and voices despair, which is more plaintive than before. Although he attempts to pray and recall how measureless is God's loving-kindness, he still feels forsaken. Mixed with his longing for the Temple is his remembrance of the constant barbs of his enemies. He gains renewed strength by repeating his formula for inner peace.^[10]

8. Prayer to the God of my life – The most difficult experiences we may encounter should heighten our prayer life and deepen our commitment to depend on the Lord's lovingkindness to sustain us.

9. Prayer to the God of my life – Our perspective of who God really is should stimulate our faith in the dark times of our lives, which in turn moves us to pray and trust God's steadfast commitment to sustain us.

a) We are likely then to pray for further blessings most successfully when we acknowledge most gratefully those already received. The prayer itself is given in vv. 9, 10. He calls God 'the God of his life' as being that character of God which he prays now to be manifested on his behalf since sorrow has brought him well-nigh unto *death*. It answers to "My soul thirsteth for *the living God*" (v. 2).^[11]

^[1] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 307). Holman Reference.

^[2] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 305). Holman Reference.

^[3] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah: Vol. III* (p. 193). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[4] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 306). Holman Reference.

^[5] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 306). Holman Reference.

^[6] *Life Application Bible Notes* (p. 888). (2007). Tyndale.

^[7] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; pp. 307–308). Holman Reference.

^[8] Smith, J. J., & Akin, D. L. (2022). *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 307). Holman Reference.

^[9] Davidson, R. (1998). *The vitality of worship: a commentary on the book of Psalms* (p. 143). W.B. Eerdmans; Handsel Press.

^[10] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Ps 42:6). Moody Press.

^[11] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah: Vol. III* (pp. 193–194). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.