

PSALM 42

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 42

To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah

Of the word “Maschil”, (see Gill on “^{f580}Psalm 32:1”), title. Korah was he who was at the head of a conspiracy against Moses and Aaron, for which sin the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed alive him and his company, and fire devoured two hundred and fifty more; the history of which is recorded in (^{f400}Numbers 16:1-50); yet all his posterity were not cut off, (^{f0251}Numbers 26:11); some were in David’s time porters, or keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and some were singers; (see ^{f3753}1 Chronicles 6:33 9:19 ^{f409}2 Chronicles 20:19); and to the chief musician was this psalm directed for them to sing, for they were not the authors of it, as some ^{f581} have thought; but most probably David himself composed it; and it seems to have been written by him, not as representing the captives in Babylon, as Theodoret, but on his own account, when he was persecuted by Saul, and driven out by men from abiding in the Lord’s inheritance, and was in a strange land among the Heathen, where he was reproached by them; and everything in this psalm agrees with his state and condition; or rather when he fled from his son Absalom, and was in those parts beyond Jordan, mentioned in this psalm; (see ^{f0724}2 Samuel 17:24-27); so the Syriac inscription, the song which David sung in the time of his persecution, desiring to return to Jerusalem.

Ver. 1. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks*, etc.] Either through a natural thirst that creature is said to have; or through the heat of the summer season; and especially when hunted by dogs, it betakes itself to rivers of water, partly to make its escape, and partly to extinguish its thirst, and refresh itself. The word here used denotes the cry of the hart, when in distress for water, and pants after it, and is peculiar to it; and the verb being of the feminine gender, hence the Septuagint render it the “hind”; and Kimchi conjectures that the reason of it may be, because the voice of the female may be stronger than that of the male; but the contrary is asserted by the philosopher ^{f582}, who says, that the male harts cry much stronger than the females; and that the voice of the female is short, but that of the

male is long, or protracted. Schindler ^{f583} gives three reasons why these creatures are so desirous of water; because they were in desert places, where water was wanting; and another, that being heated by destroying and eating serpents, they coveted water to refresh themselves; and the third, when followed by dogs, they betake themselves into the water, and go into that for safety;

so panteth my soul after thee, O God; being persecuted by men, and deprived of the word and worship of God, which occasioned a vehement desire after communion with him in his house and ordinances: some render the words, “as the field”, or “meadow, desires the shower”, etc. ^{f584}; or thirsts after it when parched with drought; (see ^{<2380>}Isaiah 35:7) (^{<1960>}Psalm 63:1); and by these metaphors, one or the other, is expressed the psalmist’s violent and eager thirst after the enjoyment of God in public worship.

Ver. 2. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God*, etc.] Who is so called, in opposition to the idols of the Gentiles, which were lifeless statues; and who is the author, giver, and maintainer of natural life; and who has promised and provided eternal life in his Son; and is himself the fountain of life, and the fountain of living waters, and a place of broad rivers and streams: particularly his lovingkindness, which is better than life, is a pure river of water of life, the streams where make glad the saints; and hence it is that the psalmist thirsted after God, and the discoveries of his love: saying,

when shall I come and appear before God? meaning, not in heaven, as desiring the beatific vision; but in the tabernacle, where were the worship of God, and the ark, the symbol of the divine Presence, and where the Israelites appeared before him, even in Zion; (see ^{<1807>}Psalm 84:7).

Ver. 3. *My tears have been my meat day and night*, etc.] That is, he could not eat for sorrow, like Hannah, ^{<1007>}1 Samuel 1:7,8; or while he was eating tears fell in plenty, and they were as common, day and night, as his food, and mixed with it ^{f585}; (see ^{<1805>}Psalm 80:5);

while they continually say unto me, his enemies the Philistines,

where [is] thy God? theirs were to be seen and pointed at, as the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, and idols of gold, silver, brass, wood, and stone; wherefore they ask, where was his? but David’s God was invisible; he is in the heavens, and does what he pleases, (^{<1910>}Psalm 115:2,3); or the sense is, that if there was such a God he believed in and

professed, and he was his servant, surely he would never have suffered him to fall into so much distress and calamity, but would have appeared for his relief and deliverance; and therefore tauntingly, and by way of reproach, ask where he was.

Ver. 4. *When I remember these [things]*, etc.] Either the reproaches of his enemies; or rather his past enjoyments of God in his house, he after makes mention of;

I pour out my soul in me, that is, he had no life nor spirit in him, but was quite overwhelmed with distress and anguish; or he poured out his soul in prayer to God, that it might be with him as in times past;

for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God; the place of public worship, whither he had often gone, with great pleasure and delight; and, which added thereto, there were many that went along with him; or whom he had “caused to go”^{f586}, had brought along with him; which is the sense of the word, only used here and in (~~23815~~ Isaiah 38:15); as Dr. Hammond from R. Tanchum and Aben Walid, has shown: a good man will not only attend divine worship himself, but will bring others with him: but now, he could neither go alone, nor in company, the remembrance of which greatly affected his mind; (see ~~48701~~ Psalm 137:1);

with the voice of joy and praise: the people singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs;

with a multitude that kept holy day; as especially on the three great festivals in the year, the feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, when all the males of Israel appeared before God together, and which was a large multitude; and a delightful sight it was to behold them, when they were all engaged in religious worship at once.

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* etc.] The psalmist corrects himself, as being too much depressed in spirit with his present circumstances, and expostulates with himself; adding,

and [why] art thou disquieted in me? which suggests, that the dejections of God’s people are unreasonable ones; sin itself is no just cause and reason of them; for though it is very disagreeable, loathsome, and abhorring, troublesome and burdensome, to a spiritual man, and is ingenuously confessed, and heartily mourned over, and is matter of humiliation; yet no true reason of dejection: because there is forgiveness of it with God; the

blood of Christ has been shed for the remission of it; it has been bore and done away by him; nor is there any condemnation for it to them that are in him; and though it rages, and threatens to get the ascendant; yet it is promised it shall not have the dominion over the saints; neither the nature of it, being great, as committed against God himself, nor the multitude of sins, nor the aggravated circumstances of them, are just causes of dejection, since the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; nor are Satan and his temptations; he is indeed an enemy, very powerful, subtle, and terrible; he is the strong man armed, the old serpent, and a roaring lion; and his temptations are very troublesome and grieving; and it becomes the saints to be upon their guard against him and them; but they have no reason to be cast down on account hereof; for God, who is on the side of his people, is mightier than he; Christ is stronger than the strong man armed, and the divine Spirit who is in them is greater than he that is in the world: Satan is under divine restraints, and can go no further in tempting than he is suffered, and his temptations are overruled for good; besides, good armour is provided for the Christian to fight against him with, and in a short time he will be bruised under his feet: nor are the hidings of God's face a sufficient reason of dejection; for though such a case is very distressing, and gives great trouble to those that love the Lord; nor can they, nor does it become them to sit easy and unconcerned in such circumstances, as they are great trials of faith and patience; yet it is the experience of the people of God in all ages: some good ends are answered hereby, as to bring saints to a sense of sins, which has deprived them of the divine Presence, to make them prize it the more when they have it, and to be careful of losing it for the future. Besides, the love of God continues the same when he hides and chides; and he will return again, and will not finally and totally forsake his people; and in a little while they shall be for ever with him, and see him as he is; and though by one providence or another they may be deprived for a while of the word, worship, and ordinances of God, he that provides a place for his church, and feeds and nourishes her in the wilderness, can make up the lack of such enjoyments by his presence and Spirit. The means and methods the psalmist took to remove his dejections and disquietudes of mind are as follow;

hope thou in God; for the pardon of sin; for which there is good ground of hope, and so no reason to be cast down on account of it; for strength against Satan's temptations, which is to be had in Christ, as well as righteousness; and for the appearance of God, and the discoveries of his

love, who has his set time to favour his people, and therefore to be hoped, and quietly waited for. Hope is of great use against castings down; it is an helmet, an erector of the head, which keeps it upright, and from bowing down: it is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and is of great service in the troubles of life, and against the fears of death;

for I shall yet praise him [for] the help of his countenance; or “the salvations of his countenance” ^{f587}; which implies that the psalmist believed, notwithstanding his present circumstances, that he should have salvation upon salvation; salvation of every kind; or a full and complete one, which should spring, not from any merits of his, but from the free grace and favour of God, expressed in his gracious countenance towards him; and also intimates, that the light of his countenance would be salvation to him ^{f588} now; and that his consummate happiness hereafter would lie in beholding his face for evermore: all which would give him occasion and opportunity of praising the Lord. Now such a faith and persuasion as this is a good antidote against dejections of soul, and disquietude of mind; (see ^{<4973>}Psalm 27:13).

