

Introduction

Good morning. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Effie Swanson and I've been coming here to Tru for about a year and a half. My husband Christopher and I started attending around the summer of 2023, along with our boys and we just couldn't stay away. In case you don't know us, [2] here's a quick photo, we have 3 kiddos, Cade who is 9, Reed who is 6, and Parker who is 5. I work in research for the University of Chicago (so I am fully remote which is great)! I love doing things with my family, being outside, hiking, gardening, running if the weather is nice, and I actually really do love a good in depth, inductive Bible study. So you may see that come through in my teaching this morning. I did grow up in the church, and came to know Jesus at a young age, so I am quite thankful for that. This is, however, my first time speaking up here like this—and also my first time ever teaching God's word in front of a larger group, so please pray for me, I'm certainly going to need it.

I actually first tried to write this teaching as a Bible study for my LifeGroup, but the more I wrote, the more it became clear that a larger group teaching was really the direction things were headed for this talk. And after taking the Shape class here at Tru and being really encouraged by Dave and James and others to lean into some areas where God may have gifted me, here I am.

So, besides all that, the main reason I'm speaking today is because this year I did something I haven't done in several years. It's something Dave and others have been encouraging us all to do for some time.. .any guesses? [3] I picked a WOTY—a Word of the Year.

Now, those of you who know me a bit more know that I am not a WOTY kind of girl. The concept is not new to me, because even though my family is relatively new to Tru, and the WOTY concept may not have been around here for too many years, I've been part of churches that encourage this practice for some time. The

idea is that you choose a word (or maybe a short phrase) that you want to encourage you in your spiritual growth for the year. You pray about it and ask God and others for input, then you select your word.

I have been a bit resistant the past few years because WOTYs seemed a bit abstract to me. If anyone is familiar with the personality test called the enneagram, I'm an enneagram 3—which is known as the “achiever”. So I am a person who likes to get things done. I'm a do-er. I like to set goals and meet them. Those things can be as mundane as checking one more task at work off my to-do list, or finishing a chore I've been dreading around the house, even things that aren't really fun—like taxes. I get a rush out of marking things off the list. So choosing a word just didn't seem exciting to me. It felt like something else on my list of things to “do” but something that would never actually get “done” if that makes sense? But this year- despite all my resistance, God was working on my heart in some ways that, to be honest, I still don't totally understand, and he encouraged me to choose a word.

And it's funny, because God being God, led me to choose a word that is very unlike me. A word that is kind of the antithesis of doing or accomplishing—**presence.**^[4] **Not presents like gifts—although those are great, but presence as in being present with others.** Or even seeking the presence of others. So in all of my natural doing-ness, I have found in my life lately that I am often guilty of doing things FOR others rather than being present in the moment and just enjoying time WITH others and for me, that extended to my relationship with God as well. **[5] But the Bible tells us to take delight in the Lord,** Isaiah 61:10 says “I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God.” In Acts 2:28 Peter is speaking to a large crowd after Jesus was raised from the dead and he quotes David saying “You have made known to me the paths of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence.”

So, I would read or hear these teachings and I knew that I wanted them to be true for me and that GOD wanted them to be true for me, but they just weren't.

And the truth was, and still is, to a certain extent, that they hadn't been true for a while. When I got right down to it, to the heart of the matter, I was —and still am, experiencing something similar to what the Psalmist writes about in this passage—a period of spiritual dryness. My soul was dry, thirsty, and didn't just want, but truly NEEDED the living God. I had been so caught up in not only doing things FOR God, but also honestly just doing my life, doing the things that we all do—getting caught up in my schedule, my priorities, my own interests and relationships, that I realized with growing clarity that I felt very far from the presence of God.

So at the beginning of this year, as we all started talking about WOTYs here and in LifeGroup, and in other places, God put it on my heart that presence was the WOTY for me. And as I started looking into what the Bible says about God's presence, the first place that I really started digging in were these 2 Psalms that we are going to look at today, because the Psalmist writing these two chapters put to words really beautifully a lot of the things I was feeling and continue to feel as I'm trying to grow in this area of being present with God.

[6] But before we jump into the Psalms, I wanted to say one more thing about this spiritual dryness, or this feeling that we are far from God. That is, that spiritual dryness can come from a lot of different places. There can be many different causes for us to feel separated from God. And some of those things are, frankly, our fault—at least in part. Our sin, selfishness, refusal to make God's priorities our own, those can all keep us from delighting in the Lord and delighting in his ways and his presence. But as we are going to see today, there is also a form of spiritual dryness that is NOT a result of sin or anything we necessarily can choose to change. Sometimes spiritual dryness happens for reasons that are totally out of our control. But what has been so helpful for me in studying these Psalms more closely is to see that WHEN (not if) spiritual dryness happens, there are things we can do, steps we can take, and a model that is set out by the Psalmist, to deal with spiritual dryness when it happens. So I invite you to turn to

the Lord with me in prayer and ask him to speak to us this morning through this teaching and through his Word.

PRAY

[7] Context

Psalms is big book, right in the middle of your Bible. Rather than a continuous narrative, which is a feature of many other books, Psalms is a collection of poems/songs. I don't have time to go into detail about the structure of the entire book of Psalms this morning, but one resource that has been super helpful for me is a set of short videos from a group called the Bible Project. If you haven't checked those out, they are short little clips that provide an overview of the setting and major themes/organization of each book of the Bible, and they are really good. I encourage to watch the Bible Project video on the Psalms - it's like 8 minutes long, and you can find it on YouTube.

[8] Today we're going to be focusing on Psalms 42 and 43. Many scholars believe they were originally one song in Hebrew. And as you'll see, they flow seamlessly together. These Psalms are attributed to the "Sons of Korah". [9] In my study Bible, the heading above Psalm 42 is "A maskil of the Sons of Korah." And the word "maskil" is also found in other titles of other Psalms and the Hebrew word there indicates that these Psalms provide instruction in godliness. So we know that the intention of these Psalms is to instruct believers in how to follow God.

But let's back up a bit, and talk about the Sons of Korah [10]

The Sons of Korah were a Levitical choir. The Levites were one of the 12 tribes of Israel and their job was to serve in the temple. They helped out, took care of the stuff in there, and generally assisted the priests. Korah himself died in the book of Numbers. We are told in chapter 16 that Korah led a rebellion against Moses, and 250 other Israelite men joined in this rebellion. If you read that chapter, there is this crazy story where the earth actually opens up and swallows

Korah and the other rebels alive due to them opposing Moses and Aaron. It's not a great story. BUT apparently Korah's sons were too young to be part of the rebellion or God somehow spared them from it, because they eventually grew up, and several generations later they eventually were appointed by David as musicians who served in the temple. There are 11 Psalms attributed to the Sons of Korah, including 42 and 43. Which is where we are going to jump in today.

[11] Passage

V 1- "As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God."

The Psalmist begins by saying that their soul is "panting" for God. Let's consider this example of a deer. Deer are, for the most part, creatures of habit. They live in the same area most of their lives, hang out in the same places, and likely get water from the same handful of sources. The only reason a deer would be panting for water like this would be if they were in a pretty desperate situation. It could be either 1) their normal source went dry, or 2) if they were being pursued by some sort of predator. So for the Psalmist to say his soul pants for God he must have been in pretty rough shape. He literally is saying he feels like he's dying for God's presence in the same way a deer would be nearing death from dehydration.

[12] V2- In v2 we see what the Psalmist not only is thirsty for God, but also desperately wants to meet with God.

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When can I go and meet with God?"

The author here, one of the Sons of Korah, would have been used to meeting with God in the temple—that's where the Psalmist would have felt close to God. But something is preventing him from doing that.

[13] V3-In verse 3 he says

My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

Here we learn something else about the Psalmist—not only are they are desperate, they feel far from God, and they want to meet with God but feel like they can’t. Here the Psalmist also says “Tears have been my food day and night”. This could mean that literally he was not eating. He was so depressed and lonely that he just cried day and night. So he’s not eating and possibly not sleeping either if he’s crying all night.

- This verse also includes the first reference to him being taunted by others
- This “Where is your God” seems to indicate that something is happening that others would expect God to prevent. Some commentators theorize that he’s in captivity, another tragic event has happened, or there is something going on that you would not expect a good God to allow to happen

[14] V4- Moving on to verse 4, we see that Psalmist here begins remembering good times where he was close to God. He says “These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One, with shouts of joy and praise, among the festive throng.”

These times were with other believers in community. But now he is alone and is feeling like God himself has abandoned him as well.

[15] In V5 we see the first time of three similar verses in this passage, where the Psalmist repeats this refrain.

“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.”

This same text also appears in 42:11 and 43:5. The Psalmist pauses his lament, his list of complaints, and he turns his questions back onto himself. He says “Why soul, why”. Stop this complaining, stop whining, put your hope in God! The

Psalmist isn't lying to himself, saying "it's not that bad, perk up!" He's being honest and saying, this situation may be rough, but hope in God. He is good, hope in Him.

[16] V6 and 7- But then in verses 6 and 7, the Psalmist is struggling again. He's trying to continue that pep talk, keep preaching to himself, but it's a struggle. He says "my soul is downcast, but I'm going to remember God!" He notes he will remember God from the "land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar". So this guy, a Son of Korah, whose life work is being in the temple, near to the presence of God is now far from home. [17] If you look at map, the heights of Hermon are about 200 miles from Jerusalem where the temple was. Some commentaries say that it's possible the Psalmist was taken captive – perhaps in one of the raids by the Arameans, but he's apparently very far from where he felt close to God both spiritually and geographically.

What's more Mount Hermon was strongly associated with idol worship and demonic forces. The Psalmist is clearly implying that he feels like he's not only far from God, but captive in the stronghold of the enemy, both physically and spiritually. He feels trapped in dark, hostile territory, surrounded by enemies and dangers.

[18] V7- In v7 he goes on and says, "Deep calls to deep, in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me."

That first phrase, "deep calls to deep" is a bit confusing at first. What does he mean? It's not entirely clear, but perhaps he's referring to a deep cry of his heart calling to the depths of God's heart. The next piece about waterfalls is interesting also when you dig in a bit.

Again, if we consider the context and location of the Psalmist, he just told us he's remembering God from the heights of Hermon. [19] Mount Hermon is a mountain cluster, among the highest peaks in the far northern part of Israel. If you look it up, Mount Hermon is a major geographic resource because of all the snowfall it receives. So that snow falls over winter, and then melts in the

spring/summer and feeds springs and rivers that eventually merge to become the Jordan river. So it is entirely possible that the Psalmist who is writing this is looking out over literal waterfalls and that imagery was brought to mind when he write about the depths of his sorrows and longing here.

It is also an interesting contrast between this verse and verse 1. In v1 the Psalmist says his soul is thirsting for God and the stream is dry, but here seems to flip the metaphor and imagine God as a rushing river of water, or a storm where the waves are drowning him.

V8- But, despite all this imagery, despite the Psalmist struggling, pouring out his heart and saying he feels abandoned, verse 8 begins to offer some hope. [20] He says,

“By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.”

Despite feeling dry, abandoned, and alone, the Psalmist turns here to acknowledge that God’s love is with him by day and His song by night. Some translations say “He will command his lovingkindness” be sent to the Psalmist.

This verse is also the only one in these two Psalm that uses the word “Lord”—everywhere else it is “my God” or “God”. While other verses use the word Elohim to refer to God, the original word here in vs 8 was “Yahweh” which is God’s personal and covenant name-used in much of the Old Testament but not frequently in this section of the Psalms. The Hebrew word -Yahweh-- means “I am and I will be”. The use of this name seems to carry some confidence in Yahweh being a God who can be relied upon. So he’s saying, “this is rough, but still I know, God is sending his love and his song to me day and night.”

[21] V9- But then in v9 the Psalmist returns to describing his dire situation.

“I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”

He ironically calls God his “Rock” –which would likely signify something unmovable and unchanging. But then he immediately says that this Rock has forgotten him. This verse also notes a “mortal enemy” is oppressing him, which makes sense if the Psalmist was in captivity at this time.

[22] V10- In verse 10 we see for the first time that the Psalmist is also in physical pain. He says,

“My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”

Some commentaries on this verse noted that the reference to “my bones” is probably not literally saying his physical bones (like his actual skeletal structure) but rather that this refers to his whole physical being. We don’t know exactly what is wrong, but we do learn that not only is he sad, depressed, and isolated, but he is also in physical pain. Here again the taunting is mentioned. His enemies are standing over him, maybe in captivity isolated and alone, and they are asking, “Where is your God?”.

[23] V11- But then in Vs 11 we see the Psalmist repeat the same refrain we first heard in v5. The Psalmist again asks

“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.” He’s not sugarcoating things, he’s not pretending things are ok, but he is still struggling. He’s still trying to keep the faith. We know WHY his soul is downcast now, it’s pretty obvious at this point. But even in this extreme situation, where he feels so spiritually dry, the Psalmist continues to turn to God. He says “I will YET praise him, my Savior and my God.”

[24] 43:V1- In the beginning of Psalm 43, we see the Psalmist taking a different tact. He starts asking God to intervene. He says in 43 vs 1, “Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation. Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked.”

The Psalmist sees the evil around him and he starts begging God to do something about it. How often do we do the same? In our world, there is plenty of evil going around. We see wars, corruption, starvation, all sorts of evil. So it's easy to see all of that evil in the world and think that God needs to intervene. And I think sometimes, as the Psalmist does here, we also get disappointed, and feel far from God when we don't see His hand putting a stop to the evil around us.

[25] V2- We might even have some similar feelings to what the Psalmist says in 43v2. He says, "You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"

V3 and 4- But then in V3 and 4, the Psalmist again shows us the way forward when we feel like he felt in V2. These next 2 verses, verse 3 and 4 are actually my favorite verses in this entire passage, because I think they really give us the perfect example of someone who feels far from God, who is dry, feeling alone, but still moves TOWARD God in hope. [26] V3-4 say,

"Send me your light and your faithful care (some translations there say send me your light and your TRUTH), let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. (Not this pagan Mount Hermon where I'm stuck currently, but to YOUR holy mountain, to YOUR presence.)

