

Wilderness Places of the Righteous

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon explores the deep longing for God found in Psalm 42, emphasizing the importance of maintaining hope amidst spiritual struggles.

Duration: 45:26

Topics: "Longing For God", "Spiritual Hunger"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares about the excitement and revelation that people are experiencing after a recent church service. He uses the analogy of shining light through a diamond to describe how God's Word can speak truth on multiple levels in different people's lives. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having a hungry heart for God and encourages listeners to pray for a passion for Jesus. The sermon is based on Psalm 42, which speaks about longing for God like a deer panting for water.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge PO Box 260 Lindale, Texas 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Now there's been some wonderful sharing from Psalm 42. Last night, and maybe we touched a little bit on Tuesday night, about three weeks ago, on my way to church I was walking into the pastor's room and the Holy Spirit, I was asking about the fast, asking the Holy Spirit when we should fast as a church.

And before talking about that with Pastor Dave and the other pastoral staff, I was just spending a little time asking the Lord about this. And the Holy Spirit clearly spoke to my heart that it was to be the third week of June and that He was going to speak to us from Psalm 42. Now honestly, I didn't really know what Psalm 42 was about, not just on the spot.

So I opened my Bible in the back room and I read it. And I thought, well, that's interesting. God's going to speak to us from Psalm 42.

As the deer of the heart pants after the water brooks, so pant my soul after thee, O God. We have sung songs about it. I have preached sermons on this before.

I've heard sermons about it. And you get a vision, in a sense, of this little deer prancing through the woods looking for a stream and thirsty for God. And I thought, well, that's interesting.

But just simply in faith, what I felt the Holy Spirit speaking, made an announcement that God was going to be speaking to us through Psalm 42. And indeed He has been. Sharing was marvelous last night.

I have met people after the service just out on the street and tonight, earlier as well, and people are so excited about what God is speaking. And I have the illustration of when you take light and you shine it through a diamond, and I liken the diamond to be the word of God, but when God shines His light, His light through His word, it will come in as a single ray on one side and come out the other side in every direction. And really, it's wonderful to see how the Holy Spirit is speaking truth on such a multiplicity of levels in different people's lives and in their hearts.

And I have to honestly say, the hungry are getting the revelation. There is revelation in this psalm, and it's hidden from the religious, but it's given to the hungry. Folks, you are blessed if you have a hungry heart for God.

It is worthwhile praying that simple prayer to say, Lord, stir up my passion for You, Jesus, and don't let my love for You and my love for Your word ever wane or ever go away in my life. Let that be a central point of my life. And I know that that's in this house.

Pastor David and I and Pastor Neil and Pastor Patrick often lovingly compare you to a nest full of baby birds here at Times Square Church with their mouths wide open when you come into the house of God and say, feed me, feed me, feed me. And you're hungry. You know how precious that is? It's wonderful.

All you have to do is travel the country and sit in some of these nauseatingly religious churches for a while, and then you see how precious a hunger for Jesus Christ really is. Oh, hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Lose everything, but don't lose that hunger for Jesus. I'm believing tonight. I don't have the corner on Psalm 42.

Nobody but God does. But the Holy Spirit has been speaking some things to me, and I'm hoping that they can supplement the great truths that you've already heard expounded. Those that have been attending here, you've heard some marvelous expoundings on this psalm.

And I know the Holy Spirit's been speaking to you, and I'm trusting to add to that tonight. I have my two loaves to bring tonight. I'm going to trust the Holy Spirit to break it and multiply it and bless you.

That's been the prayer of my heart all day today. God bless your church. Bless this body.

Bless this people that are hungering for you, Lord God. And he will always bless us by feeding us with the knowledge of who he is. Jesus, I come before you tonight.

God, I thank you for the response of this body. I thank you, Lord, for the yearning in this church, and it will fare us well not only today but in the days to come. Lord God, we thank you that you have given us breath and life in the first place, and then you've given us the ability to seek you, Lord.

It all comes from your hand. We acknowledge that tonight, Father. It's all by grace.

There's nothing in us and of ourselves, Lord, that can ever cause your kingdom to advance. Your kingdom moves in the hungry heart. You respond to the cry.

Even in our ignorance, God, when we cry to you, Lord, you respond to it. And, Lord, I've oft times even just seen, in a sense, a spiritual smile on your face, even responding to the ignorance in my own life when I didn't understand you, Lord. You never moved away.

