

My soul clings to you

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[0 : 00] I can sing to God's praise from Psalm 42. Psalm 42 from the beginning.

Like as the hart for water brooks in thirst of pant and pray, so pant my longing soul, O God, I've come to thee, I may. My soul for God, the living God, doth thirst.

When shall I near unto thy countenance approach, and in God's sight appear? My tears have unto me been meet, both in the night and day, while unto me continually, where is thy God, they say.

My soul is poured out in me, when this I think upon, because that with the multitude I heretofore had gone. With them into God's house I went, with voice of joy and praise, yea, with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days.

O why art thou cast down, my soul? Why in me so dismayed? Trust God, for I shall praise him yet, his countenance is mine aid.

[1 : 22] And so on. We'll sing these verses, 1 to 5. Psalm 42. Like as the hart for water brooks in thirst of pant and pray.

Like as the hart for water brooks, In thirst of pant and pray.

So pence my longing is so low, God, that comes to thee I give.

My soul for the living God Gathers and shall I hear Until I can't in hands approach And in God's sight of him My tears are unkill me O day and night I shall be

While the glory continually When this night brought this day My soul is born with your dream When this I lay upon Because that with the mortishes I am here to hold alone With heaven in the waters

[4 : 25] I went with voice of joy And this day with the multitude Theentry of Yahweh Thebard Antes O why art thou cast down my soul, why in this day is made?

Christ, O why art thou cast down my soul, why in this day is made?

Can we turn to the passage of scripture that we read together in the Old Testament in the book of Psalms, Psalm 63.

And we'll read verse 7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

[6 : 19] They shall fall by the sword, they shall be a portion for foxes and so on. Particularly the words, my soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.

As you can see from the title that is given to the psalm, most of the Bibles will have this title.

The psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. The two things are brought to our attention here.

The psalm is Davidic, that is it was composed by David. And the place that he was in when the composition was made.

However, there is a difference of opinion as to what exactly the time, the exact time was.

[7 : 31] For example, there's two schools of thought. It either was the result of David being pursued by King Saul and he was in threat, under threat from the king.

Or it was a later composition when he was being pursued by Absalom because of the rebellion of Absalom.

And both occasions are similar in that David was a fugitive, driven from his home and many of the creature comforts that he enjoyed.

One of the commentators, well I think, I would say that many of the commentators believe that it is a later composition.

And J.A. Alexander, just to give you one example. In the history of Absalom's rebellion and of David's flight before him, we meet with several of the very same expressions that are used here, which together with the strong internal seminary of this psalm to some others having reference to Absalom's rebellion.

[9 : 06] So his argument is that the psalm compares to others that are more openly descriptive of David's experience as he was pursued by Absalom.

It's not necessary for us to know what the situation the psalm came out of.

It may help us, it may firm up our thinking as to what lay behind the thought processes of the psalmist, but in reality the psalmist is directed by the Holy Spirit.

And the truths that are brought to bear upon our attention are designed by the Spirit in order to edify and instruct each one of us.

It is helpful at times to formulate our thinking on the basis of the information that we have.

[10 : 18] But it is, I suppose, wiser to govern our thinking with the thought that this is God's word for us, out of whatever circumstances the words arose.

But I want us to focus on just two phrases, although the whole psalm, I think, is one organic whole, in the sense that it describes to us the longings of soul of a child of God, arising out of these particular circumstances.

But what stands to the fore, what comes to the fore, is that this is a man of God deciding God's company and God's care.

And it is on the basis of past experience that he is motivated to do that. It is not something that he desires because he has heard from others what that desire may be like, but it is his own desire arising out of past experience.

And some of the terminology that he uses clearly refers to what he has previously enjoyed.

[11 : 52] Now, the two phrases in verse 8 are distinct. My soul follows hard after thee, and then thy right hand upholdeth me.

And I always try and see the different translations that are available to us to see how comparable they are.

