

# Songs of Life

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## DEEP CALLS TO DEEP

Ever been forgotten? It's not one of my best moments – but I once forgot my mother's birthday. I came home for the weekend from University and saw a few new things around the kitchen, so I asked my mum where all the new mugs had come from. "Oh" she said casually, "I got them for my birthday." "Birthday!" I asked "When was your birthday?" "A couple of weeks ago." She replied. Suddenly I was in a panic to put things right.

I drove the minibus on one of the Church holidays and I had a list of passengers to pick up and drive down to Bournemouth. When I got there I was asked: "Have you got Rita?" "Rita? NO ... was I supposed to pick up Rita???" Rita arrived much later!!

We don't like to be forgotten ... do we? Perhaps it's hardest when the people closest to us fail to remember something – a significant date, an anniversary, an achievement, a birthday, an arrangement, a promise, a commitment. Ever felt like God has forgotten you? Perhaps that's your experience right now. It's great isn't it when God speaks to us clearly and we are confident of his powerful presence. It's great isn't it when we feel we are really learning things about who God is, what he does, and our part in it. It's great when God give us a promise - one that encourages, uplifts, strengthens, leads or guides us. It's great when we are aware and awake to God's presence with us – whatever our circumstances. I'm sure we've all had those kinds of experiences – I hope you have.

Trouble is.... it doesn't always last, does it?! Sometimes there's a waiting time, isn't there – and you talked about that last week. How do you sing the waiting song...well? Sometimes it seems like God has disappeared altogether doesn't it? He did seem close, present, before me, above me, below me, around me, and

then sometimes gone...certainly not close. Sometimes we are desperate for God's presence – we pray and plead and cry out to God, and we get nothing back. Ever been there? Perhaps you are there now.

If we are honest what we want to say to God is: "Listen, I'm struggling here – why have you forgotten about me?" Well friends the good news is you wouldn't be the first – others have been there before you. Others have sung this song. I've sung it – in truth it's probably the song I sing the most. But hey – who am I – I'm just one with you.

I know another guy who sang it – you probably know him – or you know about him. Actually this guy is quite famous in some circles. He was a guy who came from a small beginning to make it big – really big actually. He was a really talented bloke – the sort of guy who could turn his hand to most things. He was good looking, strong, tall, fearless, he was musical – could sing, play write music. He was athletic – loved the outdoors and he was recognised as one with great potential when he was quite young. So he was recruited to be trained for his career. He was going to be top dog – and he was being groomed for it, trained for it, so that when his time came he would be good and ready. Trouble is, his boss got jealous – seriously jealous. David didn't help himself: killing Goliath made him more popular than Saul. Saul could not cope with it and was set on a path of trying to get rid of David: to kill him. David had to run – even his wife lied for him, his best friend couldn't save him. David had to run and hide in fear of his life.

When David writes in Psalm 3 of tens of thousands of men drawn up against him he tells the truth, there are armies trying to find him and kill him. David has to hide in caves and keep moving so as not to get caught. He has to lie about who he is and pretend to be insane to escape his pursuer's clutches. He is so hungry that he steals the communion bread from the church and eats it. David is on the run, outwitting his boss, hiding, lying, never being sure who he can trust. This is a far cry from the promise to be king; this is a far cry from being part of the royal house; this is a far cry from good preparation and training; this is a far cry from God's powerful presence or being in a place of worship. In fact in a downward

spiral of events, David has lost his job, his wife, his home, his counsellor, and his closest friends and to cap it all, his self respect.

He had no security, no food, no-one to talk to, no promise to cling to and no hope that anything would ever change. He was alone in a cave, away from everything he loved and everyone he loved.

It's one thing to be pursued by an angry boss – another to be pursued by someone in your own family. David made the catastrophic mistake of committing adultery with Bathsheba. Sure he repented and was forgiven, but, like all of us, he had to live with the consequences of his actions, and his son Absalom hated him. In fact his hatred was so great, that David had to flee again – this time from his son and from Jerusalem. Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel from David and David is once again in the desert hiding and cut off from where he wants to be. Many scholars suggest that David was the author of Psalms 42 and 43 and many suggest that they were written in the midst of one of his times in the desert.

When he's fleeing from Saul, or he's fleeing from Absalom either way – it looks pretty much like God has forgotten him.

#### Psalm 42

“As the deer pants for streams of water,  
So my soul pants for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?  
My tears have been my food day and night,  
While men say to me all day long,  
'Where is your God?'  
These things I remember as I pour out my soul:  
How I used to go with the multitude;  
Leading the procession to the house of God,  
With shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

Why are you so downcast, O my soul?  
Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him.  
My Saviour and my God.