You never took your hand off my life, God. You never distanced yourself. That was all in my imagination.

You were there all the time. You never left me. You never forsook me.

God, thank you for that knowledge tonight. Lord, you're going to open this psalm. You promised to open it.

I ask you, Holy Spirit, to take my feeble efforts tonight and multiply it. Multiply it and feed every heart. Feed every life that's come into this house.

I believe that your word is alive. And, Holy Spirit, when you quickened it, you showed us the example on that hill that day when you broke the bread and you distributed it and there was enough left to take up 12 baskets full. God in heaven, let there be an overflow in this house tonight of your word.

Oh, Jesus, we love your word here at Times Square Church. We don't do this out of ritual. We know your word is life.

It's absolute life. There's no life apart from your word. Holy Spirit, quicken the word of God tonight.

Show us the heart of God. And, Lord God, show the hungry what you've been doing. Lord, that's the cry of my heart.

You said you'd speak to this church and, Lord, I've been rejoicing all day. I know you've been doing something. And now you're about to show the hungry what it is you've been doing.

Father, thank you for that, God. I praise you for it. Lord, I praise you for a shout of triumph even before we open this word tonight.

I praise you, God, for the joy that's already in the hearts of your people. I praise you for feeding the choir, God, tonight. Feeding the orchestra.

God, I praise you for feeding the ministry. I praise you for feeding your people tonight. God, as you open your word, and to the very depths of our heart, one more time, just give us an inward revelation of who you are and what work it is that you are accomplishing in your people.

God, it's a mystery to those who don't know you, but to those of us who know you, we've learned to trust you, God. We respond. We rejoice.

We embrace your truth. Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Psalm 42, I've entitled this sharing tonight. Now, this is really just out of my own devotional time all week, but I've entitled it The Wilderness Places of the Righteous.

This psalmist in Psalm 42, this is not a psalm that's like Psalm, I believe it's 38, where David, the king, has sinned against God, and he's crying out to the Lord, and he's in a dry place, and he knows he's in a dry

place, because he's sinned against God. And if you've sinned against God and you're in a dry place, well, that's an understandable thing. You simply need to repent, an honest, heartfelt desire to turn away from that sin, receive the forgiveness of Christ, and then move on in that.

But this particular psalmist, Psalm 42, 1, is a man who's hungering after God. He's hungering and thirsting after God. He identifies himself in the first verse.

He says, As the heart pants after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. This man is saying, I'm a seeker of God. I'm hungering and thirsting after the things of God.

This is not somebody who's going through a difficult time because of any known willful sin in his life. Verse 2, he says, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Now, the word living in Hebrew is cheyeh, and this is what it means.

Vigorous, fresh, like running water. Cheyeh is a set of experiences. Now, I'm reading from the definition in the study text, not an abstract principle.

In other words, the psalmist is saying, God, I want you. I want to know you. I want to experience you, and I want that experience to be real.

I'm thirsty for you. I'm hungering for you. I want the living God.

I don't want religion. I don't want head knowledge. I want the living God.

And I believe that's the cry of many of your hearts in this house tonight. You don't want religion, and some of you come from that background. You know the death that is there.

The accumulation of knowledge with no living experience is simply death in the presence of God. This man is saying, I want to experience you, and I want it to be real. Then he asks a question.

He says, when shall I come and appear before God? Now, the word appear is reah, and this is what it means. It means to see intellectually or to perceive. He's saying, I'm thirsty for you.

I'm hungry for you. I want you. I want a real living relationship with you, God.

But when? When will I understand what it is that you're doing in my life? When will I intelligently begin to understand you're working? Verse 3, he says, my tears have been my meat day and night, while they say continually unto me, where is thy God? The psalmist is saying, I'm seeking you, but instead of joy, my heart seems to be so broken and heavy. There are voices now that are mocking me and challenging the truthfulness of my claim to know you. And this is, I believe, that many people are seeking God.

You go through this, seeking Him with a presupposition that it's going to bring instantaneous joy into your life. And yet, there seems to be this dryness, this brokenness, and the cry comes into your heart that says, God, what is it that you're doing in me? When will you help me to understand? Why don't I know what it is that's going on in my life? I'm seeking you, and all these voices now are mocking the reality of you, first of all, but also my relationship with you. Now, verse 4, he says, when I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me, for I've gone with the multitude.

I went with them to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise and with a multitude that kept holy day. The psalmist is saying, my only answer to these things is that I have been seeking you. I have been

among your people.

I've been praising you. And as far as I know, God, I'm walking in obedience to you. He says, when I meditate, the word remember really means when I meditate on these things, the things that he's been sharing in verses 1, 2, 3, I pour out my soul in me.

God, why? What's happening in my life? I've gone to the house of God. I'm praising you. I'm lifting up my voice.

I'm declaring you to be righteous. I'm singing the songs of Zion in your house, in your presence. I'm keeping holy day in a sense.

He's saying, I'm obeying you. I'm honoring you. I'm doing what I know to do.

I'm doing everything I know that's right. And then in verse 5, he says, why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. He's saying, I'm doing all these things, then why am I cast down? Why? He asks the question.

And unfortunately, really, oft times in our immaturity, we ask the wrong question. You should have really been asking God, what are you doing? Not why am I cast down? His focus was still on himself. And because his focus was still on himself, he begins to do the very thing that the natural man will always do to try to get out of.

He thinks it's the enemy, but it's the hand of God. And he's trying to escape the hand of God. And the very first thing the natural man will try to do, he said, he will try to pick himself up.

He makes a statement. He says, hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him for the help of his countenance. He goes to church, and this heaviness is on him.

He's in this place of dryness, and he builds himself up and says, I've hoped in God before, I'll hope in God again. Hallelujah, I'm just going to walk this thing through. And he's the type of a man who tries to brush off something that's happening, which he doesn't understand.

A few words of self-help. It's going to be okay, it's going to be okay, I'm going to praise God again. I've praised him before, I'm going to praise him again.

Hallelujah, I'm going to praise him again. I've seen people like that in this house. I know you're in the struggle of your life, and everything in you, it's just like, let's pick the old man up one more time.

Hallelujah, I'm going to praise God. Hallelujah, I'm going to worship him. And it only lasts until verse 6. Oh my God, he says, my soul is cast down within me.

When God's doing something in your life, folks, you can't pull yourself out of it by just making some kind of a confession, or making some kind of a statement that I've been happy before, I'll be happy again, and everything's going to be all right. Although there's truth in the statement, that's not what it's about. He finally has to come back and face the reality again.

My soul is cast down within me. Then he does the second thing the natural man does. He says, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and the Hermonites and from the hill Mizar.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts, all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me. And so here's what the natural man does again, when the reality of something deeper in him happening that he can understand, he makes God a promise. And he says, Lord, my soul is cast down within me.

But, he said, I will remember you. And then he names three places really by virtue of their geographic location, or almost the farthest geographical points from Jerusalem, from Zion, where the true praise of God is. And he says, I will remember you even though we seem to be so far apart.

I will remember you, God. We're a million miles apart, but I will remember you. I promise you I'll remember you.

And then something, what's really going on in his heart begins to come out in verse 7. Listen to this, he says, deep calleth unto deep. In other words, my deep need is calling out to your deep resources. I'll remember you, and even if I'm stuck in the borders of the kingdom, and you're far, far away, I'll remember you.

I'll cry out to you. He makes promises to God. Self-help doesn't work, so now he's going to try making promises to God and see if that works.

My deep need will call out to your deep resources. He says, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. He says, deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts.

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over. Now, the word for gone over in the Hebrew means have passed me by. And what he's really saying is, I will call out to you, and I will remember you, even though with all your power to offer me comfort, you continually pass me by.

I've not forgotten you, God, even though you're forgetting me. You see, he's becoming angry with God in his prayer. That's an incredible thing, how we can sound so religious and be trying to hide an angry heart.

He's beginning to question God. He says, God, I feel far away from you, but I'll remember you. I'll remember you.

Oh, yes, I'll praise you. I'll talk to you. I'll pray, even though with all your resources, you seem to be not even concerned about my situation.

You're passing me by. You're going over me. That's what it means.

You're just overpassing me. You're not touching me. Then he tries to pick himself up once again in verse 8. He says, yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me and my prayer unto the God of my life.

He says, oh, but faith, the semblance of faith is rising up again. You have to understand, this is all happening in the heart of a man who really doesn't understand what's going on in his life. He's trying to figure it out, but it's a work that's too deep for the natural mind to comprehend.

