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The works of the LORD
are great,
Studied by all who
have pleasure in them.
Psalm 111:2

Survey of the Psalms

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*As a deer pants
for flowing streams,
so pants my soul
for you, O God.*
(Psalm 42:1)

Lesson 3: Psalm 42, 56, & 142 Fall 2020

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Psalm 42, 56, 142: Lament Psalms

- Lament Psalm = a psalm in which the psalmist is troubled, going through physical, spiritual, and/or emotional distress, and is seeking deliverance from God.
- Key feature of today's Psalms: the psalmist shows confidence that God will hear and answer.

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Seven Elements of Lament Psalms:

1. Addressing God with a cry for help; "Give ear to my prayer" Ps 55:1
2. Looking at God's character and blessings in the past
3. Describing the current distress
4. Expressing trust and confidence in God's ability to deliver
5. Asking God specifically to deliver
6. Further questioning about the distress; "Why?"
7. Praising God for what He will do

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Title of Psalm 42: "A Maskil"

Maskil = instruction
 "enlightenment" or "to impart wisdom"
 a type of psalm focusing specifically on instruction in practical wisdom.

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Structure of Psalm 42:

3-fold questions and 3-fold refrain:
 Psalmist questions God:
 42:2b, 42:9b, 43:2
 Psalmist questions himself:
 42:5; 42:11; 43:5

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Structure of Psalm 42:

Lament alternating with Hope:

A Lament: 42:1-4
B Hope: 42:5
A' Lament: 42:6-7
B' Hope: 42:8
A'' Lament: 42:9-10
B'' Hope: 42:11
A''' Lament: 43:1-4
B''' Hope: 43:5

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Ps 137:1-4 "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept....We hung our harps. For there our captors demanded of us songs... 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.' How can we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?"

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“Over a period of 4 or 5 years, I collected an astounding list of Bible passages about soul-talk and began to understand that when my soul is blessing God, I cannot be complaining, worrying, or arguing....*I can talk to my soul in biblical phrases* somewhat like praying the words of scripture back to God.”

From *O My Soul, A Biblical Exploration of Soul-Talk*, by Marilyn McClurg

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Psalm 42:5; 42:11; 43:5

42:5 “the help of *His presence*”

42:11 “the help of *my countenance* and my God”

43:5 “the help of *my countenance* and my God”

Hebrew: PANIYM = face, presence

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Title of Psalm 56:

- According to Jonath elem rechokim (NAS, KJV)
- To the tune of “A Dove on Distant Oaks” (NIV)
- According to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths (ESV)
= Probably indicates the tune for singing this psalm

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Title of Psalm 56: A Mikhtam

Mikhtam = something inscribed in an enduring way; a memorial

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Structure of Psalm 56:

Two sections with refrains (vs 4 & 10-11) which are integral in each section:

Vs. 1-7: his faith and plight, concluding in a prayer for the destruction of his enemies.

Vs. 8-13: his confident anticipation of deliverance, concluding in assurance of his giving thank offerings to God.

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Structure of Psalm 56:

Three parts in a pivotal pattern (chiasm):

A Lament vs. 1-2

B Trust in God vs. 3-4

C Affliction and Prayer against his enemies vs. 5-9a

B' Trust in God vs. 9b-11

A' Thanksgiving vs. 12-13

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Psalm 56:3 "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You."

"It is possible for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. To be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant is the conquering faith of God's elect."

C.H. Spurgeon

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Psalm 56:12 "Your vows are binding upon me, O God."

- Ps 66:13-14 "I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings; ***I shall pay You my vows***, which my lips uttered, and my mouth spoke when I was in distress."
- Ps 142:7 "Bring my soul out of prison, so that I may give thanks to Your name..."

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Structure of Psalm 142:

- A** Lament of Individual vs. 1-2
- B** Loneliness in Suffering vs. 3-6
- A'** Public Thanksgiving vs 7

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Lessons from the Lament Psalms:

1. Tell the Lord about your trouble. 56:2,8; 142:1-2
2. Seek Him aggressively. 42:2
3. Remember how God has been faithful in the past, how He has taken care of you before. 42:4,6
4. Don't dwell in the past, however.
5. Remind yourself of what you know to be true about God. 42:5, 11; 56:3-4; 56:9b-11; 142:5
6. Do the next right thing. 56:45-13

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Memory Passage: Psalm 42:

Ps 42:1-4a

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?

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

These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.

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