

“Getting Out of the Hole”  
Psalm 42-43 (519) FLCC 7/30/17

## INTRODUCTION

Pixar’s 2015 “Inside Out” makes the point that sadness is a perfectly appropriate and healthy response to loss. However, sometimes sadness takes control of our lives long after the loss and will not let us go. At one level or another, for a limited time or chronically, we have all experienced sadness, depression, despair, hopelessness. We read with interest one man’s attempt to get his head above water, making 2 unsuccessful and 1 successful attempt.

### I. LAMENT AND SELF-TALK – 42:1-5

- A. The psalmist compared himself to a deer in the desert, longing for fresh water – 1.
  - 1. Deer need water close by and do not sweat but pant to cool off.
  - 2. Similarly, the psalmist felt parched and panted or longed for God – 1-2.
  - 3. The comparison indicates that humans are designed to live close to God.
  - 4. Possibly he was far from Jerusalem and longed to return there to present himself before God – 2.
  
- B. Ironically, the psalmist received water in the form of his own tears day and night – 3.
  - People made his sorrow worse by taunting him and asking where his God was.
  
- C. He tried to pull himself out of the hole by remembering better times in the past – 4.
  - 1. He recalled how he used to participate with the multitude in loud and glad worship.
  - 2. Perhaps you have felt far from God and recall earlier days of exuberant participation with other believers.
  - 3. While memories of good times can sometimes help us, they also can make us feel worse, because they contrast with our present situation.
  
- D. Then he turned for the 1st of 3 times to talk with himself, something we all do – 5.
  - 1. He asked himself about the source of his despair, which is an excellent exercise.
  - 2. Then he made the first positive turn by talking to himself instead of only listening.
  - 3. He instructed himself to hope in God, seeing that no other hope had held firm.
  - 4. He also assured himself that his worship of God would once again be vibrant.
  - 5. He also reminded himself of who God is: salvation and God.

### II. LAMENT AND SELF-TALK – 42:6-11

- A. He tried again to use memory to bolster him, this time of God in special places – the mountains of Hermon, the source of the River Jordan, and Mt Mizar – 6.
  - 1. However, his despairing mind laid hold of pleasant places and imagined the worst about them – that they were surrounded by the waters of the waterfalls to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west – 7.
  - 2. He thought of the dark chaos of the deep before God brought order – Gen 1:2.
  - 3. He was like a deer panting for *water*, then he *watered* himself with his own tears, and now he finds himself overwhelmed with *waters* and drowning.
  - 4. This is what our despairing minds do even with good things.

- B. Then he wisely tried to remind himself of the LORD's steadfast love (the one and only time in the psalm that he called God by his name) – 8.
  - 1. He tried to dry his tears of day and night with God's love and God's songs.
  - 2. Encouraged by God's love, he talked with God instead of only with himself – 8-9.
  - 3. However, his focus quickly turned back to his enemies – 9-10.
  - 4. He was stuck on feeling forgotten by God and taunted by his enemies – 9-10.
- C. He could not pull himself out, so he repeated his self-talk, asking the same questions and giving himself the same instructions and hope – 11.

### **III. PRAYER AND SELF-TALK – 43:1-5**

- A. On this third attempt, the psalmist went straight to prayer, and we can detect a different focus right away.
  - 1. Instead of feeling sorry for himself because of his enemies, he asked God to deal with them – 1.
  - 2. Instead of lamenting God's absence, he presented God a persuasive argument– 2.
  - 3. Instead of complaining about his distance from God, he asked God to lead him to his presence by the two things a despairing person needs: light and truth – 3.
- B. Encouraged by his own bold praying, he announced that he would indeed worship God as before – 4.
  - 1. He called God his the “joy of his delight.”
  - 2. This is a key to getting out of despair – to make God the joy of our delight.
- C. The 3rd time the psalmist repeated the self-talk, he used the same words as the 2nd, but in this context, the emphasis seems to be different. (Read the words with two different emphases).
  - 1. The way forward was to have God as his joy, his hope, and his salvation.
  - 2. In other words, to have God as his God, the object of his worship.

**ILLUSTRATION** John Foster Wallace's words to Kenyon College in 2005

### **CONCLUSION**

To say that God is salvation is somewhat redundant, since no one else could be. This is at the heart of the Christian explanation of salvation. God is holy, and we are not, so we have alienated ourselves from him and erected a barrier called sin, which deserves God's punishment, from which we need salvation. The word for salvation is *yeshua*, which is the root of the proper name Jeshua, or Joshua, or Jesus. The Bible makes an astounding claim, that Jesus is God and that he came to bring salvation to those who believe in him. It goes on to assert that he accomplished this salvation by being taunted by his enemies (like the Psalmist) and killed and coming back to life three days later. You may or may not believe this message, but it is the only one about a Savior who is God. There is a popular idea that there are many myths out there about a divine Savior born of a virgin, but on closer inspection, we find that the account of Jesus is unique. It turns out that he is not merely the best candidate for divine Savior but the only one.

## **Transcription of the 2005 Kenyon Commencement Address - May 21, 2005**

**Written and Delivered by David Foster Wallace**

You get to decide what to worship.

Because here's something else that's weird but true: in the day-to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship [. . .] is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. [. . .].

Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings.