

**Prayer and God's Covenant Love***Psalm 42, 43*

**Introduction:** Sooner or later the chances are that each one of us will experience some kind of disappointment with God. It may be that you try to honor Him and yet life gives you nothing but hardship. He seems unfair. Or you seek and seek Him for direction, but you hear nothing. He seems silent. Or you look for God earnestly and yet you don't sense Him in anyway. He seems hidden. What are we to do at such times? Today we are going to consider Psalm 42 and 43 – psalms that give us permission to go directly to God and talk things out when we're disappointed with Him. These psalms are classic examples of psalms of lament in which people pour out their complaints to God directly and boldly. People throughout Scripture cared about their relationship with God so much that it wasn't enough merely to talk to others about God or to leave things unresolved (a recipe for bitterness and despair). They went directly to God. Through this study, may we each be encouraged to go directly to God with our disappointments.

**Opening Question:** Have you ever had a time where you were either frustrated or disappointed with God? If so, what was the situation?

**Read Psalm 42 & 43**

1. What is the setting of each of these psalms? In other words, what seems to be the situation that has prompted these prayers of lament?
2. What are the issues about which the psalmist complains to the Lord in each of these psalms?
3. In Psalm 42, how does the psalmist's current experience of God compare to past experiences?
4. Ultimately, what does the psalmist say to himself (42:5, 11; 43:5)?
5. What does the psalmist know to be true about God (even if he does not currently seem to be experiencing it) that causes him to talk to himself in this way?

Steve said:

If the psalmist could cling to the lovingkindness of God, how much more should we! The covenant we have with God was secured by the death and resurrection of His one and only Son. There is literally no greater assurance of God's lovingkindness than the death and resurrection of Jesus. When God seems unfair or silent or hidden, we can remember that God has proven that He is more compassionate toward us than we can imagine. And so we tell ourselves, "Why are you in despair and why have you become troubled within me, O my soul? Hope in God for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence."

6. In what ways can reflecting on the cross help us cling to the lovingkindness of God in times of disappointment with God?

Steve said:

I have to warn you that lamenting can be rather difficult and strenuous. It's a lot easier to gripe and complain to other people. It's a lot easier to numb your pain through \_\_\_\_\_ (alcohol, fantasy, busyness, TV, sports, news, etc.). Lamenting requires us to articulate what is happening in our souls – which can be agonizing. But that's what the psalmist did in verse 6: "O my God, my soul is in despair within me. . ." He basically says, "God, I am dying on the inside. Instead of being full of joy and hope and peace, I am in despair."

7. Do you ever find it hard to "articulate what is happening in [your soul] to God? Why or why not?

Steve said:

If you have bottled up complaints and disappointments with God, the place to begin is with soul-searching honesty before God. Schedule some time to get alone with God and be honest. Get everything out on the table so that God can do a work in your life – and possibly in your circumstances. If you cross a line in what you've said to God, fall on your face and admit as much to God. As we talked about a couple of weeks ago, we don't need to fear repentance. It is a gift from God that allows us to get back on track in our relationship with Him.

8. Do you truly believe that you are free to bring your complaints to God? Why or why not?
9. Do you sense any need right now to "get everything out on the table" with God?