[27] Then in v4 "Then I will go to the altar of God (the alter was, at this time, a place where he would have publicly praised God, and made his faith known to all), to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre (remember this guy is a musician), O God, my God."

[28] Then here's our final verse, V5 again, "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."

So, those verses are a lot, and there's a lot we can learn from all the Psalmist is

saying there. [29] But before we move on, let's also stop and note 2 major things that what we do NOT see in these chapters.

[30] -Admission of sin or guilt. There are PLENTY of Psalms where we see the author bemoaning their own choices, asking God to forgive them for their sins. But here, we don't see that at all. We just see someone in a dry, desperate situation spiritually and physically, who is crying out to God for help, and trying to get themselves back on track.

[31] -Doubts about whether God exists. If you were here in January/February when Dave preached on reaching out with reason, he mentioned that there are 3 different types of doubts—there are factual/intellectual doubts, emotional doubts, and willful doubts. It doesn't really seem to me that the Psalmist has any doubt at all about God's existence, or if He is real and alive. He is just saying, "I know you are out there God, but why are you not here, with ME?".

So now, let's zoom out a bit on the bigger picture on this topic of spiritual dryness.

[32] First of all, let's remember that there are different causes of spiritual dryness.

- These can be internal (feeling alone, abandoned, or betrayed by God)

- Or they can be external (physical distance, being cut off from Christian community)

[33] -They can be the result of sin (we see that in plenty of other Psalms). Or it can actually be no fault of our own.

[34] But regardless of the CAUSE, I think it's important for us to pause for a moment and take note that although spiritual dryness comes from many different places, it is also more common than we might want to admit. I would venture to guess that if you've been a believer for any significant length of time, or if you've been trying to walk with Jesus for a while now, you have found there are times that it feels harder than it had before. There may be times where you feel the presence of God close to you like no other, but there may also be times where

He feels distant, or even like He has given up on you. Like He has moved away from you, and you aren't sure if or when you will ever feel close to Him again.

And the reality is for me, and I think possibly even for some of you, those periods of spiritual dryness have lasted for a while. And they can start to feel like they are just the new normal, and maybe it can even feel like we are alone in our dryness and that others have it all figured out and God is close to them, so there must be something **WRONG** with me, if I don't feel close to Him.

So, what do we do with all of that? The thing that has kept me coming back to these Psalms again and again, and the thing that I wanted to share with you all today is that there are some things we see the Psalmist doing, in the midst of experiencing this spiritual dryness that can be helpful for us as well. [35] **So let's move into applications.**

Applications: [36]

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.

This seems obvious, but it's so, so important. Here, even though the Psalmist is saying "I don't feel God," I don't feel him when I pray, I don't feel him when I remember what He has done for me, and the good times of the past, I just don't feel Him. These entire Psalms here are evidence that he's praying anyways. He is seeking God's face anyways, and he is remembering the goodness of community and worship. He's still seeking God, even when he feels far from Him. So if the Psalmist is doing it—we probably should too.

The late Tim Keller (a famous pastor in NYC) gave a really beautiful sermon on this passage that I listened to when I first started digging into these chapters. [37] **In that teaching Keller says,**

"The first thing you've got to do, if you don't get anything out of worship, in this period of time, in a dry time, don't miss it. If you get nothing out of prayer, don't miss it. If you get nothing out of Bible reading, don't miss it. Pour out your soul. If you don't feel anything, fine, talk about that. If

nothing else, talk to God about how you're getting nothing out of it. If nothing else, talk to God about how much you miss Him. If nothing else, talk to the absent God about His absence."

And that was really encouraging for me to hear, because, as I mentioned earlier, it's easy for me to think that I'm alone in this, and that I'm the only Christian out there, or in my circle, that feels far from God. And my situation is not NEARLY as desperate as the Psalmist's. But Keller's encouragement to seek God anyway, to seek the "absent God" felt like solidarity for my soul.

2. [38] Preach to yourself

Second, throughout this passage, we notice that the Psalmist repeatedly preaches to himself. He starts off by asking, "Why are you cast down, why are you in turmoil?" but then, rather than staying in that place of depression and questioning his situation, he preaches to himself- and tries to turn around his own thinking.

There's a famous book I came across in studying these Psalms, it's actually a collection of sermons by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones that was published back in the 1960s. It's titled, "Spiritual Depression: It's causes and cures". [39] And in one of those sermons Lloyd-Jones says this:

"Notice the psalmist addresses himself – "he talks to himself," and herein he discovers the cure. The main problem in the whole matter of "spiritual depression" in a sense is this – we allow our "self" to talk to us instead of "talking to ourself." Most unhappiness in life is due to the fact that we "listen to ourselves" instead of "talking to ourselves." [The psalmist], in effect, says, "Self, listen for a moment to what I have to say – why are you so cast down?" The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself, question yourself, and preach to yourself – you must remind yourself who God is, and what God has done, and what God has promised to do – this

is the essence of the treatment in a nutshell.”

3. Continue to fight for hope

[40] Thirdly, when we are in a period of spiritual dryness or spiritual depression, it's important that we do not lose hope. In the book of Hebrews (10:23) the author is writing to other Christians and says,[41] “Let us hold UNSWERVINGLY to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” God our father is faithful, and we can hope in Him with confidence that he will not let us down.

John Piper (another famous pastor in Minneapolis), in writing about Psalm 42, noted that through the entire writing, the psalmist is fighting for hope. [42] Piper says,

“His [the psalmists'] external circumstances are oppressing. His internal emotional condition is depressed and full of turmoil. But he is fighting for hope. And the really remarkable thing is that at the end of the psalm, he is still fighting but not yet where he wants to be. The last words of the psalm — and the last words of the next psalm — are ‘Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.’ He leaves us still fighting for the joyful experience of hope and freedom from turmoil. He is not yet praising the way he wants to.”

4. Approach God with Confidence and Honesty

[43] And lastly, we need to learn how to approach God with both confidence and honesty even when we are spiritually dry. In Psalm 43, we see a great example of this from the Psalmist. In v3 we see him praying for God's leading. “Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me”. We should ask God for the same thing. Our light, and OUR truth are not enough when we are spiritually dry. We need to beg God to send us His light and truth so that they can lead us.

And of course the last verse of the Psalm, this refrain that appears 3 times also shows us what it looks like to approach God with confidence and honestly.

“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.”

In these 2 Psalms, even by the end, the author is not giving up, but he’s being honest about his situation. He’s NOT saying “I have praised him” in the past, or “I am praising him now” in the present. But he is confident—I will YET praise him. I will do it, I believe I will, and that day is coming.

Conclusion

[44] So in conclusion, the applications here are a little frustrating, because the Psalmist doesn’t tell us how the story ends. Just as I cannot check the box, “complete” my WOTY for the year, and remove spiritual dryness from my life, the Psalmist couldn’t either. And in fact, we don’t actually know what happened to the Psalmist after he wrote these verses. We don’t know if he was released from captivity, if he saw justice served to those who had wronged him, if he had physical healing, if his depression went away, or if he ever truly felt God’s presence with him in this life again in the ways he was longing for. And, if we don’t know these things were true for him, we don’t know if those things will be true for ourselves either, when we find ourselves in similar situations. We aren’t promised that God will heal our physical pain, our deep loneliness, or this desperate feeling that we are far from God, in this life. We just don’t know.

But, God has invited us into that open ending. Invited to step into the Psalmist’s shoes and finish the story in our own life. In our own dryness, we’re invited to continue trusting in God to deliver us and draw us close.

Because there are some things we do know. Things the Psalmist has shown us, and things we know from the scriptures and from our lives of knowing Him—however long that has been for you. God is Yahweh. He is the constant, eternal,

consistent God. He loves us and if we know him, if he is the God of our life, our Savior and our God, like he was to the Psalmist, this situation is temporary.

[45] 1 Peter 5:10 says “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

[46] We can have a living hope and secure knowledge that someday we WILL be in God's presence. Because finally, as is nearly always the case, there is someone who has been through this before us, and who knows and truly understands not only our pain but the pain of the Psalmist as well. Like the Psalmist, Jesus suffered unjustly. He knew the agony of anxiety as he prayed earnestly on another mountain – the Mt of Olives -- in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was to go to the Cross. He begged God the Father to save him from it if there was any other way. But he was met with silence. Soon after, He too was captured by his enemies, and all his friends abandoned him. He was mocked, beaten, scorned, abused, rejected, and alone. He was nailed to a pagan cross on another hilltop of Golgotha outside the city of Jerusalem. He panted with dying thirst. And as he hung there suffering, he cried out in a loud voice, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’ Yet God didn’t move or say anything. But even then, Jesus didn’t give up. With his dying breath, he said “it is finished” and “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And he died like that.

Jesus died alone and separated from the Father so that we don’t have to. God raised him from the dead, never to die again, and gave him the keys to the Kingdom of heaven to reign with the Father in His presence forever. And because of Jesus’ resurrection, we can know for sure that we will also be raised like him. To be in his presence forever. On a renewed Earth where all sorrow and pain are banished forever.

If you’re in a spiritually dry season today, know this—you are not alone. Many great men and women of faith have walked through this dryness before you, and God has remained faithful to them. He will be faithful to you as well.

So be honest with God, preach truth to yourself. Keep seeking Him. And put your hope, not in your emotions or your assessment of your circumstances, but in the unchanging character and love of God and the work of Jesus on the cross on your behalf.

As the band comes up, let's pray.

Pray

Kayla after might mention if you're experiencing a time of spiritual dryness or spiritual depression like this, we'd love to talk and pray with you. Come talk to me or another pastor here. Dave will be in the front row during this closing song if you'd like to come now and pray.



Finding God in Spiritual Dryness

Psalms 42-43

EFFIE SWANSON

ABOUT ME



WOTY

- Word Of The Year



WOTY

- Word Of The Year
 - Presence



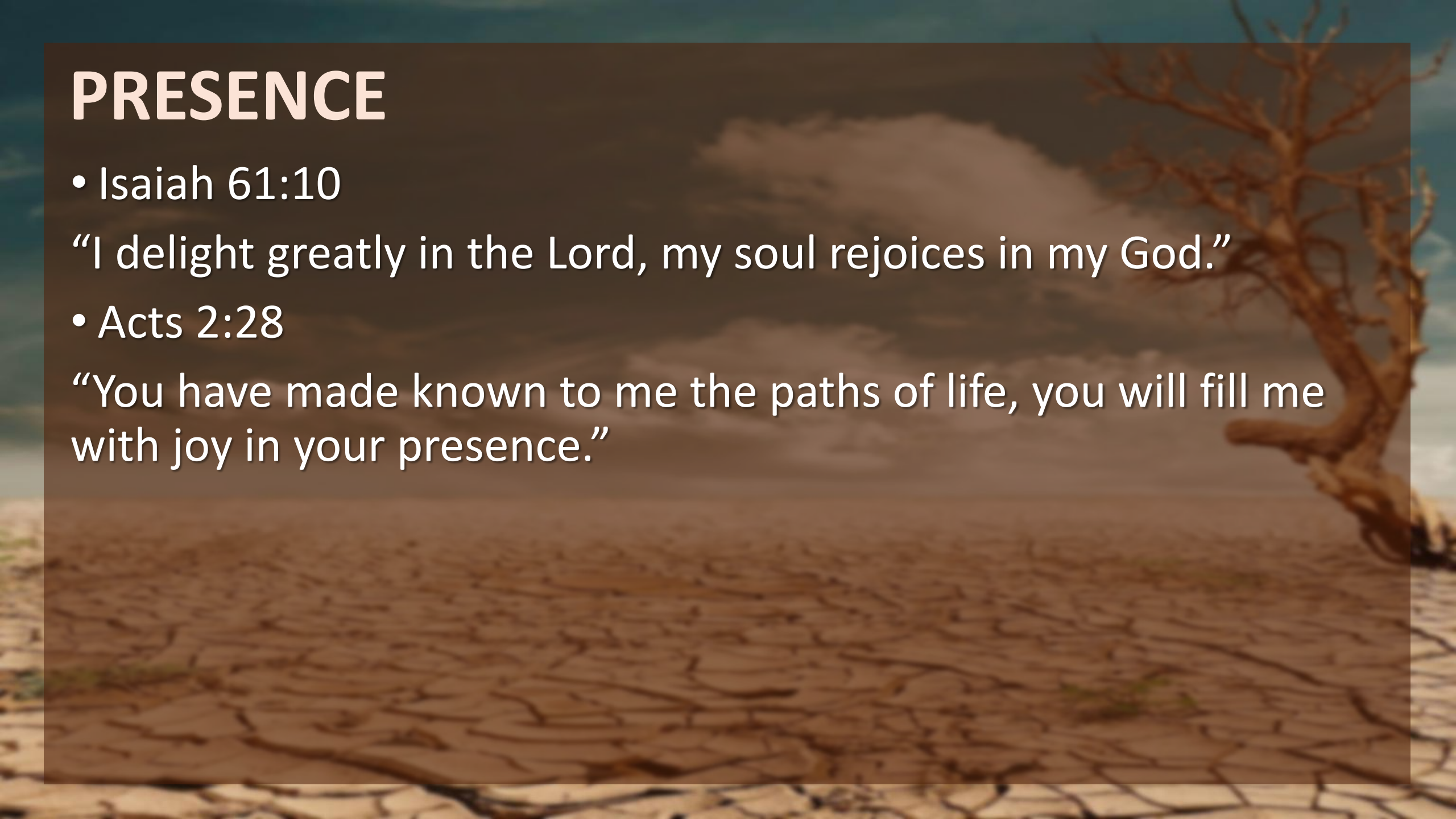
PRESENCE

- Isaiah 61:10

“I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God.”

- Acts 2:28

“You have made known to me the paths of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence.”



PRESENCE

- Isaiah 61:10

“I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God.”