It's happening in his life because he loves the Lord. It's happening because he's been crying out to God. It's happening because he's hungry.

God is doing something, but he's trying to understand it in the natural man, and the things of God cannot be understood by the natural man. So, he's in verse 8 again. He says, Oh, but the Lord will command his

loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer will be unto the God of my life.

I'm going to pray, Lord, I'm going to pray to you again. I know I'm going to be in direct communication with you one more time very, very soon. And it sounds so holy, doesn't it? But look at how angry he really is.

Look at verse 9. He says, I will say to the God of my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? He says, God, you're going to bless me, and I know I'm going to be in your presence again. And I'm going to pray to you, and I'm going to say, Why have you forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? You see, his prayer has now turned to an accusation against the faithfulness of God. It's really a hilarious prayer when you see it.

It sounds so religious, but it's not. It's accusing God. If he was honest with himself, he would be saying, God, when you come into the room, we're really going to have it out.

That's what he's saying. I'm going to meet you face to face. I'm going to accuse you of not being faithful.

Now, the religious man can't really say that, so he has to couch it all in spiritual terms. I'm going to say, Why? Why have you not been faithful to me? Why have you let my enemies oppress me? You see, the enemy is not oppressing him, but he just is not aware of it. Verse 10, he says, As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Now, the last verse is an interesting verse because I think he ends up rebuking himself for all of these thoughts.

In verse 11, he says, Why art thou cast down on my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God. He's not speaking to himself. For I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.

In effect, I think the writer is saying to himself, Why are you letting these thoughts? Why am I letting these thoughts come into my mind and heart? If I will just hope in God one day soon, I will understand. God's purposes will be revealed to me. Now, the Bible says in 2 Timothy 3.16 that all Scripture is inspired by God.

All Scripture is inspired by God. Therefore, the psalmist is more than likely under the impression when he's writing this psalm that these are just his own thoughts. This is coming out of his own mind, out of his own spirit.

He's just simply writing things down. But he's not aware, or he may not have been aware that these were not his thoughts alone. Now, we today know that another man, much mightier and more knowledgeable than his... another hand, rather, mightier and more knowledgeable than his own was guiding him to write what he wrote.

The hand of God was on him when he wrote this. The Holy Spirit was moving him to write these words, even though he may not have been aware of it. Still, it was the hand of God moving through him, because this is God's word.

This was not the word of the psalmist. This is God pouring this psalm through a man who's in distress that he does not even understand. Now, first of all, it's evidence that God doesn't despise an honest struggle.

Aren't you thankful for that tonight? God doesn't despise an honest struggle. This man was in an honest struggle. He's crying out to God.

Things are happening in his life that he doesn't understand. But yet, still, the hand of God comes upon him. And the hand of God moves his heart and moves his mind, moves his spirit.

The hand of God overrides his hand and writes these words that we're reading thousands of years later tonight. God does not despise an honest struggle. The honest saint who's really wanting to get through, but is in a time of their life where they don't seem to understand the working of God.

And secondly, it's evidence that we miss the reality of what God is doing on our lives when we fail to see that another hand is covering ours in all that we as Christians do. Everything that we do, there is another hand covering ours, just like the pen of this psalmist. There is somebody walking with us, somebody talking to us, somebody who has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Verse 9, the psalmist, I believe, made an error in his thinking, and God allowed that error to be recorded. Because he said, I will say unto the God of my rock, why hast thou forgotten me, and why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Now, first of all, God has not forgotten him, and neither is he far away, folks. When you're in a struggle, God has not forgotten you, and neither is he far away.

Like, can I prove it to you theologically? We have in our natural mind this thinking that God is grieving with me, therefore he's left and he's gone off into the galaxy somewhere, so I've just got to read and fast and pray and search, and then when he's not offended anymore, he will leave the galaxy and come back and dwell with me again. You know how foolish that is? The God of this universe, when you came to Christ, came to abide within you. You can't get any closer than that, folks.

And if he leaves you, you're dead in your sins and trespasses. He doesn't leave his children. He does not forsake those that he bought with his own blood.

He's not far away. You see, God had not forgotten him. It was the closeness that this man had found with God that was producing this distress.

You have to understand that. That's the key to this entire psalm, is found in that one thought. It's the closeness.

It's the fact that this man was drawing close to God that he was coming into this particular distress. God was not far from him. God was closer to him than a brother.

