

June 20, 2010

#### Day Four

In Psalm 42, the psalmist repeats a refrain. Read it; it is found in both 42:5 and 42:11.

What is the psalmist affirming about God?

What is the psalmist calling himself to remember and reflect on?

How does seeing these things shape the way you understand what is going on in this particular psalm?

Do you think that the psalmist's refrain is a "healthy song" to sing for a friend of God? Why or why not?

What is it that drives the psalmist to this kind of self-preaching?

What drives you when you are feeling spiritually "thirsty"? Do you address God the way this psalmist does? Do you speak to your own soul this way? Why or why not?

If you never felt real, deep, overwhelming thirst for God, how do you think the absence of such longing would impact your relationship with Him?

Seeing the dynamic and emotionally-rich journey this psalm has taken us on, what is it that you desire for your own soul? Your own relationship with God?

#### Day Five

There are other places where this idea of "soul thirst" is seen in Scripture. Keeping in mind what we have tasted and noted out of Psalm 42, draw some additional insights about spiritual thirst from the following passages:

John 4:5-14:

John 7:37-39:

Revelation 22:17:

Given the invitation extended in these passages, why would someone *not* come to Jesus and "drink" from Him?

What is the place of genuine, experiential, spiritual thirst for those who come to Jesus?

Why would this make such thirst a good thing, a needful thing?

What sense do you get for what it will mean to have your spiritual thirst quenched?

Take time today to talk to the Lord about what you thirst for. Use the psalmist's language, draw on the other New Testament passages, and speak to the living God about your thirst that can only be quenched in Him and by Him.

Psalm's:

Turning Down the Noise

June 20, 2010

#### Day One

In the fictional tale of an unconventional English professor told in the movie *Dead Poet's Society*, we hear Professor Keating expound on the place of poetry in life. He observed:

We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering—these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry—beauty, romance, love—these are what we stay alive for.

The Psalms convey a similar kind of sentiment; they are not primarily guidelines or collections of principles, but heart-felt expressions of passion and love and worship. The Psalms are not "cute" rhymes, but expressions of what matters most in life. Why is it important to understand Psalms this way if we are to grasp what they are about?

With an eye on heart-felt expression, read Psalm 42.

What is the overall experience being pictured by the psalmist?

What images does he use to help us enter into and taste his experience?

Weekly Devotional



Look specifically at the first two verses. What is the most compelling thing, to you, about the language and the image presented there?

Have you ever been exceedingly thirsty? What is it like? What happens in you when you are parched and desperate for drink?

We might not think, typically, of “thirsting” for *someone* (as when the psalmist says “My soul thirsts for God”) as much as for *something*. How do you make sense of that imagery?

Do you think it’s a good thing or a bad thing to be so extremely thirsty for God? Why?

### *Day Two*

Turn again to Psalm 42. Read 42:1-5.

What is the connection between the imagery of thirst and the idea found in verse 3? What ties the tears and the thirst together?

What is the psalmist experiencing? What is he describing?

Have you ever felt what the psalmist appears to be talking about? When? Where? Why?

As the psalmist continues, he recalls earlier experiences. Take note

of 42:4. What is the impact, on the psalmist, of his recollection of earlier times of worship? Why does it matter that he can recall such times?

If you had never tasted cool watermelon on a hot day, if you had never satiated your thirst with pink lemonade or brisk iced tea, if you had not had the pleasure of sipping fresh squeezed orange juice with just the right amount of tang, than you would not know what it is like to have your thirst quenched in such ways. That the psalmist had experienced rich times with God in worship is part of the fabric of his life that stirs up his thirst for God. He thirsts for God because he has experienced something with Him before.

How might your thirst for God be cultivated and stirred by reflecting on your past encounters with God?

What might happen, in your journey with God, if you continue to overlook and ignore past encounters and moments and experiences you have had with Him?

### *Day Three*

Psalm 42 has two “stanzas” as it were; there is a common refrain that appears in 42:5 and 42:11. Having looked closely at the first stanza, let’s turn our attention to the second. Read Psalm 42:6-11.

What is your initial impression of what the psalmist is describing in these verses?

The psalmist, in speaking of his soul being “cast down” (42:6), uses language that conveys the idea of his “pouring out my soul upon myself”<sup>†</sup> That is, somehow the psalmist not only is feeling overwhelmed but realizes that how he is processing this feeling is contributing to the feeling itself.

<sup>†</sup>John Goldingay, *Songs from a Strange Land*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1978), 30.

The geographical references call to mind the mountainous regions of Palestine. The “deep calls to deep” appears to be images of the roar of water and the echoing of the rushing waterfalls. The “breakers and . . . waves” convey the idea of being overwhelmed and carried along in the rush of water. What feeling or emotion is conveyed by this colorful language?

It is critical to note how the psalmist thinks about this flood of water. How does he identify the waterfalls and the breakers and the waves? Why is that critical?

What the psalmist is experiencing--in his desperation and longing--is apparently not simply the hardship of life. The roar that he hears is the roar of *God’s* waterfalls; the waves that he feels overwhelm him at times are *God’s* breakers. This experience he finds himself in the midst of is, to a large degree, God’s doing. And yet, he is not alone in it. What does the psalmist affirm in 42:8?

When we press further in the psalm, we hear the psalmist raise his concern. How would you answer the question he raises in 42:9? Has God, indeed, forgotten him . . . or is something else altogether different than “forgetfulness” going on? Why?

Can you, in meditation and honest reflection, think of any reason why God might allow this psalmist to experience such great “thirst” (42:1-2) and a sense of being “overwhelmed” (42:7, 9)?

What might such an experience do for the psalmist? What might such experiences do for you?