

AT THE MANGER

Hope at the Manger

Psalm 42

Main Idea: God's people must remind themselves to put their hope in God.

In this fallen world, God's people can face circumstances where they need hope for their souls (1-4, 6-10).

- *Hope is needed when the soul longs for what should be (1-2, 4, 8).*
- *Hope is needed when the soul suffers from what shouldn't be (3, 6-7, 9-10).*

Some attribute authorship of Psalm 42 to David (even though it's attributed to the sons of Korah), which would have been written during the time of his exile when his son Absalom rebelled against him for the throne of Israel. Others claim the Psalm was written during the time of the exile of Judah, when Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins and God's people were in exile in Babylon. Regardless, the Psalm reveals a soul that is sick and that needs the medicine of true hope. In the opening verses, the psalmist pointed to the desires of his heart, which were good and were for the Lord. His soul longed for what should be! He longed for the Lord like a deer pants for water, desiring to appear before at the temple in Jerusalem. He longed for the joy that comes in worshiping and praising the Lord along with God's people in his Holy City, Jerusalem. The desires of his soul were good, but the circumstances of his life were not. He thirsted for the Lord and was thirsty. He cried out to the Lord and kept crying out. His soul not only longed for what should be, but his soul suffered from what shouldn't be. Those who rejected the Lord and saw his circumstance made fun of him, mocking God himself by sarcastically asking, "Where is your God?" The circumstance in part was the very result of God's judgment for sin, which left him longing for early times when he was in Jerusalem in the presence of the Lord and with the joy of serving the Lord. His enemies were a constant wound to his soul, growing his longing for what should be in the midst of his suffering from what shouldn't be. The Psalmist needed to be reminded of the eternal realities that were true in the midst of his temporary circumstances in this fallen world. He needed true hope for his soul.

1. Has your soul needed hope because you were longing for what should be, unable to see it or experience it at that moment for whatever reason? Share testimonies. How can longing for what is good and righteous bring suffering?
2. When has your soul suffered from what shouldn't be (your sin and the sin of others that affects you)? Share testimonies. Why aren't things the way they shouldn't be?
3. Do you know someone who needs hope in their current circumstance? Pray for them right now in your group. Commit to reach out to them this week.

In this fallen world, God's people must remind themselves to put their hope in God (5, 11).

- *Question your attitudes that don't display hope (5a, 11a).*

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- *Command yourself to hope in God (5b, 11b).*
- *Remind yourself of the God of salvation who brings true hope today (5c, 11c).*

The chorus of Psalm 42 is beautiful, rich, and timeless. In the midst of circumstances in this fallen world that stir hopelessness in hearts, God's people must preach the truth to themselves and to one another. In this fallen world, God's people must remind themselves to put their hope in God! The first thing the psalmist does in verses 5 and 11 is to ask himself a question. It's a question that gets to the heart of the problem with the attitude of his heart. His soul is downcast, but the question is why? Because of all that he knows about who God is and all that God has done, he should have hope even in the midst of the most hopeless situation. In the midst of David's exile, David had God's promises for his kingdom and the future Messiah who would occupy his throne. In the midst of Israel and Judah's exile, God's people had God's promises for the restoration of his kingdom and the future Messiah who would save God's people from the enemy. The question was important because it reminded the psalmist of the obvious answer: Hope in God! The answer is an imperative. It's a command that's meant to be obeyed, and it's a self-given command. God's people must question attitudes that don't display hope and at the same time command themselves to hope in God! This command is grounded in a hope today for tomorrow. The psalmist knew that he would praise the Lord again because the Lord is his salvation and his God! This was true for David, Israel, and Judah, and it's true for you and me today. We still live in a fallen world, and we still need to set our hope in God. Like David, Israel, and Judah, our souls need hope, and we have all the hope we need in God. Christ's first coming at the manger was the hope of Israel, and Christ's second coming in all his glory – the full and final consummation of his kingdom – is our hope today!

1. How can you ask questions related to the attitude of our soul? Consider your attitude related to some problem or issue in your life right now. Perhaps you're upset or depressed or angry over something or someone. Ask "why" questions related to that attitude. These questions will often reveal if the attitude doesn't display hope.
2. Command yourself to hope in God! Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on the Hebrew word for hope. What does this word mean? What does it mean to have hope in God? What are you commanding yourself to do? Where is your power to do it found?
3. Your hope is in God, who is our salvation and our God. What does this mean? How does this bring hope in tomorrow and for eternity? How does that bring hope today?
4. Who can you share the hope of God with this week?