

Praising God in Times of Sorrow

Psalm 42

Concerning verse 5, Martyn Lloyd-Jones helpfully expounds upon this same point in his classic book, *Spiritual Depression*, which is based primarily on this psalm:

Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, "Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you." (pp. 20-21)

Concerning verse 11, Ed Welch has written an insightful article entitled "Words of Hope for Those Who Struggle With Depression," in which he speaks of the potential importance of asking this question. His treatment warrants significant quotation:

As you think about the meaning of your feelings, you will notice that, rather than leading you to more and more despair, the path leads you to the triune God. More specifically, it will lead you to the question, Will you live for God or will you live for yourself and the things you worship? Sometimes it takes awhile to get to this most critical of questions, but it is always there. Usually, all you have to do is ask yourself the "why" questions of a three-year-old.

"I can't go on."

"Why?"

"Because I am so tired and I can't take the pain any more."

"Why?"

"Because I feel like I am alone."

"Why?"

"Because ... I don't believe that God is with me."

"Why?"

"Because ... I don't trust him. I trust in my interpretation that comes from my feelings."

"Why" questions should lead you to God. You will get tired of the questions by the time you get to the second one, but keep them coming. At the end of your questions say to Him, "Jesus is my Lord, I confess my unbelief, and I trust You."

Trust, confession of sin, and following Christ in obedience — sound familiar? These are the staples of the spiritual life. When you get under the surface, these are the things that are important for everyone. You will find that they work.

If these seem superficial, then you are numb to the secrets of the universe and you need to go back to listening. Don't trust what your emotions are saying on this one. These may be simple, but they are not simplistic. They are the foundations for life itself. They are the primary ways we respond to God. (*Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Winter 2000, p. 44, CCEF.org, website of the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation)