

ESF, Lord's day service message
9/28/2014

Put Your Hope in God

Psalm 42:1-11

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

² *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

³ *My tears have been my food
day and night,*

*while men say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"*

⁴ *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.*

⁵ *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 ⁶ 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.*

⁷ *Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

⁸ *By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me--
a prayer to the God of my life.*

⁹ *I say to God my Rock,*

*"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?"*
¹⁰ *My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"*
¹¹ *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.*

The story is told of a businessman whose wife was experiencing depression. She began to mope around and be sad, lifeless—no light in her eyes—no spring in her step—joyless. It became so bad that the man made an appointment for her with a psychiatrist. On the appointed day, they went to the psychiatrist's office, sat down with him and began to talk. It was not long before the wise doctor realized what the problem was.

Without saying a word, he stood up, walked over in front of the woman's chair, signaled her to stand, took her by the hands, looked at her in the eyes for a long time, then put his arms around her and gave her a big, warm hug. You could see the change come over the woman. Her face softened, her eyes lit up, she immediately relaxed. Her whole face glowed.

Stepping back, the doctor said to the husband, "See that's all she needs." The husband thought for a moment, then said, "Okay, I'll bring her in Tuesdays and Thursdays each week, but I play golf on the other afternoons."

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression strikes about 17 million adults in the U.S. each year – more than cancer, AIDS, or heart disease. The Journal of the American Medical Association has stated, "More suffering has resulted from

depression than from any other single disease affecting mankind.” The Psalmist in this text shows us how we can overcome common depression.

Seek God with all your heart

The psalmist begins by stating how much he longs for God in verse 1: “*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.*” When a deer is thirsty, it will run at full speed until it finds some water. When it finally finds it, it will stick his face into the cool stream, forgetting everything else around it. That’s what our downcast spirit needs to do: seeking earnestly the presence of God and forgetting everything else surrounding us.

Just as a thirsty deer can’t wait to quench its thirst, the psalmist thirsty soul is desperately seeking “the living God.” Here “my soul” means “all my nature,” or “my inmost self.” He’s seeking Him with everything he has. Why? Because he recognizes that his depression is caused by thirst of his soul. And because he believes that there is nothing but the Spirit of God that can quench the thirst of his soul.

Man’s soul has a place that can be filled only by God’s Spirit. In the story of John chapter 4, Jesus proves this truth. There was a woman who had had six husbands, but still could not find satisfaction in her life. Her soul was still thirsty. She did not know how she could quench her thirsty life. Then she met Jesus who showed her the way to quench her thirsty life. Jesus said to her, “*whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life*” (John 4:14).

What Jesus means by His water is spiritual water. It is spiritual feeding that comes through knowing God and worshiping God. When we come to Jesus, He leads us to God, to know God, to worship God in spirit. And our thirsty soul can be quenched and

satisfied. That is why Jesus says to all who are thirsty in John 7:37, *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”*

When people do not know this truth or refuse to accept this truth, they try to fill their souls with other things. But their souls will remain thirsty and depressed.

God is spirit so He is invisible. But men tend to seek God in something visible. They may try to quench their thirsty souls by seeking idols that are visible. In Jeremiah 2:13, God says that by doing so, they would not get the water for their soul but only sin: *“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*

When you feel dried and thirsty, stop trying to quench the thirst of your soul with anything but God. Do not divide your heart to seek both something in this world and God. A dividing soul will never be satisfied by anything. Just as a thirsty deer pants for clean water with all his heart so you must seek Him till you find him.

Isaiah 26:9 says, *“My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you.”*

Pour out your feelings to God

A thirsty deer loves to find water and quench its thirst but sometimes it gets into trouble as well. After seeking a watered creek, it may end up in a completely dried creek. It may drink water infected with contaminants in the wild. And it may become thirstier.

Like such a deer in trouble, our lives are not always smooth sailing although we are seeking God. There are times in life when we wonder why God seems so far away.

