

42. WHY ARE YOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL? HOPE AND HELP FOR THE DOWNCAST: Psalm 42

INTRODUCTION:

When was the last time you went through a season of being cast down or depressed? If not you, do you know someone who has? What are we to think of this biblically? What hope or helps do the downcast have available to them in Christ?

NOW UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

David wrote Psalm 42, most commentators agree, and delivered it to the sons of Korah, who were singers in the Tabernacle. **Look at the title: "To the choirmaster. A Maskil of [FOR] the Sons of Korah."** The word Maskil is a liturgical term, some kind of name for a particular song.

When David wrote Psalm 42, it is most likely in the period of his life when he being sought after by King Saul; banished from his home, his city, and the tabernacle where God's people would assemble for worship. Now here is the point: DAVID IS IN A SEASON OF BEING CAST DOWN or DEPRESSED.

DOCTRINE: True believers may go through seasons of being cast down or depressed, but there are great helps for you if you are in Christ.

We have those two main points. The first is useful for instruction, the second is useful for personal application.

I. TRUE BELIEVERS MAY GO THROUGH SEASONS OF BEING CAST DOWN (Psalm 42:5a, 11a)

5a Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me? . . .

11a Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?

- **BOYS AND GIRLS:** Christians are the happiest people in the world, yet sometimes they may go through seasons of extreme sadness. David did!

I) True believers find their chief delight in God, yet sometimes they choke on their tears as they feel abandoned by Him.

(I) True believers find their chief delight in God (Psalm 42:1-2).

Psalm 42:1-2

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

- **HENRY:** "Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premises this, That he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and, casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm."
- **Q.** Is your chief delight in God himself? He is the most delightful!

(II) Sometimes true believers choke on their tears, feeling abandoned by God
(Psalm 42:3).

Psalm 42:3

3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
"Where is your God?"

- To *feel* abandoned by God is worse than the anything except actually *being* abandoned by him.
- **Q.** Are your tears the food you have been eating? Do you feel abandoned by God?

QUESTION. How does a downcast soul happen?

ANSWER I. Sometimes through sickness.

ANSWER II. Sometimes through lack of sanctification.

- If you base your happiness on your current progress in sanctification, rather than the finished nature of your justification in Christ, you will likely be constantly in and out of depressing moods.

ANSWER III. Sometimes through sins committed.

- **(I) Sins of commission** which squeeze the conscience.
- **(II) Sins of omission** which are like thorns in the bed of the conscience.
- **(III) Sins of idleness**, not actively working hard as God has created you to in your education, training, or vocation; an idle
- **(IV) Sins of slothfulness or gluttony**, not fueling, exerting, or resting your body in a way that glorifies God.
- **(V) Sins of indulging in worries and anxieties**, which drain the soul

of comfort and fill it with distrust in God's goodness.

- **(VI) Sins of neglecting private, family, or public worship of the Lord.** A starved soul is a downcast soul. A soul never exhaling God's praises will become heavy as a millstone and sink down in the sea. A soul infrequently fellowshipping with God's people, or being distant when they are around other believers, will be a lone island of despair.

ANSWER IV. Sometimes through sins received.

ANSWER V. Sometimes through suffering.

- Like Job you may be suffering without any fault of your own. The Lord may simply be sanctifying his name in the eyes of others by afflicting you and sustaining you!
He may be afflicting you simply because you need to be sanctified and this is the way he has chosen to do it!

ANSWER VI. Sometimes through persecution. *David*

ANSWER VII. Sometimes through not being able to assemble with the Lord's people to praise his name. *David*

- **In William Bridge's book *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*, he gives 9 reasons for a downcast soul and practical helps for each.** Please pick that up and read it. The whole book is applying Psalm 42:11.

II) True believers, when they are downcast, earnestly desire to worship the Lord in the assembly of the saints, knowing this is a key way God pumps joy into the soul (Psalm 42:4).

Psalm 42:4

4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I would go with the throng
and lead them in procession to the house of God
with glad shouts and songs of praise,
a multitude keeping festival.

Apply by questions.

