

ESF, Lord's day service message
9/23/2018

Overcoming Depression

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.*

Many years ago a young Midwestern lawyer suffered from such deep depression that his friends thought it best to keep all knives and razors out of his reach. He questioned his life's calling and the prudence of even attempting to follow it through. During this time he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not." But in spite of such severe depression, he did not give up on hope. He became a very successful lawyer and eventually was elected to be the 16th president of the U.S. As a president, he led the nation in abolishing slavery. Because of his achievements, he became the most admired president of all. His name is Abraham Lincoln.

Although the intensity or severity may vary, we all experience depression. 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 panting, it will do anything to quench its thirst. 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 the 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 the spiritual feeding that comes through knowing God and worshipping God.

When we come to Jesus, He leads us to God, to knowing God, and to worshipping 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 dry 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, they may end up at a completely dried creek. And they may become thirstier. They may drink water infected with contaminants. And they may get sick. Like such a deer in trouble, our lives are not always smooth sailing although we are seeking God. We have down times in our lives. There are times in life when we wonder why God seems so far away.

In verses 3 and 10, the Psalmist expressed his depression while he was seeking God: *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.

When we get depressed, we need to pour out what depresses us. If we keep what depresses us in our hearts, it depresses us more and more. But when we pour it out of our hearts, our hearts become lightened. If we pour it out to people, we may not always get help. Because there are very complicated conditions in our depression which others may neither understand nor be able to handle. Also, there are some matters 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 matter 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's complaints. God just listened to him. By listening to his complaining, God comforted him.

God is always ready to listen to His child who is 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.*

Not long after arriving in New Hebrides as a pioneer missionary, John G. Paton and his wife rejoiced in the coming of a baby son to gladden their home. But the joy was short-lived. Soon death took both his wife and child, and Dr. Paton had to dig their graves and bury his loved ones with his own hands. In the unbearable heartache and sorrow of his tragic loss, he poured his heart to God. And marvelously he was strengthened from above. In writing of this experience, he testified, "If it had not been for Jesus and the fellowship and grace He afforded me, I am certain I would have gone mad or died of grief beside their lonely graves."

When you are depressed and you can't find anybody who encourages 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. When we are depressed, we must convince ourselves to trust the goodness of God. How?

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 was determined to remember the joy of worshiping the Lord with God’s people.

By remembering the good things God had done to him, 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 on our memories of what God has done for us and on faith in what He will do. 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.

The Psalmist also remember God from the land of Jordan and the heights of Hermon. Why? 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 something good is happening, but also in the places where nothing good is 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 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 yourself to put your hope in God

To overcome depression, the psalmist commands himself to put his 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. Not with our will power but with faith, we can command ourselves to go in the direction we have to go, from being downcast to being joyful. With what faith? With faith that if we obey God's word, God will give us power to control our emotion.

God wants us to live a joyful life always. And God gives us words with which we can command ourselves to rejoice always. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, "*Be joyful always.*" Philipians 4:4 says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say again rejoice!*"

With faith in these words, you can command yourself to obey these words in times of trouble. If you command yourself with these words, God will help you conquer your depression. This is the power of a believer's life! Just believe in the power of God's word, command yourself to obey it! It will work!