

Why Psalms Matter

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MAIN VERSES

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

The Heart of the Old Testament

Right? So we're venturing into the heart of the Hebrew Bible, the heart of the Old Testament. We're venturing into the Psalms. And the reason is that the Psalms are some of the most personal, emotional, and I dare say relevant sections of the Bible. At least that's what I found in my own life.

We read Psalms after reading through the narrative and the story of the Bible from everything that happened in the garden and the call to Abraham's family to bring forth the seed that'll crush the serpent and then 69 chapters of storytelling and then the commandments are given at Mount Sinai and this whole story of Israel trying to keep these commandments and pursue God but constantly not because of the heart condition that we all know that we have.

And when we reach Psalms, we see the people who were given these commandments. And we see these people trying to live out the Torah here. And we have 150 chapters of that same people at Mount Sinai, the legacy of that people, struggling to process what that is actually supposed to look like. What is it actually supposed to look like when we read the Torah and we see the commandments of God, but then we have this mess of a world around us? What does it look like? We see this struggle to process what that's supposed to be in times of joy, in times of happiness, in times of sadness, disappointment, in times of lament.

And so this is why Psalms are important. We have a book of people in the trenches of life recording how they talk to God. And it's incredibly humbling and insightful when you realize that's what the Psalms are.

Raw and Uncomfortable

You know, being so angry to call for the death of your enemies, not just your enemy's children, but their infants. Remember last week we spoke about [Psalm 137](#). It's so raw and it's uncomfortable to read something like that in the Bible. And that's a real person with real agony and a sense of overwhelming hatred for his enemy. And it's actually recorded in our Bible. Like God wanted that in our Bible. So God made sure that was included in the Bible that we have.

And we spoke on Psalm chapter 3 last week, how to identify the things that cause us fear and how to process them through prayer. And it's good stuff. Psalms is awesome. And so I want this message to be an encouragement. And I hope that you will dare take a look through the Psalms. Maybe you're unfamiliar with them. You may be home for just a bit. Maybe you have some extra time on your hands. Dive into the Psalms. It's a beautiful, beautiful journey.

Read the array of motivations for each author to write what they did. Identify the emotions. Identify if an author is angry or disappointed or joyful or happy. These are ancient writings from an ancient people. And we actually get to connect with this ancient people through the letters they left us on the same type of emotional field.

So as we jump in, some great resources for your study. If you're interested in the kind of the nerdy stuff, How to Read Psalms by Tremper Longman III. It is like a must-have. It's super short. You can knock it out in a day. It's easy to read. It's awesome. Also, Praying the Psalms by Walter Brueggemann. Old Testament scholar, another fantastic read.

But I wanted to start this message off with a quote from John Calvin and what he thought of this book made up of 150 chapters. He says, "...what various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury. It were difficult to find words to describe. I have been wont to call this book, not inappropriately, the anatomy of all parts of the soul."

Psalms was made for us to connect and be engulfed by. I mean, just imagine these ancient writers just going through and writing down the personal experiences of what they're going through. If I were to ask you right now at home to pin a one-page journal entry of what you're going through right now and let your emotions loose, it'd make you feel a little vulnerable. But it would also... There would be some pin marks in the pages, I bet. That's what these

individuals have done in times of suffering and anguish and anxiety and joy and happiness. I love it.

Identifying Genre

So one of the things that is sometimes difficult for us to recognize when we read the Bible is identifying genre. And this is one of my favorite topics. The Bible is filled with different types of genre. Matt? Duh. I know it's a duh, but sometimes we miss it. And as such, this section may not be entertaining, but it's important for you if you're seriously wanting to read the Bible.

So you have Paul's letters to Galatians. You have the book of Chronicles over here. You have the gospel of Mark over here. The revelation of John over here. And all different genres all over the Bible.

And when we come to Paul's letter to Galatians, it's important because of how it deals with his comments on the Torah or the law. And we've all read through Galatians. And it's a little difficult at times, but look, here's how he starts off his book.

Now, immediately we identify what? We identify the genre of this is a written letter. Not just that, it's a letter sent to who? Who was this letter sent by?

And if you just said this letter was sent to me, you're wrong. It was not sent to you. This is not your mail. It's not your mail. If you open up your Bible right now and you turn to Galatians and you begin to read, you're reading Paul's mail. Makes you feel a little naughty, right? Someone else's mail. And it's kind of neat. You're reading a letter that was not written to you. By the grace of God, it was written for you, but this was not written directly to you.

