

Help! I'm Bummed

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[0:00] I'm not sure if you noticed, but a trailer dropped this week. The sequel to Top Gun, Maverick, 30 years later.

I'm not sure if you saw that. For me, that's like, I can't wait. It makes you think of pilots. It makes you think of training to be a pilot.

And did you know that for men and women who are in the process of preparing to be pilots, part of their training is to be brought up into the air in a simulated stall, which means this.

Their engine gets cut off. And what that means is these pilots in training are put in a position where they nosedive, engines are off, there's no thrust, and they need to learn how to go through a protocol in order to regain the engine, pull up on the yoke, and stabilize.

Could you imagine doing that? Could you imagine being the trainer doing that with someone training? As a Christian, we know what it's like to have, it feels like our engines conk out.

[1:30] We stall. Something goes really sideways in our life. We're just flying along just fine, and then we get hit by a wind shear, and engine conks out, our nose starts to drop, and we feel like we go into this tailspin, and we start spiraling down.

Anybody, anybody, anybody in the room identify with any of that? I see that hand. I see those hands. The question becomes, okay, for us as Christians who find ourselves in those dark places, nose diving, and the ground is coming up fast, what do you do?

Maybe you came into the building feeling like God is a million miles away from you, and so your engine is coughing. It's starting to stall. Or maybe you think that God has actually forgotten you, and so your engine, your propeller has stopped.

Maybe beyond that, you think that God just hasn't forgotten you. He's rejected you. So not only has your propeller stopped, your tail is starting to spin around.

You know what it's like You know what it's like to fall into a tailspin of heartache. These kinds of feelings that Christians experience of feeling abandoned by God, whether that's distance, or feeling forgotten, or feeling rejected, they're common among believers.

[3:18] Believers of all ages. There's a variety of circumstances that can knock out your engine and push you into a tailspin.

And so this morning, I want to ask you, in all sincerity, do you feel like your nose is dropped, engine's conked out, and you're starting to spin? If you do, you're right where God wants you. There's help for you. Help in Psalm 42 and 43. But if you're not in a tailspin right now, don't worry. It's just a matter of time before you get a wind shear.

And so what you're going to hear this morning, you need it. Because down the line, your engine's probably going to stall out. And this morning, we're going to continue this series for the summer called Psalms for the Helping.

Specific Psalms that are designed to help followers of Jesus in specific situations. And this morning, we're looking at a situation where you feel like your faith has stalled, and now you're in a nosedive.

[4:31] God has Psalm 42 and 43 for you. It's God's help for you. It's what's called a psalm of lament.

The point of this psalm is pretty clear. You're going to see it in the refrain. It's basically saying, hey, don't despair. Hope in God because He is your God.

So this morning's sermon, I'm going to ask two questions. I'm going to ask and answer two questions. The first question is this. What's unique about this psalm?

We're going to spend most of our time on answering that question. I want to walk you through Psalm 42 and 43. But the second question is, how does Psalm 42 and 43 help us?

And if we have time, I've got five lessons that Psalm 42 and 43 helps us with. So let's start with asking this question.

[5:36] What is so unique about the psalms, this psalm in particular? Well, let me start by answering that question first by saying, it's a psalm. Psalm 42 and 43 is a psalm.

And what you need to understand are the book of Psalms, all 150 of them, it's God's poetry for our souls. And here's what you need to understand about the psalms.

If you were to talk to a seasoned saint who's been through a lot of hardship and you're like, hey, what have you learned through those hardships? They'll start talking about psalms as if they are really good friends.

because the psalms give voice to our souls, to a variety of different circumstances, to a variety of different emotions.

Now, it's possible to think of the psalms as strictly human inventions because they're so emotional. There's so much humanity in it. And you can just start thinking, well, that's an interesting expression of a man despairing and turning to God.

[6:48] Well, that's fascinating. But you can't forget that what 2 Timothy 3.16 says. It says, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable.

The psalms have been breathed out by God. The son of Korah who wrote this psalm was moved by God's spirit to write down every word in it for your good, to give voice to your soul, to God.

So the first thing you need to understand is that Psalm 42 and 43 is a psalm and the psalms are God's poetry for our souls. It gives us expression.

