



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 31-60

Week 2

That Hurts S-o-o-o Bad!

DAY 8

Psalm 38

Has a medical emergency ever laid you low or restricted your movements? How did the family handle it? Any *spiritual* repercussions?

1. What is David suffering from? (a) a painful disease, (b) a medical emergency, (c) spiritual depression, (d) delusions, (e) physical attack, (f) self-inflicted wounds. What makes you think so?
2. Note the many physical symptoms of whatever David is suffering from—ugly sores, back pain, elevated heart rate and failing eyesight (vs. 1-10). What reason does he see for his suffering?
3. Does David seem to be in greater need of medical or spiritual care?
4. In David's anxiety and pain, how does he pray? What finally brings relief (vs. 15, 18)?

1. When you're sick, do you believe you are always paying for your sins? Are there times when you can easily realize how your sickness is paying the price of your ill-advised behavior? Are there other times when your sickness is just a normal part of life that has nothing to do with sin?
2. If a friend had AIDS—or another deadly disease—would that change your view of him or her?
4. Has Jesus been your “paramedic”? When?

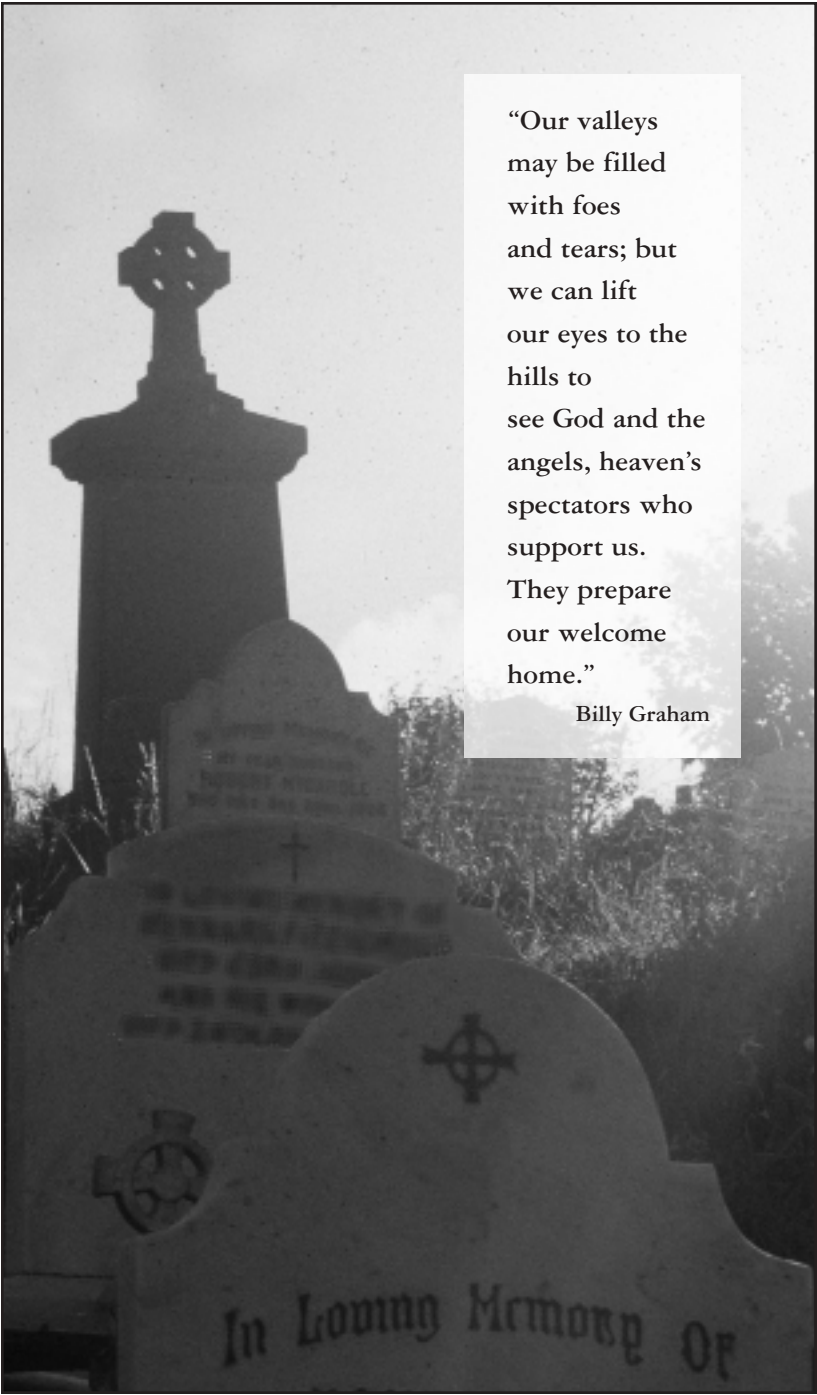
*This is one of seven **penitential psalms** (the others: Ps 6, 32, 51, 102, 130 and 143). From his years as a fugitive from Saul, from his years in Hebron waiting patiently to ascend to Jerusalem and from his patience with Absalom's revolt—David learned to wait on the Lord (vs. 15-22).*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word