Ver. 6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me*, etc.] Which the psalmist repeats, partly to show the greatness of his dejection, though he had not lost his view of interest in God as his covenant God; and partly to observe another method he made use of to remove his dejection and refresh his spirits; and that was by calling to mind past experiences of divine goodness;

therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan; the country round about it, or rather beyond it; which was at the farthest parts of the land of Canaan, where David was obliged to flee, and where he had often met with God;

and of the Hermonites; who inhabited the mountain of Hermon; or the Hermonian mountains, as the Targum; (see ^{<4973>}Psalm 133:3); a mountain upon the border of the land of Israel eastward, and which was very high; Cocceius thinks the Geshurites are meant; (see ^{<4978>}1 Samuel 27:8); here also the Lord had appeared to him, and for him; and

from the hill Mizar; or “the little hill” ^{f589}; which might be so in comparison of Hermon. The above interpreter thinks Zoar is meant, which Lot so called, (^{<4981>}Genesis 19:20,22); which was near Sodom and Gomorrah: Kimchi thinks it might be Zior, mentioned in (^{<4954>}Joshua 15:54); but, be it

what or where it will, in this little hill David enjoyed the divine Presence; or was indulged with some remarkable favour; from all which he concludes he had no just reason to be dejected and disquieted in his mind: and right it is for the people of God to call to mind past experiences, and make mention of them; partly for the glory of divine grace, and to express their gratitude to God, and their sense of his goodness; and partly to cheer and refresh their own spirits, and prevent dejection and despondency: and delightful it is to call to mind, how, at such a time, and in such a place, the Lord was pleased to manifest his love, apply some gracious promise, or deliver from some sore temptation or distress: all which must tend to encourage faith and hope. The Jewish writers differently interpret these words; Jarchi, of David's remembrance of the wonderful works God did for the people of Israel of old, in drying up the river Jordan, and giving them the law on Mount Sinai, a little hill, in comparison of some others: Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, understand them as a reason of his dejection, when he remembered how the Israelites came from those several parts to the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, which he was now deprived of; and the Targum paraphrases them of the inhabitants of those places, and of the people that received the law on Mount Sinai, remembering God; and so Arama thinks "beyond Jordan" is mentioned because the law was given there; and by the hill Mizar he understands Sinai: and some Christian interpreters consider them as a reason why David's soul was cast down in him, he being in such places as here mentioned, at a distance from his own house, from Jerusalem, and the place of divine worship, and so render the words, "because that I remember thee", etc. ^{f590}.

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the water spouts*, etc.] By which are meant afflictions, comparable to the deep waters of the sea, for their multitude and overwhelming nature; (see ^{<590>} Psalm 69:1,2) (^{<38D>} Isaiah 43:2); these came pouring down, one after another, upon the psalmist: as soon as one affliction over, another came, as in the case of Job; which is signified by one calling to another, and were clamorous, troublesome, and very grievous and distressing;

all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me: with which he seemed to be covered and overwhelmed, as a ship is at sea. It may be observed, that the psalmist calls afflictions God's water spouts, and "his" waves and "his" billows; because they are appointed, sent, ordered, and overruled by him, and made to work for the good of his people: and now, though these might

seem to be a just cause of dejection, yet they were not, as appears from (^{<1948>}Psalm 42:8).

Ver. 8. [*Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,* etc.] Which is a tender affection in God towards his people, springs from his sovereign will and pleasure, is from everlasting, is ever the same, never removes from them, and is better than life; the effects of which are all spiritual blessings, grace, and glory: and this the Lord “commands” when he sends it forth with power, makes a clear manifestation and home application of it to them; when he commands his covenant, or bestows covenant blessings on them; when he commands his strength, or gives them strength to bear up under afflictions; when he commands deliverances for Jacob, or works salvation for them; and when he commands blessings temporal and spiritual on them, especially life for evermore: (see ^{<1310>}Psalm 111:9 68:29) (^{<1948>}Psalm 44:4 133:3); and this is done in “the daytime”; either, as some interpret it, in a fit and seasonable time, in God’s appointed time, who has his set time to favour his people, and show his lovingkindness to them; or openly and publicly, so as themselves and others may see the salvation of the Lord; or continually; for mercy, goodness, and lovingkindness, follow them all the days of their lives; yea, are from everlasting to everlasting: and these words may be read either in the past tense, as some do, “yet the Lord hath commanded”, ^{f591}, etc. and so respect what had been, and relate to the former experiences and manifestations of the love of God, with which the psalmist encourages himself under his present afflictions; or in the future, as in our version; and so they are an expression of faith as to what would be hereafter, that the Lord would appear again, and show him his face and favour;