The psalms, unlike any other biblical writing, give language for our souls to speak to God. And so, isn't God kind? Isn't He so kind to give us this treasury as Spurgeon would say?

A treasury for our souls to cry out to God, whether that's in praise or whether that is in lament. The second thing that's unique about this psalm is that it is a lament.

[8:11] Now, here's how we know it's a lament. Look at Psalm 42. If you look at verse 2, it says, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

That's lament. It's a question. When am I going to see you again? When am I going to behold your face? Think about it as His engine is starting to cough.

Those are signs of a stall happening. If you look at Psalm 42, verse 9, we have another question. Why have you forgotten me? Laments are so honest. They can almost come across accusatory of God. Why have you forgotten me, God?

Anybody in the room asked that kind of question before? If you look at 43, 2, we have another question. Another why question.

[9:12] Why? Why have you rejected me? This psalmist, writing this psalm, feels distant from God. He feels forgotten by God.

And he even is wrestling with feelings of rejection by God. The engine of his faith is stalling out and he is nose diving and entering into a tailspin.

And God has it for us to learn from, to give voice to our souls. If you're feeling abandoned this morning by God, you need to pull up.

Have you ever seen those movies where there's this airplane out of control, nose diving, and you have this siren and this voice, pull up, pull up, pull up. There's a refrain throughout this psalm.

It's essentially saying, downcast soul, pull up, pull up, pull up. This is a lament. Just as there are variety kinds of literature in your Bible, there are variety kinds of psalms.

[10:26] There are wisdom psalms like Psalm 119. There's psalms of praise like Psalm 150. There's messianic royal psalms like Psalm 2 and Psalm 110.

And then there are psalms of lament. And believe it or not, the majority of the psalms are laments. And so what is a lament?

Well, when I was studying this past week, I came across a definition of a lament by a pastor in Indy. And this is how we defined a lament. And I think if you're taking notes, you're going to want to write this down.

A lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust in God. A lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust in God.

It's being aware that your engine is stalling, you're feeling the nose of your airplane drop, and you're starting to feel the altitude go down and spin. and yet, you cry out to God.

[11:38] There are all these typical movement in a lament. You can see it in Psalm 13 where it starts off by questioning God because of pain, and it turns to trusting God despite the pain.

A prayer of lament is for people who are experiencing hardship, people who are in process. what I'm very aware of is this.

When we talk about lament in our culture, I am very aware that it seems foreign to us because happiness is the premium of our culture.

Happiness at all costs. And what the Bible is showing us here, no, life is hard, and we need to learn how to lament. As I mentioned, laments make up the majority of the Psalms, which means this, God's not surprised when your engine starts to stall.

He's not surprised when your nose starts to dip. He's not surprised when you start to spin down. In fact, he's usually the one orchestrating it to bring you to himself, to teach you to trust him.

[13:08] So, laments, a lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust in God, and that is exactly what Psalm 42 and 43 is. The last thing that I want to point out that makes this Psalm unique, that makes it a lament, and helps us to see it, is its actual structure, the way it's designed.

Now, I'm not sure if you've noticed this yet, but you've heard me talking about Psalm 42 and 43 as separate Psalms, yet we're to take them together. Do you know how I know that? Here's how.

You'll notice that there's one heading for both Psalms, and that's after Psalm, in your Bible, it says, Psalm 42, to the choir master, a mascal of the sons of Korah.

And if you look at all around these Psalms, every one of them has a heading, this does not. So that means we're to take them together. But even more significantly, Psalm 42 and 43 hold together because of the structure.

There are two stanzas in Psalm 42, in one stanza in Psalm 43, and you are to take them together as three stanzas. And what we see in these stanzas is a movement.

[14:27] First, the psalmist feels isolated, then he goes into complete stall mode and in turmoil, and then in the last stanza, he pulls up.

There's hope. Let's dial in to get a closer look at how this psalm is laid out because it is going to be instructive for you when your engine starts to stall of what to do.

So let's start seeing some of the details here. Stanza 1, in verses 1-5 of Psalm 42, it starts with a lament. So what you're going to see here is each stanza has a lament and a refrain, lament and a refrain, lament and a refrain.