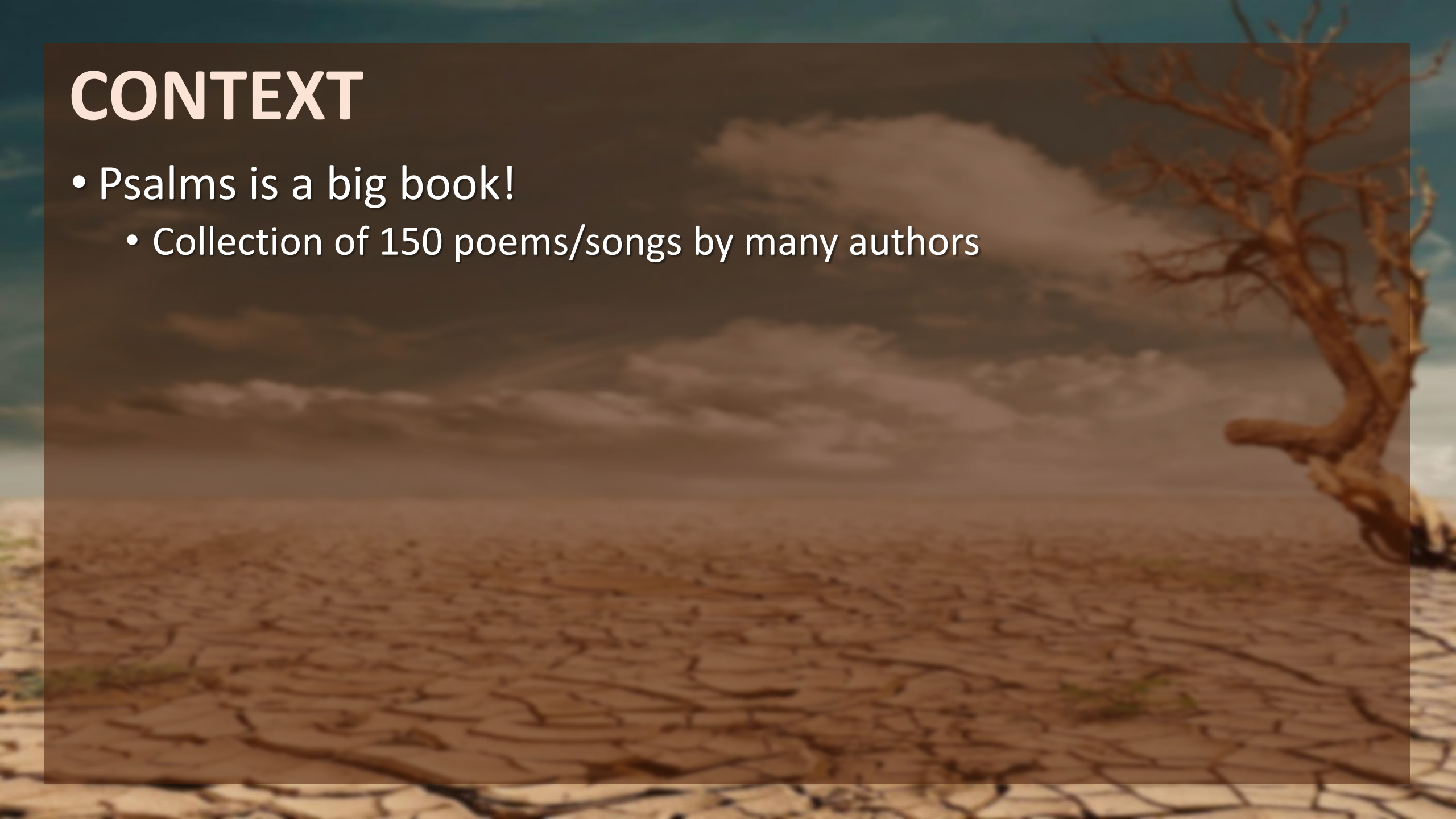
- Acts 2:28

“You have made known to me the paths of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence.”

- Spiritual dryness- when we don't feel God's presence working in our lives
 - Many causes, but it is COMMON

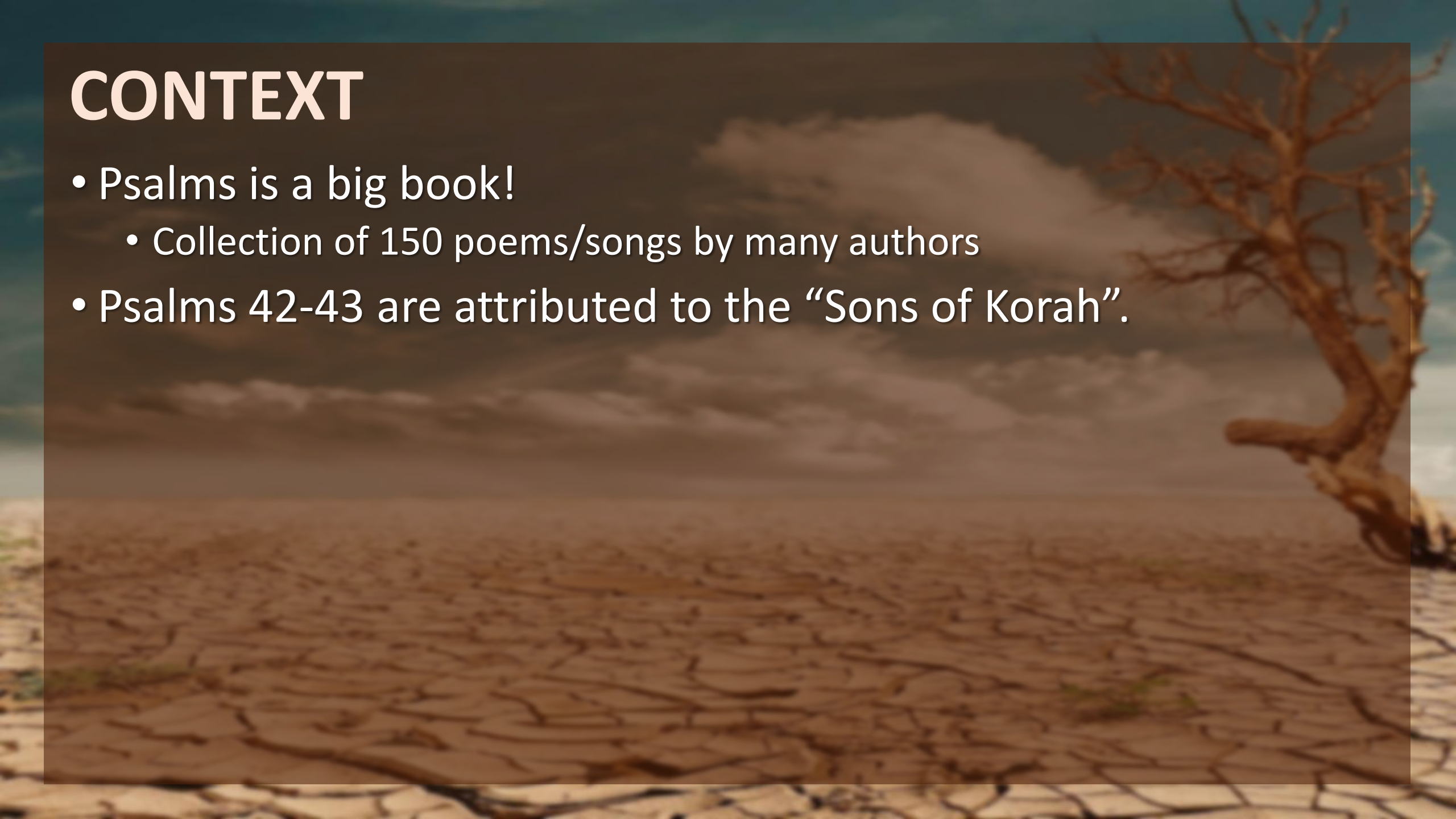
CONTEXT

- Psalms is a big book!
 - Collection of 150 poems/songs by many authors



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- Maskil - Instruction in Godliness

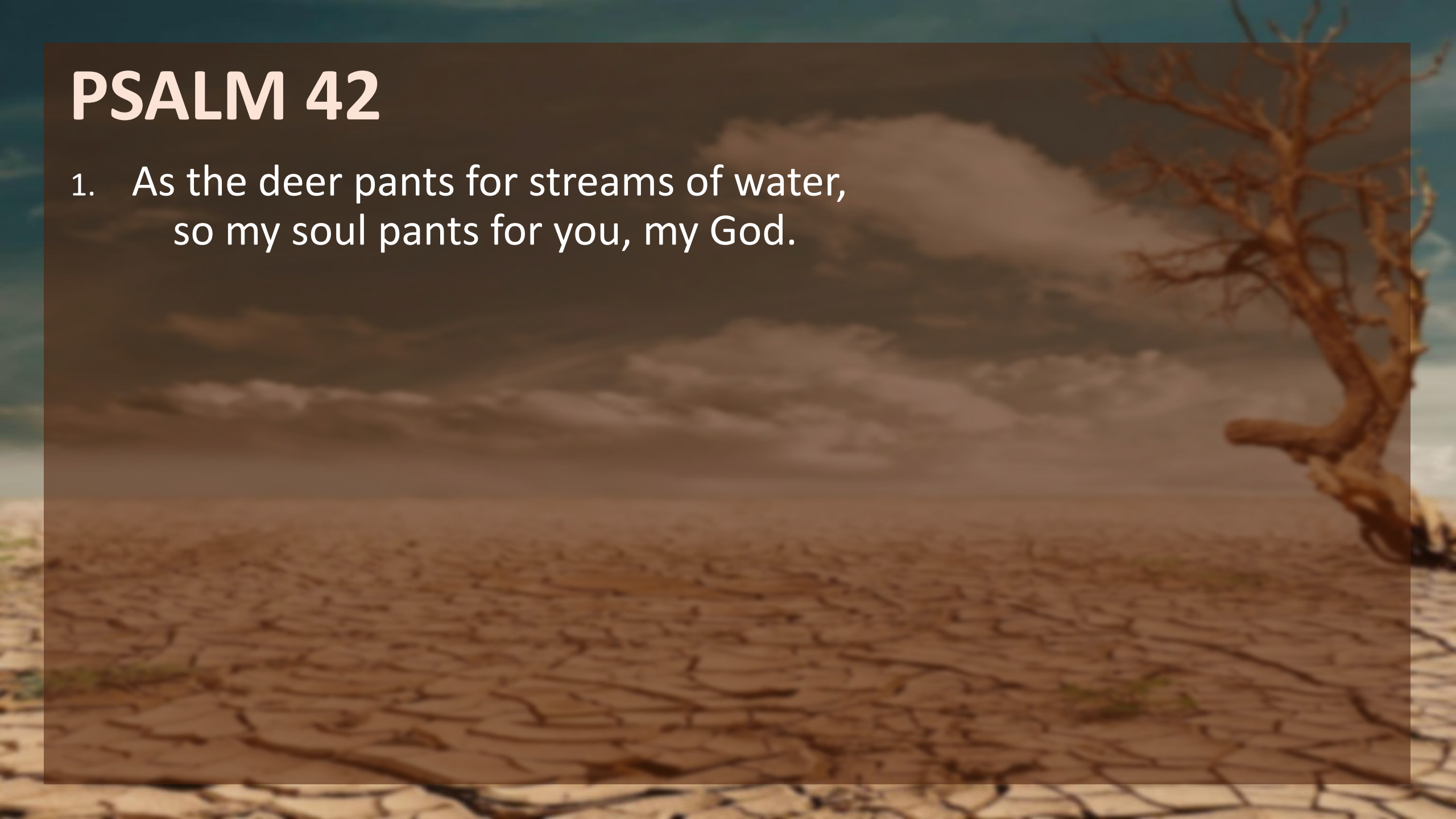
WHO ARE THESE SONS OF KORAH?

- Levitical Choir
 - Levites- Served in the temple
 - Musicians
- Korah - Numbers 16
 - Led rebellion against Moses and Aaron
 - Sons survived, appointed by David to serve in the temple
- 11 Psalms are attributed to the Sons of Korah, including 42 and 43



