

## Hope For The Downcast Soul

Psalms 42:1-11 KJV To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. [2] My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? [3] My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? [4] When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. [5] Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. [6] O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. [7] Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. [8] Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. [9] I

will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? [10] As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? [11] Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

### I. INTRODUCTION—THE BLESSING OF THIS BOOK

-There is a great blessing in being able to hold and read the Book that you have in your hand. I realize that times have changed and that Bibles are now available on all sorts of electronic devices but there is nothing like holding a hardcopy of the Bible.

-This past week (2/18/13), I heard a preacher (Steven Lawson) say something that was very disturbing to me personally and yet after hearing him out; I believe what he had to say. He said that after almost 30 years of preaching, he had discovered that we only get to preach from passages in the Bible once.

-He meant that because of the time factor involved in preaching that most diligent preachers who want to preach their way through the entire Bible will only pass through a particular passage because of the shortness of this vapor of life. Therefore, he pointed out, that it was crucial that we do our dead-level best to preach every time with a pure heart, pure motive, and pure mind.

-I must confess that when I began to meditate on what he said, I again had to make the determination to treat every passage of this book with a sense of sacred honor.

-The blessing of the Book and of anointed preaching is that it helps us to move along the Christian walk for the Lord.

- It encourages us to move forward.
- It challenges us to prayer.
- It urges us to worship.
- It confronts our sin.
- It helps us to battle the whims of our flesh.
- It breathes hope into us when we are under attack.
- It opens our eyes to the greatness of God and the power of His salvation.
- It softens the blows of disappointment.

- It molds our minds into the greater plan of God.

-With this Psalm, it helps to breathe hope into a downcast soul.

## II. PSALM 42

### A. Five Books in the Psalms

-If you have one of the Search for Truth Bibles, you will notice something written above Psalm 42. You will note that it has the caption that gives BOOK II, Psalms 42-72. The Psalm we have just read comes at the very beginning of Book II of the Psalms. In fact there are five books of the psalms and the Jews commonly referred to them as the psalter. This was what they sang when they came to worship.

-The longer you live for the Lord, the more of these Psalms you will discover to be of great value to you. In fact, I believe that some of them you will come to treasure.

- **Book I—1-41.**
- **Book II—42-72. Completed 300 years after the first book. Hezekiah comes along and is the force behind putting them together.**

- Book III—73-89. You will note that they are not chronologically in order but rather by a theological theme.
- Book IV—90-106. This section focuses on Israel's relapse and recovery in the wilderness.
- Book V—107-150. Revivals began to take place in this segment as Israel returns from their exile and rebuild the walls and the temple in Jerusalem.

#### B. A Maschil

-The superscription above this psalm notes to us that it is a maschil. This means that this is a psalm of instruction. The instruction to be given is the understanding the God can be trusted during the tough times of life.

-The other maschil psalms are scattered throughout the psalter: 32; 42; 44; 45; 52; 53; 54; 55; 74; 78; 88; 89; 142. All of them have some kind of instruction attached to them. For instance, Psalm 32 is instruction given concerning forgiveness.

-The author of this psalm is unknown but we can know that it was written for the sons of Korah and was intended for the director of music. The sons

of Korah were Levites who were the descendants of Kohath, the father of Korah (1 Chron. 6:22-48; 9:17-32; 2 Chron. 20:19).

-These were the men who produced the music while the Tabernacle was in the wilderness and after the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Num. 26:11).

#### C. Why Art Thou Cast Down, O My Soul?

-I would like to jump ahead to Psalm 42:5 and then backtrack through the rest of the Psalm. He asks the question, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

-The psalmist pours out his soul to God during a time of duress. He is discouraged, he is downcast, and he feels a sense of hopelessness trying to choke the life out of his soul.

-The Hebrew word in that text is shah-kak which means to crouch or to bow down. It is the same word that is used in Job 38:40 to describe a lion in a crouched position waiting along the trail for its prey. The psalmist describes his soul in such a way that it has been bent down by the challenges and difficulties of life. As if a heinous lion has attacked his soul.

-He has come into contact with some very difficult trials. These trials have seemed to bring even greater agony to him than any he has ever faced. It is sort of like have a wound that needs treatment and some healthcare worker coming along and working with the wound that inflames the wound even more.

-Burn victims often experience this through the process of their own rehabilitation. They can have a second or third degree burn but the subsequent trips to the whirlpool for something called debridement makes it seem like the pain has to be endured all over again.

-The psalmist is expressing that kind of pain here. However, he is not in the throes of physical pain but in the clutches of some soul pain. Soul pain hurts even worse than physical pain. It seems to linger and there is nothing that can seemingly bring relief to soul pain.

-Soul pain is drawn out over months and sometimes even years.

- A fractured family relationship that has seethed for years.

- Wayward children who seem to mock God and everything their parents stood for.
- A nasty divorce battle that has children caught up in the middle.
- Having to contend with difficult people who seem to have it out for you.
- The loss of a job that you really were fulfilled by.
- The nagging pain of a physical ailment that will not heal.
- A limiting health condition that has seemingly put you on the sideline.
- Financial pressures that never seem to go away.
- A wrong path that was chosen and now it is taking years to get back to the starting point.
- A pastor who is run out of a church at no fault of his own.
- A saint who made a mistake but no one will let them forget it.
- A feeling that you have been overlooked for a position you would have excelled at.