And we're jumping in the middle of a conversation between Paul and this specific group of people in this community. And there is a conflict. There's a lot of drama and conflict going on. And Paul is making every attempt to give some type of wise direction.

Here's the thing. We don't have the rest of the mail. And we really don't have full clarity of the scope of this entire conversation. And I'm not saying that we shouldn't read Galatians. We absolutely should. Thank God. Paul makes several advisements that are perfectly clear and edifying for every generation.

But because it was a letter, we need to understand that it's okay if some of the things he says are difficult to fully understand. His comments about the Torah. He makes some rather difficult statements about the Torah. And the thing that makes it so difficult isn't the fact that he makes

these statements about the Torah. It's that he says like other things about the Torah that seem to kind of conflict in his other epistles.

The Problem Paul Was Addressing

So was he double-minded? Like, what's he addressing? Why is he flip-flopping? There's a reason. There's a reason. And sometimes it's hard to reconcile his comments.

As Dr. Longman puts it, the first step towards understanding these passages is to recognize that Paul is confronting a specific problem. In Galatians, it was their tendency to depend on the law. Rather than writing a systematic exposition of a relationship between law and Christian, that's not what Galatians was intended to be used for. You can't use Galatians in that capacity without neglecting its genre and abusing its intention.

And so it's important because sometimes we get into arguments and debates. And don't even act like you don't. We get into arguments and debates about what we think are about the Bible. Yeah, I'm in an argument with someone because we disagree about the Bible. And actually, in reality, most of the time, we're not arguing about the Bible. We're arguing about what genre the section of the Bible is that we're talking about.

Remember, we did the Jonah series a couple years ago, and we discovered that Jonah is distinctly not written in the genre like a historical genre. It's not written like Chronicles. It's written in a style that is more along the lines of a dark comedy, something referred to as a parable narrative. And that doesn't excuse the historicity of the account, or if it really happened, that has nothing to do with it. It's just how the account is written.

And when we begin to notice things that kind of make us chuckle, like the pagans on the ship praising God and praying to God before the prophet of God ever prays to God, it's one of those things that makes you go, like, and it's intentional. It kind of makes you smirk. Like, that's kind of funny. Or the patterns.

Literary Patterns in Jonah

The patterns in Jonah are super intentional. The pattern of Jonah going down to Joppa and then going down to the ship to leave Tarshish. And then the pagan sailors find Jonah where? Down in the very bottom of the ship, fallen asleep in a deep sleep. And he gets swallowed up into the depths of the fish. And in Jonah's prayer, he even describes it as going down to Sheol, down to the grave. And it's a literary pattern to show the reader what happens when we choose not to

obey and follow God. We keep going down and down and down and down, further and further, sinking down until finally we get to the grave. We experience death, as Jonah puts it in his prayer.

Then what happens in the story? Jonah confesses. Plot shift. Jonah, it says that God then brings him up from the grave in [Jonah 2](#). God commands the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land. God then tells Jonah to arise and preach to Nineveh. And Jonah arises and he goes to Nineveh and he doesn't really preach. He says a little slur.

The King of Nineveh and Jonah's Mirror

And after Jonah goes and just says his little summed-up words, the king of Nineveh rises up for what purpose? To repent. The story ends at Jonah with an object lesson to Jonah from God, demonstrated with a plant that's growing up to cover him from the harsh sun beating down on him. And the story ends with God asking Jonah if he will consider how much God loves the people that he hates. Will he continue to be the messenger of God's grace? Or will he continue to protest? Will he rise up, or will he go down?

It's what Walter Brueggemann, like I said, calls parable narrative. Written like a self-reflective mirror that actually challenges the reader. It was not written in the style of Ezra or Nehemiah or Kings. And like I said, that doesn't affect whether this really happened or not historically. It's just how the account's written. It's written for a specific purpose. And if we recognize that purpose in that genre, then we can allow ourselves to read it how it was meant to be read, as a story that challenges us with the same mission given to Jonah.

See, we sometimes read Jonah and think, oh, that's a bunch of stuff that happened back then. No, it was meant to call you and engulf you with the same story and the same mission. See, Ezra mentions specific kings, specific times, specific places that help us understand what happened with the historical account. I love Jonah. Go back and read Jonah. It's super short. And you'll find that the author is baiting you as a reader.