Sometimes, understandably, depending on the basis of translation, sometimes they're very loosely based upon the original tongue, in the sense that the desire of the translator is to bring the meaning to our attention, not the exact detail of the words that conduct the meaning to us.

But in this instance, all of the translations that I looked at, they convey the same meaning, although nuances in the translations show us the actual fertility of the thought, if you like.

My soul, we have here, is following hard after thee. I don't know if you would use that expression yourself, to follow hard after somebody.

[13 : 38] But the other translations, just to give you a taste of them. My soul clings to you, which is the most favoured translation.

My soul clings to you. One of the older preachers uses the example of a bird. I can't remember having seen birds in the locality here.

I think they probably are there. But growing up, when I grew up, there was always birds. Gloran. And if you wore a woolly jumper or clothing, that these birds stuck to very easily.

And that's the example that he gives. The clinging that results of, for when there is an adhesive property. My soul pursues you.

And in the Gaelic, Now, you can tell, there's slight nuances in the translations.

[14 : 57] But essentially, the meaning is the same. But they emphasise the relationship this person has, who we believe to be David, with the Lord.

A spiritual relationship. The word soul is the word that is in the New Testament, it's the man's spirit, the passion spirit.

And his spirit, his spiritual being, clings to God, as somebody who knows who God is.

Now, throughout the sun, you see how the description of previous experiences feeds his thought processes.

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.

[16 : 14] This is where I am, and this is my spiritual condition. I am parched, literally parched, in the same way you would expect a person to be parched to his living, or having to spend time in a desert place.

But what is he parched for? It's not for water. It's not for something that's satisfied physical need, but spiritual need.

Because he wants to see the power and the glory of God, as he has seen it before in the sanctuary. He has had occasion to enjoy God's blessing.

God's blessing in close proximity to the temple, as he conducted or partook of worship there. And the description that follows is really a description of somebody who enjoyed the blessing of God in the worship of the temple or the worship of God wherever it took place.

And now he is in a situation where that is no longer possible, and he remembers that. The preacher, Gerald Lewis, looks at the hall and he says, David saw Jehovah in the sanctuary in provision, in illumination, intercession and forgiving measures.

[17 : 54] So when you go through the psalm, you'll find these identifiable features, if you like, of his past experience. These things he had enjoyed before, these things were part of his spiritual journey.

these things were the things that made him what he was, a child of God. And having seen these things, they couldn't be forgotten.

They couldn't be not. You know, we have this expression, if you see something that is unedifying or inappropriate, and you're saying, well, I can't not see that.

It's as if you would like to forget it, you would like the thing to be obliterated from your memory, but once seen, it is never to be forgotten.

Now, this is not what I'm saying about David's experience, what he is saying, these things I have enjoyed, these things I have experienced, these privileges of the worship of God's house have been mine, and they will continue to be with me, and they will sustain me, no matter what.

[19 : 16] And less than that, I think you have to say, will not satisfy. I would say, if a person enjoys the near presence of God, and you put alongside it something less than that, you're not going to derive the same pleasure from that, although I think we have to remember that worship of God, while it may be pleasurable, it is not essentially for pleasure that we engage in at worship of God is for his glory and for our spiritual good, but it may be pleasing, and it should be pleasing, and it's something that we delight in, it's an emotional experience at times, it is something that's good for our soul, and as it stimulates our soul, it stimulates our spiritual appetites, then it is something we derive pleasure from it, but the psalmist is not remembering it because of the pleasure he derived from it, but from the very fact that it was

God that was at its heart, and it was his soul that was being nourished, and it was his soul that was being stimulated by the experience, and that's important, I think, as well.

While we understand that David might be deprived of many of his creature comforts, and it's not to belittle them or diminish them in the import they have, but such as they are, they are not as important to him as the privilege that he enjoyed in God's house and in fellowship with God, and knowing the instruction of God and everything else that comes with it.

You know, sometimes we say things that, and we know what we say, if we're, if we've been travelling on a hot summer stay for a long time, and we will say to someone, well, I'm looking forward to a warm shower, or a cold shower, or something that will be, something that we take pleasure in.

