



Sermon Growth Guide

September 29, 2024

Who Cares? - "Why?"

Psalm 42

Key Verse: Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:5)

Foundations

This psalm is a song of lament. Many scholars think that Psalm 43 was originally a part of Psalm 42, because both contain the same words and themes. It is clearly the cry of a mature believer who feels that God is off in the murky distance somewhere far away. This was probably written by the leaders of worship in the Temple. They were now, along with David, cut off from Jerusalem because of the revolt of Absalom, David's son. David and the Temple worship leaders have been betrayed.

The psalm begins by describing a thirst that must be quenched or the result will be death. The image is that of a deer that is being hunted by enemies and who has come to the end of all its resources. The psalmist says that being away from God's Temple and worshipping with God's people leads to despair.

The psalmist is talking to his soul, but it is not self-talk. His point of reference is not himself. It is God, for during his despair, he knows that his hope...his only hope is in God.

Dealing with treachery and betrayal at the hands of enemies, the writer doesn't blame God. It seems as if his dire situation increases his desire for God. He then intensifies that desire as he then seeks the living God and finally the face of God.

Understanding God's Word

Together read Psalms 42 and 43 as one psalm. In both psalms the writer asks, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why are you so disturbed within me? How would you describe the circumstances that cause him to ask this question? Having described the condition of his heart, how would you then describe the desire of his heart?"

Applying God's Word

C.S. Lewis says that the imagery of "panting" for water is describing the psalmist's "appetite for God." Not only does the psalmist have an appetite for God, but he also wants to praise God. Worship with God's people is essential to him. In what specific ways do you think worship can satisfy our appetite for God? How have you experienced worship as satisfying your thirst for God?

Witnessing God's Word

In those times when God feels distant and you feel disturbed, how can you bear witness to the hope that is within you? How can remembering the goodness of God in other times help you live before others with the assurance that in "life and in death" we belong to God?