You'll find yourself judging Jonah at certain times in the book. Like, how could you let these pagans pray? Jonah, you're the prophet and you haven't prayed yet. Really? You're going to try to run from God? Really, Jonah? You look like a fool. Why won't you just obey God? How stupid can you be, Jonah? We've all thought it when we've read Jonah. Man, this guy was a fool. Just disobedient, unrepentant. Just go to Nineveh and preach the message of God's mercy and grace to Nineveh. You think you can run from God?

And at the end of the book, you're faced with a question that never goes unanswered because you're meant to ask it to yourself. At the end, you find yourself looking in the mirror the entire time. You fool. Do you think you can simply ignore God's calling? Do you think God hates your enemies? Do you think you can just run away from God? Are you going to choose the fruit of determining for yourself that they don't deserve God's mercy? And that's literally how the book ends. It's potent. What will you do? And if we understand the genre of the book, man, that's so applicable and it's so daunting, especially to the generation it was written in.

Why Genre Matters

With genre, the question comes out in different parts of the Bible. The apocalyptic books like Daniel and Revelation — are the beasts real beasts, or are they symbolic? Will real beasts get up and attack New York City with seven heads and ten crowns and a bunch of eyeballs? Genre is important. And I may have overstated that example, but Psalms — all of the Psalms are generally poetry. But we're going to look at a few subcategories here, such as the ones we mentioned a little while ago. And we're going to attempt to remind ourselves what the authors felt in their circumstances when writing in this style, so that we can learn from it and actually put it into practice in our own lives. That's what we're meant to do.

And so we may only get to cover probably two today, but I think they're the most impactful for many of us and what we're experiencing in our lives right now as a community and a nation. So the first one I want to start off with is the sub-genre of poetry known as a hymn. And it's [Psalms 103](#), verses 1 to 2. "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" Now when we read a hymn in Psalms, we can see one of the major characteristics is how exuberant — over-the-top isn't the right word, but not holding back — praises and exultation to God are. Because this author has a realization about God's goodness and presence in his life.

Hymns

And hymns begin with the direct call to worship, typically a reminder of who we serve and how we can claim to be worshipers of this great God by actually worshiping. Hymns continue to build, typically with a structure of reasons why you need to be quick to always have a mindset of worship, no matter what your situation or what distractions are in your life. Here they are. Many hymns are a public invitation. [Psalm 103](#) is actually more of a personal, individual invitation, a reminder to yourself to jump into worship. It's like in [Psalm 103](#), the individual is reminding himself that it's probably a good time to worship. And that's truly impactful for me,

because do we ever find ourselves having to remind ourselves that it's probably a good time to worship because of God's goodness that does exist in our life?

Most hymns begin with a type of phrase. It's either "bless the Lord" or "praise the Lord." If a hymn starts out with that, you know kind of what genre it is. Like this one, [Psalm 113](#), verse 1. "Praise the Lord. Praise, O servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord." And we might read that and just read right over it without realizing that we ourselves spontaneously begin and create hymns all the time in our lives. And we don't even realize it. And do you know what that phrase is, "praise the Lord"? It's a very familiar phrase that I know many of us use quite frequently. It's hallelujah, hallelujah.

So when you read the Psalms, you instantly understand. Imagine a time in your life where you used that phrase, hallelujah. And typically when we use that phrase, it's not like a monotone hallelujah. It's usually — if we're passionate about it — because something big just happened in our lives where we're reminded of God's goodness and graciousness and mercy and provision in our life. And we're like, hallelujah. And instantly when we read those Psalms, those emotions come up, because those are the emotions being given on the pages. That's the intensity of what is popping out of the pages. Love that. Love that. Praise the Lord.

Zion Psalms

In reading hymns in the Psalms, the most potent section of the poem is the reasons why God deserves our praise. God is not typically praised in abstract ways when we go through the Psalms. They're specific about how he has entered into a relationship with a community or an individual. [Psalm 92](#), 1 and 4, 96, 1 and 5 — examples.

Now, there's a section of Psalms that are specific to surrounding Jerusalem and Mount Zion. And they're called the Zion Psalms. Creative, right? And the thing about these Psalms is they're typically lifting up Mount Zion, Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. And they're talking about how beautiful it is and how big it is and how awesome it is. And if you've ever been to Jerusalem, you know the mountain is not that impressive. I mean, if you're on the Mount of Olives looking down, it's not that impressive. Right? Why would they be talking about it like it's so beautiful and grand, when it's not?