God had not moved, but he was now going to, he was about to receive a revelation. Now, there's no evidence in this particular psalm, but I know in my heart that God was going to give him a revelation, was going to draw him closer, was going to further reveal how his kingdom works in and through his life. Charles Finney, a noticed evangelist from many years ago, said these words.

He said, the man who is far away from God is often the man who feels very good about himself. Feels good about his church attendance. Feels good about the size of his Bible, the newness of his clothes, the new language that comes out of his mouth.

Feels good about the amount he's able to give in the offering. He feels very good about himself. He comes into the house of the Lord and feels so good about himself, he'll eventually end up criticizing and

condemning everybody around him.

But yet the man who is actually drawing near to God always, Finney said, has the sensation that he is becoming undone. Just like Isaiah. He is becoming undone because he is drawing nearer to God in his understanding.

And when we begin to draw near to God, everything unlike Christ has to be challenged within our lives. You and I will readily cast off, when we came to Christ, we readily cast off those things that we know are no good. Alcohol.

We'll cast off drugs. We'll cast off bitterness and hate. There's some very evident things.

But we all have the natural tendency to want to hold on to some things that are good. We think they're good. But Christ says, if you want me, if you desire me, if you want to know me, if you want my life manifested in you, some of the things that you think are good are going to have to go.

And there's a certain work I'm going to have to do in your life in order to make that happen. Now, he really pens, in Psalm 42 verse 1, When I was preparing this, there was such a chuckle in my spirit because I've lived through some of this. Not all of it, yet.

I did pray today. I said, oh please, I really thank you for these experiences I've gone through like this. But Lord, just let them be few and far between from here to the end of my life.

It's not fun. I heard Pastor David say last night that they are the key growth times, and I will agree, they are. That's where we really get to know Jesus Christ and his power and intimacy with him.

I believe it's kind of a, I don't want you to misunderstand me, okay? So please don't think I'm being light. But it's almost as if the Holy Spirit is playing a joke on this man. Because you have to understand, the Holy Spirit is actually painting these words through him.

And so, if you look in the Psalm, the Holy Spirit is actually describing the man, although he doesn't know it's a description of himself. And it's a very accurate description. In verse 1, he says, as the hart, or the deer, or it's a member of the deer family, like you could also say the gazelle, pants after the water brook, so pant my soul after thee, oh God.

Now, this man is describing himself as a deer. He has a concept, but God has another one. The characteristics of a deer are that they are graceful.

You know, deer, I don't know if you've ever seen a deer leap over a fence. I have, where I used to live in the country. If you live in New Jersey, I guess you get to see that quite often, too, as well.

But a deer is a graceful animal. Its movements are held in admiration by onlookers. People will stop and watch deer, hoping that they get a chance to see them.

They're so graceful, the way they run. Even when they're fleeing, their white tail flips up and they sort of, I don't know, it's almost like a high five as they're heading down through the field. And onlookers will hold a deer in admiration.

They're appealing to the eye. I mean, they're a nice-looking animal. They're not like a wolverine or something like that, or a porcupine.

It's not very appealing to the eye. But they're appealing. They're a fine-looking animal.

And they're stealthful. That's the one thing about deer is they will always keep one eye open with the purpose of preserving themselves. They're stealthful.

They're quiet. They're silent. They're always watching out for themselves.

And this is exactly where every man will settle in in his relationship with God. If the Holy Spirit doesn't do something in us, you and I are just like the deer. I believe that's why the Holy Spirit was chuckling when this man, in his distress, wrote this song, as it was supposed to be, and likened himself to a deer.

Because a deer is just like you and I. If God is not provoking us, if He's not moving us into a deeper understanding of Christ, we will settle for what others admire in us. We will settle for what looks good. And we will settle for that which preserves self.

And that will be the end result of our walk with God in His house. We'll come into the house, and if others give us compliments, we'll soak them in like an old sponge and we'll be so happy. Yes, I am.

I do. I thank you. I appreciate that.

All the glory goes to God, of course, you know. Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. And anybody can be prayed to that in the house of God.

It doesn't matter what position you hold. All of a sudden, yeah, I'm pretty good at that, aren't I? I mean, it's just, wow, that's wonderful. Thank you.

I'm really glad you noticed. Of course, it's the work of God, obviously. And our natural tendency is to settle for what looks good.

