

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

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Today is Wednesday, November 6, 2024 and we are studying Psalm 42 – praying that God would move our hearts from despair to hope!

OPENING PRAYER

In this season, we pray together:

May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE

***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.
My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
Psalm 42:5-6***

REFLECTION

In your Bible, you may have noticed a heading of Psalm 42 that says something along the lines of: “A *maskil of the Sons of Korah*.” There are two things to note here. First, the Hebrew root of the word *maskil* is *sakal*, which means “to have insight, to teach.” Thus, we can understand a *maskil* as a *teaching song*. Second, the story of the “Sons of Korah” is told in Number 16. Korah led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses during the wilderness days of the Exodus. God judged Korah and his leaders and they all died, but the *Sons of Korah* remained (Numbers 26:9-11). These Sons would go on to be leaders of worship in the tabernacle – perhaps out of gratitude for the mercy and favor received from God.

How are we doing? That was a lot to lead with. But I think we’re at a good place to pick back up in Psalm 42. What can the *Sons of Korah teach us*? What is their example?

Well, *this Son of Korah’s* soul is in deep despair and is crushing him. Despondent. Filled with melancholy. Safe to assume this isn’t the first time Korah’s sons have felt this way. But this son stands up and says: “Self, listen for a moment, we need to talk.” And what does he say to his soul?

He acknowledges the state of his soul. In verse 6, he is honest about where he is physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He’s far from Jerusalem, far from the Temple, and feels distant from God. He knows that hiding from heaven only does his soul harm and thus doesn’t let himself

stay there. Instead, he challenges himself to pursue praise – and therein lies what I think we can learn from this Son of Korah today.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones once said:

“The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: ‘why are you downcast?’ – what business have you to be disquieted?”

He continues:

“Then you must go on to remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with [the Psalmist]: ‘for yet I will praise Him, my Savior and my God.’”

To risk over-indulging with a third quote, Dr. Lloyd-Jones then asks:

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?”

When you wake up each day voices immediately begin to speak. Most commonly it is our own inner voice – clamoring to bring yesterday's problems back into view or to push ahead into tomorrow's trouble or something in between. Jesus had a prescription for this sort of thinking and it sounds a bit like *“put your hope in God.”*

Today, let's learn from this Son of Korah. Take yourself in hand, address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. Ask: *how is it with your soul?* If you find your soul troubled today, remind yourself of who God is, what God has done, and what God has promised to do. Defy the world and say with the Psalmist: “Yet, I will praise Him!”

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

God, we praise you! In joy and in sorrow we look to you. Today we draw near to you. Give us the willingness to name the state of our souls before you. Then give us the courage to challenge ourselves – to speak your truth to our souls. Quiet the voices that seek to disturb and cast us down. Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul! Amen.