

“Where is our God?” Psalm 42 (9/14/25)

Today, before I talk with you about Psalm 42, I want to share a recipe how to cook steak. I will show you two recipes for steak, and please see how you feel different when you see the recipes.

The First Recipe

1. Prep the Steaks

Take steaks out of the fridge 30–45 minutes before cooking so they come to room temperature.

Pat them dry with paper towels (this is important for a good sear).

Season generously with salt and pepper on both sides.

2. Sear

Heat a cast-iron skillet over high heat until very hot.

Add oil and swirl to coat.

Place steaks in the pan, pressing gently so they make full contact.

Sear 2–3 minutes per side without moving (for medium-rare, adjust cooking time as needed).

3. Baste

Reduce heat to medium.

Add butter, garlic, and herbs.

Tilt the pan slightly and spoon the melted butter over the steaks continuously for 1–2 minutes.

4. Rest

Remove steaks from skillet and place on a cutting board.

Tent loosely with foil and let rest 5–10 minutes to lock in juices.

5. Serve

Slice against the grain.

Pair with mashed potatoes, grilled veggies, or a fresh salad.

The Second Recipe

1. Prologue – The Warm-Up

Take the steaks out of the fridge. They are the lead actors. Let them breathe for 30 minutes before the curtain rises.

2. Act I – The Entrance

Heat up a cast-iron skillet until it's blazing hot.

Add oil, let it shimmer. The stage is ready.

3. Act II – The Sear

Drop the seasoned steaks on the pan — sizzle!

Don't move them. Let them perform their solo for 2–3 minutes per side.

Flip, and hear the applause of the crackle again.

4. Act III – The Aromatics

Lower the heat a bit. Add butter, garlic, and herbs.

As the butter melts into a golden pool, tilt the pan and begin the butter shower performance — spooning the hot, aromatic butter over the steaks again and again.

This is the climax!

5. Finale – The Rest

Remove the steaks and let them rest on the cutting board, loosely tented with foil.

Give them 5–10 minutes of silence — the actors need to catch their breath before the encore.

6. Encore

Slice against the grain.

Serve with mashed potatoes, roasted veggies, or a glass of bold red wine.

Take the first bite with your eyes closed, and let the applause happen in your head.

Which of these two explanations made you want to eat steak more? Both describe the same event, using the same ingredients, but in my opinion, the second one makes me want steak much more. The first is more straightforward and clear,

but the second makes us imagine the cooking scene and really feel it.

This is how Psalm 42 functions as the introduction to the second book of Psalms. Last week, when we looked at Psalm 1, we saw that the “Blessed person” is the one who meditates on God’s Word day and night. Most of the first book of Psalms is written by King David. But in the second book, while David is still a major author, we can also read other authors’ Psalms, like the sons of Korah and Solomon.

If the books of Kings and Chronicles tell us the history of David and the kings of Israel, then the second book of Psalms shows us the humanity of David — his struggles, his pain, and how he looked to God in the midst of suffering. Through the writings of other authors as well, we can learn not only about David but also how the people of Israel looked at God in suffering. That’s why Book 2 of the Psalms often touches people deeply and sympathizes with people’s hearts.

Psalm 42 begins with the title: “For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah.” Here, we should see two words: maskil and the Sons of Korah. In Israel, music was an essential part of worship in the temple and was often used in teaching and faith formation. A maskil is a psalm meant to give instruction or teaching. The sons of Korah, they were temple gatekeepers and singers at the temple in the days of David and Solomon. So, Psalm 42 is a psalm written by the Sons of Korah to teach and guide God’s people through song.

But if you read Psalm 42 carefully, it does not sound much like teaching at all — it sounds more like lament and despair. Instead of instructions to worship or meditate on the Word, the writer pours out longing and pain:

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”

In Psalm 1, the image of streams of water meant endless supply and blessing. But here, the author is desperate, like a deer searching for water to survive. The author feels abandoned, not even sure where God is.

Some scholars argue that this psalm may have been written during the Babylonian exile of Israel, long after the time of David and Solomon. Even though this psalm was written after David and Solomon, there are some reasons why Psalm 42 stands at the beginning of Book 2. Psalm 42 shows us how Israel, in the midst of despair, had to turn to God. Even a great person of faith like David had moments of weakness, sorrow, and discouragement. And it shows how David overcame his suffering and challenge.

This is one of the reasons I love the Bible. Unlike other histories, the Bible has many stories of failure and disappointment. But it shows how God works through those moments, how God comforted and restored the people of God.

Psalm 42 is very personal to me as well. I may have shared this with you

before: when I passed the officer candidate test and entered training camp, I was full of joy and expectation. I thought, “If I train well and get dispatched near my church, I can serve my church faithfully during my military service.” But when I started the training, I noticed that new officers would be dispatched based on scores during training. My fellow candidates were from very famous universities; they were strong, good at exercise, confident, and impressive. I felt sure I would be sent far away, maybe near the border with North Korea, and I was filled with anxiety.

One night before the main training began, I had a dream. In the dream, I was reading the Bible, but I could not remember exactly what page and passage I was reading. The only thing I remembered was “Psalm Book 2.” When I woke up, I opened my Bible and found the beginning of Book 2 — Psalm 42.

The Psalm 42 author’s situation was exactly like mine. I was desperate, not knowing where God was. Then I read: “These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.” It was as if the author had written down my exact feelings of sorrow. I wept as I kept reading, and then I came to the verse: “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” Through this word, I found strength again. I endured training, finished with good results, and was

assigned near my church.

I do not want to go into more scholarly details today. Instead, I want to highlight one important truth: if, in that time, I had read another Scripture telling me simply, “Do not despair, trust only in God,” I think I would have felt even more discouraged. Of course, I already knew I should trust God — I was a seminary graduate! But reading Psalm 42, where the author is honest about despair and yet still struggles to hope in God, gave me true comfort.

That’s what I hope for us as we read Book 2 of the Psalms: that we also may experience God’s comfort, that in suffering we too may learn to look to God. As the author poured out their true emotions before God, may we also bring our own worries, fears, and burdens honestly to God. And may we be able to confess with them: “I put my hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” May God’s unchanging comfort, love, and grace fill your hearts this week as you read the Psalms. Amen.