As long as we're speaking nicely, and we can be thinking one thing in our heart, but as long as we're saying what sounds right, then we settle for that, and we will settle ultimately for what preserves ourselves. There's areas of our life that we don't want to give up. There are things we don't want to change.

Pastor Patrick said that last night. As a prime example of what the Holy Spirit is speaking in my heart, he said, here I am serving God with all my heart, but at the same time, he said, I was resisting His will, and it brought me into this horrible dryness in my life, because I didn't want to go the length, as it were, that God wanted me to go. I wanted to settle in.

I wanted to be comfortable in a certain place. And I ended up in this dry, dry, dry, almost like a valley, and began to feel overwhelmed, he shared, with my circumstances. And Proverbs 12, 21, 2 says that every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord ponders the hearts.

Now the Lord says, because you desire me, I'm going to bring you out and away from all that falls short of what I have destined for you. I'm going to bring you out. This is a sovereign work of God.

This is not something you and I do. We can let go of the bad things, but God says, I'm going to help you to let go of what you think are good things. The places, the bushes you want to hide behind, the tall grass you want to walk in, you want to look good before me, you want to look good before the people, but God says, I've got a plan.

You're crying out to me, so I'm going to bring a distress into your life. I'm going to dry up all the water where you are. I'm going to send a drought.

You're going to find nothing there. There's going to be no satisfaction. I'll bring you to a place where you'll despise the comments of men, the compliments of men over your life.

You'll know it's worth nothing because of what's going on in your heart. I'm going to send a famine for water into your soul, God says. That's the closeness of God.

That's not God running off into the galaxy. That's God drawing close and saying, you want me? Now I'm going to do something to bring you into what I have destined you to be. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I'm going to bring you into the only source of true life.

And that is the life of Almighty God Himself being lived within us. There's no other life. There's no other life.

And God says, if I don't do this, you will settle into religion. That's why we're fasting, to have a renewed passion for Jesus Christ. And with that renewed passion comes a renewed understanding of the working of God.

With the renewed understanding comes a renewed song. Hallelujah. A song of praise.

A song of joy. Hallelujah. As the deer, as the heart, panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

There is one word in there that is really poorly translated in the King James. When you go to the original Hebrew, one of the study books actually had in parentheses poorly translated in the King James Bible. The word for panteth really is braise.

Braith. It's the sound that a donkey makes. This is the end of side one.

You may now turn. Now, when I began to research this, I got ahold of a book called Animals in the Bible Kingdom in the Middle East. And the Mid-Eastern hunters have reported coming upon herds of deer during times of drought that have come out of the forest, they're standing right in the open, and they are braying like donkeys.

Now, if you don't know the sound that a donkey makes, I'll make it for you so you'll understand. It goes like this. Like that.

They make a sound breathing out and breathing in. They go... It is probably the most ungracious sound in the animal kingdom. Now, that changes the whole meaning of the song, doesn't it? It's not this little deer prancing, dancing through the field.

Oh, I'd love a little taste of God. No. It's this deer standing in the middle of the open going... I've heard some of you at the altar like that from time to time.

Now, for a deer to come out into the open and begin to cry like that, it has to have cast off its strongest natural instinct. And the strongest natural instinct of a deer is to preserve itself. That is the strongest natural instinct.

Because the moment it begins to cry, it is now exposed to lions. It's exposed to wolf packs. It's exposed to everything it naturally fears.

But it doesn't care anymore. Hallelujah! There's no fear of disclosure anymore in the heart. Because there's a greater need.

It has been confronted with that which it needs to sustain its very life. I need living water. And without this water, there's going to be no life left to live.

And the deer, in effect, is saying in its heart, I don't care who knows. I don't care who sees. I don't care what people think.

I want God. And I want Him with all my heart. It's the woman with the issue of blood that doesn't care who knows.

If I can just touch Him, I'm going to be whole. It's the blind man sitting on the side of the road when everybody's saying, shut up! The king's passing by. Shut up! Be quiet! And they cried louder.

Thou Son of David, have mercy on us! Hallelujah! I know the Holy Spirit was having a laugh when this man penned this. Because that's what God was doing. He said, I'm drawing you out.

I'm drawing you out of what you think is righteousness. I'm drawing you out because you want me. I will put a cry in you.

In the places that you live, where you are going to fall short of what I have for you, I'm going to dry it up. You're not going to find any water there. You got all your fulfillment being an usher in Times Square Church.

