

Remember God When Your Soul is Cast Down

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[0 : 00] and looking especially at the verse in the 42 verse 6 my soul is cast down within me therefore I remember you and while we're looking at our two other points from the psalm we're going to focus our thoughts particularly on that verse just as another instance of the use of the word remember in the scriptures we've been looking at for a number of weeks different ways in which the word remember is actually used in terms of how God remembers and an appeal for God to remember and also how we ourselves as Christians how the Lord's people in different ways remember the Lord and remember different aspects of their relationship with him.

Well here we find again the psalmist saying my soul is cast down within me therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and Hermon and so on.

Psalm 42 and 43 are essentially one unit in the book of Psalms you'll have seen and you'll have known I'm sure anyway before now that they are very like each other in terms of their content and in fact you could say that when you put the two of them together that there are three sections of teaching dealing with a common theme you can see the sections coming to an end in verses 5 and 11 of Psalm 42 in these words hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God why are you cast down my soul and that's repeated in verse 11 and also at the end of the next psalm Psalm 43 verse 5 exactly the same words there so these really if you like are the endings of these three sections and within them you find similar teaching on the theme of being cast down of being anxious or depressed or cast down in mind and being as we'll see encompassed with various experiences and opponents that cause his particular predicament at this time whenever indeed it was we're not told exactly but they all feature being cast down an anxious depressed soul looking for answers looking for a way out of that particular condition at the time and also you'll find along with that this corresponding antidote you might say for exactly the same number of times as he's saying my soul is cast down you also have therefore hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God so the two things are very much kept in equilibrium in balance as you find an emphasis on being cast down so also he works towards this other emphasis on continuing to hope or to trust in God for he is convinced that he will yet praise him as the God of his salvation mental health issues are given more prominence today than they used to be in previous generations prominence in a good way that is because mental health issues have a place in many homes and many individual lives and have their own difficulties of course in dealing with these issues and along with those mental health issues which we are now seeing being attended to in different ways and different therapies and so on but you also have us in the psalmist here a spiritual dimension at times to anxiety or over concern or depression where there is that spiritual element of a relationship with God which of course in its own way complicates the matter in terms of trying to deal with that either by the person themselves or by someone who is trying to give them some help and some guidance some comfort, some reassurance whatever it might be and a Christian of course is not immune from that this man is a believer this man is dealing with this relationship he has with God in such a way that brings all of this out in the presence of God and pours out his soul in the presence of God specifying these particular issues to God and indeed you'll find that although the devil can take a hold of the fact that we are Christians and will suggest to us therefore you should never feel depressed though he can make misuse of that yet you go to your Bible and you find that some of the greatest believers in history were at times cast down to use the words of the psalmist here

Elijah who would have thought that this strong figure of Elijah coming from this success on Mount Carmel and facing the prophets of Baal that in the next chapter you would find him actually taking to his heels for fear of Jezebel and making his way very slowly and eventually to Horeb the Mount of God where he sat down under a juniper tree and asked that the Lord would take away his life because he said I'm no better than my father in other words he's saying to God Lord I just feel useless so what's the point of going on there's a great man of God who had achieved so much by God's power and grace working through him who had stood against that great tide of wickedness under Ahab and Jezebel and there he is now alone in the desert in the gloom and despondency of his mind and you'll find through the Bible others too

Job for example but also Jeremiah and the disciples disconsolate at the prospect of the Lord not being with them physically anymore and down through the years indeed some of the great works of Christian literature and poetry have been written by believers who were beset with mental health issues to use the current term most of their days and you'll find particularly in the book of Psalms that it's an issue that frequently appears and is dealt with and friends that's why the book of Psalms is such an absolute treasure for every believer to know well because that's really more than any other book of the Bible we could say where our experience in everyday life as believers is actually set out for us all the rift and turns of events all the ups and all the downs of a Christian experience everything that you find in your own life you can trace it in the book of Psalms where one Psalmist or other is actually setting out for us as here that his soul is cast down so what's he doing about it where does he go with it where does he look for answers he doesn't leave it unattended he doesn't actually seek primarily to look for human help with it though that is valuable so many times he makes it an important issue between himself and God and God sends him as he deals as he as he goes on with this speaking and relationship with God you'll find that the Lord comes to him and he ends with these reassuring notes to himself still trust in God why should you continue to be cast down