And they are all moving us to hope in God. So what's the lament in stanza 1? Well, the psalmist is comparing his longing to be in God's presence as a deer panting for life-giving streams of water. He's in a dry place, verses 1 and 2. He says, When shall I come and appear before God? Somehow he feels distant from God, apart from him. And then, in verse 3, we see these taunts.

[15:48] He's somewhere apart from God and people are saying to him, Where is your God? And my impression of this, is because this question gets asked again in the next stanza, is that the psalmist is starting to wonder that question himself.

Where are you, God? God? In verse 3, his wanting to be satisfied by the life-giving, water-like presence of God is unquenched, and he's got to settle for his tears.

And in verse 4, he goes all nostalgic. He's like, Oh, I remember the good old days. Man, I remember when I was on fire for the Lord and going to church, I would go to every service and worship the Lord.

If you're a guy and you've been around the block and you remember what Promise Keepers was, this guy would be saying, I remember Promise Keepers. I remember gathering stadiums with tens of thousands of men and singing for hours to the Lord.

Man, those were the good old days. It's not uncommon when we face hardship, we go all nostalgic. But what you need to know is fond memories of past experiences is not the presence of God.

[17:15] And so here we have this lament resulting, ending up in nostalgia and then there's this control panel. There's this light on this psalmist's cockpit.

Pull up. Pull up. Pull up. It's the refrain. This refrain, why are you cast out on my soul and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God. This refrain, this same exact refrain is repeated three times. Here in verse 5, in verse 11 and in 43, 5, this refrain is going to be the siren in our cockpit repeatedly calling us to pull up.

Hope in God. The psalmist is speaking to himself despite how he is feeling. one would like to think that all you need to do is tell yourself once, right?

You're starting to sense your heart, your faith, your faith engine, it's starting to conk out and all you just need to do is say once, oh soul, why are you so downcast?

[18:40] Why the turmoil? Put your hope in God and you would think that's all you need and then you're on your happy way, right? Not according to this psalm.

And it's strangely encouraging because when he turned to the second stanza, starting in verse 6, look where the psalmist is. He says, my soul is cast down within me.

He's like, okay, my engine started to saw, I saw the lights on my display panel, I tried to pull up, but I'm still cast down. And he goes from feeling isolated from God to now going into quite a tailspin.

Look at what happens. We learn more. Therefore, I remember you from the land of Jordan of Hermon from Mount Mizar. We don't know where Mount Mizar, but we do know the land of Jordan and Hermon.

And what it is, it's an area located north of the Sea of Galilee. It would have been the headwaters of the Jordan River. And so this psalmist is saying, I am displaced from the presence of God.

[19:55] Because when he talks about being in God's presence, he's thinking in Jerusalem and in the temple. So he feels displaced, but we're not told why. We don't know if he's a refugee or he's in exile, whether he got sick or he missed the 455 bus to Jerusalem.

We just don't know. What we do know is he's feeling distant from God and it is acute. And not just that, look at verse 7. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls.

All your breakers and your waves have gone over me. Not only does he feel displaced, he feels overwhelmed. Overwhelmed by God's waterfalls.

Overwhelmed by God's breakers. overwhelmed by God's waves. It's a soft blame. There's some accusation there. Why are you doing this to me?

Did you guys see the video this week of the couple in Hawaii? They went out to take a picture of waves crashing on this rocky shore and they were taking the picture. This huge wave came in and just pulled them out.

[21:02] And the video is of them, their little heads bobbing in these rough seas, just one wave coming over them after another. If you were there, you would have been completely horrified and overwhelmed.

That is what this psalmist is feeling. Displaced, overwhelmed. Verse eight, he tries to pull up.

It's so helpful to see turmoil, isn't it? It's so helpful to see someone struggling to trust in the Lord.

Verse eight, by day the Lord commands his steadfast love and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God, verse nine, my rock, why have you forgotten me? It's complete turmoil. Yahweh, steadfast love.

I'm trying to pray. I'm trying to sing. I'm trying to call to my mind that you are my rock. Why have you forgotten me? You feel the turmoil?

[22:11] You feel the struggle? Do you know what that's like? He's overwhelmed. He's displaced.

He's trying to trust, oppressed, but he still has these questions. It seems like he's more overwhelmed by his circumstances than the truth of who his God is.