That's not what David is thinking here, whatever the equivalent was in his own day. his soul yearns for God in the way described.

[22 : 20] But while we may appreciate the thought that there may be threat or imminent danger in his experience that may show wisdom in deciding the presence of God or the goodness of God to be immediately made known to him, that is not what he desires above all else.

His clinging to God is not something akin to, the way I thought about it was this, or the way I think about it is if you think of the image of somebody who is in the middle of a storm and he is thrown into the water and somebody throws a life jacket or a life boy to him or a life belt to him or her, they'll grab that and hold on to it for dear life because obviously it means salvation to them, it means something that keeps them from drowning and from imminent death.

Now that's not the clinging that David is describing here, it is the description of somebody who understands the benefit and the privilege that is his as a child of God and laying hold of that God and clinging to that God is what makes him what he is.

this is his ongoing experience. This is not something that is new, but something that marks him out as a believer.

when you think about your own personal experience of God, can you think of your own experience exposing you to being separated from God?

[24 : 42] That's quite different to the experience of clinging to God. if you're separated from God, it is not something you would countenance, not something you would want to speak about.

And we may think that the act of clinging to God is a weak one, that it's the experience of somebody who is because of danger doing something that would not be there, whether not for the danger.

But that's not what David is saying throughout the whole psalm. He is reminding himself and those to whom the psalm composition will be sung or will be read, that this is the kind of relationship that he enjoys with God.

E.W. Toser in his writing speaks about his own generation which would have been in the 40s, 1940s.

And he describes the church in his day which had probably the same kind of similarities to our own generation.

[26 : 21] But he was thinking of the church and the mistake that belonged to the church of his own generation or part of it.

He was critical of many things that the church were not doing. But this criticism was addressed to those who were fundamentally conservative, they were reformed, they were evangelical, they had all the attributes of a living denomination as a church or as an individual.

and these things in themselves he considered desirable. But the problem was that they saw this as an end in itself, that they thought that as long as they portrayed this kind of image of themselves were and gave the place to God's word and gave the place in preaching and in teaching that as long as they were conservative, as long as they were presenting the correct material before their congregations and they themselves were part of such congregations, that they were all right.

and that was all that was needed. That was all that was wanted. But he saw that these things of themselves led to some falling into a lethargy of spirit which was a terminal illness as far as he put it.

I want to encourage the mighty longing after God that marked out the saints of the Old Testament and New Testament.

[28 : 41] The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth.

acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to his people. Now what does that have to do with this?

Well, the way he understood it was that this ardent desire for God, this clinging to God, was something that was the byproduct of a knowledge of God that was not content simply with the possession of that knowledge.

There was this pressing need to bring that knowledge to bear upon all aspects of our living as believers.

And for David, it is manifested in this that he is seeking the Lord my soul.

[29 : 55] He says, followeth hard after thee because God himself is what he wants and God himself must be a part of all that he is as a believer.

You know sometimes when you look at various congregations or churches or denominations it is very seldom that you have a congregation or a denomination that is getting all things right.

You know we as a congregation here, we can never be satisfied with having the right doctrines or the right teachings or the right theology.

I would hope to God that that would be something that is of the utmost import to you that whoever is in the pulpit preaches God's word, whoever is in the pulpit presents the word of God in its fullness without excluding anything, the whole word of God.

But the next step is important. The word that we hear has to be applied whatever word it is, whatever area of our life it touches.

[31 : 42] And when that happens the desire that we have for God becomes all important, becomes all more apparent.

There are always dangers of emotionalism, the emphasis on feelings and good feelings and these themselves are not bad, they are not wrong, they are not things that we should be without, but they are not the main reason for our existence as believing people.

God is at the heart of our Christian experience. He's in the passion of Jesus Christ, he is all important to us and we say to God and we say to Christ, my soul clingeth to you, my soul followeth after you, my soul pursues after you because of who he is and what he means to us.