“Our valleys
may be filled
with foes
and tears; but
we can lift
our eyes to the
hills to
see God and the
angels, heaven’s
spectators who
support us.
They prepare
our welcome
home.”

Billy Graham

End of the Line

Psalm 39

Would you like to know the exact date of your death? Would you change your behavior if you did? Why?

1. How is David's life journey pictured here? (a) last leg of a long family trip, (b) a quick trip in the fast lane, (c) a fun merry-go-round, (d) a scary roller-coaster, (e) a relentless treadmill, (f) a pilgrim just passing through.
2. What emotions did this journey conjure up for him?
3. Why did David's life seem so short to him (vs. 4-6)? Why was he anxious for the end of the line?
4. Since life is so fleeting, what did David do (vs. 7-13)? (a) took a joy ride, (b) shrugged it off and went on, (c) rested and trusted in God, (d) threw a pity party, (e) fell apart.
5. How did he ask God to help him?

1. Faced with similar circumstances as David, how would you respond?
2. With the end in sight, David asked God to give him enjoyable days. Is there something you need from God before he brings you to the end of the line?
3. How would you treat a dying member of your family in his or her last days?

*This psalm encourages **silence before God** as the proper response to God's rebuke. Psalm 39 has many themes in common with Psalm 90 on the frailty of human life.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