[8 : 04] O my soul hope in God for I shall yet praise him you see the Christian as Christians we live in a tension between the time that now is and eternity because every believer is really for eternity and a child of eternity in the proper sense of being an heir of heaven and an heir of glory but in the meantime you're actually in a situation that sometimes is in conflict with that or appears at least to our own minds to be in conflict with that why should I as a child of heaven have so many difficulties why should I be so like the world and the troubles they have in their providence or even be unlike them as Psalm 73 says where they appear to have less than I have as a believer of these difficulties and trials there's that tension there's that conflict and sometimes you lose sight of that eternal dimension because we can get so caught up with the present and with the things that we have in time and in our immediate context and our immediate circumstances and that's what sometimes gets to our minds and to our souls so that we lose a sense of balance and end up being cast down well let's look at how the psalmist deals with this and some of the things you find in the psalm that may help us actually deal with our own circumstances whenever we actually find ourselves cast down as well in a small or great measure however it might be two things especially we're going to look at first of all the psalmist is here expressing a longing for God a cry from hurt a cry from his hurt a longing for God and secondly a looking to God where he finds a comforting hope as he expresses that in talking to his soul a longing for God a cry from hurt and a looking to God a comforting hope now this longing for God has itself two things included in it first of all he speaks about a distance from God he's obviously at a distance from the temple where the

Lord's worship is situated in the psalmist day and he finds himself here at a distance for whatever reason he's talking about being from the land of Jordan and Hermon from Mount Mizar which we don't know really what that mountain was but it's in that vicinity where the Jordan comes where the source of the Jordan is found and where you find him here as we'll see making an image really of the roar of the waters that he finds literally in that vicinity as an emblem or a symbol of how he feels within his soul and how the providence of God appears to have just overwhelmed him and is washing over him in his waves of conflict and so he's recalling in verse 4 the time that he spent with God's people in the procession that he was part of going to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise and a multitude keeping festival and that itself certainly adds to his own sense of gloom or to his being cast down within him but as we'll see he's not just referring to it so as to add to his sense of gloom he's using it as a means by which he will work his way back towards this comfort this hope in God that he speaks to his soul in other words we're dealing really with the presence of God in a believer's life he's at a distance from

God not just in terms of literal geography but this is emblematic this is really teaching us about a very spiritual reality for the people of God and that is the presence of God and indeed the counterpart in the absence of God because the presence of God is not just a doctrine it is a doctrine it's a fact in terms of the terminology that we use in the theology of our salvation this particular aspect of God's relationship with his people God is present with his people but it's not a mere doctrine it's not something that is a theological fact it is something that every believer really knows or wants to know more of in their personal experience it's not something that exists out there on the pages of a theology book it's something that exists in here if you've come to know the Lord then you know something or to some extent the Lord's presence the Lord being in your life the Lord revealing himself to you in your life the Lord speaking to you through the scriptures the Lord ministering to your soul and because you know the Lord's presence and you know something of the Lord's nearness you know something of the difficulties of the Lord being distant or you being distant from the Lord as well and whether that comes about through our own neglect or our own falling into some sin or other and not repenting of it or whether it's simply like Job in the mystery of God's own sovereign providence toward us nevertheless it's not a good feeling for a believer in their heart to know that their nearness of God is not something now that they're aware of as they once did and that's really in many ways one of the main keys to the book of Job where you find him coming and saying to God outrightly similar to the psalmist here and Psalm 13 how long will you forget me Lord as we've been singing where you'll find

Job there saying in his own circumstances of gloom and is searching for an answer to why this is now the case with him or that I knew where I might find him this man is perplexed because once he was near to God and once God was there as it were almost face to face speaking to him but now he doesn't have that in his experience things have changed and he's saying oh that I knew where I might find him that I knew where I could again reconnect with his presence in my life and that's why you have here the longing of the psalmist in the early part of the psalm my soul thirsts for God the living God just like the deer pants for flowing streams so pants my soul for you oh God not one of us I'm sure would want really to envy the psalmist circumstances you wouldn't want yourself to be in the circumstances where the distance from