-All of those matters can shut down our faith, our hope, and even our determination so that we become prey to all matters of the devices of the devil.

### III. THE DIAGNOSIS OF A DOWNCAST SOUL

-If you were to go to the hospital with some kind of ailment, you would have to give them what we call the chief complaint.

- Where are you hurting?
- What does the pain feel like? Sharp? Dull? Throbbing?
- How long has it been going on?
- Are there things that cause this pain?

-All of these questions are leading up to helping us to get a diagnosis for the condition. We will probably draw some blood, maybe take some X-rays, perhaps do a CT scan, an MRI, or an ultrasound, and perhaps even a biopsy.

-We do these particular things to get a diagnosis so we can treat you so you will get better. All the way through Psalm 42 and the first verse of Psalm 43, there are reasons that we see into the diagnosis or the cause of a downcast soul.

A. An Absence from the House of God—  
42:1-2

Psalms 42:1-2 KJV To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after

the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. [2] My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

-Many scholars feel like this was David describing his time of fleeing from Jerusalem as he ran from Absalom.

-Why the despair? Because . . . he has been separated from the house of the Lord. He had been forced to flee from Jerusalem where he regularly worshiped. He can no longer lead in the worship as he had in times past.

-He will have to remind himself to hope in God. There are times that you have to remind yourself to worship.

-Because David had been forced to leave; he literally felt himself to be cut off from the Lord. His greatest question is “when can I go and meet with God?”

-One of the causes of a downcast soul is an absence from the house of God. Whether many are willing to admit it or not, we find great bolstering in our soul when we come to the house of God routinely, regularly, and actively.

-In Luke 10, we find the parable of the Good Samaritan who brought the wounded man to the inn. The inn can be pictured as the house of God.

- The inn was a place of refreshment for weary travelers . . . The house of God brings relief to us in this valley of tears.
- The inn had an owner who attended the beaten man . . . The house of God has pastors, faithful ministers, godly saints who receive weary sinners to help them recover from the injuries of the world and the devil.
- The inn had a grand table of food in it . . . The house of God brings us the sincere milk of the Word and the strong meat of the Word.
- The inn was a desirable place for lodgers . . . The house of God is a place that saints long to go to and find rest for their souls.

-Our soul can very quickly become downcast when we do not regularly attend the house of worship. The psalmist is far from home and therefore he feels very far from God and anytime we feel that distance from God our soul can become downcast.

#### B. The Mouth of the Ungodly—42:3, 10

**Psalms 42:3 KJV My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?**

**Psalms 42:10 KJV As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?**

-The catcalls of the ungodly, the backslidden, and those who hate everything righteousness stands for can get under your skin. Obviously it had some effect on the psalmist because it is mentioned twice . . . Where is thy God?

-You have probably heard it before . . .

- Where is your God when you need Him?
- Where is your God now?
- Why hasn't your God given you a fair shake in life?

-It is only when we entertain the questions of the ungodly that we feel our soul slipping down into the gorge of the downcast . . .

- Where is God indeed?
- Where is God in this far country?
- Where is God when my enemies taunt me?
- Does God even hear my cries?

- When is God going to change my circumstances?

-It reached the point where the psalmist couldn't even eat! He said, "My tears have been my meat day and night!" My appetite has been snatched from me so I don't even desire to eat anymore.

-That is what the catcalls of the ungodly can do to you . . . It can begin to harbor doubts about everything that you have even held is true. But remember that David was at that point before we ever even came along in life. Never forget that there is a brotherhood before us in the gates of Heaven who have endured and made it to the end!

-We shall do the same thing!

-We can become downcast when we miss the house of God and when the mouth of the ungodly overwhelms our faith and trust in God.

### C. Memories of the Past—42:4

**Psalms 42:4 KJV** When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God,

**with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.**

-He also became downcast when the memories of past revivals, past victories, and past accomplishments came to his mind. This is the trap of the aging . . .

-The psalmist tells of how he used to be with the great multitude that went to worship, the shouts of joy, the wealth of thanksgiving, and leading the worship. Pleasant memories of the past became a source of discouragement for the present.

-There is a memory of the past acts of God and how that it seemed better somewhere "back then." The human tendency is to glamorize the past and make it seem better than it really was. But the reality is that every step of this life has its battles, which bring both victories and losses, our tendency is to remember the victories and forget the losses.

- There has always been a fight for holiness.
- There has always been a battle for doctrine.
- There have always been tares among the wheat.
- There have always been wolves among the sheep.

- There was a Judas alongside the John.

-I have a tendency to forget that there were battles in the past just like there are present struggles. Don't waste the afflictions you are enduring now. Let the spiritual pressure you feel now be something that causes you to dig even deeper into the Kingdom of God.

#### D. The Trials of Life—42:7

**Psalms 42:7 KJV Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.**

-The psalmist goes on to further note the fact that there are times that trials sweep us away like the great waves and breakers of the deep.

