

cascades over rock, to mirror his feelings. He uses it as a prayer – a prayer of longing and praise. Longing for his restoration to his beloved Temple, that God will yet vindicate him because he “is the help of my countenance and my God.”

This psalm has remained with me since I first heard it, and each time I see it now I am taken back to those days and reminded both of life’s challenges and the value of trust, courage and faith.

*Noël Hector*

### A MEDITATION ON PSALM 42

from “**DAVID’S CROWN - Sounding the Psalms!**”

by Malcolm Guite

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You are my heart’s desire from first to last.  
‘Like as the hart desires the water brooks  
so longs my soul towards You.’ So I thirst

for living streams, not for the dusty books  
they write about You, nor the empty words  
that ring from pulpits, nor the haughty looks

of those who market You. These are the shards  
of broken idols. I long for the deep in You  
that calls to the deep in me, the chords

that sound those depths and summon me to weep  
at first with tears of grief, and then with tears  
of joy, that I may sow those tears and reap

a timeless harvest, that the ripened ears  
of grain may shine as clean and clear as gold,  
shucked of the husk of all my wasted years.

### FUTURE WEEKS

16th March	Joshua Fowler on Psalm 117
23rd March	Caroline Sackley on Psalm 63
30th March	Nicholas Maddock on Psalm 22
6th April	Tim Daplyn on Psalm 95

## The Benefice of EAST CLEVEDON - LENT COURSE 2022

*Diocese of Bath and Wells*

### **PSALM 42** (*Common Worship - Daily Prayer*)

#### **Longing for God and His Help in Distress**

*To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.*

- 1 As a deer longs for the water brooks,  
so longs my soul for You, O God.
- 2 My soul is athirst for God,  
even for the living God;  
when shall I come before the presence of God?
- 3 My tears have been my bread day and night,  
while all day long they say to me,  
“Where is now your God?”
- 4 Now when I think upon these things,  
I pour out my soul:  
how I went with the multitude,  
and led the procession to the house of God,
- 5 With the voice of praise and thanksgiving,  
among those who kept holy day.
- 6 *Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?*
- 7 *O put your trust in God;  
for I will yet give Him thanks,  
Who is the help of my countenance and my God.*
- 8 My soul is heavy within me:  
therefore I remember You from the land of Jordan,  
and from Hermon and the hill of Mizar.
- 9 Deep calls to deep in the thunder of Your waterfalls;  
all Your breakers and waves have gone over me.
- 10 The Lord will grant His loving kindness in the daytime;  
Through the night His song will be with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

- 11 I say to God, my rock,  
 “Why have You forgotten me?  
 And why go I so heavily  
 while the enemy oppresses me?”
- 12 As they crush my bones,  
 my enemies mock me,  
 while all day long they say to me,  
 “Where is now your God?”
- 13 *Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul,  
 and why are you so disquieted within me?*
- 14 *O put your trust in God:  
 for I will yet give Him thanks,  
 who is the help of my countenance and my God.*

### PRAYER

***Come, creator Spirit, source of life;  
 sustain us when our souls are heavy  
 and our wells have run dry,  
 for you are the Father’s gift  
 with Him who is our living water  
 Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

### BACKGROUND

This deeply moving Psalm is set in Exile. The unknown author was a priest or holder of high office in the Temple in Jerusalem but is now isolated in the countryside in Caesarea Philippi by the river Jordan where fast flowing tributaries gather together over rocks. He sees the rushing waters and the dry rocks and uses these images in a lament for his lost Temple worship where he experienced joy and closeness to God. But he “hangs on” in spite of the mockery of his enemies, and in his loneliness and thirst for God’s consolation he cries for justice and restoration placing his trust in God “for I will yet give him thanks”. This Psalm, perhaps introduced by the author, later became established in the canon of worship at the Temple when his exile was over. Psalm 43 is part of 42 and is one longer song, but broken into two sections, becoming two psalms.

### REFLECTION

I came across this psalm when I was a barrister in Leicester. When possible, I went to a city centre church which had a vibrant lunchtime ministry for people in the offices and workplaces around. We had a series on the psalms, and this is the one I recall most clearly. The person leading the reflection spoke movingly about the reality of life’s ups and downs, his own experience of depression and how he (and we) are sometimes forced to cling on to our faith in God despite very difficult circumstances. The repeated refrain “put your trust in God for I will yet give him thanks” was a moving testament to faith’s endurance and hope.

I’ve not suffered from depression myself – certainly not the chronic form – but like everyone there have been times when life has been difficult, isolating and lonely. As Cardinal Basil Hume said, “there is nothing so isolating as pain”. In these circumstances one longs for happier times and God can seem very distant.

Notice in the psalm how water is used in different ways (the thirst in v1; the author’s own soul’s thirst v2; his tears v3; his pouring out of his feelings v4 and his feeling of overwhelming judgment and gloom like waterfalls and great waves v9) and there is an atmosphere of someone being overwhelmed by grief or desolation, either associated with aridity (too little water) or by being deluged by a torrential force of water (too much water). Either way the key word is “overwhelm”.

So inevitably the question for us is what happens to our faith when we fear being overwhelmed by circumstances? The fear of being overwhelmed can be very strong, and can emerge in a huge variety of circumstances. Bereavement, a health crisis, reducing independence, anxiety about a family member, being lonely – and more. In these circumstances it’s inevitable we look back to happier times, but that can make the pain even more acute. So we long for the cycle to end and to be delivered into happier and calmer times. Can faith help us with this? Certainly the psalmist says “yes it can” – he clung onto his faith sure that better things would be restored.

The psalmist uses his environment, his removal from Jerusalem to this place where from dry ground the tributaries gather in rushing