Well, the reason is because Mount Zion is so special is that it's the place where God made his presence known, where God symbolically mended heaven and earth through the temple structure. It's not the mountain that matters. It's the fact that God's presence was manifest there. [Psalm 48](#), verse 1, is one of the Zion Psalms. It kind of gives you like, wow, that is a

beautiful, big, large mountain. It's not. It doesn't matter. I love it. That's where God made his presence known.

And so I want you guys to dig in maybe this week on your own and try to organically identify types of Psalms when you go through them. But also, like I said, read how the authors draw out the emotions specifically in Psalms when they're crying out in agony. Man, can you look at some of the situations the Psalmists are going through, releasing all the heaviness that is bound up just to proclaim, you know what? Hallelujah, God is here. Psalms were meant to be incorporated into a prayer life, a prayer structure. And that's what I find so beautiful about them.

Psalms of Lament

Now the next genre is one of my personal favorites, and I'm not sure why, but it's the Psalms of lament. And there are groups of Psalms that are very depressing when you read them, and they're very uncomfortable with the passion that leaks out of them. Because they're not written by individuals that are praising God necessarily. They're not written by individuals who are dancing around going, hallelujah, I'm so excited, I'm so overjoyed, I'm so happy for everything God's done for me. No, they're written by people in torment. They're written by people trapped in fear. They're written by people who are legitimately scared, drowning in anxiety, and they're written by people who are crying out to God. God, will you save me? And many times, they're asking God, where are you? Why have you left me? I don't know where you are. You're gone.

[Psalm 88](#) is a very, very tough psalm because the author is just mad at God. And he never rectifies that by the end of the chapter. God, you said... you're a liar. All these things happened to me and they weren't supposed to happen to me, and you're not here, and you're gone, and where are you? And he just ends the psalm. It's not even like, "but I trust God." No, it's just done. [Psalm 88](#). It's potent. God allowed that psalm to be in our Bible. Just pin that.

When you read the Psalms of lament, you go from the height of reflecting on a relationship with God, like you do the hymns, to the very depths of struggling with your relationship with God. So let's jump into — how about an uncomfortable zone of the Bible? Because we always love those. Let's see here. We're going to go to [Psalm 22](#). Yeah. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?"

The Cry from the Pit

Oh my God, I cry by day, but you don't answer. And by night, I find no rest, no shalom, no nothing. That's uncomfortable to read as a believer. That's uncomfortable. Remember, God wanted this in the Bible.

Now, when you read the entire psalm, this is not simply a cry against God in the context of the entire psalm. The context — the author is so distressed. Look at that, the psalm is so distressed here. He's crying out that he has no one else to turn to but God. And he's crying out to God, have you left me? Like, I'm at my wit's end, God, and where are you? And [Psalm 22](#) continues with the author struggling between facing a world where he is desperate, but also reminding himself, going back and forth, of who God is and how God has shown evidence of his faithfulness to his forefathers, and that he himself can trust God. It's a great template for prayer through tough times. It's a back and forth struggle.

And maybe you've never struggled with a relationship with God, or maybe you've never struggled with times in your life where it's like, is this really God's plan, or where is God taking me, or is God even here? How do you pray during those times? If you're not sure how to pray, we have an example going back and forth. It's okay to struggle when you talk to God. Great template for prayer. This is also the Psalm that Yeshua quotes while being crucified. So read [Psalm 22](#). It's humbling but incredible as a template for prayer in certain situations — working through being surrounded by hopelessness, but also working through the fact that we can still trust God. He's never given us a reason to doubt him before.

Three Motivations in the Psalms of Lament

So in all of these types of Psalms, before we continue to the big Psalm of lament I want to focus on, there's typically three motivations that you'll see in the characteristics of a Psalms of lament. You'll see an author who is typically frustrated with himself sometimes, and or you'll see an author that is frustrated by others or his enemies, and or you'll see an author that's frustrated directly with God — ticked off that the circumstances that God has allowed him to be in have occurred. [Psalm 88](#).