Without you we can do nothing. Is that not what it says? truly these are the longings we see displayed in this and similar psalms.

To go back to Psalm 41 and Psalm 42, the psalm is there, maybe you'll point to the situation out of which these yearnings come, and doubtless they are never decontextualized, they are not brought out of their situation historically or in real life.

[33 : 33] None of our experiences can be divorced from our behavior. All, whatever makes up our life, whatever the issue of the day that we are involved in, as individuals, as families, as neighborhoods, as communities, we can't separate ourselves from them, nor should we.

But we shouldn't compartmentalize the word of God and say it has nothing to say to me as far as any of these things are concerned, or as far as all of these things are concerned, because they do.

And God himself is at the heart of what he is saying to us. The second phrase here, very quickly, is this. it's a claim to God's assistance.

My soul followeth hard after thy right hand upholdeth me. Thy right hand, this expression you find often in the scriptures, the right hand of God.

Most of the common statistics is right back to the book of Exodus, where the Lord has taken Israel out of Egypt, and when Moses composes the song of praise and the song of thanksgiving, he highlights and he elevates the right hand of God, as the God who has exercised divine power to take him out of there.

[35 : 17] Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. But it's not always power exerted in destruction, it's power exerted at times to care and to exercise compassion to the vulnerable, to the weak, and to the infirm, and to psalmist to sing, thy right hand upholdeth me.

You are the God who has sufficient power to sustain me no matter what. Psalm 41, Psalm 42 again.

God's word is used here by the psalmist in such a way that he encourages remembrance of what God has done in our past.

God but also encourages us to think of what he is yet to do in our future. If you speak about the Lord Jesus Christ, how does he speak about?

He speaks about the power of God in his own experience and in the experience of God, God's people. God has given to him sheep, he's given to him people to be his own people.

[36 : 47] Christ says, I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

The certainty of the power that is God's. thy right hand upholdeth me. We should never deny the help of God but insist upon it.

Without me you can do nothing. One of the divines puts this as simply as this. God, he said, has created the heavens and the earth and he holds both in the palms of his mighty hand.

He will therefore be able to hold up and bear such a little speck of dust, an atom of dust as you are.

And is that not the case? Is that not what the psalmist is alluding to? Yes, he's aware of enemies but he is aware of God more than his enemies.

[38 : 04] The king shall rejoice in God, everyone that swadeth by him shall glory, but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped. Those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into lower parts of the earth.

He's convinced and persuaded of the power of God exercising might on his behalf. Do you feel embarrassed about soliciting that help from God when you are in need?

Do you feel that God is really too great a God to be involved in your minor problems?

There are no minor problems as far as God's children are concerned. There are no events in our life that God would consider insignificant.

So why then do we go to him and do what the psalmist is doing here? Remembering and reminding himself of the power that belongs to the right hand of God.

[39 : 16] Perhaps it speaks more of the salvation of the soul more than anything else. The experience of David is the experience of a child of God that has met with God and will never forget that encounter with God whatever it brought into their experience it's not meant to be forgotten.

Perhaps here it focuses on the experiences of the worshipper and David derived great pleasure separated from the public worship or the people of God in worship as he was he still did not overlook what was his privilege and his joy.

May God encourage us to remember the need that we had to cling to himself to pursue after him to desire him more than anything that he has to offer us.

Sometimes we do that. We think of the gifts rather than the giver that's often said. God bless with these thoughts. Let us pray. Lord our God we give thanks for the experiences of David experiences that we would not have enjoyed or sought out for ourselves but he was at times driven from the comforts that were rightly his and made to suffer at the hands of enemies as they pursued him relentlessly seeking his life but his life was in your hands and he desired nothing less than to have the giver of that life as his possession and his portion.

We pray for your blessing upon the needy this evening your people in particular may they seek you earnestly and may they pursue you with equal desire.

[41 : 44] Grant mercy for our sinfulness in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing some verses in Gaelic from Psalm 17 at verse 7.

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