And we've all been there. He says in verse nine, why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? That word mourning is a Hebrew word that it can be translated darkness as well.

Why do I feel all the lights are out because of this oppression? I feel like I've been cut deep by a deadly wound to my bones because those who oppose me are saying, where is your God?

He is so aware of the taunts. Where is your God? Where is your God? Makes you wonder if he's wondering where his God is. What this is a picture of is not just a sputtering engine, but an engine

that has stalled out, propelled stopped, and the nose is now dropping.

[23:30] And then comes the refrain. Pull up. Pull up. Pull up. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God, he commands his soul, for I shall again praise him. That's hope. That's faith.

Forward-looking faith. My salvation and my God. Pull up.

Pull up. Pull up. When we turn from the second stanza into Psalm 43 and the third stanza, we're met by another lament.

But now something's changed. Something's changed. vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people from the deceitful and just man.

Deliver me. Three commands the psalmist makes to God. Three imperatives. Three faith-filled calls to God to act. He says, vindicate me, defend my cause, deliver me.

[24:38] Something has happened. He's no longer so aware of his circumstances. Now he's focused on God. It seems as though what has happened is that last refrain for him where he addresses his soul, the engine restarted.

And it started to fire again, and it fired with the noise of vindicate me, defend my cause, deliver me. he's calling on God his salvation.

Rescue me. But it's not like he's out of the woods. It's not like all the struggle has gone, because in verse 2 you read, for you are the God in whom I take refuge.

Why have you rejected me? Why do I go about in mourning? Because of the oppression of the enemy. It's almost identical to 42.9. So it's not like he's completely out of the woods.

It's not like he's completely unaware of the hardship that he's in. But now something has changed.

His despair is surrounded by hope.

[25:52] This crying out of why have you rejected me is preceded by vindicate me. And then in verse 3, it follows by saying, send out your light and your truth.

let them lead me. Why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning in darkness? And now the psalmist says to himself, send out your light and your truth.

It's kind of like saying this. Okay, okay, I'm pulling up, God, deliver me, rescue me. Would you show me the runway lights? Would you give me my bearings?

Would you show me how to land my plane in your presence? Would you bring me home, God? This tailspin, he's stabilizing.

The engine has been restarted. There's thrust. He's pulling up. He gets hit by a shear in verse 2 of, why are you rejecting me? But he pulls back out of it.

[27:00] He's send out your light. Help me, Lord. Let them lead me and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling place.

Do you remember what he was calling for in verse 2 of chapter 42? When shall I come and appear before you? And then he starts talking about the good old days of past kind of experiences with God.

And in verse 4, he goes from looking at the past to anticipating what's about to happen. It's full of hope, full of faith. Come get me, come direct me.

Verse 4, then I will go to the altar of God, in God's presence, in God's place, and to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with a lyre, O God, my God.

In this third stanza, something is now operating in the heart of this psalmist. trust. He has got faith.

He's got hope. He's looking forward. It doesn't mean he's out of the woods, but he's pressing on.

[28:07] He's trusting in his God in a way he wasn't before. This lament is moving him from questioning God to trusting God.

we've looked at quite a distance that he has come.

A lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust in God. And what we see by this third stanza, this third lament, is that this psalmist is trusting in God in a way that he wasn't when Psalm 42 started.

And by the time we get to the refrain in 43.5, why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. There's this different sense of that.

There's a confidence. There's a yes to it. He's pulled back on the stick. He's pulled out of the nosedive. He's been able to restart his engine by faith and that thrust now of faith in God is able to

pull him out of the despair.

[29:30] This morning, if you're feeling distant from God, if you're feeling forgotten by God, if you're feeling rejected by God, you need to stop listening to yourself and you need to start talking to yourself and speaking to yourself, this pull up, pull up, pull up, hope in God, yet I shall praise him.

He's my salvation. He's my God. So what makes this particular psalm unique is not just that it is a psalm, it gives voice to our soul, it is a lament.

And what we just saw was this progress in the psalm of one in despair, moving from questioning God to trusting God.

So now the question I want to ask is, how does this psalm uniquely help us? This psalm uniquely helps us in five ways.

