

Psalm 43:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Analysis

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. This verse repeats the refrain appearing in 42:5 and 42:11, now concluding Psalms 42-43 (originally one psalm). The threefold repetition creates rhythmic structure, reinforcing the psalm's central message: despite continued struggle, choose hope; despite present despair, expect future praise. The repetition itself demonstrates faith's persistence—returning again and again to truth when feelings repeatedly suggest lies.

The verse's structure and meaning echo previous analysis (see 42:11), but context matters. This final occurrence follows specific petition for guidance (v.3) and confident anticipation of restored worship (v.4). The refrain now functions as conclusion, demonstrating that after expressing complaint, making specific requests, and envisioning future joy, the psalmist still faces present struggle. The soul remains "cast down" and "disquieted." Spiritual victory isn't instant emotional transformation but sustained choice to hope despite unchanged feelings.

The progression through three refrains charts spiritual journey. First occurrence (42:5) comes after describing intense longing for God (42:1-4). Second occurrence (42:11) follows complaint about enemies' taunts and God's apparent forgetfulness (42:9-10). Third occurrence (43:5) concludes after petition for guidance and vision of future worship (43:1-4). Each context differs, yet response remains consistent:

question despair, command hope, declare confidence in future praise, affirm personal relationship with God.

The consistency demonstrates mature faith—not depending on circumstances but rooted in God's character. Whether describing longing, addressing enemies, or requesting guidance, the psalmist returns to same foundational truth: God is faithful, present despair is temporary, future restoration is certain, relationship with God defines identity regardless of feelings. This pattern models how believers navigate prolonged difficulty—not by resolving all problems instantly but by repeatedly choosing trust over surrender to despair.

The final "and my God" emphasizes personal appropriation of covenant relationship. Through all struggles—separation from worship (42:4), enemies' taunts (42:10), oppression and deceit (43:1-2), darkness and apparent divine abandonment—the claim remains: He is MY God. This possessive pronoun anchors faith when everything else shifts. Circumstances change, feelings fluctuate, difficulties persist, but covenant relationship endures: "MY God." This is the psalm's ultimate answer to soul's turmoil—identity secured not in circumstances but in relationship with the covenant-keeping God.

Historical Context

The refrain's threefold repetition served powerful liturgical function. Corporate worship often employed refrains allowing congregational participation. As worship leader sang verses describing struggle, the congregation joined in repeated affirmation: hope in God, future praise is certain, He is our God. This communal dimension strengthened individual faith—when personal conviction wavered, corporate confession sustained belief.

The pattern of repeated affirmation despite unchanged circumstances appears throughout Scripture. Job, after losing everything, declared: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). Habakkuk, confronting Babylon's invasion, concluded: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom...yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego told Nebuchadnezzar: "our God whom we serve is able to deliver

us...But if not...we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17-18). Faith confesses truth about God regardless of outcomes.

The Psalms' honesty about ongoing struggle distinguished biblical faith from pagan religion and modern prosperity gospel. Ancient pagans manipulated gods through ritual and magic. Modern prosperity teaching promises immediate resolution of problems through faith. Biblical faith acknowledges prolonged difficulty while maintaining hope grounded in God's character and promises. The psalms validate extended seasons of struggle—not as failure of faith but as context for faith's exercise.

Church history records countless believers who returned repeatedly to this psalm during prolonged suffering. Augustine meditated extensively on Psalms 42-43. Medieval mystics used them to describe dark night of the soul—seasons when God's presence withdrew for spiritual purification. Reformers facing persecution found comfort in the psalmist's honest struggle and persistent hope. Modern believers battling depression, chronic illness, or unresolved circumstances find validation: faith doesn't eliminate struggle but provides resources for enduring it.

The psalm's conclusion without resolution models realistic spirituality. We don't know if the psalmist immediately returned to Jerusalem, if circumstances changed, or if emotional relief came. The psalm ends where it began—with struggle. Yet the three refrains demonstrate something changed: not circumstances or feelings but settled determination to hope in God regardless. This is faith's victory—not eliminating difficulty but maintaining trust within it.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the threefold repetition of the refrain teach about the nature of faith and the persistence of spiritual struggle?
2. How does the psalm's lack of resolution (ending with continued struggle) provide realistic model for Christian experience?
3. Why is it significant that the psalmist repeatedly addresses his own soul rather than expecting God to immediately fix feelings?
4. What is the relationship between corporate worship (liturgical refrains) and individual faith during prolonged difficulty?
5. How can you cultivate the kind of settled determination this psalm demonstrates—choosing hope repeatedly despite unchanged circumstances?

Interlinear Text

עַלְלֵי תַּשְׁתַּחַת וּמְחֵץ יְמִינָה נֶפֶשִׁי וּמִמֶּה תַּהֲמֵן
H4100 Why art thou cast down O my soul H4100 and why art thou disquieted H5921
H7817 H5315 H1993

אַוְدֵךְ עַד כִּי אֶלְפָתִין הָזֵחַ וְלִי
within me hope and my God H3588 H5750 for I shall yet praise H3034
H3176 H430

וְשׁוֹעֵת הַפְּנִים אֶלְפָתִין
him who is the health of my countenance and my God H430
H3444 H6440

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 42:5 (Resurrection): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Psalms 42:11 (Resurrection): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