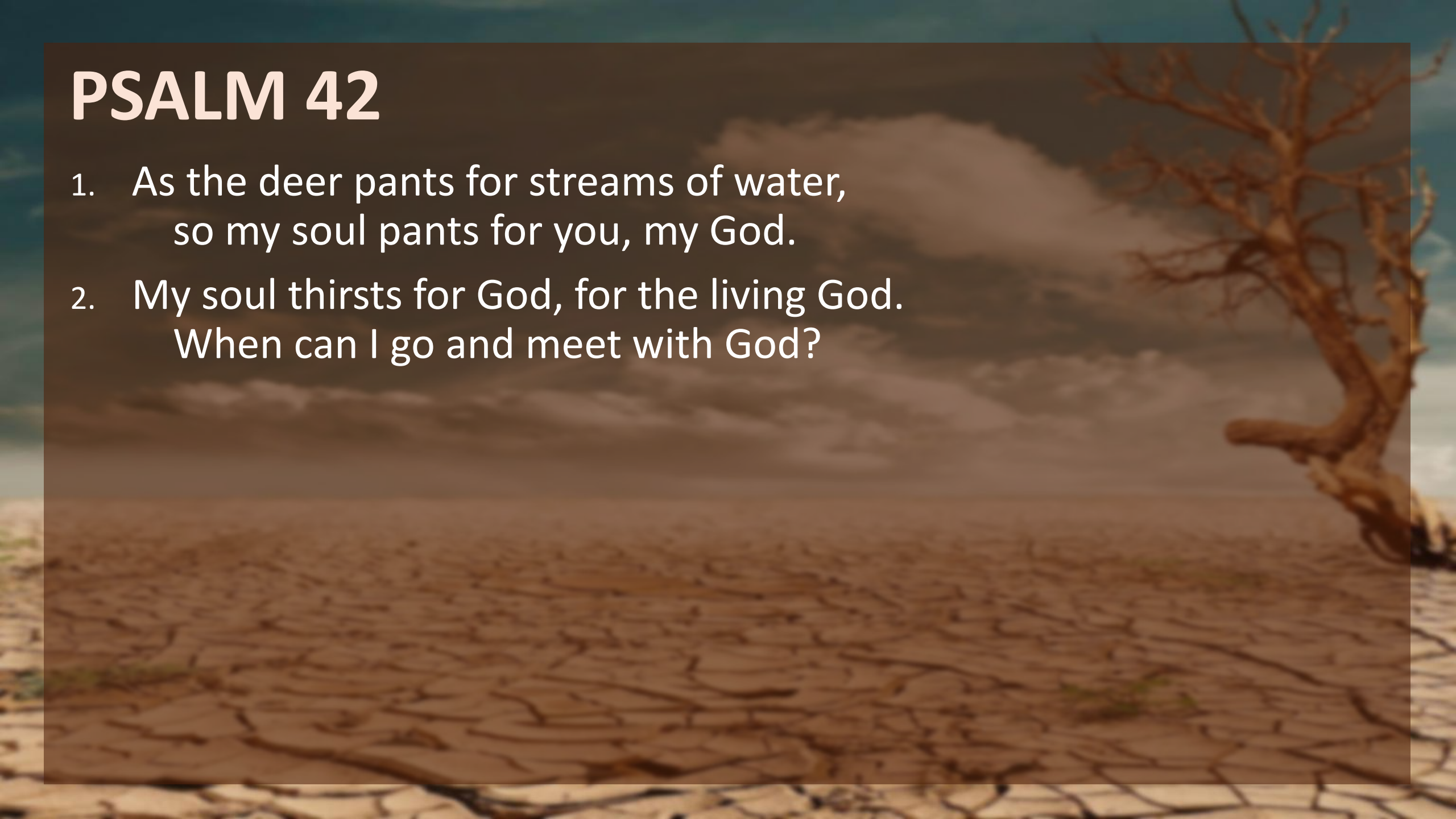
PSALM 42

1. As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.



PSALM 42

1. As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
2. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?



PSALM 42

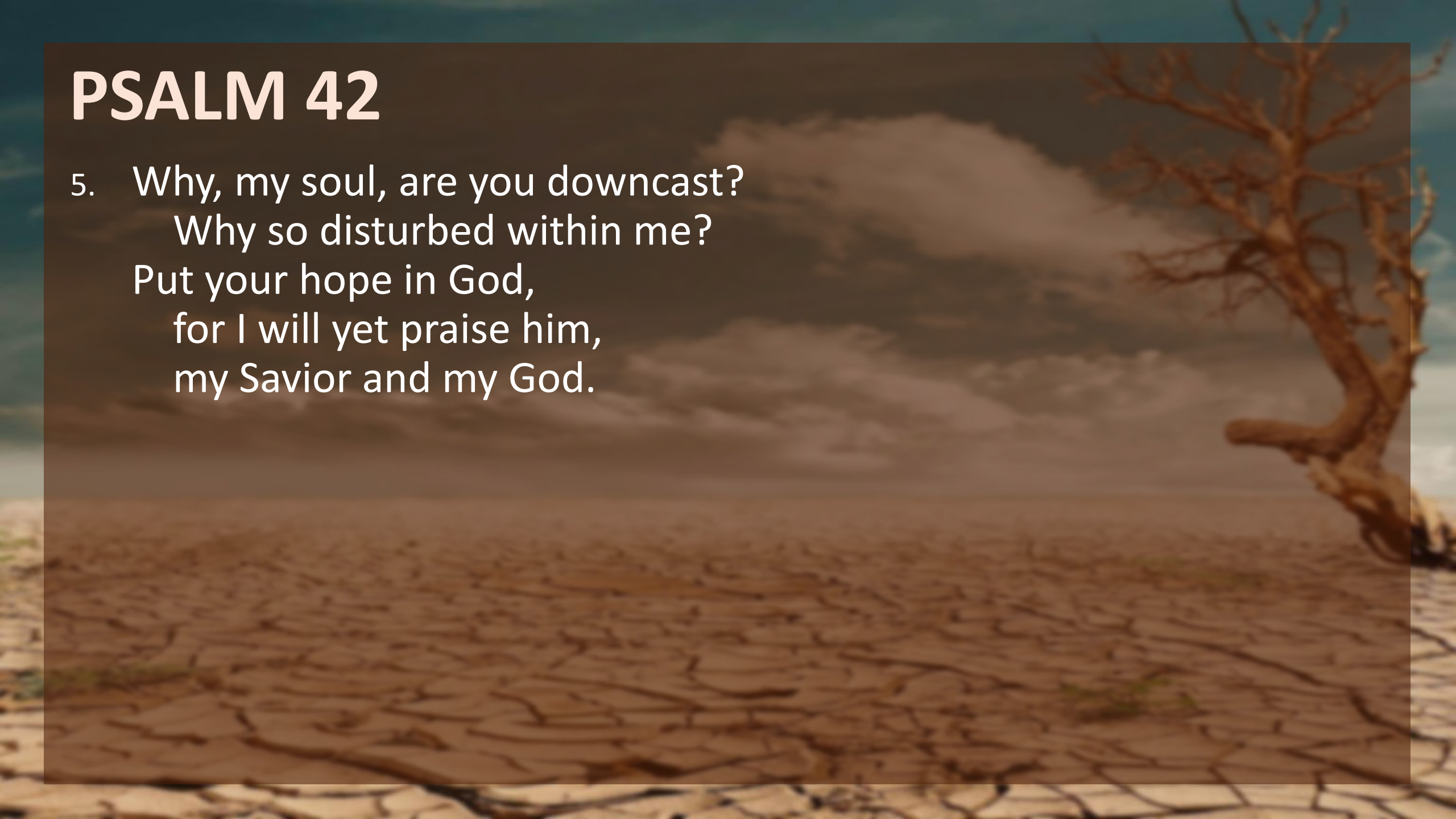
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When can I go and meet with God?
3. My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
4. These things I remember as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.

PSALM 42

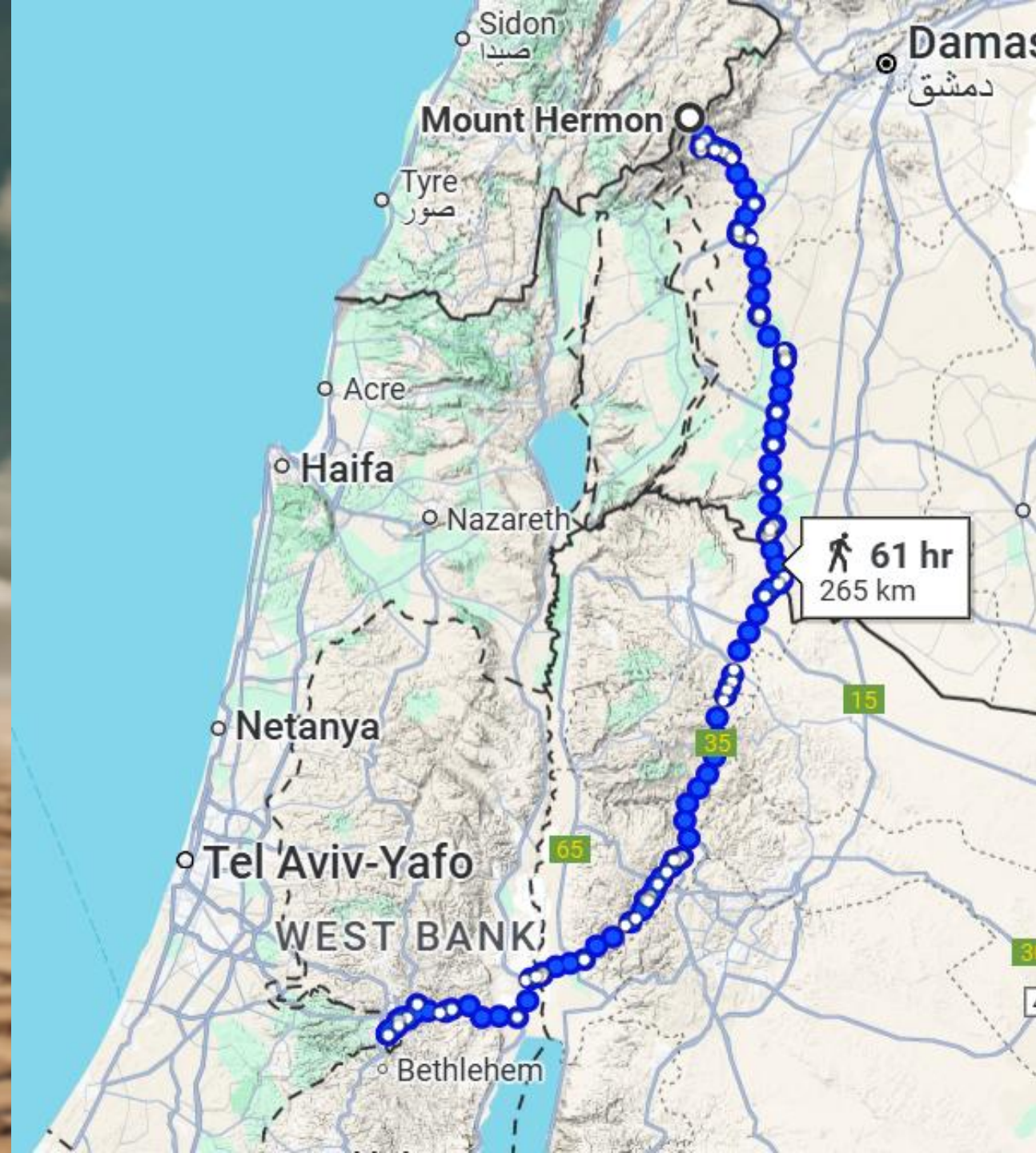
5. Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.



PSALM 42

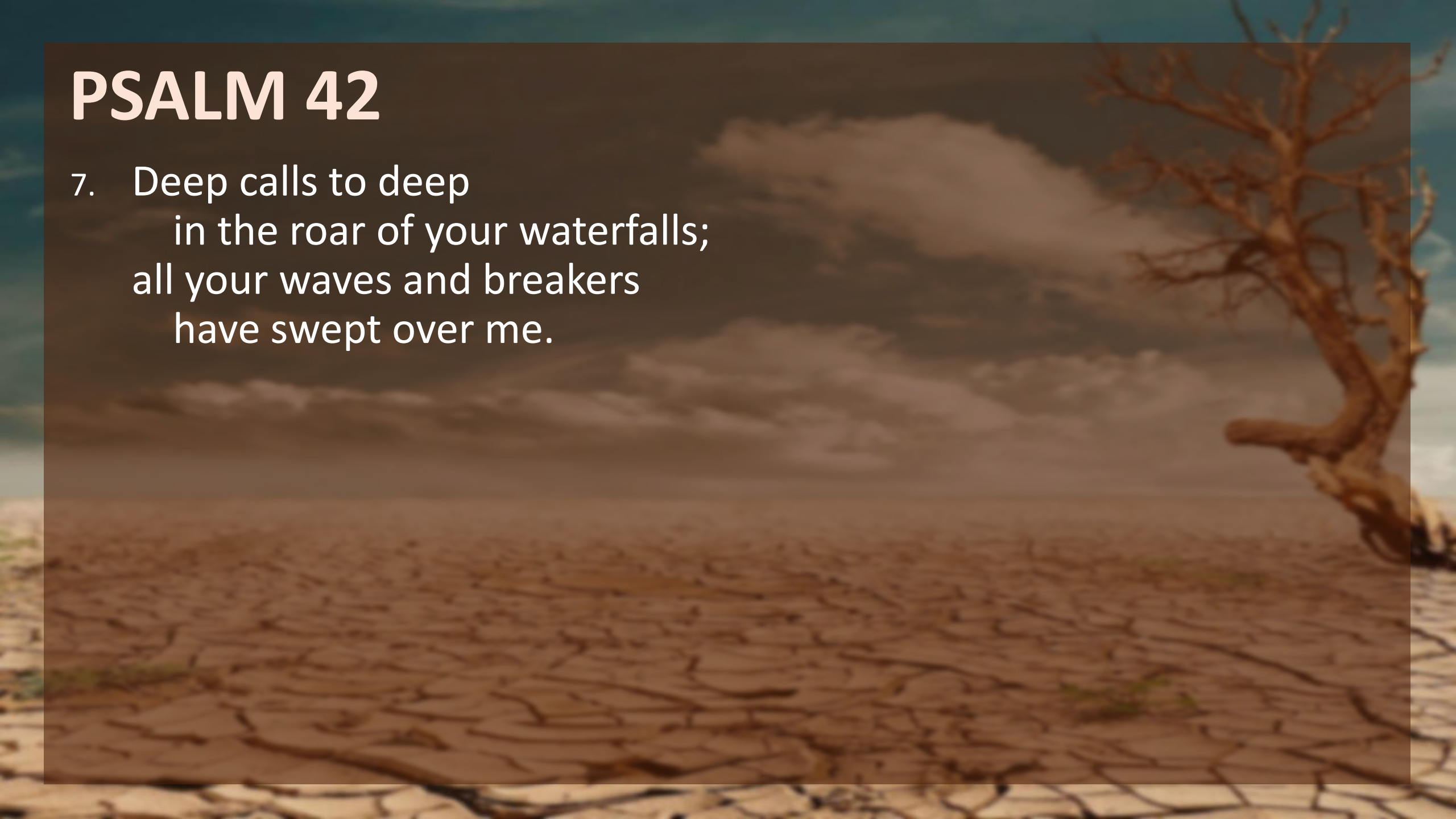
5. Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
6. My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

Mount Hermon



PSALM 42

7. Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.