Your whole sense of identity. I'm not picking on ushers tonight. It just happened to be the example.

You got your whole sense of identity from being an usher, from looking good, from being in the house of God. God says, I'm going to dry it up. I'm going to dry it up.

I'm going to take it away. I'm going to cause such a discomfort to come into your soul. I'm going to draw you.

I'm going to draw you to the real source of life. I'm going to draw you to the only voice that satisfies. And I'm going to, because you're seeking me, I'm going to put that on you until one day, you're just going to break in my presence.

It can be at home, it can be on the subway, it can be here at this altar, but you're just going, oh God, God, God. Hallelujah. I need you.

Jesus, I need you. Oh folks, I can laugh because I've walked that road. I've braved like a donkey out on a country road.

Sobbing and crying and my nose running and my eyes go, oh God, oh God. All I wanted to do was live for you. All I wanted to do was travel the country and win every soul that breathes to Christ.

What could possibly be wrong with that? And then getting angry with God, and I've shared it here before, where shout out to God and say, what do you want out of me, blood? What do you want from my life? I've

given you everything. I've given you my job, my family, everything I've got. I've lived for you.

I've traveled the country and now you've taken away my strength. And I was angry with the Lord and I said, what do you want, blood? And then all of a sudden I just felt the love of God just surround me. I don't even know how to explain it and all he said was yes.

He said, I want everything. He said, all I want you to do is just obey me and trust me and learn to bloom where you're planted. You don't have to do anything for me.

Just abide. Bloom where you're planted. That's what God began to speak to me.

That was the beginning of life. That was the beginning of understanding even the covenant, the New Testament covenant that Pastor Dave finally put into understandable terms for me. But that was the beginning of the work of God that he wanted to do in my life.

It was bringing all my good things to an end. I was a strong man, I think, a strong-willed man so that the battle was long. It was months.

It was a tough battle. But it was finally that point of finally saying, I was no longer saying, why? But I stopped and I said, what do you want me to do? And that's when the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, I've given you about 150 people. He said, get them into heaven.

That's all you're going to answer for. You won't answer for any of these other places you've spoken because I didn't call you to go there. The other crusades, the things you did, that was you.

He said, it's all going to burn. That's fine. I don't expect it to be on the altar.

When I get there, it was all me wanting to do something for God. God said, I never asked you to do that. But there was no, you have to understand, there was no anger in the heart of God.

There was no intolerance in His voice. There was a loving Father who just walked with me. He walked with me all the places I went.

Never left me, never forsook me, wasn't distant from me. But in my heart, there was this cry for Him. God, I want you.

I want you with all my heart. And then finally, you get to the point of saying, why? Why are you seemingly so far away from me? When all I've wanted to do is live for you and serve you. And God says, no.

I'm just answering your prayer. He said, now all I want you to do is get these people into heaven. I want you to dedicate their babies and marry their children.

I want you to counsel them. I want you to bury their dead. I want you to comfort those that are mourning and all the rest of these things.

And you just get them into heaven. And if I ever want you to do anything else, the Holy Spirit just said, I'll let you know. I know where you are.

Just bloom where you're planted. Do you know why you struggle so much, some people that are here tonight? Because you haven't learned to bloom where you're planted. God has been drying up every place that you get your satisfaction from, so that you can learn to just bloom where you're planted.

In whatever that is. It's just simply the presence of Jesus. The favor of Almighty God.

The understanding of how He works that I know today when things begin to dry up, God's speaking to me. It's not the devil after me. God is speaking to me.

He's drawing me to Himself again. I want to give an altar call tonight. And then we've got a well over half an hour, 35 minutes to worship.

But I want to give an altar call tonight for those that are really struggling to bloom where you're planted. And because you've been fasting, God's opened to you a key. Psalm 42 has become a key, I believe, to the release for many people in this house tonight.

You've been seeking God. You've been going through this dry time, and God's saying, you're right on course. You're right on course.

Now I'm showing you why you've been going through this. Now you don't have to play games anymore in the house of God. Your shout's going to be real.

You're going to be content just to be who I made you. Just to go where I'm leading you. Just to bloom where you're planted.

That's what the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart today. That was the altar call. To learn to bloom right where we're planted.

To bloom means to flower. Flower. It doesn't mean just to endure.

It doesn't mean just to put down roots and survive. It means to flower. It means to germinate.