-David is saying that the conflict with Absalom has been the greatest trial of his life. It has swept him away from Jerusalem like the waves being smitten by a hurricane. At another time, the ocean might have been a calm and relaxing scene for him but instead he can see no beauty in it.

-But there is an acknowledgement of something here that you will miss at just a glance. The psalmist describes the forces of the sea at work here. It was not something they would be

unfamiliar with because they were on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and there were also storms that came to the Sea of Galilee.

-Here is what we miss sometimes with this Scripture . . . God is in charge of the waves of the sea and even if there is a grudgingly acknowledgment, there are some trials in our lives that God ordains them to come our way.

-He can see there are things He wants to work out, draw out, and allow us to walk through so that we can really know what it is like to be molded into an ardent disciple.

- **Matthew 20:23—If you drink of his cup you are going to be baptized with the baptism the Lord is baptized with.**
- **2 Corinthians 1:5—Sufferings of Christ abound in us, so does the consolation of Christ abound in us.**
- **Galatians 2:20—I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ who lives within me.**
- **Philippians 3:10—Fellowship of suffering.**
- **Romans 8:17—If we suffer with him, we will be glorified with him.**
- **Romans 8:29—Being conformed into the image of the Son.**



- 2 Timothy 2:11-12—If we are dead with him we shall live with him . . . If we suffer, we will reign with him.
- 1 Peter 4:13—Partakers of Christ’s sufferings . . . we will be glad with exceeding joy.

-Our trials are often the very tipping points that are present in our lives. In the years to come, once we look back with the wisdom of maturity, we can say, “that thing was good for me.”

-But when you are in the midst of the trial, even though it may be God-ordained, your soul can become downcast.

#### E. To Feel Forgotten by God—42:9

Psalms 42:9 KJV I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

-Closely related to the fact that God will let us walk through the challenges of a trial, there is another connection that we have to make to God that comes from Psalm 42:9.

-It is the painful cry to God that He has forgotten us. Look no further than the Cross and you find

Jesus crying out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46).

-A downcast soul can really find himself downcast when he thinks that God has forgotten him. There is nothing like being lost at the end of this dead-end!

-There are times that those who feel a great devotion to God will find great condemnation when they even question God. But the Word of the Lord is the greatest place to go when you get in this state of mind because recorded on the pages of the Word, there were others who felt the same way and God decided to put it in His book . . .

- Psalm 13:1—How long will you forget me Lord? Forever?
- Psalm 22:2—My God I cry in the daytime but you are not there! I cry at night but I can’t find you!
- Psalm 44:23—Awake from your sleep, God, and please hear me out!
- Psalm 44:24—Why are you hiding your face, O God? Why are you forgetting my affliction and oppression God?

- Psalm 77:9—Have you forgotten to be gracious to me, God? Have you closed off your mercies from me?
- Isaiah 40:27—My way is hid from the Lord . . . My knowledge of Him has passed from my mind.

-All of these things pour out of a downcast soul . . . But I can say to you without a doubt that God knows exactly where we walk and the direction that we take!

#### IV. THE CURE OF THE DOWNCAST SOUL

-Those are the reasons for a soul that has become downcast. But just as there are reasons that we get downcast, the Word can point out some things that will help cure us of this.

##### A. Put Your Hope Back In God—42:5, 11

-Twice in this Psalm, we see the phrase, “hope thou in God” (vv. 5, 11).

-The man who learns that he must not give in to the depression of soul is a man who has learned one of the greatest lessons of life. He will not let himself give in to being downcast or filled with self-pity.

-Instead he gets a grip on himself and wrestles through it. He reminds himself that there are some things he can put hope in.

-We are constantly talking to ourselves . . . In fact no one talks to you more than you! More times than not, you have to talk to yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself.

-Why art thou cast down, my soul? What business do you have being in this condition?

-This is what Paul was getting at when he noted in Romans 6 that you have to kill your flesh. You have to turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself . . . ‘Hope thou in God!’ . . . Instead of muttering around in this unhappy, depressed way of life.

-There is a spirit of faith and a spirit of dejection and our faith has to get the upper hand.

##### B. He Reminds Himself of His Responsibility—42:5, 11

-In that same connection with the hope verses in 5 and 11, the psalmist knows his responsibility is

to put his hope in God. Nothing more, nothing less.

-This world is passing, it is fleeting, and it goes by so quickly it is astounding. If you are putting your hope in the passing fancies of this world, you are already in trouble.

-The psalmist has the sense of responsibility to know that he must do what has to be done and that is put his hope in God.

C. Praise Is What Gets Your Through—  
42:5, 11

-Look once more at those two verses, 5 and 11 . . . he notes that I will praise him.

-Certainty came to his life when he began to understand that God had not changed one iota.

- God has not changed!
- His purpose for me has not changed!
- He has led me to uplifting victories in the past!
- He will do it again!
- Let your faith arise to the better things that are in the future!

-A host of men in the Bible have proven this to be true.

- Joseph
- Moses
- Joshua
- David
- Jonah
- Peter

-Because to a great degree all of the men that I have mentioned were men who in some form or fashion got a second chance!