and in the night his song [shall be] with me; signifying hereby, that he strongly believed he should have occasion of singing praise to God in the night season, though he was now in such mournful circumstances: he calls it “his song”; that is, the Lord’s song; because the matter of it are his lovingkindness, and the blessings springing from it; because the Lord himself is the subject of it; his perfections, his works, his salvation and glory; and because he gives songs in the night, and puts them into the mouths of his people; (see ^{<2312>}Isaiah 12:2) (^{<18510>}Job 35:10); and the psalmist says it would be with him, in his heart, and in his mouth, and be his constant companion wherever he was, lying down, or rising up; and that “in the night”; either figuratively understood of affliction and distress, out of which he would be delivered, and so be compassed about with songs of

deliverance; or literally, it being a time of leisure to call to mind the salvation and mercies of the day, and be thankful for them; (see ^{<377B>}Psalm 77:6 119:62) (^{<446S>}Acts 16:25);

[and] my prayer unto the God of my life: natural, spiritual, and eternal; being the author, giver, and preserver of each; and this is no inconsiderable mercy, to have such a God to pray unto in a time of distress; as well as in a time of salvation, to go to, and make known requests with thanksgiving; which seems to be intended here, since it is joined with a song. Prayer and praise go together, the object of which are not lifeless idols, that cannot save; but the living God, who is a God hearing and answering prayer, and does not despise the prayer of the destitute. The prayer of the psalmist follows.

Ver. 9. *I will say unto God my rock,* etc.] A name frequently given to the eternal God, Father, Son, and Spirit, (^{<153D>}Deuteronomy 32:4,31 ^{<450D>}1 Corinthians 10:4) (^{<412D>}2 Samuel 23:2,3); (see Gill on "^{<498D>}Psalm 18:2");

why hast thou forgotten me? (see Gill on "^{<493B>}Psalm 13:1");

why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? meaning perhaps Saul; though it may be applied to any spiritual enemy, sin, Satan, and the world; who are very oppressive and afflicting, and occasion continual mourning to the children of God.

Ver. 10. *[As] with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me,* etc.] The reproaches of his enemies were grievous and cutting to him, as if a sword pierced through the marrow in his bones, which, being very sensitive, gives exquisite pain. There is a various reading here: some copies, as Vatablus observes, read **b**, "in", or with, and others **k**, "as", which seems to be the truest; and our translators supply "as", to make the sense, though they read "with"; but some ^{f592} only read "as"; and the sense is, the reproaches cast upon the psalmist were as a sword cutting and killing; and these reproaches were as follow;

while they say daily unto me, where [is] thy God? (see Gill on "^{<498B>}Psalm 42:3").

Ver. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* etc.] The same expostulation as in (^{<498B>}Psalm 42:5); and so is what follows,

and why art thou disquieted within me? and the same argument and means are made use of to remove dejection and disquietude;

hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him; (see Gill on “⁴⁹⁰⁵Psalm 42:5”); to which is added a new argument, taken from the grace and goodness of God, and covenant interest in him;

[who is] the health of my countenance, and my God; as the bodily health of man is seen in the countenance, and for the most part to be judged of by it; so is the spiritual health of the saints, and which they have from the Lord; when he, as the sun of righteousness, arises upon them with healing in his wings, he, by his gracious presence, makes their countenances cheerful, fills them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and causes them to lift up their heads with an holy boldness and confidence, and without shame and fear: or as it may be rendered, who “is the salvations of my countenance”^{f593}; that is, who is or will be the author of full and complete salvation to me; which will be so public and open, so clear and manifest, as to be beheld by myself and others; and this the psalmist mentions, in order to remove his present dejections; and besides, this God of salvation he believed was his covenant God, and would be so even unto death; and therefore he had no just reason to be dejected and disquieted.