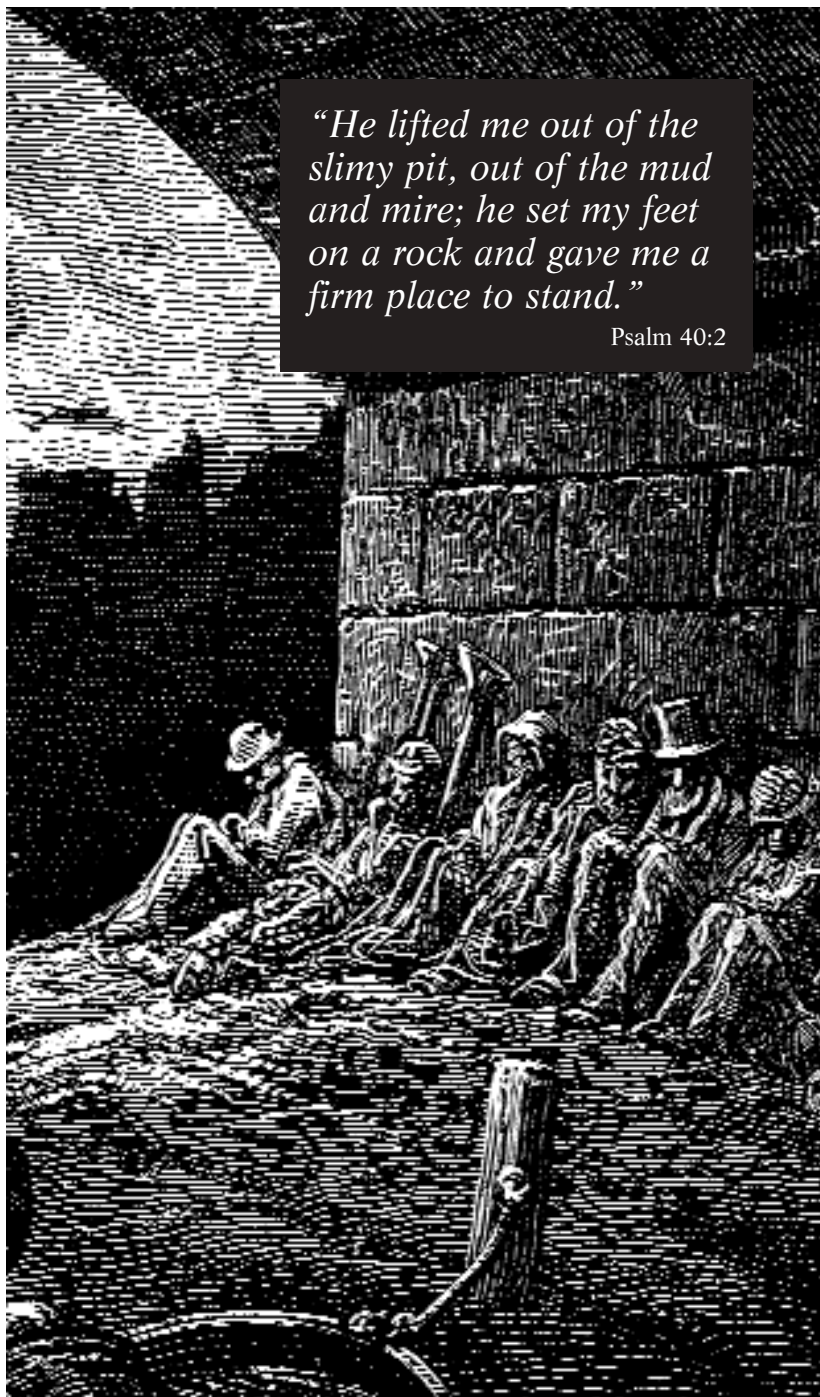
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“He lifted me out of the
slimy pit, out of the mud
and mire; he set my feet
on a rock and gave me a
firm place to stand.”*

Psalm 40:2



Artwork by Gustave Doré

Retrieved from the Slimy Pit

Psalm 40

Have you every become “stuck” in a situation you can’t seem to get out of? A bad relationship? A bad financial predicament? A religious quagmire?

1. Why does David sing a “new song” of praise to God (v. 3)?
2. From what circumstances had God delivered him (vs. 2, 5, 12-14)? Do you think this was primarily a physical “slime pit”—or was it also a spiritual one?
3. What elements mattered most to David? To God? (a) traditional sacrifices, (b) David’s ability to praise and worship, (c) God’s mercy.

1. Is there a new thing in your life that you feel like singing about?
2. What does God want from you in terms of worship? (a) traditional brick-and-mortar liturgy, (b) a full heart, (c) willingness to speak out about God’s grace, (d) all of you, (e) all of the above.
3. In his new song, David identified the Lord as his “help” and “deliverer” (v. 17). Does the Lord help you? Has he delivered you from a “slimy pit”?
4. What do you do when God says “wait” or seems to take too long to help?