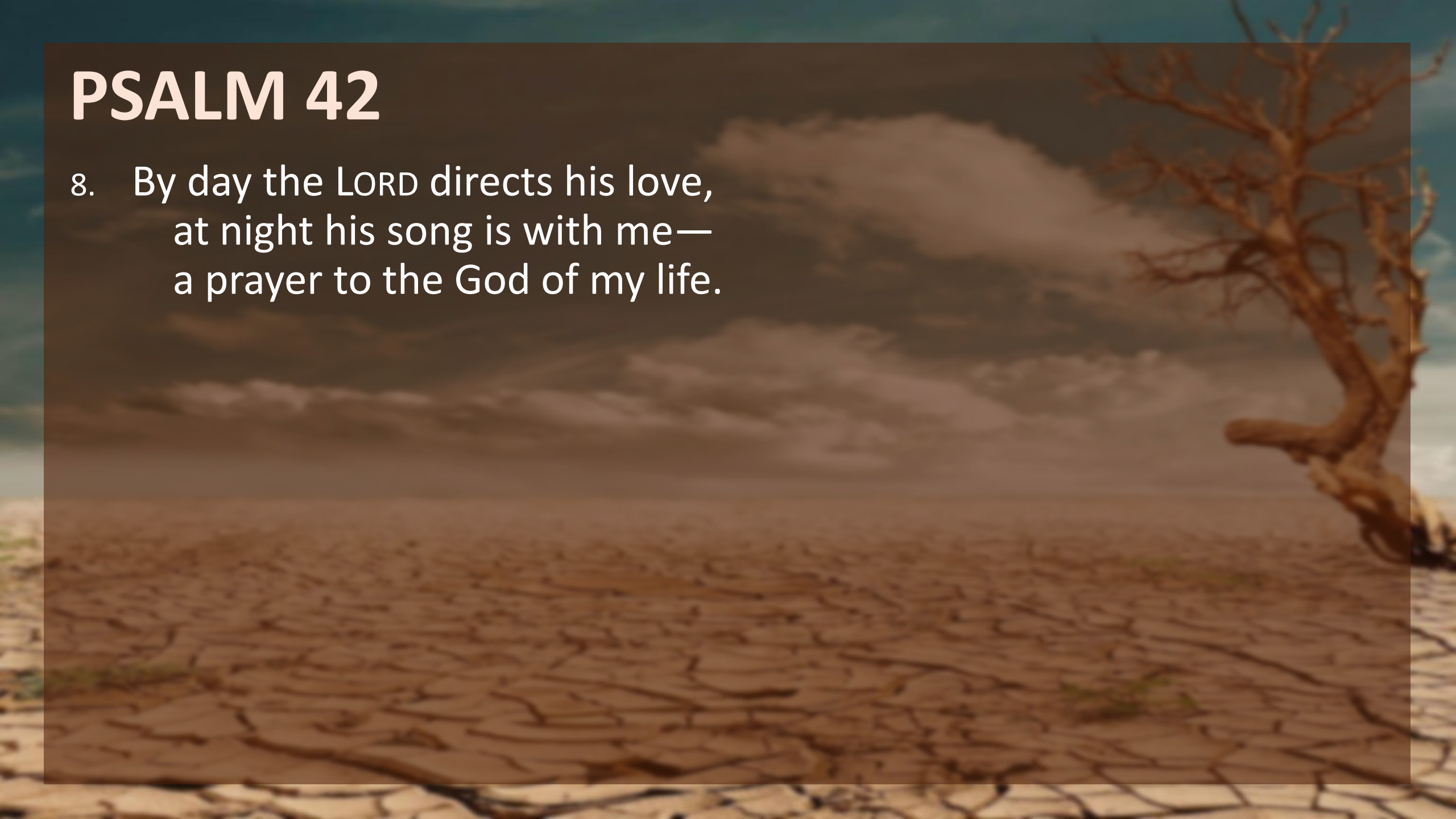
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PSALM 42

8. By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.



PSALM 42

8. By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
9. I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”

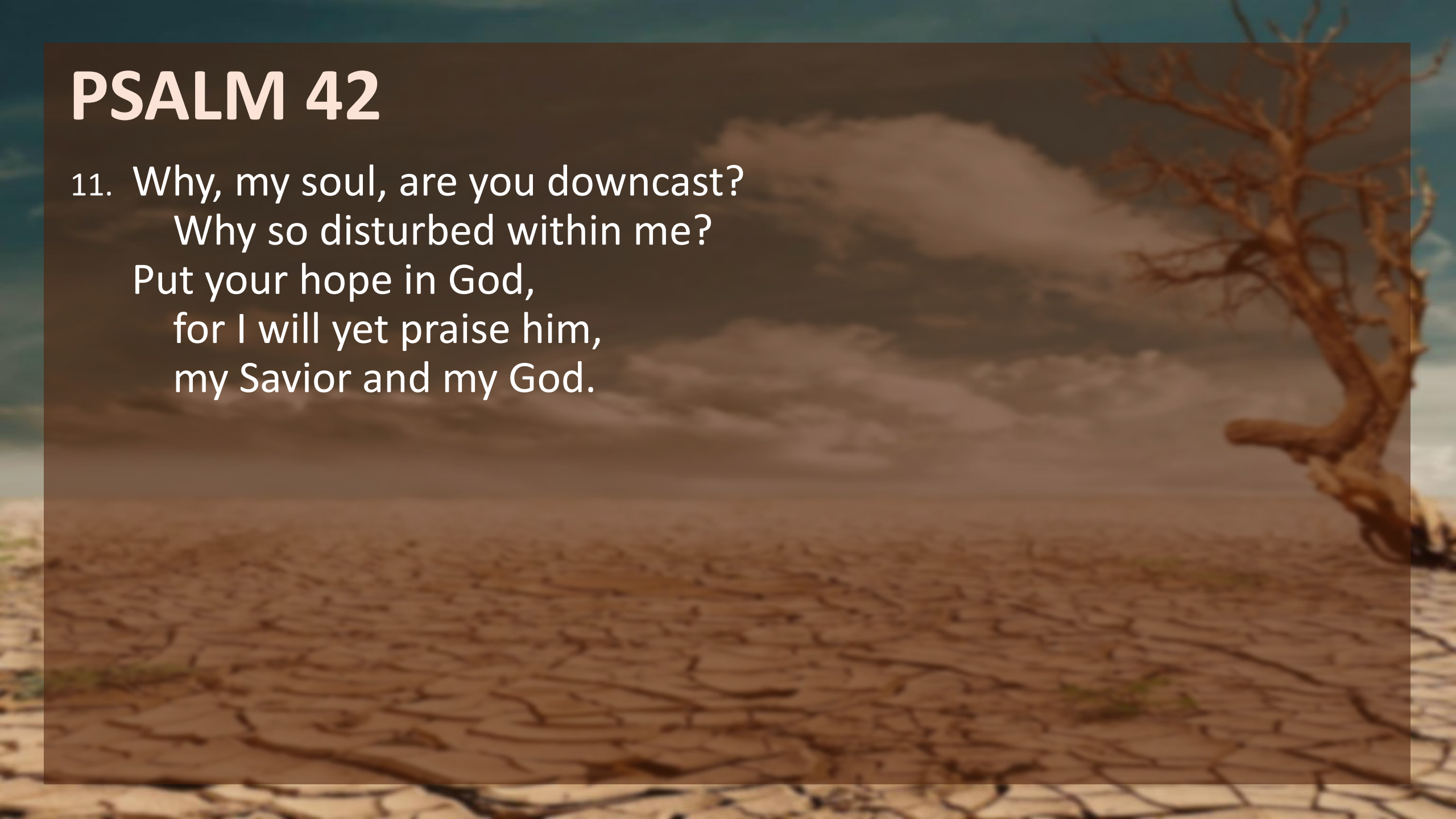


PSALM 42

8. By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
9. I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
10. My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

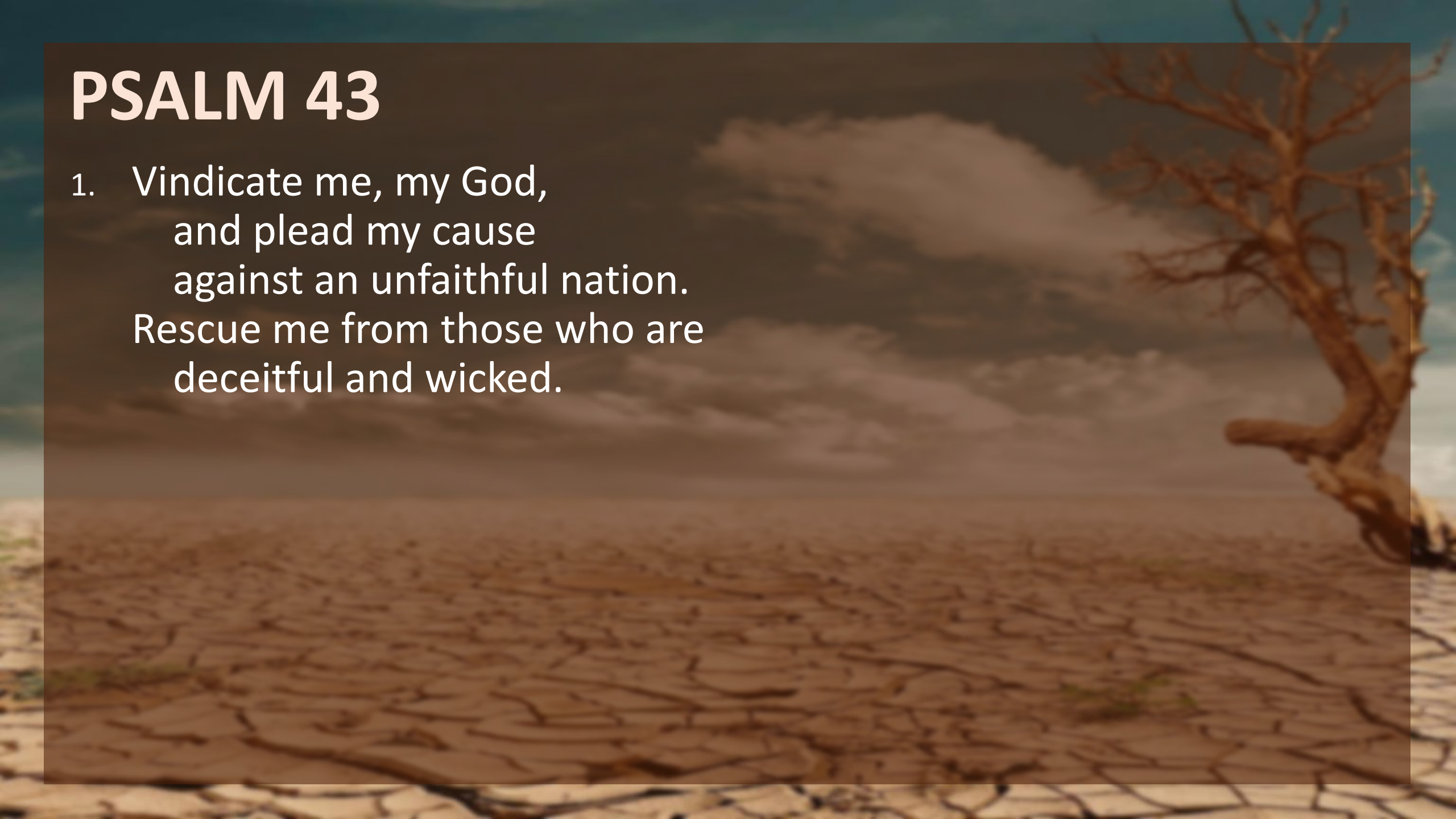
PSALM 42

11. 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.



PSALM 43

1. Vindicate me, my God,
and plead my cause
against an unfaithful nation.
Rescue me from those who are
deceitful and wicked.

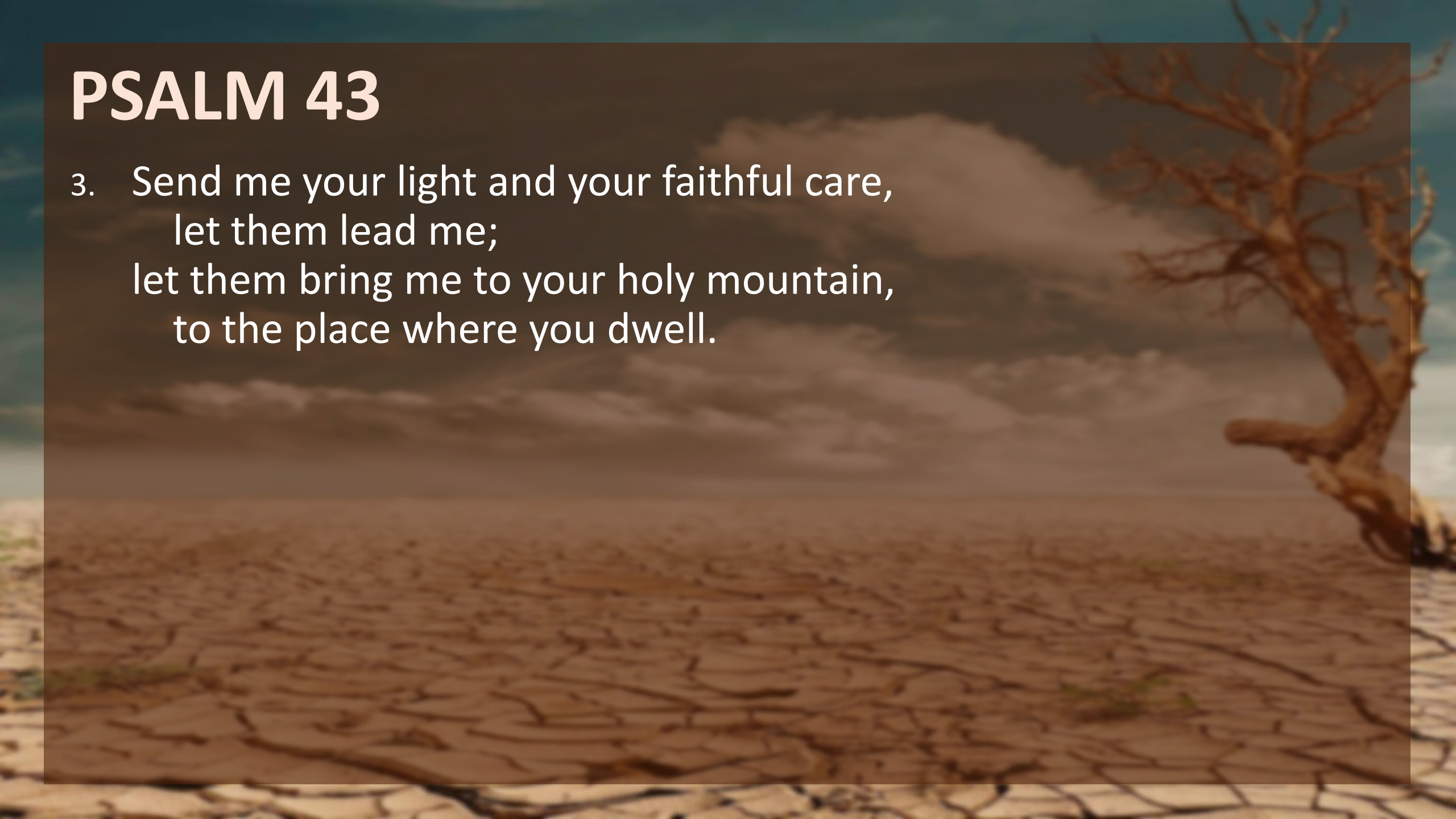


PSALM 43

1. Vindicate me, my God,
and plead my cause
against an unfaithful nation.
Rescue me from those who are
deceitful and wicked.
2. You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?

