



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 42

[Worship]

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help 6 and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. 7 Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. 8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. 9 I say to God, my rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?" 10 As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Consider:

Paul's witness is that, in Christ, we may be freed from all the "disciplinarians" that restrict our lives. Entry into that new life of gospel freedom, through baptism, is like changing clothes; that is, changing self. In the new life, all of the old classifications and stratifications are

[Words]

eliminated (Galatians 3: 28). In the gospel narrative we see "a man from the city who had demons" (Luke 8:27). We may imagine, in contemporary context, the demons are any form of addiction—drugs, sex, money, power, control, self-promotion. Such demons preclude much of the life that we want to live. But Jesus has the power to give the man a new life of freedom, beyond the grip of all the demons. The man in his new life is "in his right mind" (8:35).

That new life requires bold, risk-taking human agents to be enacted. The Elijah narrative in 1 Kings portrays the risks the prophet ran in obedience to the God of life. And then he is spent (19:4,10)! But then, like the needy man addressed by Jesus, Elijah is cared for and sent on his way. We may imagine that Elijah (or the man with Jesus) is the one who speaks the psalms. The speaker is exhausted, bereft of resources, thirsty for God and for new life. But this voice refuses to give in. While "cast down" (42:5; 43:5), the psalmist calls for "hope in God" (42:5,11; 43:5).

In the extremities of our life, we are powerless for ourselves. Just so the man with Jesus is powerless in the face of his demons. And Paul reflects on being "imprisoned" (Galatians 3:23). But then freedom, restoration, and new life flow through. New energy for mission (1 Kings 19:15)! New life for testimony (Luke 8:30)! New life by promise (Galatians 3:29)! These readings trace the hard journey from bondage to freedom, from death to joy in life. No wonder the guy with Jesus went away "proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him" (8:39).

- Walter Brueggemann

[Scripture]

Galatians 3.23-29

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. 27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Question:

We are freed from law when we are "in" Christ. However, the allure of power (and rules-keeping) initially help us feel secure, only to turn into our slave-master(s)

Why do you feel we often reject God's freedom for dead orthodoxies?