*As in Psalms 38-39 and Psalm 41, David feels that his unspecified **troubles** are the result of multiple **sins** (40:12), compounded by enemies gloating over his situation (40:14-15).*

DAY 10

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Heal Me

Psalm 41

OPENING
up to the Word

When was the last time you had the flu? How did you know when you were finally better?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. From this psalm, can you determine David's state of health? His emotional state? His mental outlook? His social support?
2. Why do you suppose David's enemies, even his friends, rejected him when he was sick? Did they conclude that God was punishing him?
3. To whom did David turn for healing (vs. 10-13)? On what did he base his appeal?
4. Could David be confident that God would uphold him because of David's "integrity"?

LIVING
out the Word

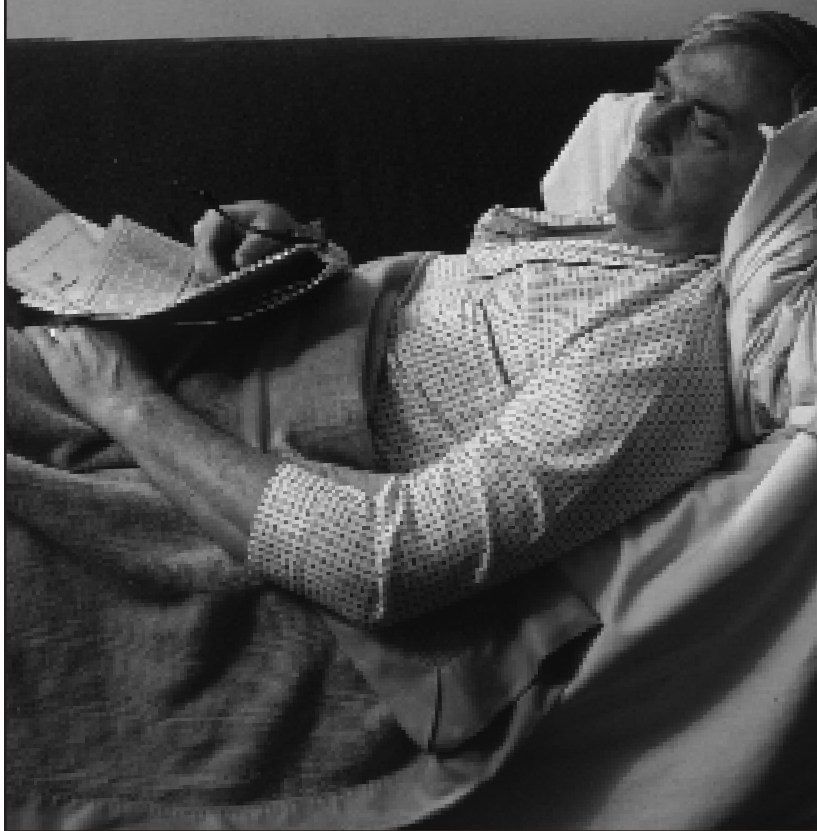
1. Have you been insensitive to others who were ill, weak, hurting or poor? Have you ever been tempted to take advantage of a situation where someone was absent or indisposed due to illness?
2. How do you feel Christ-followers should treat the weak, hurting or poor (vs. 1-3)? (a) with patience, (b) with compassion, (c) with physical help, if possible, (c) as Jesus did (see Mt 5:1-11).
3. Can you come to God cleanly and confidently, knowing his is as pleased with you now as he ever will be, because of the completed work of Jesus?

WINDOW
on the Word

As in Psalms 38–40 (see footnotes there), David attributes his ill health to the consequences of sin (41:4), complicated by his enemies gloating over him (41:5-9). The doxology in 41:13 is a congregational affirmation of all the contents of Book I (Ps 1–41).

*“The Lord will protect
him and preserve his
life; he will bless him
in the land and not
surrender him to the
desire of his foes.
The Lord will sustain
him on his sickbed and
restore him from his
bed of illness.”*

Psalm 41:2-3



Where Is God When It Hurts?

Psalm 42

OPENING
up to the Word

When are you most likely to feel lonely or sad? When depressed, what do you typically do? (a) eat, (b) drink, (c) sleep, (d) watch TV, (e) pray.