PSALM 43

3. Send me your light and your faithful care,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.



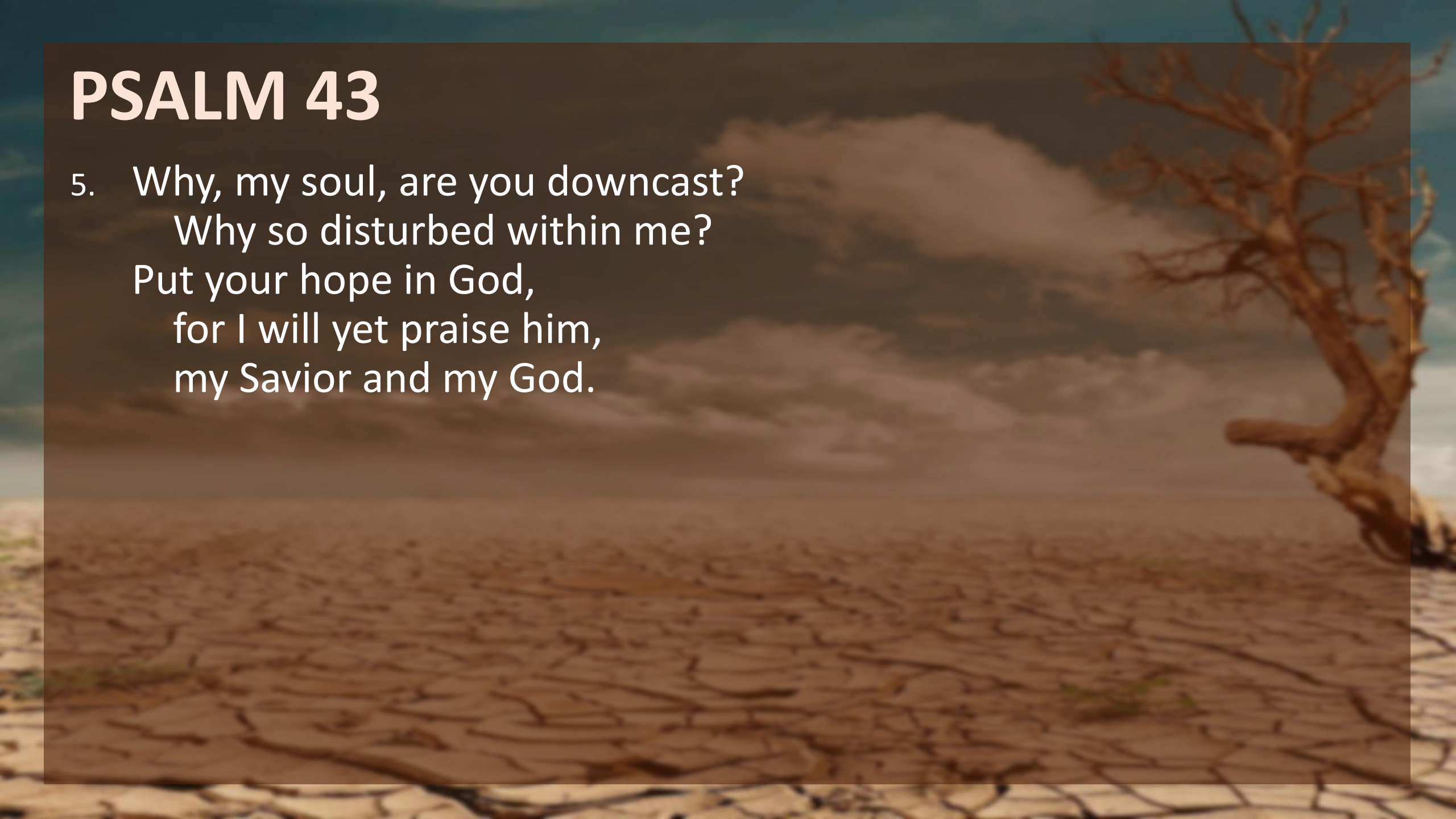
PSALM 43

3. Send me your light and your faithful care,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
4. Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.



PSALM 43

5. 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.

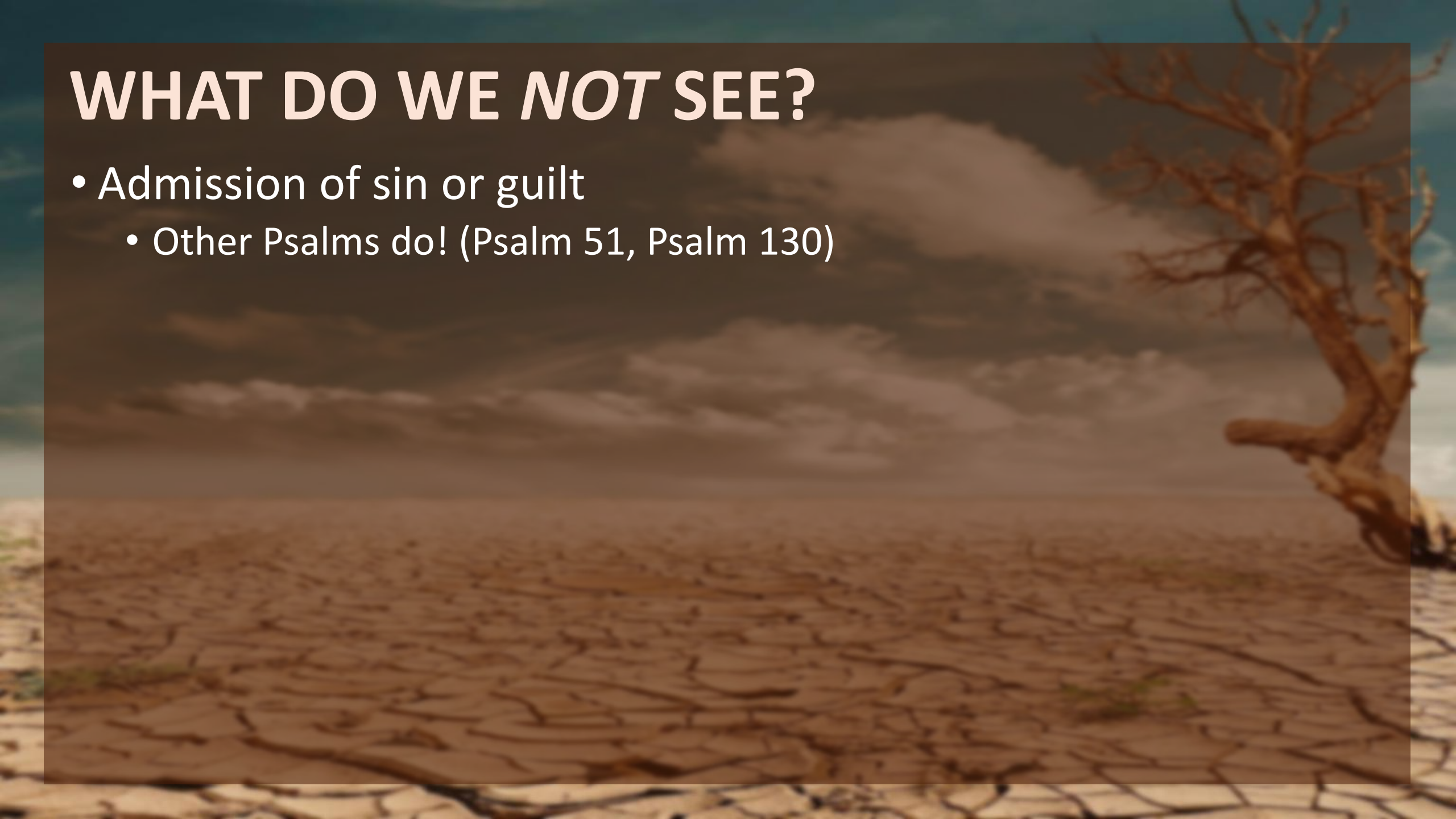


WHAT DO WE *NOT* SEE?



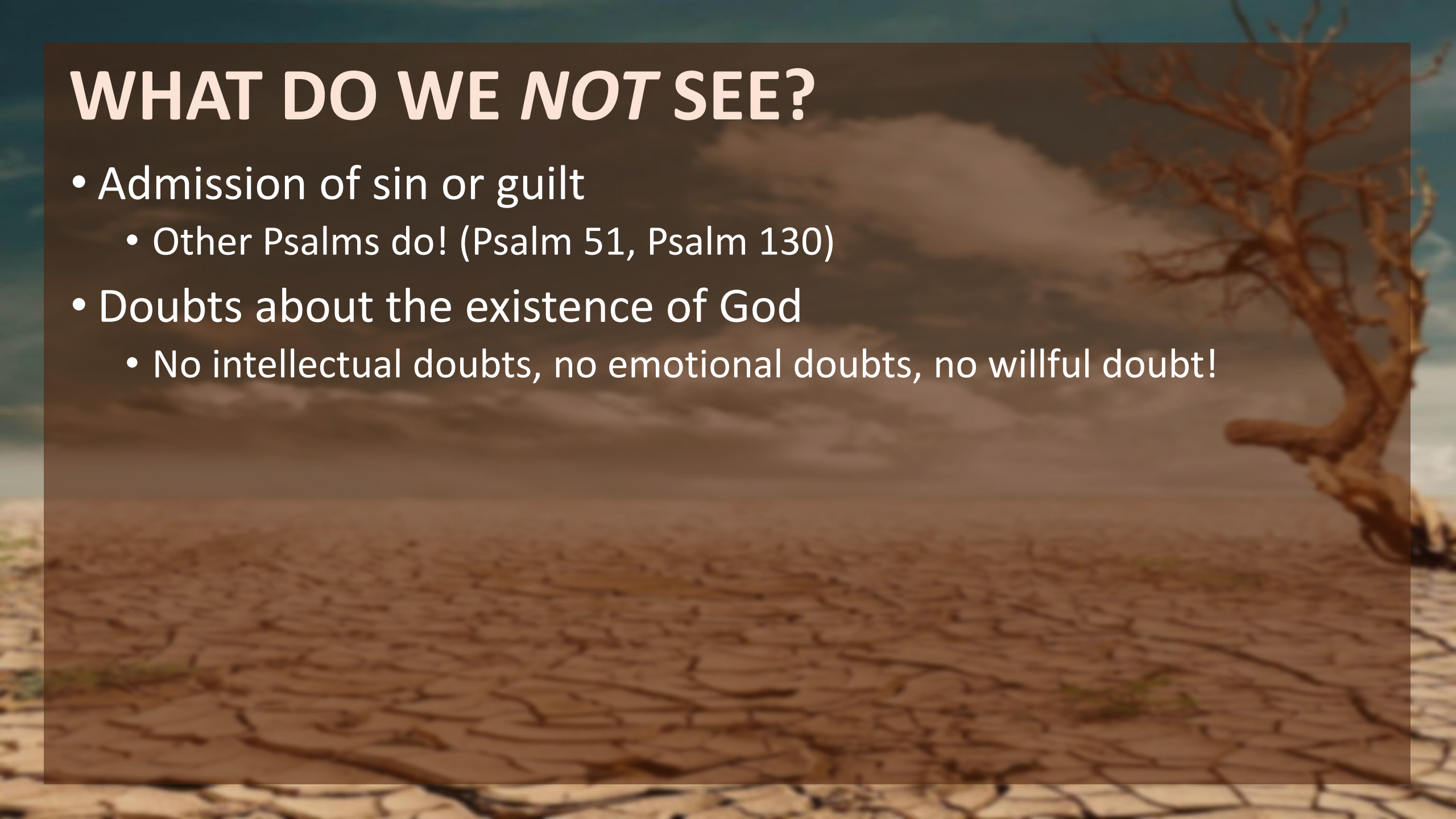
WHAT DO WE *NOT* SEE?