In verses 3 and 10, the Psalmist expressed his depression: *My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"*
My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

In such depression, he poured out his feelings to God. In verses 4, he said, *I pour out my soul*. In this Psalm, he was pouring out his feelings and thoughts to God. In verse 7, he poured out to God: *Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me*. In verse 9, again he poured out to God: *I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"* See the phrase, "I say to God my Rock." He poured out his inner agony to God who is his Rock. "God my rock" means that God gives him everlasting strength and protection.

By pouring out his feelings to God, he was relieved from depression. When we get depressed, we need to pour out the things that depress us. If we keep the depressed things in our hearts, they depress us more and more. But when we pour them out of our hearts, our hearts become lightened.

If we pour them out to people, we may not always get help. Because there are very difficult and complicated conditions in our depression which others may not be able to handle. Also there are some things we can't talk to others about.

But when we talk about our problems to God, we can tell Him anything and everything. We can tell him exactly how we feel! God never gets tired of hearing our cries. God never rebukes us for pouring out all our burdens to Him. God can handle any and every thing that causes depression in our lives. God has a vast reservoir that can contain all our emotional problems and purify and refresh them.

Psalm 62:8 says, *Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*

Elijah cried out to God when he was depressed: *I have had enough, LORD, Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.* While he was pouring out his depressed heart to God, God did not rebuke him for his complaining. God did not try to correct Elijah while he was pouring out to Him. God just listened to him. By listening to his complaining, God brought comfort to him.

God is always ready to listen to His children who are crying out to Him. Psalm 10:17 says: *You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.*

When you are depressed and you can't find anybody who to encourage you, or you don't want to talk to anybody about it, just talk to God.

Pour your heart to God. Cry out to God. God is ready to listen to your cry. By listening to you, God will comfort you and encourage you.

Encourage yourself to trust God's goodness

When the psalmist was depressed, he did not let the depression control him. He willfully encouraged himself with goodness from God and in God. He led himself to trust the goodness of God. When we are depressed, we must convince ourselves to obey, trusting in the goodness of God.

First, remember God's loving-kindness

In verses 4 and 6 he said: *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.*

My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon--from Mount Mizar.

The Hebrew word to “remember” here conveys a strong expression of determination: “I will remember.”

He remembered the times when he could worship the Lord joyfully. By remembering them, he could gain strength to resist his depression. Sometimes the recovery of our hope doesn't depend on making sense of the present moment but rather in our memories of who God is and what He has done for us. Ultimately to keep our faith strong, we must cling to the memory of what happened on the cross, where Jesus died for you and me.

Also he remembered God from the land of the Jordan and the heights of Hermon. Why did he try to remember God from the land of Jordan and the heights of Hermon? The land of Jordan and the hills of Hermon were not sacred places like some holy places in Israel such as Mt. Zion or Jerusalem. So by remembering God in those places, he confessed his faith in God who can be everywhere, not only in holy places but also in ordinary places, not only in the places where good things are happening, but also in the places where depressed things are happening.

When we remember God's consistent loving kindness regardless of our situation we find hope again. That doesn't mean that everything suddenly becomes smooth sailing but it does give us assurance that someday we will see God's deliverance again.

When you're in the pits and you feel like there's no way out, resolve to remember the good things which God has done for you.

Second, command your heart to place hope in God

The psalmist confessed: *By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me.* The word “day” here refers to prosperity. The expectation of the psalmist was that a time of goodness would return and the loving-kindness of God would again be manifested to him. He suddenly became optimistic when he thought about God’s goodness and his favor for his people.

By regaining faith in God, he commanded himself to hope in 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 Savior and my God.

The psalmist commanded himself to put his hope in God in all situations. And he led himself out of depression.

With faith, you can command yourself to go in the direction you have to go, from being downcast to being joyful. This is the power of the Christian’s life!

You can command yourself what to do in times of trouble. By commanding yourself, you can conquer your depression.

Life is too short to live under emotional misery. God wants us to live a joyful life always.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, “*Be joyful always.*” Philippians 4:4 says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say again rejoice!*”

Have you ever directed your heart to obey these words of God in times of depression? Direct your emotions to obey these words. No single word of God is in vain! His word has power for you to command your emotions.

Just believe in the power of God’s word, command yourself to obey it! It will work! You will be surprised with the result.