It means to have seeds. It means to pollinate the ground. It means to have others come into the kingdom.

It's a complete trust in Jesus Christ. There's no other way it can come, folks, but by trusting Him. Hallelujah.

Aren't you glad you're fasting tonight? Aren't you glad you're seeking God? Would you guys gentlemen, would you come? I'd like to sing that song as the deer pants for the water, so long my soul after thee, O God. We've been in this psalm for so long now, but it's a wonderful word. Isn't the word of God wonderful? When God shows us His word.

I don't know. Some of you may cry like donkeys tonight. I'm not sure when you come to the altar.

You don't have to. But I think it's going to be a relief for some to know that God's not mad at you. You're not a million miles away from God.

He's not a million miles away from you. He hasn't despised your honest struggle. You're right on course.

He's teaching you to bloom right where you're planted. Right where you are. Who you are.

What you're doing. He's teaching you that it's all in Him that you find your hope. It's not in circumstance or even in the church.

It's in Him that we find our hope. Let's all stand for a moment. If God spoke to your heart tonight, would you come to this altar and join us? Those that are having a difficulty just blooming where you're planted.

Then we're going to pray together. ...was telling us about, was giving us the revelation the Lord laid on his heart about intelligently understanding what God is doing with us. And the Lord led me to a verse I want to share with you before I tell you what I believe the Lord wants us to do in response to what we've heard tonight.

And I'm reading from the 12th chapter of Psalms. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise. And he has done just that.

You didn't understand what you're going through. You didn't understand the process of the work of the Holy Spirit in molding and making us in this fashion. Saith the Lord, I will set him now in safety from him that puffs at him.

He sets you at safety now from all this puffing and lying of the enemy at you. That God's mad at you, that you're paying the price for some thing that you have done. And, you know, David said, why do I take counsel with myself? In other words, why have I why can't I figure this out? Quit trying to figure it out.

Go home and go to sleep tonight. Go home and go to sleep with peace in your heart. Absolutely.

He said, now I have arisen. I've given you the answer that you've been seeking for. You don't have to ask why anymore.

Just say, thank you Lord. And even in the 40, you know what it says in the 42nd Psalm there, the last the last paragraph, the last word, hoping God I so yet praise Him who's the health of my countenance. He understands now this has been a healthy thing.

It's not been, it's not been an oppressing thing after all. It's been healthy. I'll praise Him now for the health of my appearance, my countenance.

I'm going to show it. What God wants from all of us is to praise Him for the understanding and get the victory now before you walk out. Otherwise you're going to lose the whole truth.

It'll just evaporate out of your hands. You're going to praise yourself out of the blues and out of this pit. The trap was in the pit, but when God reveals the trap and He shows you the pit that you were allowed to go down into was that God was showing you the victory of His cross.

He'd given us absolute victory out of the pits that many of us were in. God bless you. Let's praise Him and worship Him.

I think now, listen, I feel so led of the Lord that you just, you and I, for the next four or five minutes just raise your hands and thank Him right now. Thank Him that He's not mad at you. Thank Him that He's cleansed you.

Thank Him that His hand is on you. That the blessing of the Lord is upon you. Lord, we thank you for your blessing.

You're not angry at your people. No, Lord, you said, I have arisen now and I've delivered you from everyone that puffs at you. I put you in safety now.

I put you in safety from the lies of the devil and the lies from the pits of hell. You are safe now. Thank Him for being safe.

Lord, I'm safe from the devil who's puffed at me long enough. I refuse the lies of the devil. Hallelujah.

I am going to overcome now in Jesus' name. We shall overcome. We shall overcome in the name of the Lord.

We shall glory in His presence. Hallelujah. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Hallelujah. Lord, we just give you praise. We give you thanks for truth that sets us free.

We magnify your name. We glorify you. We worship you, Lord.

Let's sing all hail King Jesus, all hail Emmanuel in thanksgiving and praise. He said, I am the King and I have arisen and I've given you the very thing that your heart yearned for, for freedom. You don't have to ask why anymore.

You don't have to think God's forsaken you anymore. God should... You should walk out of this church tonight without any doubt or fear or question in your mind. The Lord has given you the intelligent answer.

You come to Him intelligently. Walk out of here intelligently saying, I am free in Jesus' name. He has come.

All hail King Jesus. Sing it. This is the conclusion of the message.

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