- Admission of sin or guilt
 - Other Psalms do! (Psalm 51, Psalm 130)



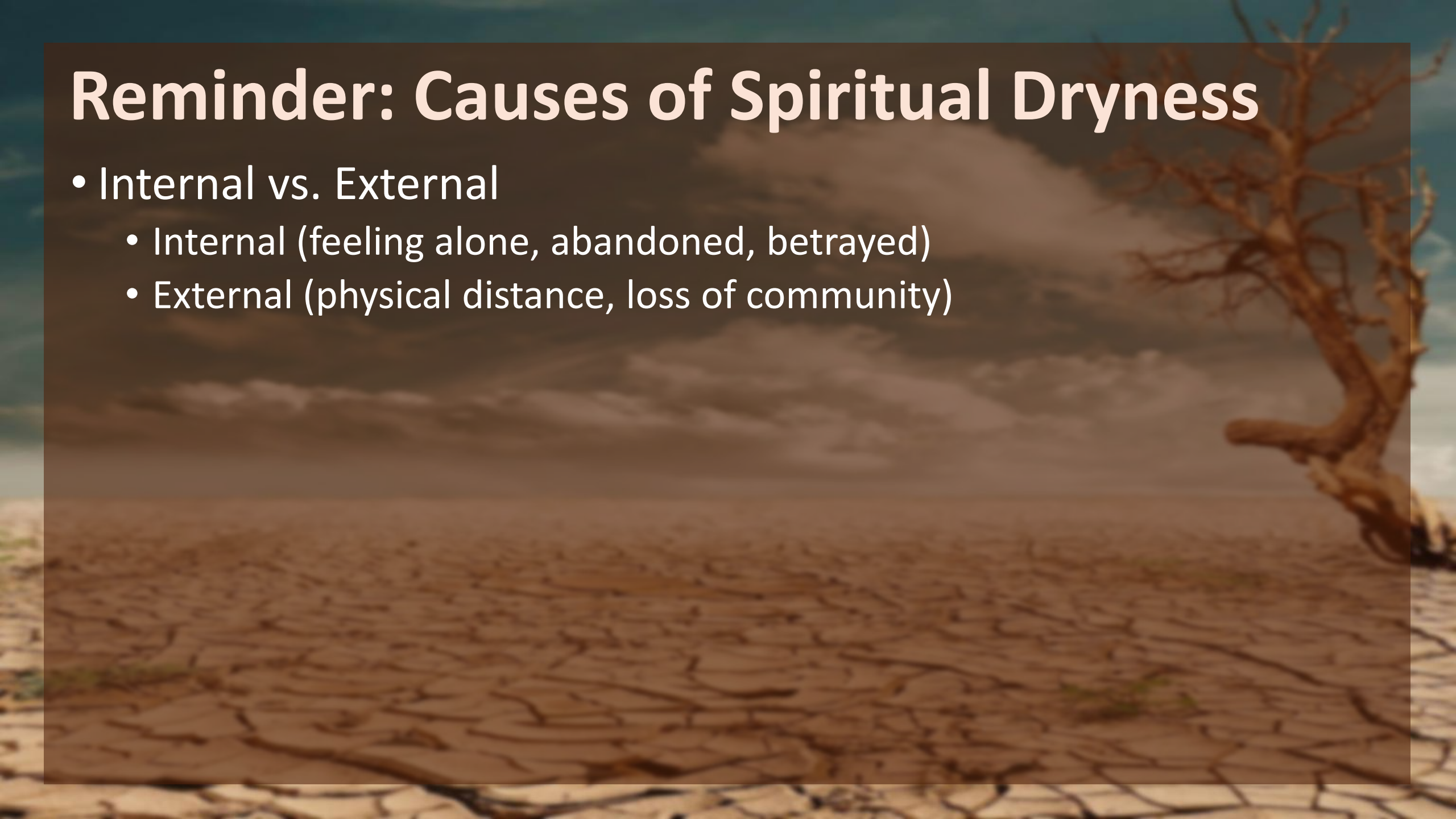
WHAT DO WE *NOT* SEE?

- Admission of sin or guilt
 - Other Psalms do! (Psalm 51, Psalm 130)
- Doubts about the existence of God
 - No intellectual doubts, no emotional doubts, no willful doubt!



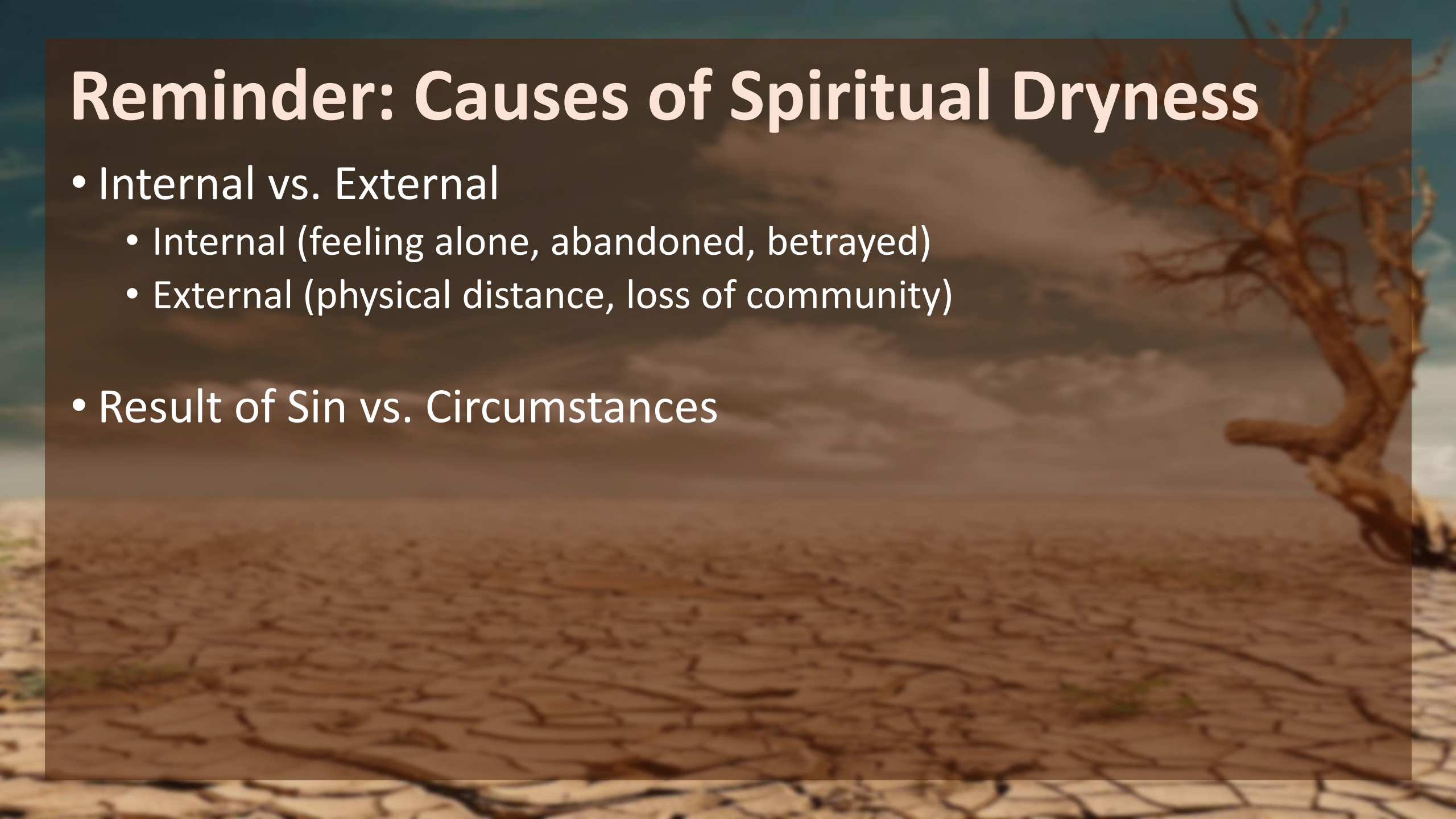
Reminder: Causes of Spiritual Dryness

- Internal vs. External
 - Internal (feeling alone, abandoned, betrayed)
 - External (physical distance, loss of community)



Reminder: Causes of Spiritual Dryness

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Reminder: Causes of Spiritual Dryness

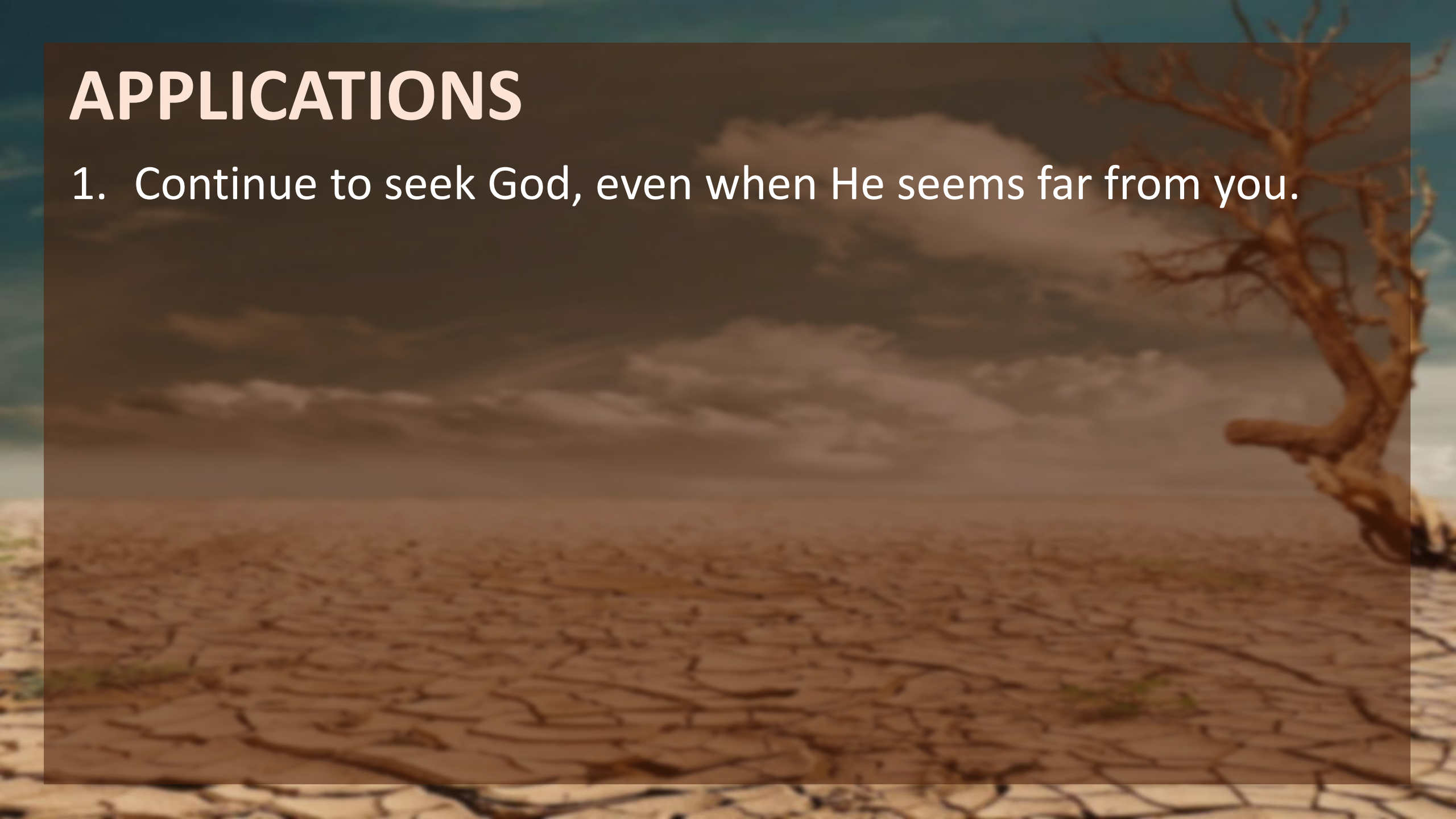
- Internal vs. External
 - Internal (feeling alone, abandoned, betrayed)
 - External (physical distance, loss of community)
- Result of Sin vs. Circumstances
- Regardless of the CAUSE, spiritual dryness is COMMON

APPLICATIONS



APPLICATIONS

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.



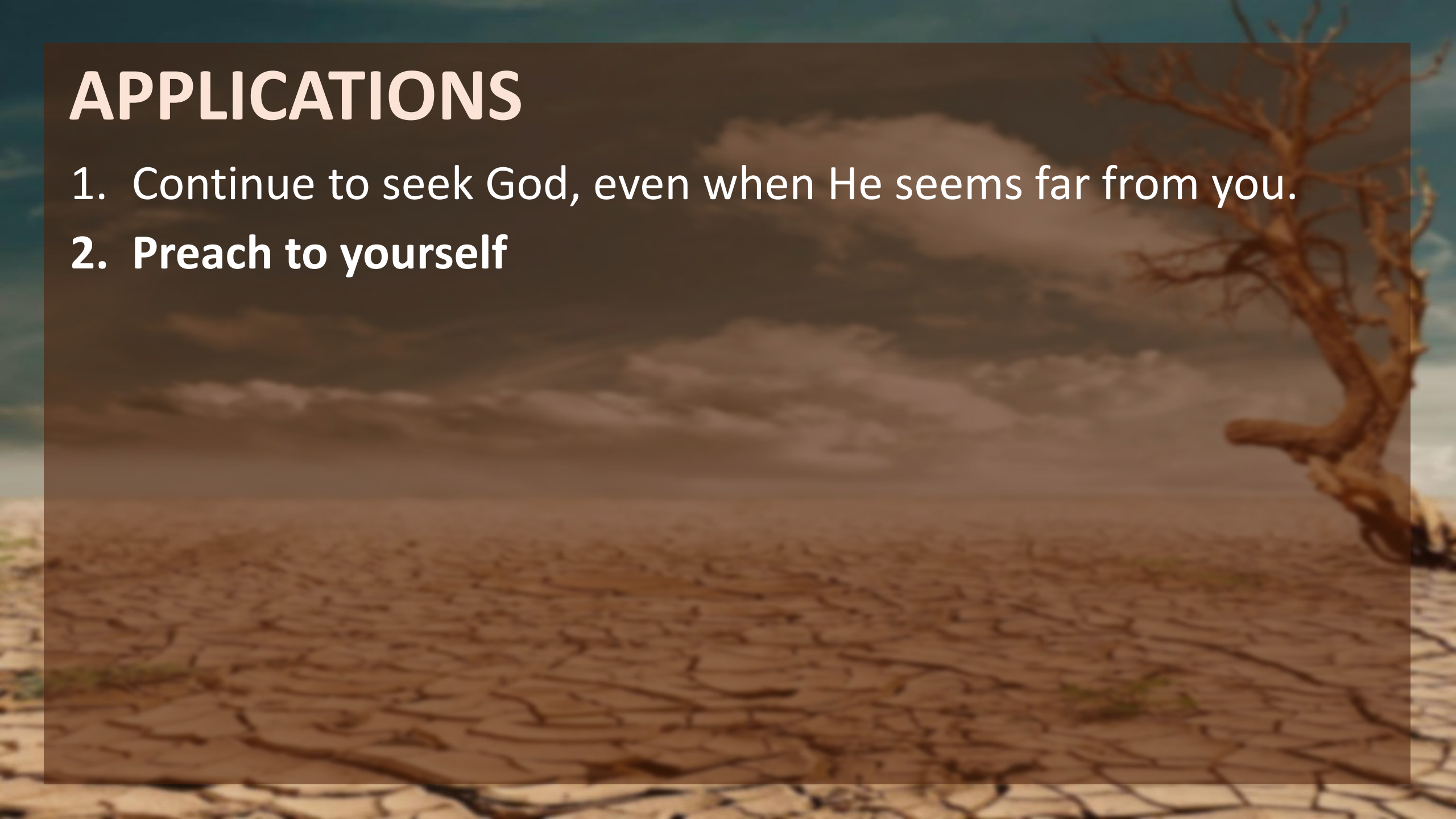
APPLICATIONS

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.

