

Series: A More Excellent Way**Today's Message: Hope In God: The Remedy for the Depressed Soul; Psalm 42:1-11**

Depression is a term coined in the early 20th century used to describe feelings like being in a dark hole that feels impossible to climb out of. People that suffer from depression often will describe a feeling of bearing a heavy weight that drags them down lower and lower until they can barely crawl. A number of people in the Bible experienced what would likely be called depression today. Among them was Moses (Numbers 11:14-15) and David (Psalm 42:5, 11; Psalm 143 4), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4) and even the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Words found in the Bible that are associated with depression are words like, disturbed, disquieted, downcast, dismayed, hard pressed, weary and perplexed.

The Bible doesn't run away from the problems people face in this fallen world, but it does tell us repeatedly the one thing we are to do with these problems that often lead to spiritual depression: Trust in God by bringing them to God! Doing this creates hope! In Scripture we learn a more excellent way to address depression: Hope in God!

Psalms 42 and 43 have proven most helpful for me personally. In these psalms we can hear the great lament of a soul depressed. And yet we also hear the remedy: Hope in God.

I think these psalms were written by David's companions, the sons of Korah, during David's brief exile when Absalom conspired to oust David as King of Israel. David and his loyal followers fled Jerusalem in fear for their lives and they crossed over to the east side of the Jordan. 2 Samuel 15-18 describe the harrowing scene. 2 Samuel 15:30 describes David's grief this way, "But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered, and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went."

The Sons of Korah were Levites. They had been assigned the responsibility of guarding the entrances to the Tent of Meeting; the place where God was worshipped. But they were also gifted in leading the singing of the congregation when they met to worship God. And in these psalms, they express the great longing and heartache of David, the King of Israel, who longed to meet with God, but now was being driven away from the tent he had erected in the City of David, designated as the place he met with God.

Psalm 42:1-5 begins with the expression of longing for God Himself. You can hear the lament of his soul, "As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you O God. My soul thirsts for God, the Living God. Where can I go and meet with God? (42:1-2)" There was deep distress in his soul at the thought of his access to the place where God was worshipped was now cut off. Gathering with the faithful to worship God was impossible. But we are encouraged by his hope in verse 5, when he says to himself, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

Psalm 42:6-11 keys in the hopelessness of the situation. He even expresses feeling of being abandoned by God (42:9) and the real physical pain at the hearing of the taunts of his enemies (42:10). But we see hope in his words of self-encouragement in verse 11 as he once again, takes his soul in hand a speaks forthrightly to Himself, "Hope in God!"

In time, David returned to Jerusalem, and worship was resumed. But it was a time of deep darkness for David. Yet we learn a most profound but simple remedy for a depressed soul.

Many Christian writers have referred to spiritual depression as a "dark night of the soul." Most Christians have felt the heaviness of the dark night of the soul. It is that sense of God's absence, a leanness and dryness of soul, where God feels like He's a million miles away.

Psalm 42 provides a great lesson for all of us who from time to time experience this spiritual depression. What can we learn? How can we apply it to our lives so that we can overcome those dark seasons and return once again to a vibrant sense of fellowship with God?

- I) **First, Acknowledge your depressed, disquieted or disturbed soul before God.**
 - A) Acknowledge the true source of your spiritual depression.
 - 1) He is soul-sick, in a state of spiritual exhaustion.
 - (a) 42:1: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.”
 - (i) “My soul pants...”. Very personal. Not everyone else; my soul.
 - 2) His soul is craving relief.
 - (a) 42:2a: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”
 - B) Acknowledge the points of greatest stress.
 - 1) 42:2b: A sense of inability to get help: “Where can I go and meet with God?”
 - 2) 42:3: A sense of heavy sorrow and of defeat.
 - C) Acknowledge your pain.
 - 1) How does he describe his pain in 42:6 and 11? “Downcast” and “Disturbed.”
 - D) Acknowledge God.
 - 1) To whom does the Psalmist direct his anguish?
 - (a) See 42:9: Though it is a complaint, it is directed to God, who does supply healing (42:1-2).
- II) **Second, Declare your faith and hope in God. Soul talk!** Make yourself declare your trust in Him.
 - A) What does the Psalmist tell himself to do? (See Psalm 42:5, 11, and even 43:5)
 - 1) Jesus taught His disciples to “**Let not** your heart be troubled” and to trust in Him and in God.
 - (a) Control your frantic attempts to fret.
 - (i) Example: If you have children you “**let not**” them run wild. In the same way, by use of soul talk, you “**let not**” your mind turn away from hoping in God.
 - (a) Too often we will appeal to all kinds of perceived earthly comforts: sleep, isolation, food, pharmaceuticals, etc.
 - (b) Soul talk: He commands himself to Hope in God. Trust in Him.
 - (i) We would do well to learn to wait upon the Lord in hope.
 - (a) Isaiah 40:33 gives us hope of resolution: “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar like wings on eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.”
 - B) The Psalmist determined to do three important things: To Hope in God (vv5,11), to praise God (vv5,11) and to remember God (v6b) **even while the feelings were still present!**
 - 1) A practical application: When depressed say, “Because I have faith in God I will **hope in God**, I will **praise God**, and I will **remember God**. I will set my mind on Him, no matter what I feel.
 - III) **Broadening the Scope: The One thing you cannot fail to do: Hope (trust and depend) in God!**
 - A) **Isaiah 40:28:** Concrete reasons to teach you that you must hope in God and nothing else:
 - 1) God is the everlasting God; He is the Creator; He is never tired or weary. He is dependable.
 - (a) This should help you to know that you can’t wear Him out as you pour out your heart to Him.
 - B) **Isaiah 40:30:** You cannot fail to depend on God because you were created with a deep need for God. “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall.”
 - C) **Isaiah 40:29,30:** You cannot fail to hope (trust and depend) and God because only He can give you the strength to overcome your spiritual depression.
 - 1) He promises to give you strength when weary, power when weak, and renewal when lacking spiritual vitality.
 - (a) A good confession when depressed: “God is good. At just the right time He will strengthen me when I am weary, give me power when I am weak, and He will renew my spiritual vitality.
 - D) **Isaiah 41:10:** Claim verse this prayerfully. In due time He will restore your spiritual vitality.