

Ps. 42 (LD 9) “Why Are You in Despair?”

For the Children: People often feel sad, for one reason or another – even God’s people. Perhaps you have felt that way yourself at times, or noticed it in someone else. How can a person be cheered up when they are sad? By hearing a joke or watching TV? Well, that doesn’t last long. The best way to deal with our problems is to look to the Lord, read His Word; pray to Him; admit our problems; remember all the kind things He has done for us; and look at what He has promised us. He has promised to bless us and eventually to remove all our problems, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. He is able to do this because He is the Almighty Creator and Ruler. He wants to help us, because He loves us as our Father in heaven, for the sake of His Son who died for us. **Questions:** What kind of situations make you feel sad? Why do you think we feel sad at times, despite God’s promises? Why is patience also important?

Introduction:

First Point: Looking for the Right Cure

- 1) Experiencing Difficulties: The Psalmist was apparently cut off from Jerusalem and the House of the Lord (vss. 2b,4,5). He felt forgotten by God (v. 9). He was also being reviled by enemies who insisted that God had deserted him (vss. 3,10). This resulted in tears (v. 3), despair (vss. 5,6,11), feelings of being disturbed (v. 5), overwhelmed (v. 7), grief (v. 9) and brokenness (v. 10). Sin adds to such feelings and makes a bad situation worse. If we focus on ourselves, we look for wrong solutions – a mere change in circumstance or the restoration of our happiness.
- 2) Focusing on the Lord: The start of a proper solution is to focus instead upon the Lord. The Psalmist desires not only the worship of God with the congregation in Jerusalem (v. 4), but he also desires the Living God Himself (vss. 1-2) – His presence, closeness and favour.

Second Point: Word and Prayer

- 1) Confessing Our Weakness: We can cultivate that desire for God only by means of God’s Word and prayer, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. The first part of that prayer is a confession of the Psalmist’s weakness. He pours out his soul to the Lord (v. 4), acknowledging his feelings of despair etc. He does not try to hide this from the Lord. Such confession is actually an expression of trust in the Lord. The irony is that when we pray about feeling distant from the Lord, we are actually drawing close to the Lord who is near to His people!
- 2) Thanking Him for Past Kindnesses: In prayer we can also rehearse the Lord’s past kindnesses, both to His people at large, and to us personally. The Psalmist does so in v. 4. The whole Bible is an answer to the question, “Where is your God?”: He is with His people in Christ, and we express that in prayer. This is true wherever we are, at all times – from the far north to the deep south (v. 6; Ps. 139).
- 3) Expressing Hope for the Future: In prayer, we also express our hope for the future. See vss. 5 and 11. The basis for this is not our feelings, but God’s Word: God’s attributes assure us He will keep His promises. Redemptive history outlines how He always has. In prayer, we lay hold of these truths.

Third Point: Hoping in the Lord

- 1) Assured of His Help: Our hope that God will keep His promises is grounded especially in the truths of LD 9 – that God is able to help, since He is the Almighty Creator and Ruler; and that He is willing to help because He is Fatherly towards us (loving, caring, protecting and providing) in Jesus Christ. This leads the Psalmist to confess that God is the God of his life and that He will command His lovingkindness (v. 8); and that He is the “help of my countenance” (v.11). On this basis he is certain that he will praise God and sing to Him again.
- 2) Waiting for the Right Time: That restoration will certainly take place, but only in God’s time. Meanwhile, we must wait with patience, trust and expectation – rather than letting our feelings dictate to us.

Conclusion: