

Are You Enduring

Texts: Psalm 42 cp Isaiah 40:27-31

Introduction:

A. When it comes to temptation “God will never give us more than we can bear”. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

We’ve all heard the common phrase: “God will never give us more than we can bear.” We may intellectually assent to this but subjectively, experientially, we may balk. Now, in regards to temptation this idea is certainly true. The apostle Paul specifically said,

- **1 Corinthians 10:13 HCSB** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you are able to bear it.

When we fall into sin, it’s never because the temptation was unbearable, but because we chose not to take the way of escape God provided.

B. When it comes to life circumstances:

1. God’s power is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

However, when it comes to life’s difficulties and burdens, there will indeed be occasions when God will put more on us than we can bear. This is because He wants to bring us to the point of brokenness, to bring us to the end of our own resources, so we’ll say “We can’t.” Then God has us right where He wants us. God occasionally breaks us and this is a good thing!

- **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 HCSB** especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself. (8) Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me. (9) But He said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”** Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. (10) So because of Christ, I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in catastrophes, in persecutions, and in pressures. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. Suffering can help us conform to His image (Philippians 3:10)

Paul said he wanted to share in the sufferings of Christ. It’s through the pain in our lives that God takes us deeper in our relationship with Him.

- **Philippians 3:10 HCSB** *My goal* is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

3. In order to enjoy His glory we must first share in His sufferings (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Listen to what the Apostle Peter had to say on the matter.

- **1 Peter 4:12-13 HCSB** Dear friends, when the fiery ordeal arises among you to test you, don’t be surprised by it, as if something unusual were happening to you. (13) Instead, as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah rejoice, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory.

If we want to see and enjoy His glory, we must first share in His sufferings. Those sufferings will help us recognize our weakness and our insufficiency so we can learn to endure them with His strength instead of our own. As Paul discovered, it is only when we realize our own weakness and begin relying on Hashem’s strength that we can truly endure.

So the question is: Are we doing it? Are we enduring, even when we face more than we can bear?

The author of Psalm 42 knew all about suffering and oppression (Psalm 42)

Let’s look at our text.

- **Psalms 42:1-11 HCSB** For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, God. (2) I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God? (3) My tears have been my food day and night, while all day long people say to me, "Where is your God?" (4) I remember this as I pour out my heart: how I walked with many, leading the festive procession to the house of God, with joyful and thankful shouts. (5) Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God. (6) I am deeply depressed; therefore I remember You from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. (7) Deep calls to deep in the roar of Your waterfalls; all Your breakers and Your billows have swept over me. (8) The LORD will send His faithful love by day; His song will be with me in the night--a prayer to the God of my life. (9) I will say to God, my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why must I go about in sorrow because of the enemy's oppression?" (10) My adversaries taunt me, as if crushing my bones, while all day long they say to me, "Where is your God?" (11) Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God.

First of all, there's spiritual dryness here. In verses one and two the author recognized his spiritual dryness and sought the refreshment that only El Ch'ay (God of Life) can provide. The psalmist related his desperate search for God to a deer's desperate search for water. Life had done a number on this man and he was in hot pursuit of God.

- v. 2 He was struggling spiritually because he felt that God was nowhere to be found. It's really tough to be emotionally and spiritually in despair and not know where God is.
- v. 3 He was suffering emotionally. He was crying and couldn't eat. He was in a state of despair.
- v. 4 It hadn't always been like this. He remembered better days. Back then, he came to God joyfully. Now he was coming with tears. Others noticed this about him as well. (v.3)
- v. 5 In verse five he said that he was depressed and in verse nine that he felt abandoned by God. The author found himself in deep trouble and despair.
- v. 10 His dryness was so deep and the oppression he experienced from others was so bad that it was as if his bones were being crushed. His life experience hurt!
 - He was struggling physically. When we struggle emotionally and spiritually, it can bring us down physically.
 - He was also struggling relationally because he was surrounded by those who were adding to his grief.

We learn a lot from this text. Life is not always sweet. The Christian life on this earth is not all joy and bliss. That's heaven. This man was struggling with real questions; primarily, "Where is God in the dark times?"

All of us who have been adopted into God's family have at times had the experience of feeling real close to God and at other times also had the experience of wondering if God was on vacation right when we needed Him most!

So what should we do when we're in trouble and God seems to be nowhere to be found?

I. Focus on a higher reality – seek God not escape. (James 1:2-5)

Psalm 42's author was doing more than recognizing honestly the reality around him. He was also persevering in the honest pursuit of true spirituality, which is the higher reality.

Look at verse 1 again. What is it that he is panting for? It's not blessings or gifts. He was seeking after God Himself. Could it be that God wants us to be hungry and thirsting more for Him and less for a solution to our problems?

- **James 1:2-5 HCSB** Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) But

endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. (5) Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.

The Master's half brother, the Apostle James said that times of suffering can be made into times of victory if only we will turn to God. Unwanted circumstances bring us despair, and we want a change right now, when maybe all God is offering us is Himself. If God isn't answering our prayer about our painful situation, maybe we should change the focus of our prayer. Maybe we need to focus on pursuing God only.

II. Choose to remember what God has done for us in the past. (Psalm 42:6, 11)

Look at verse 6.

- **Psalm 42:6 HCSB** I am deeply depressed; therefore I remember You from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

In the middle of his desperation, by perseverance and endurance, he chose to remember God. That's why it's important to have a history with God in the good times so we don't forget Him in the bad times. Living in the past isn't always good, but when it comes to remembering God's blessings when we're going through hard times, it is good.

Look at verse 11.

- **Psalm 42:11 HCSB** Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God.

The author deliberately directed his mind toward what God had done for him. It's been said that Christian faith is like a tea bag – you only see how strong it is when it's placed in hot water. It's easy to love God when all is well, but the proof of our love is when all is not well.

Unfortunately it is often only when we are in the darkest hours of our lives that we are really ready to pray. It is often only then that we are prepared to face the truth of the depth of our need.

III. Hear God with new hope (Isaiah 40:27-31 cp James 1:5)

Turn to Isaiah 40. Let's look at verse 27.

- **Isaiah 40:27 HCSB** Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you assert: "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my claim is ignored by my God"?

God was hearing complaints from many of the hearts and voices of His people. God hears us when we cry foul, when we pray "It's not fair!"

We tragically come to the mistaken conclusion that if God is silent, He must also be still. If we can't SEE Him doing something, then He must be DOING nothing. Panic may set in and in our panic we may lose control and start making mistakes. What does God's word say to His people who feel devastated by having to wait?

If we feel we have been put on hold by God, then God has an invitation for us.

- **Isaiah 40:28 HCSB** Do you not know? Have you not heard? Yahweh is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never grows faint or weary; there is no limit to His understanding.

In the context of our waiting, we must come to know the character of God. He reminds us of this because when we have to wait, it's easy to forget what God is like.

- He's the "everlasting God."
- He's the "creator of the ends of the earth."
- He does not "faint or grow weary."
- "His understanding is unsearchable." In other words, we can't figure God out.

How then are we supposed to make it through our trial when we can't fathom what He's up to? Here's how: Look at verse 29.

- **Isaiah 40:29 HCSB** He gives strength to the weary and strengthens the powerless. Remember James? Let's go back to his teaching on the matter.
- **James 1:5 HCSB** Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.

When we patiently and humbly wait for Him, He'll replenish us with new strength – He'll grant us wisdom. And note this especially: Isaiah said that Adonai GRANTS this power and strength. We don't have to earn it. We don't have to work for it. It's a gift to those who are weary.

Just remember, God wants us in a totally dependant position. And it doesn't matter who we are. Examine verse thirty.

- [Isaiah 40:30 HCSB](#) Youths may faint and grow weary, and young men stumble and fall,

It's not only the elderly who yield before life's tough circumstances. Even young people with all their supposed strength and endurance can fail. It's the human condition. We need to not live in the land of "if only." Every day there are people throwing the towel because they are tired of their circumstances, tired of their marriages, tired of their work, tired of their lives.

Look at God's promise in verse thirty-one.

- [Isaiah 40:31 HCSB](#) but those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.

God's renewal of strength is our for the asking, no matter how tired we are. It's a renewal that means mounting up with wings like eagles. It's a renewal that means running ahead tirelessly and walking forward on our journey without weakening.

This kind of waiting for the Lord means looking to Him in the midst of our situation. It means trusting even when there are difficulties. It means believing God when believing God is the last thing we want to do.

Conclusion

Waiting on the Lord doesn't mean sitting in a corner and do nothing. Waiting on the Lord means we're so confident in Him that we proceed with routine faithfulness regardless of our circumstances. Waiting on the Lord means not leaning on our own wisdom, going against His Word in order to "fix" our situation ourselves.

That's why Adonai will let our weariness increase until He finally becomes our only way out.

- He's waiting for us to get so old that there's no way we can have a baby on our own and must rely on a miracle for His promise to come true.
- He's waiting for us to get caught between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea so that all other options are gone.
- He's waiting for us to be like David before Goliath discarding Saul's armor because it doesn't fit.
- He's perfectly willing for us to be born blind and wait our entire lives so that at some point He can walk up and heal us to show us the wonder of the world.

By waiting for the Lord, we exchange our weakness for His strength. We'll fly as the greatest birds; we'll run and not be weary; we shall walk and not faint. We will keep going. We won't give up.

God wants to give us a new capacity to keep going. He wants to supply us with everything we need to endure for as long as we must wait for Him. God may give us wings to lift us out of our discouraging circumstances or He may give us a fresh sense of His presence as we struggle on a long weary road.

Regardless of our circumstances He promises His presence will always be there; even when we can't see Him; even when we can't sense Him; always.