

“Spiritual Depression – Part 2”
Psalm 42
(Preached at Trinity, October 17, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With the 42nd Psalm comes the beginning of Book 2 of the Psalter which covers psalms 42-72. The theme of both Psalm 42 & 43 deals with a subject we don’t often consider although we’ve all experienced it in various degrees.
These two psalms deal with the subject of spiritual depression.
2. As I pointed out last time, it has affected the greatest of saints – Abraham, Moses, Elijah. Charles Spurgeon fought this often in his life.
3. This is such an important subject because of the effect it has upon our Christian witness.
 - A. Lloyd-Jones – “Unhappy Christians are, to say the least, a poor recommendation for the Christian Faith; and there can be little doubt that the exuberant joy of the early Christians was one of the more potent factors in the spread of Christianity.”
 - B. The lost man who is desperately seeking something to bring him lasting happiness should see that we have found it. They should see that our relationship with Christ has changed our lives.
4. Last time we limited our focus to some of the causes of spiritual depression.
 - A. Estrangement from God – **Verses 1-4**
The psalmist was separated from the Temple and so separated from God.
He cries out, - “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God”
 1. There are several reasons a Christian may feel separated from God – these times can throw us into a deep state of sorrow
The chief cause for a feeling of separation from God is sin
 - a. Sin will hinder our prayer life. It will hinder our worship.
 - b. Sin crushes the believers confidence and robs him of his assurance
 - c. Sin always affects our fellowship with God
God will seem distant. We long for the times when He was near.
As time stretches on we fall into great sorrow
 2. Sometimes through sin or neglect we fall into the valley of darkness where prayer is hard and our fellowship with our Father is difficult.
 3. For the Christian separation from God is the greatest sorrow
 - B. Memories of better days – **Verse 4**
The psalmist remembers previous times, better times
“When I remember these *things*”
 1. People long for the experiences in their memories of days gone by.
People become melancholy as they long for the past.
 2. Christians are often full of joyless sorrow now longing for some religious feeling they had in the past rather than looking unto Jesus now
 - C. An over-estimation of our problems – **Verse 7**
The psalmist describes his situation
Psalm 42:7 – “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”

1. He describes his situation – only he is describing it in the worst possible terms
 2. Sometimes we brood over the situation examining every detail and fretting about what may happen
- D. The insensitive words spoken by other people – **Verse 10**
Psalm 42:3 – “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?”
- A. It was bad enough that the psalmist was away from home, he was surrounded by those who taunted him
They mocked him, “Where is your God.”
 - B. The absence of caring brethren can fill our lives with grief. God never intended us to be alone.
And when we are surrounded by those who mock us it is source of great grief.
5. These are real issues and there are many other ways we can fall into sorrow and a disquieted spirit. The important question is what are we to do about it? Is there a cure? This evening I want us to look at some possible cures for spiritual depression.
 6. Let me say at the beginning, I’m speaking to the believer tonight. There are also many unbelievers who are continually depressed. Their lives are plagued by an emptiness that they try in vain to fill. They try alcohol, entertainment and the unending pursuit of pleasure. They try material goods. Some look for fulfillment in their relationships but are left empty. The divorce rate soars. To the lost man I can say unequivocally, there is no peace apart from Christ.
God created us to find contentment in Him. Apart from Him there is no meaning to life.
 7. But to the believer the Psalmist directs us to several cures for spiritual depression.
- I. Let me begin with the chief and primary cure - Faith
- A. This seems simplistic
 1. It seems too smug to just tell someone in the pit of despondency, “Trust God.”
 2. But this is the essence of the Christian life
Yes, we go through terrible trials but we are told over and over to place our confidence in Christ and none other
John 14:1 – “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”
Proverbs 3:5-8 – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones.”
Philippians 4:6-7 – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

- B. Every fear, every doubt, every worry is caused by unbelief
1. Is God the Ruler over all of creation?
NAS **Daniel 4:35** - "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'
Psalm 135:6 – "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."
Psalm 115:3 – "But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."
 2. Has He ordained all things that come to pass? Is He not infinite in wisdom?
Isaiah 46:9-10 – "Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"
 3. Is God not great enough to be trusted?
Psalm 91:2 – "I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."
Psalm 91:5 – "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;"
Psalm 91:9 – "Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;"
 4. Faith is the ultimate cure for our fears and times of depression
 Matthew Henry – "A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquietude of spirit."

II. In faith the psalmist takes control of his own heart

- A. He changes his self-talk to faith talk
1. We can talk ourselves into gloom and doom
 "I'm not going to recover from this sickness"
 "God has abandoned me"
 "No one cares for me. I'm all by myself"
 "I'll never find a job. We are heading for financial ruin."
 "Things will never be like they used to be."
 2. Listen to the Psalmist
Psalm 42:5 & 11; 43:5 – "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God. . ."
- B. We have to take charge of our emotions
1. Lloyd-Jones – "You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God'—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way."
 2. We have to remind ourselves of God's mighty power. We have to remind ourselves of His infinite love for us. We have to remind ourselves that our present situation is not hopeless—"Hope thou in God."

3. God has come to your aid before. He will surely do it again.
 “I will hope in God who has proved Himself mighty in the past.”
 “I will hope in God who has promised He will never leave me nor forsake me.”

III. Instead of looking inward, by faith we are to look upward

- A. The Psalmist turns from despair to praise
Psalm 42:5 – “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.”
Psalm 43:4 – “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”
- B. To continually gaze upon our earthly condition will keep you earthly minded.
 1. If you continually surround yourself with earthly things you shouldn’t be surprised when you are left empty.
 2. As Christians our lives must be enveloped by Christ. We are to be clothed with Christ
Romans 13:14 – “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.”
 3. As Christians we are to continually look upward
Colossians 3:1-2 – “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”
 - a. Jesus is seated on His throne as my Mediator, as My Lord and King, as My High Priest.
 - b. If I have trusted Him with the care of my soul I can surely trust Him with the care of my life.
 4. Even in the midst of his depression notice the Psalmists upward gaze to his great God.
Verse 9 – He refers to God as his “Rock”
Psalm 43:2 – He refers to God as “The God of my strength.”
 5. He discovered that by looking above praising God his very countenance would change
Psalm 42:11 – “I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance”
 6. In Christ our griefs are turned to joy
1 Peter 1:8 – “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”

- IV. By faith we are to remember our relationship with God
- A. This is a great source of confidence for God's people
1. Notice the Psalmist's claim upon God
Psalm 42:6 – "O my God, my soul is cast down within me"
Psalm 42:11 – "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."
Psalm 43:4 – "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God."
Psalm 43:5 – "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God."
 2. There is a modern expression that is nothing short of blasphemous, nothing short of taking God's name in vain. It is the flagrant use of the expression, "O my God." In texting many use the shorthand OMG.
 3. The psalmist is not using this phrase lightly. God is his God and he is a child of God.
 4. He was confident of his relationship with God
- B. This is one of our greatest comforts
1. I belong to Christ. He is my Savior. I am His bride. He has reconciled me to the Father.
Romans 8:1 – "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"
 2. God is my God.
He loves me. He is working all things for my good.
 3. Nothing shall separate me from My God.
 4. Even the taunts of his enemy proved an ultimate comfort
"Where is your God?" – they were talking about *his* God.
 5. Even in Christ's darkest hour when the Father turned away from Christ as sin bearer it was His greatest comfort.
"My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?"

Conclusion:

1. So this is the cure for the despondency that can sometimes grip us. Looking to Christ in faith keeps our hope in Him. When we feel downcast we must sternly remind ourselves that our hope is in Christ. We rest in the promises of Christ.
Psalm 42:5 – "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God"
2. As we hope in God we turn our eyes off ourselves and our earthly condition. Our eyes will look up and our tongues will be filled with praise. And this glorifies God. Our sorrows will be turned into joy.