My Soul is downcast within me;  
Therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan,  
The heights of Hermon – from Mount Mizar.  
Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls;  
All you waves and breakers have swept over me.

By day the Lord directs his love,  
At night his song is with me - a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God my Rock, 'Why have you forgotten me?'  
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?  
My Bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me,  
Saying to me all day long 'Where is your God?'

Why are you downcast, O my soul?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
My Saviour and my God.

Psalm 43

Vindicate me, O God,  
And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;  
Rescue me from deceitful and wicked men.  
You are God my stronghold.  
Why have you rejected me?  
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?  
Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me;  
Let them bring me to your holy mountain,  
To the place where you dwell.  
Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.  
I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God.

Why are you downcast, O my soul?

Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
My Saviour and my God.

In these words David bears all. In these words David doesn't hold back – he is honest to the core. “God... Why? Why have you forgotten me? Once I was close, you were close to me, but now I am cut off... and you have forgotten me!” Friends, this is the song of an honest but desperate heart. When your heart is desperate – how honest are you before God?

Friends, we are the masters of the cover-up. We do it when we come to church: we play the game, sing the songs, smile and chat. We hide behind the mask of our false spirituality: we look interested but really we are miles away running with a completely different agenda. We find all sorts of ways to keep up appearances. David blows it apart, he takes down the mask, and he's not having any false spirituality. This is the lament of a parched and beleaguered man who is searingly honest. You, friends, can sing this song too. David had nothing to lose, and neither do you! So he bears his soul in prayer... and so can you!

David lays out the longing of his heart. He 'thirsts' for God, longing for streams of living water. This imagery evokes the depth of longing in the human heart. What are the longings of your heart friends? Some longings are casual longings: I want England to win in South Africa; I must have a coffee. Some longings are critical longings: the longing to be loved and wanted, to feel that we matter. We long for friendship, love, relationships - and in these things we think our thirst will be quenched.

But in the depths of the soul there are crucial longings: “The dissatisfaction of life is a thirst for God. The body cannot live without water. Its lack, quicker than anything else except breath itself, is felt as desperate desire. The soul cannot survive without God. That is true of every human soul, not just the deeply pious. Many or most may not understand the thirst that disturbs and drives their living, but it is there because God created the human soul to correspond to God.”<sup>1</sup>

What are the longings of your heart? In opening his heart David begins to break through his despair, and he at least knows where his longing will be satisfied. As he expresses his deepest feelings, he begins to remember. He remembers special times and special places. A friend said to me once: "I can never let go in the darkness what God taught you in the light." Special times and special places are a means of grace that God generously gives to us. Dates, people, events, celebrations, experiences, moments of deep and profound encounters with God – these are the means of God's grace. These are what God uses in forgotten times to gently draw us back. Friends, never let go in the darkness what God taught you in the light. Memories of these things help us to begin to reconnect faith and hope.

I don't know about you, but there are some places that are special for me – places where I seem to reconnect with God in ways that don't happen everywhere. Here in these special times, memories, and places 'Deep calls to Deep.' The depth of God's grace begins to call to the depth of my human longings. David's song faces the urgent need we have for God – the God who is my life.

When we feel forgotten, this song of David, his honesty and openness encourages us in the following ways: First don't be fobbed off with anything less than God. It is easy when we feel forgotten to settle for less than what God wants to give. There may be many other things that we think will satisfy our thirst, but the truth is they are all found wanting. There have been many times that the people of God have felt forgotten.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: "But I know the plans I have for you, plan to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This was spoken to his people who had settled for less than he wanted to give, but God is reminding them that he has not, and does not forget his people. The desert or the caves are a hard place to be but maybe they give room for God to move and work in us in ways that we never thought possible. Friends, do not settle for anything less than God wants to give, don't be fobbed off with anything less than God.

Secondly, three times in his song David asks himself a question: “Why you are downcast O my soul; why so disturbed within me?” In spiritual things talking to yourself is a sign of health not madness. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones said: “We must talk to ourselves instead of allowing ourselves to talk to us.”

In ‘Freedom in Christ’ we learnt who we are in Christ and we need to keep telling the truth. Lloyd-Jones continues: “Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.” In Paul’s words ‘Be transformed be the renewing of your mind.’

And thirdly, we would do well to remember what God has taught us in the past: never let go in the darkness what God has taught you in the light.

Through the courage to sing this song David seems to move. He seems to suggest that he will take the risk of trusting God again: “Put your hope in God; for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.” When Deep calls to Deep, hope is again possible. How about you – will you have the courage to be searingly honest, that you may take the risk of trusting God again?

1. Mays L “*Psalms: Interpretation Commentary*,” John Knox Press 1994 page 173

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