And you know what? Let's go ahead — if you're following along, turn with me to [Psalm 42](#). And we're going to read [Psalm 42](#) and [Psalm 43](#). Don't freak out, they're short. And the reason why we're going to read both of these is because in several ancient Hebrew manuscripts, these two psalms were connected together as one psalm. It's believed that they were originally one before they were separated. And the evidence for why this is the case is that ancient authors, or ancient editors, noticed that because of the chorus in the psalm called a refrain, it united them

in both chapters. In 42:5, 42:11, and in 43:5, it has the same chorus that connects the entire story and distress lament together.

And so as we read, I want you to feel the distress if you can. And we're going to read some scriptures — just follow along with me. I want you to try to feel the self-doubt that the author has. I want you to feel the fear from his enemies and actualize the feelings of abandonment from God, or of God, that this man perceives that he's going through. And watch what the author does during this journey. It's so, so potent.

Reading Psalm 42 and 43

To the choir master. A masculine of the sons of Korah. As the 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? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, where is your 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 psalms of praise, a multitude keeping the festival.

Verse five, here's the first refrain of the first chorus. *Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me* — verse 1 — *as with the deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me.*

Why are you cast down, O my soul? The second chorus of refrain. *And why are you in turmoil within me?*

Going into chapter 43, it just picks up, keeps going. *Why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of my enemy? 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.*

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why are you in turmoil within me?* The final concluding chorus here. *Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*

Three Sections, One Journey

So that was a lot, because you feel that emotion bubbling up. And for some of us, some of these emotions we can empathize with. Some of these emotions are familiar to us. Wow — there's

someone else in the Bible who had these same type of discussions with themselves about the life circumstances in their life.

And so, nerd moment, just academically, the psalm is divided into three different sections. I think I have it here — yeah, three different sections. 42:1 through 5 is the first section in the scriptures. And then verse 6 through 11 starts the second part. And then, of course, chapter 43:1 through 5 is the third, concluding section. And, of course, they're marked out by the repetitive refrains that are included in there as markers.

And I want to point out that the author feels abandoned by God. Others mock him. He then remembers — what he remembers is significant to today. He remembers what community felt like, if you read it — that is where his mind goes. He remembers what his community felt like. He remembers what it was like to engage in worship, not alone, not isolated. He remembers what it was like to engage in worship with his congregational community at the temple when they gathered together. And these memories fuel this sense of encouragement that he's trying to remind himself of — that his God is faithful and he will praise God again. God hasn't gone anywhere. I will recover. I will praise him. I will return to the place where all of the people praise him at his temple, and I will be among them, with my community, with my family.

The Deer Panting for Water

So 42, the first section, [Psalms 1](#) through 5 — the psalm begins with a striking image of a deer thirsting for water and arriving at a stream that is just a bunch of dry sand. We have songs that we used to sing in the early 2000s and late 90s, worship songs about this, and it was like, yes, praise God. And when you read it, it's like, wow, there's nothing here for me to live. I'm going to die. The deer cries out in anguish. He's thirsty, and thirsty. And the need for the deer is urgent — we can feel that. It needs water to live. We need water to live. And just as water is necessary for him to live, so is God necessary for life to be abundant. And the speaker is crying out for this urgent arrival of God's presence in his life. He's absent from it.

And in contrast to that hope is the present situation that is characterized by tears. And rather than drinking the refreshing water of worship and God's presence — and did you see it, the community of worship — the speaker pours out water of tears. And the water is a recurring theme throughout this entire psalm. Others wonder what the author has done. Has he done something to cause this crisis in his life, to bring this on himself? Obviously, so they begin to inquire — what'd you do, what'd you do, you must have done something to tick God off.

I mean, as tears flow, the speaker begins to pour out his soul. The imagery of eating his tears day and night — maybe some of us can identify with that artistic symbolism. They pour and just go straight to his mouth and he consumes them, and they just continue to pour, and it's a never-ending cycle of deep, deep darkness. Memories begin to flutter on replay, and then, at that moment, the author remembers. Remembers the procession, likely Shavuot, going through the Mount of Olives, rushing to the temple to offer praise and thanksgiving to God in the congregation. The contrast between then and now, between times of gladness and joy and his current situation, his current spiritual wasteland — it makes this crisis he's experiencing even more difficult to process. And it leads him deeper, and it leads us into the first refrain in verse 5.

Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul?

Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God — you know you can, hope in God — *for I shall again praise him, my salvation.* This inner dialogue is going on. And I know no one else has ever talked to themselves before, or had a dialogue with themselves before. Maybe in the shower, that's where most people have this go back and forth. Or maybe you just spend time replaying arguments with other people. But I'm sure you, with yourself — he's having an internal dialogue. And the speaker asks himself, wait, stop, stop it, stop it. Why are you so troubled and so distressed?