II. THERE IS HOPE AND HELP FOR YOU IF YOU ARE CAST DOWN (Psalm 42:5-11)

Psalm 42:5-6a

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation 6 and my God."

- **CALVIN:** "David contended strongly against his sorrow, lest he should yield to temptation: but what we ought chiefly to observe is, that he had experienced a strong and bitter contest before he obtained the victory over it."
- **BOYS AND GIRLS:** Though sometimes believers may go through seasons of extreme sadness, there are great helps in the Bible to fight this sadness and be happy again.
 - **We will focus on what we can learn from these words in verse 5 once we get to verse 11**, since it is repeated there. For now be content to learn that there is hope and help for you if and when you are depressed.

QUESTION. What do I do when I am downcast?

ANSWER. Here are TEN helps for you if and when your soul is cast down within you.

I) Remember the LORD by fixing the eyes of your heart on who He is and what He has promised (Psalm 42:6b).

Psalm 42:6b

"My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar."

II) Remember the LORD is sovereign over all your downcast seasons (Psalm 42:7).

Psalm 42:7

"Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me."

- **GILL:** "[David] calls afflictions God's water spouts, and "his" waves and "his" billows; because they are appointed, sent, ordered, and overruled by him, and made to work for the good of his people."
- **REMEMBER, THE LORD IS SOVEREIGN OVER ALL YOUR DOWNCAST SEASONS. This will terrify you a sinner and comfort you if you are a saint.**

- *And you need to remember the sovereign Lord has not forgotten you if you are untied to Christ by faith.*

III) Remember God's lovingkindness to you in Christ (Psalm 42:8a).

Psalm 42:8a

"By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,"

Think of the lovingkindness of God toward you, believer:

- **(I) God's love for you, believer, never began!**
 - *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." **Jeremiah 31:33***
 - *"But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children." **Psalm 103:17***
- **(II) God in his love for you, Christian, gave his only begotten Son so that you would not perish but have eternal life!**
 - *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." **John 3:16***
- **(III) God's love for you, saint, led Christ to lay down his life for you!**
 - *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." **John 15:13***
- **(IV) God's love for you, believer, will never end!**
 - *"Having loved his own who were in the world, [Christ] loved them to the end." **John 13:1***
 - **Q.** How can something end that never began?
- **(V) God's love for you, Christian, can never be severed!**
 - *"35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Romans 8:35-39***
 - **God's love for you, saint, can never be severed by sin, suffering, or sadness; God's love can never be separated by being downcast, in a drought, or depressed.**
 - **Remember the never-beginning and never-ending love of God in Christ Jesus especially when you are in a downcast season!**

IV) Remember God's song (Psalm 42:8b).

Psalm 42:8b

"and at night his song is with me,"

- **(I)** When you are downcast, remember to sing! (*Sing Psalm 42!*)
- **(II)** When you are downcast, remember that God sings over you!

- **Zephaniah 3:17**

"The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing."

- **BOYS AND GIRLS:** Jesus loves to sing. But do you know what he loves more than singing? His saints. Jesus even sings over his people in joy because he loves us so very much!

V) Remember to pray to the God who gives you both life and eternal life (Psalm 42:8c).

Psalm 42:8c

"a prayer to the God of my life."

- Maybe you need to memorize Psalm 121, so you can recite that as a reminder to pray!

Psalm 121

- 1** I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
- 2** My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- 3** He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- 4** Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5** The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
- 6** The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- 7** The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
- 8** The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

VI) Remember to cry out to God in prayer, and cry out honestly (Psalm 42:9-10).

Psalm 42:9-10

"9 I say to God, my rock:

'Why have you forgotten me?

Why do I go mourning

because of the oppression of the enemy?'

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones,

my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me all the day long,

"Where is your God?"

- **BOYS AND GIRLS:** You can be honest with God in prayer and tell him what you are thinking and feeling!

VII) Remember to preach to yourself, calling your soul to account

(Psalm 42:11a).

Psalm 42:11a

"Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you in turmoil within me?"