God has set in where you're not as aware of the presence of God in your life where you're missing the presence of your loved one from your life where that nearness is not now in your soul the way it once was you wouldn't want the circumstances but you would want that longing and tonight I wish I had that longing of the psalmist or more of that longing of the psalmist while we wouldn't envy his circumstances surely tonight we envy his longing soul where he says the best image I can find of the way I long for God is where there's a deer in a situation of drought desperate for a drink of water and knowing that they will die if they don't get this drink of water and so panting and really yearning for that water so he says my soul thirsts for God living God our religion tonight is not mere theory it's not something in which we simply practice formalities it's not something even in which you stuff your mind with points that actually appeal to your intellect or with formal theological points good as they are it's a living relationship with a living

[16 : 08] God and where there is a living relationship with a living God then you mourn his absence when he's absent and you enjoy his presence when he's present and these are realities for the children of God and all those who have come to know God as their saviour know something of it and will want to know more of that presence in their lives how important tonight then is God's presence in your own life let me ask myself first how important is God's presence to me as a preacher of the gospel as a minister of the gospel do I value God's presence as I'm preparing for the pulpit to preach the word of God do I value God's presence when I'm on my knees praying to him for my own life and for my ministry do you value the presence of God in such a way that would say to some degree or other that you have a yearning for him that you really have this desire in your soul to again have a nearness to

God or to have an even nearer sense of his presence than you presently have and I hope you have that presence of God near to you in your life as I would hope of myself but here we are as a worshipping people how important is the presence of God in our worship in our public worship how important is it to really know that God is here tonight how important is it to me and to you tonight to be able to leave this place and to say to other people look we really would like you to come with us to this place to hear the gospel because there tonight I met with God and I met with God there in a way that remarkably touched my soul and I want you to experience this isn't that really our burden this living religion this religion that's denounced so often this whatever word you use to decry it as Calvinistic or whatever is used as a term of abuse so often but this is the essence of our religion really isn't it that we have a living relationship with the saving

God and that in that relationship we value his presence we know his presence we appeal to him for his presence to know more of the reality of that in our soul in our very hearts is the absence of God a big deal to us tonight if somebody took communion with God out of your life or mine would we miss it would it be something that we would mourn over something we would be desperate to have back or not here is the psalmist then at a distance from God and that distance really that he's aware of is something that he brings before God and appeals to God over that he will again know his living presence he's yearning for him he's thirsting for him he's desperate again to have him with that experience that he once enjoyed but not only is there in this longing for

God this cry from hurt a distance from God there's secondly in it an attack by his opponents verse 3 there the end of verse 3 you'll find they're saying to me continually where is your God and he says these are my tears they've been my food day and night this is a major part of the crisis in his life he's facing such difficulties such bitter rivalry and opposition from whatever quarter he doesn't tell us but they're his opponents they're his enemies they're the Lord's enemies and they've just been harassing him constantly and you know that's something that the world and Satan will use against you as a Christian if you're a Christian here tonight because in that situation his enemies are locking on to his circumstances and say what's a man like you doing here shouldn't you be back in Jerusalem shouldn't you be back where the temple of

God is situated shouldn't you be partaking of the worship of God as you once did you see that's something that we face ourselves to and what that is often what it includes very often is when when Satan comes and of course it's Satan always that's behind these great movements of opposition and of bitter attacks upon our souls and upon ourselves in these circumstances too and what the suggestion constantly is well is this God really worth believing in is this God really worth you following him from now on isn't this evidence itself that this God is really a God that's no longer worth placing your trust and your faith in it wouldn't you better to be without that and as that goes on you can see how the psalmist has to deal with it let's just pause for a moment so what are we saying what is really this setting out for us this attack on him that he's speaking about and how it's part of his situation that really hurts and that is getting to his soul and that's part of why he's now cast down and needs to remember

[22 : 29] God well this is how Satan works this is part of his strategy it's a major plank in his strategy that's what he used even in Eden before man fell and he's used it many times since then because his attack really is not so much to say well God doesn't exist why do you keep believing in God when he doesn't exist that's not a strategy but what he says is if God exists in the way that you believe he exists as one who cares for his people what's leaving you in this condition and that's exactly the same strategy that he used in the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ himself there he is in the desert there he is having fasted and been without food for these forty days and there Satan comes to him and says if you are the son of God command these stones that they be made bread he's not asking or trying to bring the son of God to doubt the existence of

God that's not his strategy what he's saying is if indeed you're the son of God as you claim to be why are you here like this why are you in these circumstances why don't you at least command these stones to be turned into bread at least relieve your hunger because it's not becoming of you the son of God to be in the desert and to be in the desert suffering from hunger how can this possibly be right how can God be consistent how can God be really the God he it's the fairness of God that's under question isn't it when this comes as a temptation go back to Eden again there is as we've seen in our study of the creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and then as you go into chapter 3 this is the serpent and Satan through the serpent this is his attack there is man the human being man and woman that God has created in this magnificent environment so fitting for him in

Eden everything around him that he could want at this communion with God and there's one tree one tree out of the whole of what God has created on which God has put a prohibition and what does Satan do well if you look at the way he comes with his temptation it's really to the effect of saying to the woman and saying to Adam too through her is it really fair of God that he's left out this one tree that you're not allowed to eat why didn't he give you the whole lot why wasn't he consistent and just let you have access to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil isn't he not isn't he being unfair isn't he really just being unlike what he believes what you believe him to be and that's really the same strategy that he will use for you and for me to to cast us down to bring us to an anxiety and to question

God and to question his rights and to question his wisdom Psalm 73 we mentioned it you find the psalmist there perplexed coming himself to be doubting and casting questions in the face of God he's looked at the world and the prosperity of the world he's measured himself against the world he's compared himself to the world he looks at the world and sees that it's relatively easy in many respects outwardly for them compared to what he is himself there he is himself he's committed to God he's committed to following God's ways he's committed to obedience to God and these people in the world they've cast off restraint they're not bothered about God's commands and about a relationship with the living God surely he said I washed my hands in vain until he said I went into the sanctuary of God and then I understood their end what was his problem he had got things out of balance as we mentioned in the beginning because all the time that he was stuffing his mind with what the world had compared to what he had he was forgetting about eternity and when he went into the sanctuary and placed his mind again under the truth of

God the word of God then I understood their end Satan will tell you what's the point in going on this God's not consistent look at the way he deals with you look at the way things have changed in his providence from what they were a week ago or last year or whatever but you have to see everything in the light of eternity and eternity is where God will put everything right where he would answer the questions that cannot be answered here there will be nothing out of place when God is finished the wicked will have that portion his enemies will be where they should be his people will be free from all the hassles that they experience in this life eternity judgment

[28 : 01] God and his people together in that inheritance that he has bought for them whatever happens in this life don't ever doubt the wisdom of God don't ever doubt his integrity his commitment to his people his superior knowledge of your life and mine and everything else besides that's where the problem is for us so often we get things out of balance so there is this longing for God this cry from his heart we spent a bit more time on it than we intended his distance from God the importance of the presence of God or the absence of God correspondingly how we must deal with that how we bring it to God how we seek that he reestablish if you like that contact with us that draws us near again how he actually enables us if need be to examine our hearts is there anything that's caused this distance and if there is he's saying let's deal with it let's have it out and we come in knowing temptation to be aware of

Satan's strategy to be aware of what he's about and why he brings things in the way he does it's always with the intention of us questioning God and God's right and God's wisdom let's look secondly at his looking to God very briefly this comforting hope you see his dialogue with first of all with his God in verses 8 and 9 the middle of verse 8 there he says by day the Lord commands his steadfast love the prayer to the God of my life I say to God my rock why have you forgotten me why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy why is this with me why do you leave me like this and one of the great points about that is that as it is throughout the Bible you can bring your perplexity your questions your doubts your need of reassurance you can bring them to God and you can deal with them there in all the openness and the honesty and the sincerity that you need to deal with you'll find

Abraham Moses Isaiah Jeremiah Paul they're talking to God as they wouldn't speak to their nearest relative or friend in this life and that's the great privilege we have as children of God if we are God's tonight he's our father he understands when we bring our perplexity to him and even when we can't find words that really put in before him put in words before him and put in a constructive way before him how we feel what's caused this and why it's like this this is what the psalmist is doing he's just simply pouring out his heart as he puts it earlier there in verse four these things I remember as I pour out my soul where tonight can you pour to somebody whose support you value but that's nothing compared to what you can do in the presence of

God because God is a listener like no other God has understanding like no other God has patience like no other God has an answer like no other you can pour out your soul to him and don't be afraid to do that don't be afraid that this is just too much to put it in this plain and bold language because that's surely not proper in the presence of God you let him be the judge of that and you take your encouragement from scripture of all the times in scripture when you find people women and men of God pouring out their soul and just telling God this Lord is how I feel it I want to tell it as it really is and feels to me what a great privilege that is Allah will not do that for you

Buddha will not do that for you secularism will not do that for you but the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ will and only he will take it to the Lord in prayer as the hymn writer put it in order to find with him an ear and a listening and a help that he alone can give but there's also a dialogue with his soul and there's an overlap in the dialogue of his soul and the dialogue with God where you find in verses 5 and 11 there why are you cast down oh my soul why are you in turmoil within me compare that with the likes of Psalm 103 oh thou my soul bless God the Lord and all that is within me bless his holy name it's a good thing when Christians talk to themselves it's not a sign of being eccentric not saying it is out with that either plenty people in the world talk to themselves as they go about their business they speak as if there was somebody beside them but it's just themselves but for a

[33 : 51] Christian never to speak to themselves is surely a great lack you have to speak to yourself you have to speak to your soul in your relationship with God you have to look inwardly and say soul why are you like this let's examine the issue he's saying to himself why is it that you're cast down oh my soul why are you in turmoil within me and that's why he says here in the verse that we began with which we're now come to conclude our study with where he says here my soul is cast down within me therefore I remember you that's what he's saying to God as he's in dialogue with his own soul and dialogue with God you see this word therefore it's so important what's he doing he's reflecting he's looking in on his soul he's looking for past experiences he's going back over his life he's thinking of the goodness of God as he's once known it all that God has been to him up to this moment he's remembering that he's remembering all that God means to him and has meant to him since he came to know him and sometimes that's what you need to do you need to remind your own soul of how good God has been to you you have to take encouragement with what he's been to you in your life you have to answer the assaults of

Satan and the world with the assurance of God's care as it's been evident in your life and it's from that that he works towards this comfort hope in God for I shall again praise him myself you reflect on the goodness of God and really see in your life the goodness of God even if you feel at a distance from him unless you study that more and reflect upon it you'll find that it draws you further towards a renewal of that relationship if it's broken down or even if it hasn't it brings you to more assurance of this God being your God and it's amazing thing how he finishes hope in God for I shall yet praise him my salvation and my God what is he saying he doesn't just say my salvation is from this God no he's saying this God is my salvation he's everything to me is what he means and therefore the more

I think about what he's done for me and reflect upon the goodness that he's shown to me in my life the more I can see that there's no reason why I should be cast down at all because this God is my God and my salvation so tonight let's value the presence of God more than we've ever done let's look for the presence of God more and more in our lives individually let's treasure it in our worship services let's mourn over the sense of its absence if that's where we are in our relationship with him let's reflect upon the goodness of God to us and the more we do that the more we will come with brokenness of heart to say why should you my soul be cast down still trust go on trusting in God for I shall yet praise him my God my salvation let's pray

Lord our God we give thanks for the reality of your presence and that however many times we may find assaults being made upon your people and assaults which call upon them to dismiss the idea of God as real we give thanks that he is real to our souls as believers we give thanks that through being born again we have come to a true understanding of what it is to live in communion with God Lord help us we pray to prize your presence and help us we pray to recover in our own lives wherever that is lost even briefly we give thanks for every advantage that you give us through your presence being made known to us we pray that you would indeed continue with us oh Lord for we think upon even Moses long ago who made his appeal to his

God and when Lord you did say that you would not go with the people you would send your angel did he not say to you Lord as we would say to oh Lord how is it that we shall be known that we are your people is it not in that you go with us so grant these mercies to us now we pray for Jesus sake amen let's conclude our worship this evening singing in psalm 43 we'll sing the four verses in psalm 43 and that's on page 264 in the Scottish Psalter sorry psalm 43 verses 3 through to 5 the tune of spore oh send thy light forth and thy truth let them be guide to me and bring me to thine holy hill even where thy dwellings be psalm 43 page 264 to the tune spore oh send thy light forth and thy truth oh send thy light or come thy truth let them be eyes to thee and bring me to thy holy hell in where

[40 : 15] I dwell in thee then will I turn the salt circle to God my cheapest joy in God my God thy name to raise my heart my will and glory why art thou then cast down my soul what should discourage thee and why with their sing thoughts are love disquieted in me still trust in love for him to praise who holds thy yet shall hand beyond my count and sister help my hope that doth be saved amen

I'll go to the main door again this evening after the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always amen out thanks przyp only for sake