I know many therapists and counselors out there, when you have trouble with anxiety and replaying situations in your mind, they often tell you to say it out loud. Stop, stop, say that verbally to yourself. And this is what happens right here. It's biblical, it's biblical. Why are you so troubled and distressed? The hope of past experiences where God's presence was manifest and his spirit of joy was just overwhelming him.

The first section of the Psalm shows us that it is the presence of God that makes life possible, and it powerfully articulates the yearning to encounter that presence in the form of worship. The second section of the Psalm, verses 6 through 11, in repetition, says — the verse repeats a section of the refrain to help leaders transition into the second part of the poem.

And the memories of the divine presence here, they're still at the forefront for the author. But the setting here has changed. The atmosphere has changed. As before, water continues to be the central theme, but the scene now is in the area that's near the source of the Jordan River. The water is now related to great, chaotic, deep waters. The water's powerful, overwhelming the author as roaring waves crash upon him. He's troubled. He's in distress. He's being pummeled by the chaos, and he's not in control.

Hope Begins to Surface

In verse 8, however, a shift occurs in which hope begins to surface amidst this brutal beating in his own mind. The author remembers again the divine steadfast love and mercy of God. He remembers God has a history. God has a history of coming to deliver and being present to bless. But somehow, for some reason, the divine presence here seems absent and the crisis is urgent for the author. The author asks God: Why have you forgotten me? Why are enemies oppressing and distracting and overwhelming me? And why are they mocking me with words of divine absence? Where's your God? He's obviously not in your life.

The author's prayer leads us into the second refrain with its inner dialogue. This dialogue holds out hope, even in the midst of this chaos. Hope that God can again bring about praise in the midst of the great congregation.

From Complaint to Petition

And then we have the third section, chapter 43, verses 1 through 5. The third section of the Psalm moves from complaint to petition, and evolution is taking place in where the author is going. Again, there's a template being laid out for us to use in our prayer life.

The image in verse 1 calls for God to act as the speaker's defense attorney in the face of all of these accusers that are coming against him. The enemies do not cause the crisis. Notice that. Enemies aren't throwing rocks and swords, no. But they make it worse by mocking the author here as one who is under divine judgment. They use their words and communication to distract the author from actually addressing the crisis at hand.

Stop Being a Distraction

Is there a crisis going on? Right now, is there a crisis going on? And the thing we can learn from this section is: Is your communication to others around you helping them or is it distracting them from actually experiencing God's peace in this crisis? Because the ones that were distracting the author here from experiencing the peace in his crisis were known as the enemies. How is your communication impacting people? Is it a distraction from them experiencing the peace of God in a time of crisis?

There's a lot of well-meaning people out in the world and the internet connects us all. Social media. Yeah, this whole quarantine thing, like it's not that bad. Let's be honest. Netflix, Amazon video, Disney, Nick Jr. app on your TV. I mean, there's Facebook, Instagram. You're doing exactly

what you'd be doing if you took a day off work. Like, come on. Thank goodness this is happening in 2020 and not like 1990 or something. Gosh, man.

Here's the thing. Sometimes what we say about a crisis that others are in can drive them away from experiencing the focus they need to actually accept it, balance their lives, balance their emotions, and focus on what they really need to do in their home. Stop distracting them. Stop being a distraction. You could be the enemies causing people to think that God is farther away than he really is and not even realize it. And what's worse, what's worse is you might be using the Bible or some type of scriptural overtone to do it, to produce this result. Telling people, don't fear, don't fear, don't fear. Guess what? Sometimes it causes people. Your tone and how you communicate is as important as your words. Instead of don't fear, don't fear, maybe, man, God is good today. Hittany, there's a difference. We need to learn not to be a distraction to others in their pursuit to find the peace of God.

Light and Truth Lead Home

Psalm 43 too makes it clear that one of the bases of the prayer is the contrast between these oppressive enemies and the God who provides refuge for which the psalmist pleads. The petition operates in the hope that light and truth will bring this faithful one to a place of divine presence that renews and makes possible the praise to God. He wants to be back. He wants to have that experience like he did intimately with his fellowship praising God in Jerusalem. And verse 4 articulates the vow of praise with a harp. And in the context, a harp is an instrument in a congregation. Community worship. I love that. I love that.