“The first thing you’ve got to do, if you don’t get anything out of worship, in this period of time, in a dry time, don’t miss it. If you get nothing out of prayer, don’t miss it. If you get nothing out of Bible reading, don’t miss it. Pour out your soul. If you don’t feel anything, fine, talk about that. If nothing else, talk to God about how you’re getting nothing out of it. If nothing else, talk to God about how much you miss Him. If nothing else, talk to the absent God about His absence.” –Tim Keller

APPLICATIONS

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.
2. **Preach to yourself**



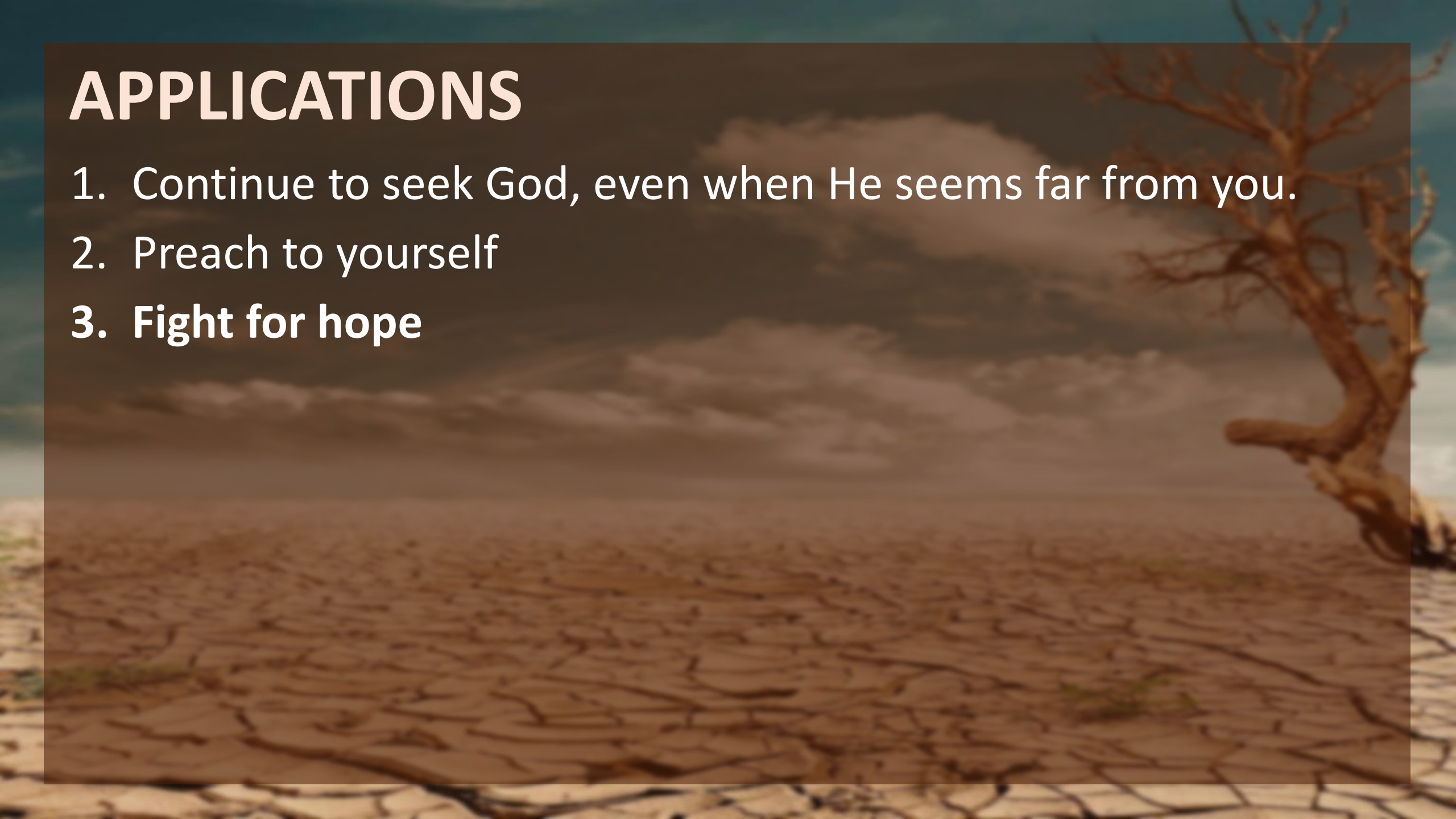
APPLICATIONS

2. Preach to yourself

“Notice the psalmist addresses himself – “he talks to himself,” and herein he discovers the cure. The main problem in the whole matter of “spiritual depression” in a sense is this – we allow our “self” to talk to us instead of “talking to ourself.” Most unhappiness in life is due to the fact that we “listen to ourselves” instead of “talking to ourselves.” [The psalmist], in effect, says, “Self, listen for a moment to what I have to say – why are you so cast down?” The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself, question yourself, and preach to yourself – you must remind yourself who God is, and what God has done, and what God has promised to do – this is the essence of the treatment in a nutshell.” –D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

APPLICATIONS

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.
2. Preach to yourself
3. **Fight for hope**

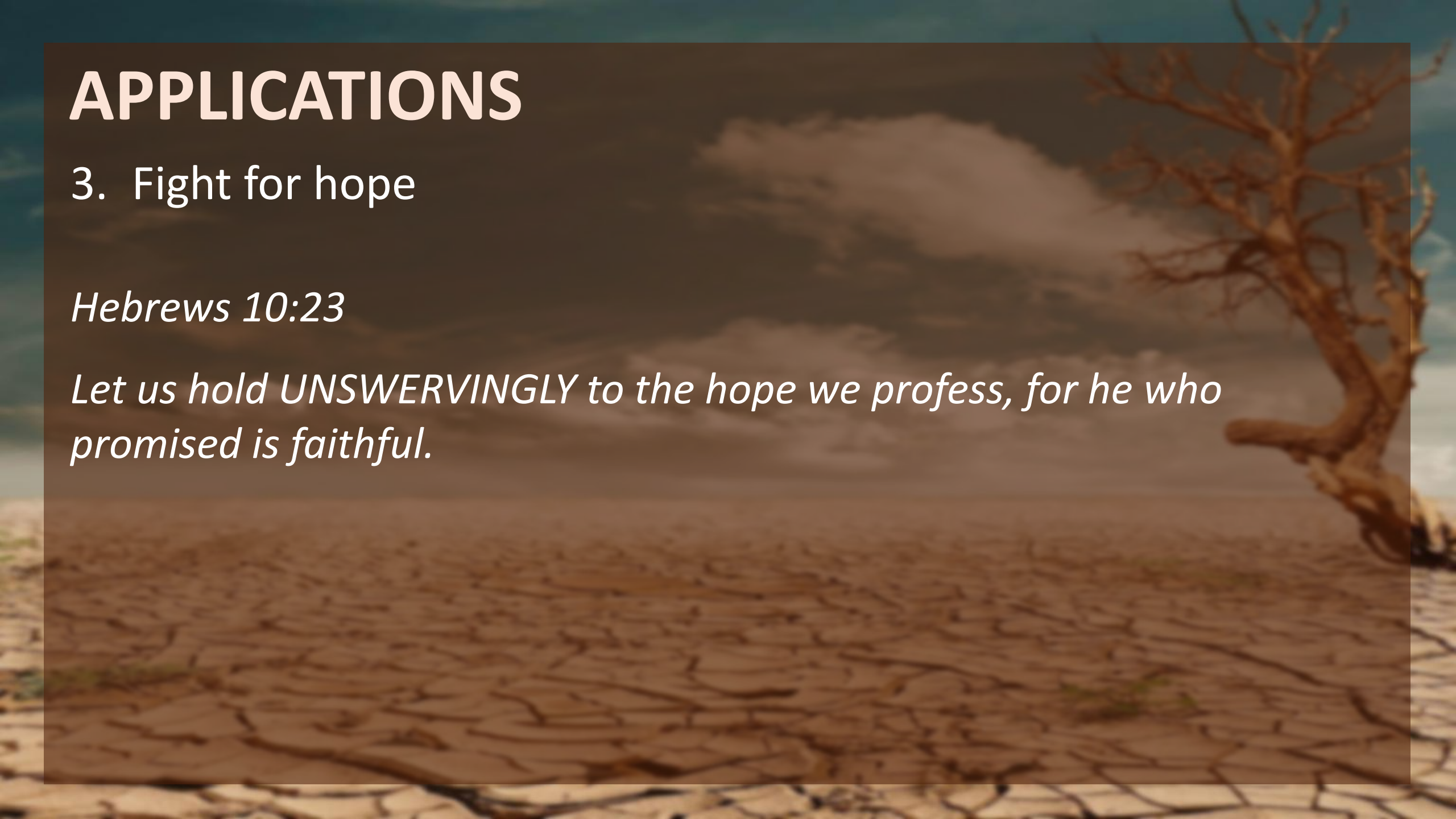


APPLICATIONS

3. Fight for hope

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold UNSWERVINGLY to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.



APPLICATIONS

3. Fight for hope

“His [the psalmists’] external circumstances are oppressing. His internal emotional condition is depressed and full of turmoil. But he is fighting for hope. And the really remarkable thing is that at the end of the psalm, he is still fighting but not yet where he wants to be. The last words of the psalm — and the last words of the next psalm — are ‘Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.’ He leaves us still fighting for the joyful experience of hope and freedom from turmoil. He is not yet praising the way he wants to.”- John Piper

APPLICATIONS

1. Continue to seek God, even when He seems far from you.
2. Preach to yourself
3. Fight for hope
4. **Approach God with confidence and honesty**

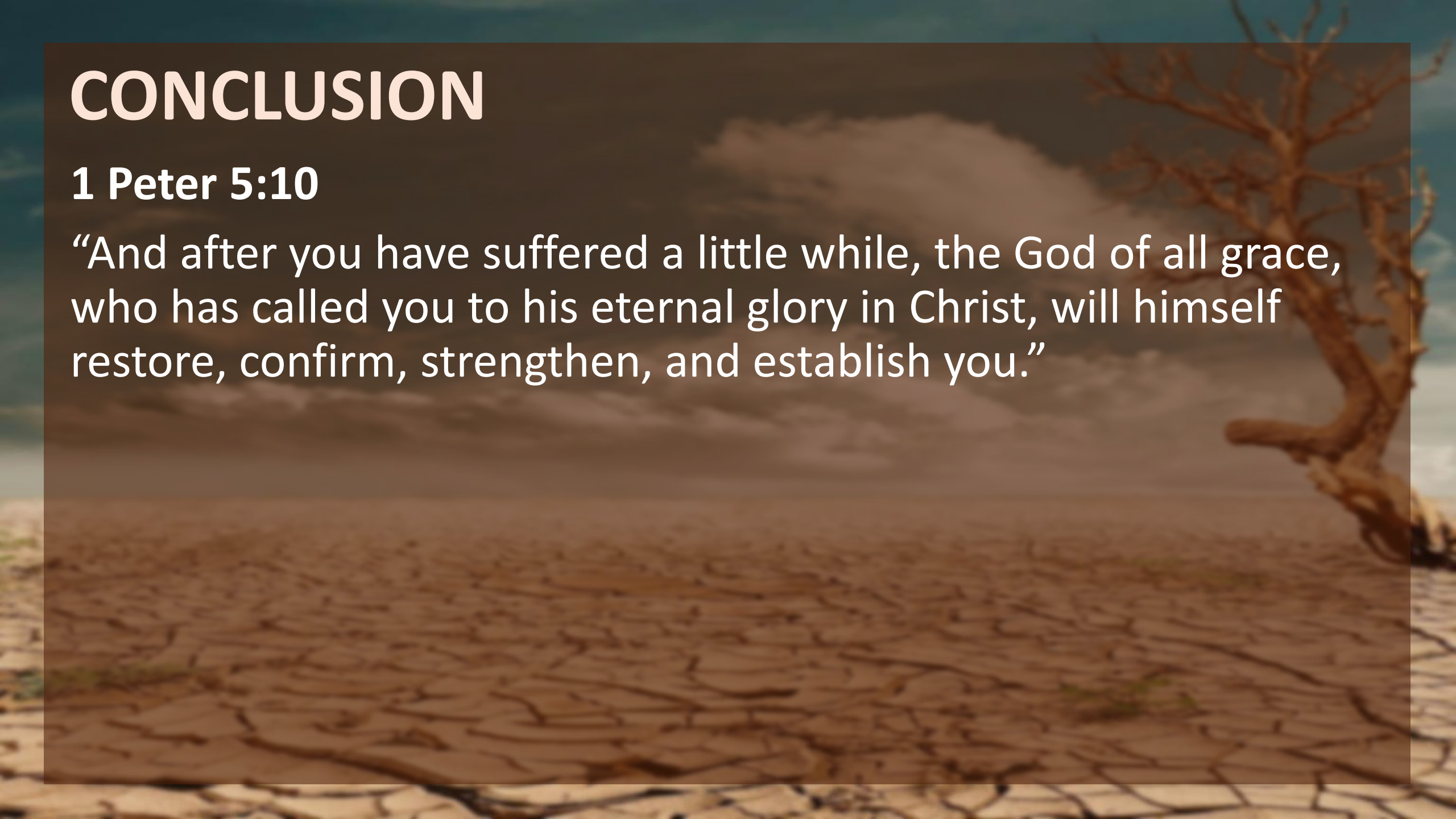
CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

1 Peter 5:10

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”





Finding God in Spiritual Dryness

Psalms 42-43

EFFIE SWANSON