- **David calls his soul to account:** he is the accuser, the accused, the prosecutor, the advocate, and the judge.
- **(I) Examine yourself by seeing if you can discern why you are in this downcast state.**
 - **(I)** Is it because of sickness?
 - **(II)** Is it because you are navel-gazing, rather than looking at Christ?
 - **(III)** Has God by his providence handed you into this downcast state because of sin that you need to repent of?
 - **(I.)** Sins of commission?
 - **(II.)** Sins of omission?
 - **(III.)** Sins of idleness?
 - **(IV.)** Sins of slothfulness or gluttony?
 - **(V.)** Sins of indulging in worries and anxieties?
 - **(VI.)** Sins of neglecting the private, family, or public worship of the Lord?
 - **(IV)** Are you in this downcast state because of sins that have been committed against you?
 - **(V)** Are you downcast because of persecution?
 - **(VI)** Are you downcast because of not being able to worship the Lord in the assembly of the saints?
- **(II) Beloved, it may be that you can easily discern by examination** why you are in a down cast state. **But it may be that you cannot discover the reason.** Enlist the help of your husband, wife, friend, or one of your pastors. **You must not walk through the valley of the shadow of death**

alone.

- **Whatever the reason for a depressed soul**, the Lord is sovereign over it and will make use of it for his great name and your great good, Christian.

VIII) Remember to tell yourself to fix your hope on God (Psalm 42:11b).

Psalm 42:11b

"Hope in God;" (*imperative verb*)

- **The word Hope in the Scriptures means "a confident expectation of future salvation."**
 - **GILL:** "Hope is of great use against castings down; it is an helmet, an erector of the head, which keeps it upright, and from bowing down: it is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and is of great service in the troubles of life, and against the fears of death."
 - **Hope is the birthright of those who have been born again.**
- **(I) You and I must set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us when Christ returns** (1 Peter 1:13).
 - **1 Peter 1:13** "...Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - **Romans 12:12** "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."
- **(II) Your sufferings and afflictions will result, by God's grace, in increased hope in Christ** (Romans 5:2-4; Job 13:14).
 - **Romans 5:3-4** "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces *hope*. . ."
 - **Make it your aim and ask for God's grace, to be able to say with Job**, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him." (**Job 13:14**)

IX) Remember to tell yourself that this darkness will not last—say to yourself, "I shall again praise him!" (Psalm 42:11c).

Psalm 42: 11c

"for I shall again praise him,"

X) Remember to tell yourself that this darkness will not last—say to yourself, "I will see Christ's face!" (Psalm 42:11d)

Psalm 42:11d

"my salvation and my God." [the salvation of God's face]

- **BOYS AND GIRLS:** The best thing you could ever see is the face of Jesus Christ. His face will melt away all sadness forever. His face will strip away

all sins forever. His face will chase away all sickness forever. Jesus' face will whip away all suffering forever. *WHEN YOU ARE IN A SAD STATE, TRUST JESUS, AND REMEMBER THAT ONE DAY YOU WILL SEE HIS FACE!*

Men and women, young men and women, boys and girls, remember that the darkness will not last—say to yourself “I will see Christ's face!”

- **Say with Edward Mote, who wrote *The Solid Rock*,**
“When darkness seems to hide his face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds within the vale.”
- **Say with Isaac Watts, who wrote *Come, Ye That Love the Lord*,**
“There we shall see his face
and never, ever sin.
There from the rivers of his grace
drink endless pleasures in.”

Matthew Henry: “In singing [Psalm 42], if we be either in outward affliction or in inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them, sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it which express and excite holy desires towards God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.”

DOCTRINE: True believers may go through seasons of being cast down or depressed, but there are great helps for you if you are in Christ.

**I. TRUE BELIEVERS MAY GO THROUGH SEASONS OF BEING CAST DOWN
(Psalm 42:5a, 11a)**

I) True believers find their chief delight in God, yet sometimes they choke on their tears as they feel abandoned by Him.

(I) True believers find their chief delight in God (Psalm 42:1-2). (II) Sometimes true believers choke on their tears, feeling abandoned by God (Psalm 42:3).

QUESTION. How does a downcast soul happen?

ANSWER I. Sometimes through sickness.

ANSWER II. Sometimes through lack of sanctification. If you base your happiness on your current progress in sanctification, rather than the finished nature of your justification in Christ, you will likely be constantly in and out of depressing moods.

ANSWER III. Sometimes through sins committed. (I) Sins of commission which squeeze the conscience. (II) Sins of omission which are like thorns in the bed of the conscience. (III) Sins of idleness, not actively working hard as God has created you to in your education, training, or vocation. (IV) Sins of slothfulness or gluttony, not fueling, exerting, or resting your body in a way that glorifies God. (V) Sins of indulging in worries and anxieties, which drain the soul of comfort and fill it with distrust in God's goodness. (VI) Sins of neglecting private, family, or public

worship of the Lord. A starved soul is a downcast soul. A soul never exhaling God's praises will become heavy as a millstone and sink down in the sea. A soul infrequently fellowshiping with God's people, or being distant when they are around other believers, will be a lone island of despair.

ANSWER IV. Sometimes through sins received.

ANSWER V. Sometimes through suffering. Like Job you may be suffering without any fault of your own. The Lord may simply be sanctifying his name in the eyes of others by afflicting you and sustaining you. He may be afflicting you simply because you need to be sanctified and this is the way he has chosen to do it.

ANSWER VI. Sometimes through persecution.

ANSWER VII. Sometimes through not being able to assemble with the Lord's people to praise his name.

II) True believers, when they are downcast, earnestly desire to worship the Lord in the assembly of the saints, knowing this is a key way God pumps joy into the soul (Psalm 42:4).

II. THERE IS HOPE AND HELP FOR YOU IF YOU ARE CAST DOWN (Psalm 42:5-11)

QUESTION. What do I do when I am downcast?

ANSWER. Here are TEN helps for you if and when your soul is cast down within you.

I) Remember the LORD by fixing the eyes of your heart on who He is and what He has promised (Psalm 42:6b).

II) Remember the LORD is sovereign over all your downcast seasons (Psalm 42:7).

III) Remember God's lovingkindness to you in Christ (Psalm 42:8a).

Think of the lovingkindness of God toward you, believer: (I) God's love for you, believer, never began (Jeremiah 31:33; Psalm 103:17). (II) God in his love for you, Christian, gave his only begotten Son so that you would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). (III) God's love for you, saint, led Christ to lay down his life for you (John 15:13). (IV) God's love for you, believer, will never end (John 13:1). (V) God's love for you, Christian, can never be severed (Romans 8:35-39).

IV) Remember God's song (Psalm 42:8b).

V) Remember to pray to the God who gives you both life and eternal life (Psalm 42:8c).

VI) Remember to cry out to God in prayer, and cry out honestly (Psalm 42:9-10).

VII) Remember to preach to yourself, calling your soul to account (Psalm 42:11a).

(I) Examine yourself by seeing if you can discern why you are in this downcast state. (I) Is it because of sickness? (II) Is it because you are navel-gazing, rather than looking at Christ? (III) Has God by his providence handed you into this downcast state because of sin that you need to repent of?

(I.) Sins of commission? (II.) Sins of omission? (III.) Sins of idleness? (IV.) Sins of slothfulness or gluttony? (V.) Sins of indulging in worries and anxieties? (VI.) Sins of neglecting the private, family, or public worship of the Lord?

(IV) Are you in this downcast state because of sins that have been committed against you? (V) Are you downcast because of persecution? (VI) Are you downcast because of not being able to worship the Lord in the assembly of the saints?

(II) Beloved, it may be that you can easily discern by examination why you are in a down cast state. But it may be that you cannot discover the reason. Enlist the help of your husband, wife, friend, or one of your pastors. You must not walk through the valley of the shadow of death alone.

VIII) Remember to tell yourself to fix your hope on God (Psalm 42:11b).

(I) You and I must set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us when Christ returns (1 Peter 1:13). (II) Your sufferings and afflictions will result, by God's grace, in increased hope in Christ (Romans 5:2-4; Job 13:14).

IX) Remember to tell yourself that this darkness will not last—say to yourself, "I shall again praise him!" (Psalm 42:11c).

X) Remember to tell yourself that this darkness will not last—say to yourself, "I will see Christ's face!" (Psalm 42:11d)