The first is this. This helps us with our expectations. This psalm helps us with realistic expectations.

[30:41] We're not going to be happy all the time. Life is hard. You're going to find your engine stalling mid-flight, your nose dropping, perhaps your tail starting to spin.

What this psalm helps us with is it sets the expectation for a reality which we will all experience. If you haven't experienced this despair in this room, you will experience this helplessness.

we don't need to fear it, but we will experience this hopelessness and feeling overwhelmed, this deep wounding, this walking in darkness.

And so it helps us with reality. But the second thing that it helps us with is it helps us to learn how to lament. Lament. I was telling someone before the service that many of us were taught how to worship God and pray by the acronym ACTS, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. And one professor noted there's something missing. It's the L of lament, of praying to God in pain, letting that lead you to trust in God.

[32:03] what this lament does is show us two things. It shows us how to be honest with God, honest when we feel distant, honest when we feel forgotten, honest when we feel rejected.

We're honest with God about those things. We speak those to Him in faith, expressing our true feelings. But it just doesn't end with being honest.

It means being persistent in hope that we continue to speak the truth of who God is and what He's done. And so what we see in a lament are two things.

Honesty with God and hope in God. Honesty with God and hope in God. You see it in the refrain. Why so downcast? Hope in God. Why so downcast?

Hope in God. Why so downcast? Hope in God. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, he wrote a book.

[33:07] He was a preacher from a bygone age and an exceptional preacher. And he wrote a book called Spiritual Depression. If what I'm describing, you're like, man, I'm living there right now, get it from Amazon.

Martin Lloyd Jones, Spiritual Depression. Well, in that book, he writes this. 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?

Could you imagine Psalm 42 and 43 without the refrains? Could you imagine what would happen to the psalmist if there was no 42-5 and no 42-11?

He would nose dive. What these refrains do is it gives a Christian the words to speak to himself and herself to pull us out of a nosedive by trusting in God.

For us, it's the pilot training of the protocol when the engine stalls, of knowing what to do, of not panicking, of focusing in.

[34:21] So the second thing that this helps us with is to learn how to lament. But the third thing that this helps us with is it helps us to know our hearts. Because if your heart is like mine, when I'm overwhelmed, it takes more than one speaking to myself to pull me out of my nosedive.

So we're persistent in speaking hope to ourselves. The fourth thing that this psalm helps us with is this. It helps us remember why we can say that the God of Psalm 42 and 43 is not only the psalmist God, but we can say he is my God.

You want to hear it? If you look at Psalm 43 verse 2, there's a really interesting question. The psalmist says, why have you rejected me?

Do you remember what Jesus said on the cross on Good Friday? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus himself knows what it means to be rejected by God.

He knows it because he was rejected by God. And the reason why he was rejected by God is so that you and I can be accepted by God.

[35:43] So that we can call on God as my God. God. And so the Jesus, who was really rejected by God and said something very similar to 43.2, he did that so that we can claim the God of the Bible, the God of the universe, who's sovereign over all, who's all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving, and we can say, you are my God and I feel like I'm doing a nosedive.

Pull me out of it. This psalm helps us remember why we can say to this God that he is my God. It's through Jesus. And the last thing, last helpful lesson this psalm teaches us, it's not even in the psalm, it's in the heading.

Look at Psalm 42, the heading, to the choir master. psalm was meant to be sung.

This psalm was meant to be sung in the company of the redeemed, those who can call on God as my God.

[37:04] This psalm allows us to be honest with one another when we are feeling distant, forgotten, and rejected by God.

This psalm allows us to sing together our hope who can pull us out of our despair, stabilize us, and bring us home.

So we're going to close, I'm going to close in prayer, and then we're going to sing a new song together this morning as a response. It's Psalm 42, put to music. So let me pray, and the worship team will come on up, and we'll sing together as it was meant to be so.

God in heaven, we thank you so much for Psalm 42 and 43. Thank you for the help that is in this psalm, not only pointing us to the God who is our salvation, our God who is my God, but thank you for this psalm and how it instructs us to lament.

Would you grow us as a church in how to lament personally and corporately, and now God, would you knit our hearts together as we sing and search and look to you for you to be present in our midst.

[38:20] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.