DIGGING
into the Word

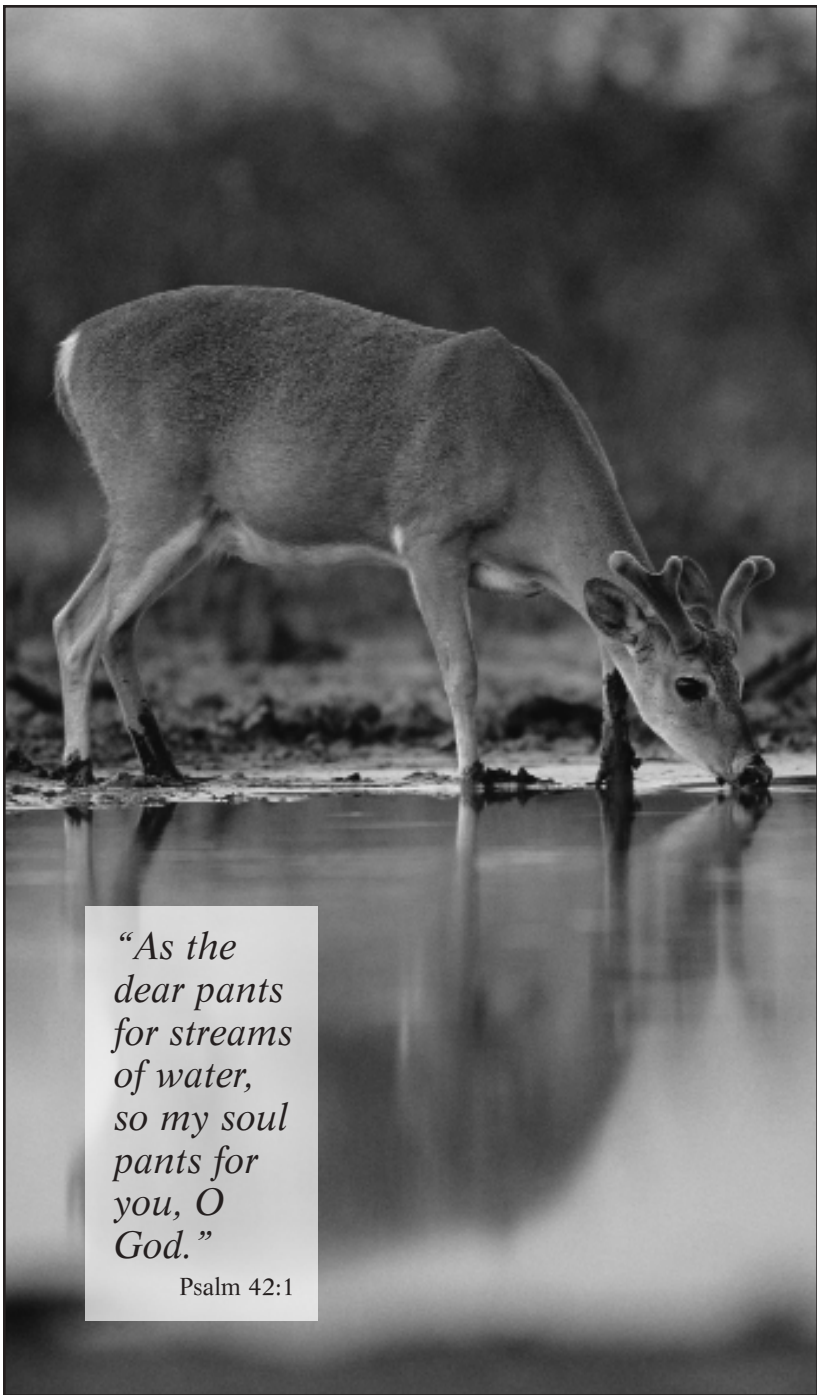
1. Is the psalmist here experiencing the dark side of faith, or the sunny side of doubt? Is he sad, bad, godless, homesick or what?
2. Why do you think the psalmist is so downcast? (a) his enemies are prevailing, (b) his friends have vanished (d) he's been taken captive from Judah, (e) he's feeling cut off by God.
3. Where does he find hope and encouragement (vs. 5, 8, 11)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you hungered and thirsted for God "like a deer" in a drought-stricken area? What caused you to feel that way?
2. The psalmist, trying to commune with God in his soul, longs for the days when he used to serve in God's Temple. Have you ever felt as though God had forgotten or rejected you? What was happening to you at the time?
3. Did you eventually feel remembered, wanted and hopeful again? Why? Do you have a favorite memory of God at work in your past, a memory that cheers you up at sad times?
3. Does knowing Jesus give you the confidence and peace of mind that he will never leave you or forsake you—that he is always there with you no matter what?

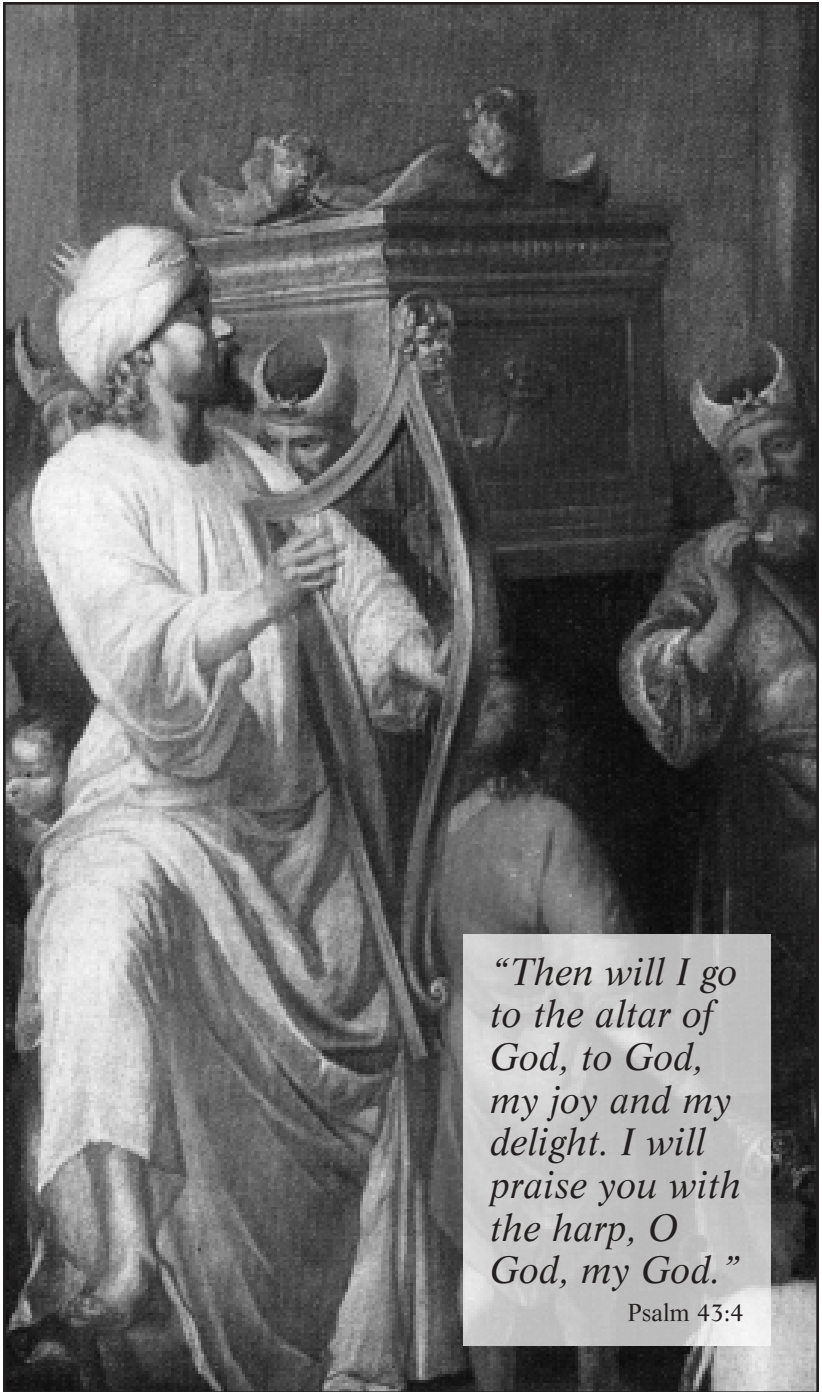
WINDOW
on the Word

In Hebrew manuscripts, Psalms 42 and 43 were originally one three-stanza psalm. Editors later divided it into two psalms. See notes at Psalm 43.



*“As the
deer pants
for streams
of water,
so my soul
pants for
you, O
God.”*

Psalm 42:1



*“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.”*

Psalm 43:4

Second Verse, Same as the First

Psalm 43

Is there a refrain, or favorite song, that you find yourself singing repeatedly?

1. Ask the *Digging into the Word* questions of Psalm 43 that were asked of Psalm 42. What further answers do you come up with?
2. How does this psalm build on, even complete, the themes of Psalm 42?
3. What editorial rationale can you see for treating these two psalms as one? For keeping Psalms 42 and 43 distinct (see footnotes to both)?

1. What memory from your life illustrates this psalm? What picture in your life could this psalm be the caption for?
2. What mood music would you use to accompany this psalm/picture of your life?
3. What New Testament themes and elements might be prefigured by the “holy mountain” and the “altar of God” and the “Savior” (vs. 3-5)?

*“Far from home” captures the theme common to Psalms 42 and 43. The **ungodly nation** (43:1) may have been the Arameans who raided the Korahite cities of Judah (see 2Ki 12:17-18). Literary tie-ins also link these two psalms as one. Questions of “**why?**” (42:9, 11; 43:2, 5) and affirmations of **hope** (42:5, 11; 43:5) are repeated verbatim.*

DAY 13

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

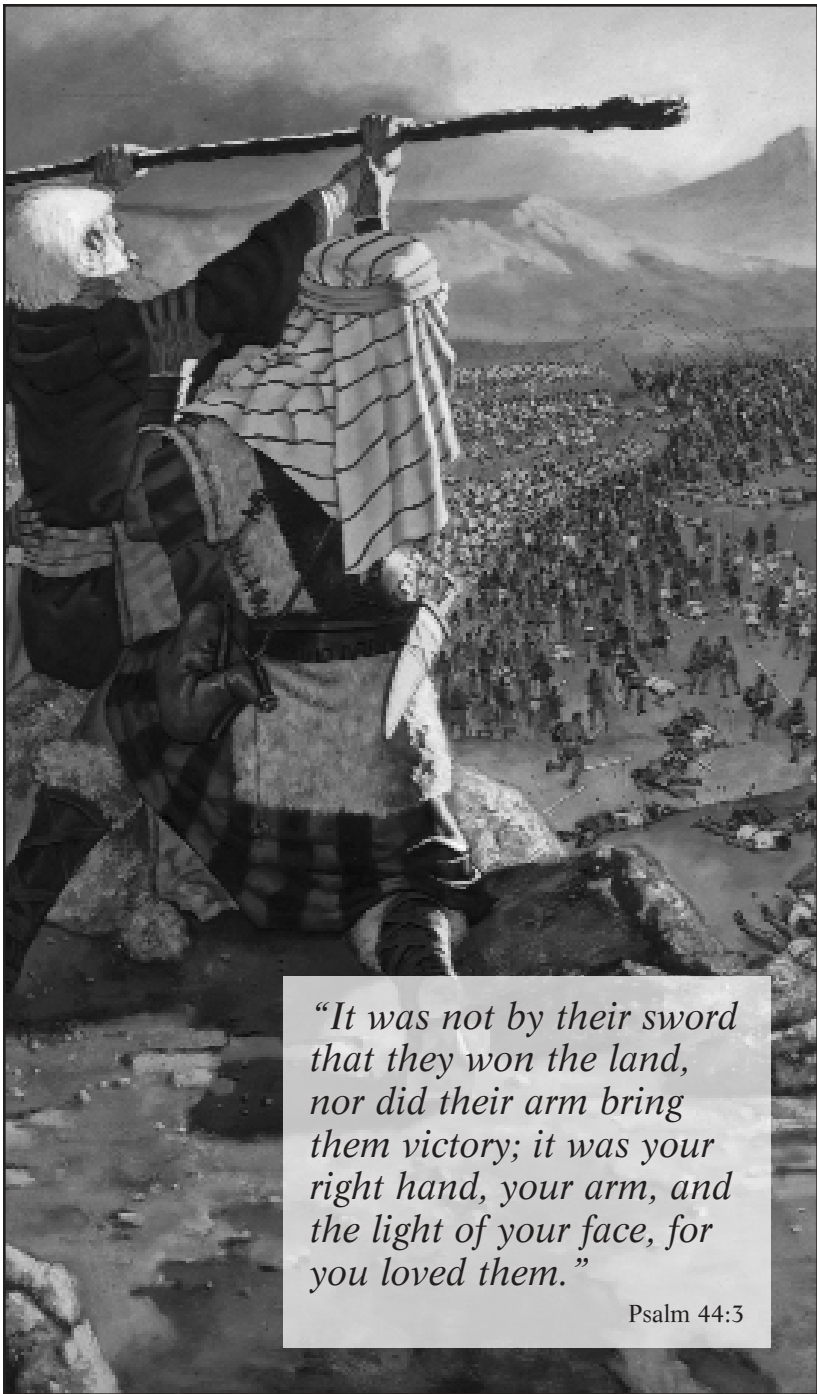
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“It was not by their sword
that they won the land,
nor did their arm bring
them victory; it was your
right hand, your arm, and
the light of your face, for
you loved them.”*

Psalm 44:3

“God, How Could You?”

DAY 14

Psalm 44

Was there a time when your life seemed to be falling down around you—when God seemed to be unresponsive and uncaring, when you were tempted to give up on him and “do your own thing”?

1. What past victories of God is the psalmist boasting about here (vs. 1-8)? What is the surprise twist (vs. 9-16)?

3. What is the conclusion in verses 17-22? (a) God doesn't seem to care anymore, (b) God recants his promise, (c) faithfulness doesn't pay, (d) the innocent suffer anyway, (e) God seems powerless over evil.

4. Still, the psalmist trusts God (vs. 23-26). Why? Why trust God when bad things happen to good people?

1. Have you ever bragged about God to anyone? What was the reason to share your story?

2. What enemies (of your soul, health, marriage or faith) have crushed you at some point in time? Even so, did God prove his unfailing love to you?

3. For the innocent who suffer, what answer is provided in Romans 8:36-39 (quoting vs. 22)?

4. Are there any unanswered questions in your experience of suffering?

*This psalm dates from a time of **humiliating defeat and national disaster** when Judah was still loyal to God's covenant (44:17-18), perhaps during the reign of Jehoshaphat or Hezekiah. The people (we, us, our) and king (I, me, my) complain that God has turned against them for no apparent reason. They wrestle with their consciences, searching for an explanation. They build their case—step (vs. 1-8) by step (vs. 9-16) by step (vs. 17-22)—leading to a crescendo of railing against God for not doing anything about injustice and oppression (vs. 23-26). However, the answer is that we don't always understand why God does what he does or allows what he allows.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word