

PSALLO

Psalm 42:1–11

The Psalm begins with a title, verse one in the Hebrew. Many Old Testament scholars agree that the titles are inspired, and not without good reason. These scholars speak of the obvious antiquity of the titles, the fact that some speak of details not related in the historical books of Scripture, etc.¹ The title of Psalm 42 first tells us that it is a *Maschil* Heb. מִשְׁכִּיל that is a song of instruction. Further, the song is written by a writer among the sons of Korah. This title ought to warm the heart of every Christian, for it speaks of the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord. These were men, whose ancestral father challenged the authority given to Moses by the Lord and suffered capital punishment for it at the Lord's own hand. The family was not wholly consumed, and the sons of Korah became Temple Ministers (See Numbers 16:1–49; 1 Chronicles 9:19–31).

Most Old Testament commentators and scholars place this Psalm as a companion Psalm to the following portion of the Psalter, Psalm 43. There is good reason to hold this view as well, seeing that Psalm 43 is an “orphan” Psalm, that is, it has no title in the Hebrew text, and contains the same refrain as its predecessor: “*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.*” Note that in the first instance of this refrain (42:5) the final “*and my God*” is absent from the text. It is the opinion of this writer that the final phrase closes the Psalm lyrically, as it does in Psalm 43, and that the absence of it in 42:5 is fitted to the continuation of Psalm 42 as its second portion.

As for the translation itself, there are no really difficult words or constructions. The most difficult part was setting the translation in a meter that might be sung, and still keep faithful to the Hebrew phrasing. Further, the Psalm has portions which are plaintive, and others speak of praise and thanks. So the tune ought to have portions where there is a more somber minor, and also musical strains of gladness. The meager

effort you have before you reflects the translator's attempt at both an accurate translation, and a tune and a meter which fits the instruction of the Psalm.

Being then a *Maschil*, what wisdom or instruction ought we to glean from this Psalm? First, we see here, as with many of the Psalms, the devotional nature of the Psalter. Along with many others of these inspired hymns of praise, this Psalm breathes of a devout and inspired affection which the human author keeps toward the Lord. He is pressed by that prophetic Spirit into likening his desires for the Lord as to the thirstings of a deer for that necessary, life-sustaining substance, water. This allusion teaches us that life apart from the Lord is parched, dried, barren, needy, and nigh unto death. He repeats that his soul *thirsts* for God. This devotional spirit teaches us to bewail our distraction and satisfaction with other things, competitors to the Living God, and causes us to remember that our only life-giving sustenance is truly God alone.

The Psalmist augments this desire for God in that he points himself toward God in days of distress, when his soul is “cast down”. The word he uses here is a word which can mean to be cowed down, beaten down, even bowed under a heavy burden. It is in such times of difficult providence that the Psalmist confesses that the Lord is his sustenance—and that a life-giving one. His desire for God and the comfort and hope He gives is not optional. It is necessary.

There is another point of wisdom to be learned in this Psalm which is found in the answer to the question, “Why is the Psalmist so bowed down, why so disquieted and troubled?” Once again the entire Psalter, not just here in Psalm 42, gives the answer. The Psalmist is somehow prevented, kept from the public ordinances of worship. Perhaps captivity, perhaps the triumph of an unspecified enemy, and the taunts of that enemy, along with absence from the public worship of God—these are the sources of the Psalmist's soul-trouble. It would be superfluous to write of the great value the Psalter places on the public worship of God. Any student of the Scriptures, and especially of the Psalter, would be able to show with little effort how public worship is extolled, valued, prized in these sacred hymns. Note that in the Psalmist's present state he comforts himself by remembering the more halcyon days of free concourse with others of like precious faith going up to the house of the Lord to worship together. It could even be said that his longing for the living God is one and the same with worshipping God with the multitude of those that kept the Holy Day.

Further, as the Psalmist is able even in this afflicted estate to worship God privately, we may rightly understand that this is not enough for him. So highly does he prize the public ordinances of worship that his private worship, and the comfort he takes therein, will not be truly complete until such time as he is able once again to join the worshippers in the house

Continued on Page 323.

THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Todd L. Ruddell is pastor of Christ Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCGA) in Wylie, Texas.

1. Among the many scholars who support the antiquity and veracity of the Psalm titles, see E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) 300; and G. L. Archer *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998) 491–492.

***Francis Turretin and Barthianism: The Covenant of Works in Historical Perspective.* Continued from Page 213.**

To again invoke the impression of à Brackel mentioned in the beginning of this study, only when we understand aright the covenant of works will we understand aright the covenant of grace.⁵⁵ Only when we first understand what Adam failed to do, can we fully appreciate—to the glory of God alone who is abundant and rich in mercy—what Christ succeeded to do on our behalf. For if we are to be justified, and justification is to truly be by grace alone, it must be on the basis of a righteousness that is not our own. It must be on the basis of a perfect righteousness that is imputed to us by faith alone because of Christ alone. Perhaps ironically, only with *this* understanding of the covenant of works can the covenant of grace be truly gracious. ■

***In Brief: The Intent of Larger Catechism 109 Regarding Pictures of Christ's Humanity.* Continued from Page 228.**

The wording of public ordinances and subsequent widespread destruction of depictions of Christ, the Parliament's authorization of views such as those held by Vicars and others, Laud's view contrary to the Homilies noted in his trial, and the involvement of the four London ministers in identifying idols for destruction which included pictures of Christ, as well as the work by the Assembly on Parliament's list of scandalous sins, all indicate that if indeed the Westminster divines were of a mind to omit pictures of Christ's humanity from their proscriptions in Larger Catechism 109, they would surely have needed to have stated this explicitly. Clearly, subsequent generations of Presbyterians understood this to be the intent of the Westminster Assembly, which can be traced in the many sources cited in Dr. VanDrunen's article.

