



When God seems distant

1. Face your feelings

2. Fight your feelings

A Song for every season Psalm 42-When God is silent / seems far off

Read

- **Psalm 42**

Intro

The Psalms are a gift to the people of God. This Psalm is a notable example of how God invites us and permits us to give voice to our feelings of frustration and raw emotion and then teaches us how to move from this into a place of worship and reverence.

The psalm has a heading 'a mascal of the sons of Korah'. The sons of Korah are found elsewhere in the bible to be associated with a ministry of singing. This psalm would be used in congregational singing. Mascal has lost its specific meaning but it is associated with the sense of giving wisdom. So this psalm is a congregational song of wisdom and instruction.

How do we fight the feeling that God is far off?

We have to recognise that we are emotional beings. A worldly commentator recently celebrated the fact that today we do not have any external reference for behavior anymore we just go with how we feel. In conclusion however he did acknowledge that because our emotions are up and down this new world view does not provide any sense of stability.

The people of God, unlike the world, are not led by our feelings but by who we are in Christ.

We can sometimes feel our way into thinking whereas here in our psalm feelings are brought into line with the truth of our relationship with God.

1. Face your feelings

Acknowledge the external

- The Psalmist is facing external pressure and confrontation from enemies taunting him with the question 'Where is your God?'
- This question is asked of us all of the time by the enemy of our soul. We have a constant enemy whose sole purpose is to steal away any worship of God.
- When we are grief stricken, down, depressed, in difficulty we will be confronted by this question from the world and our enemy in a relentless stream of doubt.
- It is important that we accept this is happening – and that we DO NOT just stop here.



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Acknowledge the internal tension

- The Psalmist moves from acknowledging the external factors causing a sense of abandonment from God to looking at how he is feeling inside
- He recognizes that his soul is overwhelmed but he stops and asks the question 'What is it that is stopping me from worshipping God?' He goes deeper. What is the root of this feeling?
- Has he been forgotten by God? Does he believe that? Well in V8 he is declaring that he actually knows and believes that God is always with him. That he has never actually been deserted.
- What does this teach us? It is ok to say false things to God? It is ok to express your feelings even if they are not true as long as they are expressed along a journey that turns into praise for God.
- John Piper calls these 'words in the wind'. This is an observation to Job 6:26 where Job's friend try to bring comfort by giving needles advice. 'Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat my desperate words as wind?'

2. Fight your feelings

Seek God

- The Psalmist doesn't just lay on the canvas floored by his feeling he gets up with his boxing gloves on and starts the fight back.
- He thirsts for God, his soul pants for intimacy with God.
- Note that the psalmist is not seeking or pursuing a solution but a person – God.
- In Psalm 43 the psalmist asks God to send out His light leading him to a new place. We can do the same, seeking God to lead us into His presence.
- This is so challenging – if we had a choice to have either our current challenges and intimacy with God – or no challenges and no intimacy with God what would we decide?

Speak to your soul

- **Remembrance – these things I remember**
 - He reminds himself of times when he wasn't in a rut when he was free to worship God.
 - In C.S. Lewis story the Silver chair about a cursed character who needs Polly and Eustace to unbind him we see how we need others to help us. We need our friends to remind us of who we are in Jesus Christ.
 - We need to be encouraged by this to escape our dark places.
 - Don't let fear be your dwelling place. This hole does not define you.
- **Remind yourself who God is**
 - The psalmist remembers who God is. He is my rock. We can only do this by knowing who God is.



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- Joseph advises Pharaoh, after interpreting his dream, to store up grain in barns ahead of days of famine.
- We need to stock pile the truth – is our barn empty? Regularly meditate and store away words that give free expression of God's greatness.

Give a rallying call to your souls

- The Psalmist cries out – why are you downcast oh my soul?
- Hope in God – he tells himself – for I will praise him again. This is a call and a determination to go back and worship God the next time he is in the temple.
- When should we come to God? the answer for us is NOW!
- Today, tomorrow at any time we can come to God in an instant.
- We just lift our eyes to Calvary where Jesus died on the cross for us.
- There at the cross is the banner that says God is always present.
- In Romans 8 – it says that nothing will separate us from God.
- Nothing separates us from God but our DECISION NOT TO COME

Let us learn as a people to work through our feelings as we walk through the day declaring 'Come on soul. Come on heart get in line with who I am'.