The chaotic and oppressive crisis does not have to have the last word in this psalm. The concluding verse is the final refrain, the closing chorus. And it offers the final word of trust and hope. And the use of the personal pronoun with the divine name in the last sentence, my help, my God, suggests that the author has indeed arrived. He's arrived in the hope of relationship with the living God, the God who comes to deliver. And it is that God who this hopeful petition is addressing.

The last words of the author here in the psalm are,

Faith Struggle in Exile

These two chapters articulate the faith struggle in the midst of exile. And whether that exile is geographical or spiritual in its sense, maybe in the context here, in our lives today, I am sure many of us can relate to times and seasons where we feel a bit alone, quarantined, if you will.

This is speaking about those times of deep darkness, of deep anguish, of deep anxiety, of deep depression.

See, our contemporary culture promotes dealing with these types of experiences and emotional roller coasters. Just depend on yourself. Like, just don't tell anybody. Keep it to yourself. I'll resolve it. You know what? I'm a man. Like, I can take care of this. I can handle this situation. And we don't talk about it.

I am guilty of times where I have depressing waves in my life. I don't like to talk about it to anybody, my wife, no one. This is a culture that trains us to do that. See, the perspective of the Psalms here is that such an approach leads to nothing but more isolation, more fear, and more trouble.

Hope and help are found in the covenant God who continues to engage the world, who continues to engage communities, and who continues to engage persons. And he makes it possible to take the journey towards wholeness in the context of worshiping within a community. The author yearns to be surrounded by the believing and worshiping community that he knows he's a part of. They want to participate in the worship services of the temple and to celebrate with the people the presence of God in their midst.

The Psalms Matter Today

So why do the Psalms matter today more than ever? Because we're not immune to anxiety. We're not. We're not immune to fear. We're not immune to those deep, dark places of depression. Simply not. Isolation from other worshipers causes a thirst as a deer pants for water. Feels like a dry stream bed where God is not present. And the Psalm here walks us through how to pray through that. How do we pray through that?

Constantly reminding ourselves that God has not gone away. He's still there. The God that we serve has a resume of faithful, steadfast love in our lives. And God is still giving life right now.

So no matter where you're at, no matter what you're facing, no matter how anxious or stressed or scared or alone you may feel, bring forth the memories of God's faithfulness. And if you're sitting at home right now, you know what? I want you to think about the things in your life that God has done for you, the overwhelming blessings that he has given to you. I want you to start making mental note of the resume that God has in your life.

If you're sitting at home with your family right now watching, I'm gonna ask you to do something and you gotta do it because everyone's around you and everyone's gotta do it. I want

you to scream as loud as you can. Hallelujah! Noticing the blessings of God that surround you now. Say it again. Again. Hallelujah.

And maybe you're sitting at home missing your family right now. Maybe you're sitting at home not surrounded by the people you most love. I know you're thinking about them and I want you to know that you're not alone. I want you to know that God's presence has not abandoned you. God's presence is right there with you. And I want you to now say, hallelujah for the blessings of a faithful God steadfastly.

Closing Prayer

Alvina Malcano, our father, our king, father, we thank you. We thank you for this time together. We thank you that we can know and realize the things that cause us to allow the heaviness on our chest, the heaviness that we carry around, the burdens that we carry around, the places in our life that have become too overwhelming, that we know we can drop those for this moment right now and we can say with full heart and full passion, hallelujah.

We thank you, Father, for your faithfulness, for your love and mercy and your graciousness in our lives. Even though it feels like the stream is dry, even though it feels like the waves are crashing over us, you are constant. You are still here and that you would allow us to encourage ourselves with the spirit that you have given to us to remind us of the resume of your faithfulness in our lives. We ask this in the name of the faithful King that we serve, Yeshua the Messiah. Amen.

I'm Matthew Vander Ailes, pastor of Founded in Truth Fellowship, and we hope you enjoyed this message and that it was a blessing to you and your family. Founded in Truth exists to cultivate a fellowship of image bearers that live the redeemed life only Yeshua can give. If this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us an email through the contact form on our site and tell us how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and your relationship with Him.

Closing

If you would like to donate to Founded in Truth Ministries and be a part of this ministry's continued impact, you can do so through our website. Thank you for joining us, and we pray that you experience the peace and the joy of God's holy Sabbath. Shabbat Shalom.

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