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

***The Sabbath Day and Sabbath Recreations.* Continued from Page 238.**

the ministry is a failure to engage the Puritan view of the Sabbath. One is tempted to think that no exegetical or historical work has been done by these candidates. It behooves candidates coming into a confessional church to examine the reasons why the standards say what they say. If they plan to take an exception to the "no recreation" clause, they need to have a better understanding of what Isaiah 58:13–14 mean in the context, and in the overall scope of redemptive history, and not simply argue that "pleasure" means "business," when the context of the passage does not lend itself to this interpretation.

On what can and cannot be done on the Sabbath, there is endless debate, stretching all the way back to Talmudic times (the Talmud has an entire treatise on the Sabbath). Rather

than asking about a specific activity, as to whether or not it is lawful (and usually with the mindset of what the person can get away with), it is more helpful to remember that the rest in view is not simply physical rest, but rather a rest of worshipping the Lord. Therefore, if the activity is conducive to worship, then it is lawful. We cannot ignore the human conscience here either, since an activity that might be conducive for worship to one person may not be conducive to worship for someone else. To take one example, it is certainly wise to let small children let loose some of their excess energy on the Sabbath (contrary to Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Farmer Boy!*). Otherwise, they will not be able to sit still and pay attention in worship. One does not have to take the attitude of Almanzo Wilder's father in order to have a Puritan view of what is acceptable on the Sabbath! It is certainly a work of necessity to do something about the energy of small children. We must avoid both extremes of legalism and antinomianism here, as well as everywhere in our treatment of the law. ■

***Psallo: Psalm 42:1–11.* Continued from Page 296.**

of God. In the companion Psalm which follows, he asks for that deliverance which results once again in joining in those public ordinances. In a day when the lightest or slightest things become excuses for missing the public worship of our day, this is indeed a refreshing encouragement not only to be diligent in attendance upon those ordinances, but to count them as the precious gifts that they are from the Lord.

Let us then learn from this "Wisdom Psalm". Let us, with the Psalmist, confess that the Lord is our necessary sustenance, and that we are indeed dried and parched apart from Him. Let us confess that our affections are not as they ought to be, and bewail, and confess our indifference and coldness toward the Lord. Let us also confess that the public ordinances of worship are our necessary food, and turn away from the pietistic notion that we can be content in private and secret worship. Let us prize the Day the Lord has set apart for Himself, and those ordinances by which He communes with us. Let us prepare to meet the Lord week by week, and have a proper sense of anticipation which befits the greatness of His blessing in these signal benefits. Let us long for Him as the thirsty deer long for the valley springs!

TODD L. RUDELL ■

55. And therefore we cannot agree with the points of agreement that McGowan has with Barth on the covenant. McGowan argues that Barth's rejection of the covenant works/grace distinction and denial of the priority of law over grace was a helpful critique of traditional covenant theology. He therefore concludes that to advocate these things is potentially "fatal." However, as for us, it appears to be just the opposite; the preservation of the gospel depends upon the priority of law and the distinction between covenant of works and grace. "Karl Barth," 130.

Psalm 42:1-11

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

Longing Deer

Todd L. Ruddell

1 As the deer longs for the val - ley springs, so pants my soul af - ter Thee, O God.
 For I to God's house went sol - emn - ly, I went with the throngs to cel - e - brate,
 6 God my soul's cast down in me with - al there - fore will I Thee to mind re - call
 9 I'll ask God hast Thou for - got - ten me? Mourn - ing and o' - prest by the en - e - my?

2 Thirsts doth my soul for the liv - ing God. When shall I ap - pear be - fore God?
 We did go un - to His ho - ly place wor - ship - ping with joy and thanks.
 From Jor - dan, the Her - mons from the hill.⁷ Deep un - to deep doth call.
 10 As to break my bones so my en - e - my where's thy God, this they dai - ly say.

3 My tears have been my bread day and night, and all day, they say where is thy God?
 5 Why art thou cast down, my soul in me? Why so trou - bl'd, and bur - den'd art thee?
 Lord Thy noi - some floods pass o - ver me. ⁸ In the day the Lord ut - ters His mer - cy,
 11 Why art thou cast down, my soul in me? Why so trou - bl'd and bur - den'd art thee?

4 When these things I call in - to my thoughts then my soul in me is pour - ed out.
 Hope up - on God, for Him shall I praise He a - lone my coun - te - nance saves.
 His song's ev - er with me in the night as a prayer to the God of my life.
 Hope up - on God, for Him shall I praise He a - lone my coun - te - nance saves, He is my God.