

The cure for depression

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[0 : 00] the psalm tonight because over the next four Sundays, except the middle Sunday, we're going to be looking at the book of Psalms and seeing what it has to say to our life.

I'm also reminded that going back to the time of the Reformation in Calvin's Geneva, this is what you would have sung. You would have sung a psalm to a beautiful tune.

Our own reformer, John Knox, was there, exiled there, and he said of it, never did I see such a perfect school of Christ on earth since the days of the apostles, by which he meant the church was perfect in its preaching, in the administration of the sacraments, and in its worship. So we'll carry on in that strain now.

Matthew Henry, he used to say this, that if you want to understand the Psalms, you have to put them in their historical context. And we're looking at Psalm 42 tonight, but the first reading gives you the historical context, and that's in 2 Samuel chapter 15, beginning to read at the first verse.

Verse 1. After this, Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and 50 men to run before him.

[1 : 30] And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. Absalom said, Then every man with a suit of cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.

And whenever a man came near to do obeisance to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. Thus Absalom did to all Israel, who came to the king for judgment.

Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And then in Psalm 42.

As the heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually, Where is your God?

[3 : 09] These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I went with the throng and led them in procession To the house of God. With glad shouts and thongs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me.

Therefore, I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon and of Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts.

All your waves and billows have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

[4 : 20] I say to God, my rock, Why have you forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul?

And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Amen. May the Lord bless those three readings. May they be to his praise and to his glory.

Concentrating on verses 5 and 6 and 11 in that psalm, Why are you cast down, O my soul?

And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

[5 : 29] Is it right for a committed Christian to suffer depression? Well, from the experience of the psalmist, we can see that it is.

We're coming to a consideration of a number of psalms, of which this is the first, and I've entitled this, Your Life in the Psalms, with the belief that the book of Psalms has the ability to speak to every situation of the human heart in the very situations that life throws at us.

Now, this psalm occurs in the beginning of the second book of Psalms. The book of Psalms has five divisions, and its second one starts at 42 and goes on to 72.

And they're mainly of the authorship of David, he wrote them, except 72, which has been written by Solomon. And having looked at this psalm, I do believe that its historical setting is in that portion I read from 2 Samuel chapter 15.

During the time of the conspiracy of Absalom, who intended to usurp his father from the throne of Israel and Judah. But we start with the title.

[7 : 09] And the title says, Now, the first noun means the chief musician or the principal conductor.

It's then said to, and some versions have it as of, the sons of Korah, but the preposition leh, which goes in front of it, means two or four.

And what this is like, this is like a manuscript of music. And the BBC are going to perform it.

And so they write on the top the name of the conductor, and who's going to perform it is the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Well, that's exactly what this is, except it's in ancient Israel.

It's for the chief musician, and it's for the sons of Korah who are going to sing it. Now, the sons of Korah were a Levitical family of singers, and you find reference to them in the second book of Chronicles, chapter 20.

[8 : 27] I want to look at this in three ways. First of all, the memory of the psalmist, verse 4. These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I went with the throng and led them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and thongs of thanksgiving, a multitude-keeping festival.

So because he's no longer in Jerusalem, having been driven away by the revolt of Absalom, what he's doing, he's remembering what he once had.

And what he once had was being in the experience of worshipping God. Now, such an occasion is found in 2 Samuel, chapter 5, where we read this.

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David, i.e. Jerusalem, with rejoicing. And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.

And David danced before the Lord with all his might. David was girded with a linen ephod, so David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the shout of the sound of the horn.

[10 : 02] This is the memory he's got in the midst of this state of depression. It's a memory of worshipping God. And I want you to see how accurate his memory is in the psalm.

Because in the historical narrative in 2 Samuel, we read that David danced before the Lord.

In the psalm, it speaks about keeping festival. And that keeping festival is expressed by a verb which means to dance.

This is the moment he's thinking about. When he danced before the Lord as the ark of the Lord was brought into Jerusalem. It's an accurate memory.

And this idea of keeping a festival by dancing is still celebrated in Judaism to this day. So the memory is an accurate one. Now what's the purpose of it?

[11 : 10] The purpose is that he delights in it. Listen to verses 1 and 2. As a heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you.

My thirsts, my soul thirsts for you for the living God. when shall I come and behold the face of God? Now mark this.

He's not asking for the palace. He's not asking for the throne. He's not even asking for Jerusalem. What he's asking for is to be restored to the presence of God.

And that request is continued in the very next Psalm 43, which is a continuation actually of this Psalm. Oh, send out your light and your truth.

Let them lead me, let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy. I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

[12 : 23] God, this is what he wants. Back in the presence of a holy God. Back there making sacrifices.

Back there singing the Psalms, some of which he's written. But this is not only another memory, there's another aspect to it in verse 6.

My soul is cast down within me. Therefore, I remember you from the land of Jordan and Hermon and from Mount Mazar.

What's he talking about now? He's talking about the land of Jordan and Hermon, which are references to the country to which he's been banished.

It is because these places are not in proximity to the house of God that the psalmist now places his memory not in a place of worship, but in the person of God himself.

[13:33] And there's a New Testament example about all of this, and you read of it in Revelation chapter 1. John, I, John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the isle called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. If you read Revelation chapter 1, you find that it was the policy of the Roman empire, Domitian, to exile people like John to this rocky isle.

His compatriots were convicted murderers. What does he say? I was in the spirit in the Lord's day. And this rocky isle was transformed to a place of revelation. So here is what is being said here, is that this is a grim experience.

There is no doubt about that. And I have to confess, I've been there myself. know what I'm talking about. But this experience that the psalmist is talking about has now become for him not just a memory but a place where God revealed himself in all his glory.

[15:22] That is what is being said in Revelation chapter 1. and that is what is being said in Psalm 42. This memory of a past blessing becomes a future and present revelation and a guarantee that the God who is blessed in the past is blessing now and will go on to bless in the future.

second, the complaint verses 3 and 10. My tears have been my food day and night while men say to me continually where is your God?

Verse 10. As with a deadly wound in my body my adversaries taunt me while they say to me continually where is your God?

In other words, what's being said here is that he's being ridiculed for his faith. While men say to me but in verse 10 the men are not just men my adversaries taunt me continually.

So they are not just men. There's a development in their description. So we have to ask the question who are these people?

[17:03] In the second book of Samuel chapter 15 it makes clear that one of them was a guy called Ahithophel the Gileanite who was the counselor of David.

And in Psalm 41 which is a psalm that we'll look at next week the psalmist says this about Ahithophel even even my bosom friend in whom I trusted who ate of my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

In the gospel of John that is quoted by Jesus to refer to Judas Iscariot but here it's referring to Ahithophel the kind of counsel that this man gave is defined in 2 Samuel 16 23.

Now in those days the counsel which Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God. This is the estimation that this man is held in.

He's able to walk into the presence of the royal court and say this is what you should be doing. This is the way forward. I wouldn't go that way.

[18:25] This is the way to go. Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted who ate of my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

That's bad enough. But then there's the case of Shimei the son of Gera who was also of the house of Saul again in 2 Samuel chapter 16 we read this.

When David came to Bahurim there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei the son of Gera and as he came he cursed continually and threw stones at David and all the servants of David and all the people and the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

So here he is opposing the king and this is what he says Begone begone you man of blood you worthless fellow the Lord has avenged upon you all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom your ruin is on you you are a man of blood so here's the substance of what David is saying he as the anointed and chosen king of God is being ridiculed for his calling as a king and for his faith my tears have been my food night and day while men say to me continually where is your God when is this happening when David is strongest no when is his weakest when is he in tears before God you who believed in the promises of God regarding the future where are they now what

are the promises of God as far as David is concerned 2nd Samuel 7 says this the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up spring after you who shall come forth from your body and I will establish his kingdom he shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever initially of Solomon but ultimately of Christ these are the promises of

[21 : 22] God and according to the ridicule and the cursing of Shimei the son of Gera they're gone they're finished but that's not the case if it is the case that in your walk with God God has promised you something don't let the devil convince you that it's wrong it's not the promises of God are irrevocable what he says will come to pass so the resolve of the psalmist is the third point why are you cast down on my soul and why are you disquieted within me hope in God for I shall again praise him my help and my God so what is being said here is the response in faith that the psalmist has to take to get himself out of this very difficult situation the condition we want to look at a bit closer why are you cast down my soul and why are you disquieted within me now it's interesting to note the

Hebrew text of the psalm uses the verb shachach you really have to be a Scot to be able to pronounce Hebrew it's very guttural what it means is to be bowed down to cast down to be despairing in other words the emotional feeling that it gives is to be cast down in such a way that you feel that you're carrying a heavy weight within yourself and here is the psalmist 1000 BC and using this verb he gives us an exact description of depression but then he goes on why are you disquieted within me a different verb hama to growl to murmur to be dejected and when it comes to audible speech it means to give a sigh of discouragement how many of us have not been there and this sigh of discouragement has been deepened by the treachery of

Ahithophel and the curses of Shimei the son of Gera now note this this situation is not going to be reversed by one of his courtiers coming to him and saying it's okay David cheer up the first thing he's required to do and it's not easy to do is to make a confession of faith and he does it in verse eight by day the Lord commands his steadfast love and at night his song is with me a prayer to the God of my life how does he know the songs are round at the time of night if you look at the book of Job which has similar sentiments you find that Job is lying awake at night what the psalmist is saying is that by being awake at night in this mood of discouragement his song is with me it's very similar this the way he expresses this to the verse that we know from the book of laments the steadfast love of the

Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end they are new every morning great is your faithfulness in the night watches when he's awake through discouragement and depression he's in possession of the Lord's song on his lips and this situation can be reversed difficult as this is by singing the praise of God now mark what Paul says in Colossians 3 16 let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God so the first way that the psalmist intends to restore his spirit is by singing one of the songs of

Zion now at the beginning right in the title we read about to the chief musician a maskil for the sons of Korah what is a maskil in truth nobody knows what a maskil is but it's derived from a verb which means to grant understanding so when the psalmist describes this psalm as a maskil what he means is that by singing and studying it it will teach him and remind him of the truths that he's learned through this very profound experience there's great spiritual value in singing one of the songs of Zion and that applies to hymns as well so he has his faith restored by the song but he also has to have an exercise of faith and in this exercise of faith he's not allowing his depressed self to talk to him he's talking to his depressed self

[28 : 04] I say to God my rock why are you cast down oh my soul and why are you disquieted within me now this statement of faith brings another statement and that statement is this hope in God for I shall again praise him my help and my God this is the result of him speaking to himself in the presence of God hope in God I shall again praise him my help and my God and we know from the book of Samuel he came back to Jerusalem he came back to his throne he came back to the worship of

God but at this moment in his experience he doesn't know any of that what he has is this deep depressive situation and he is exercising his faith by this word of faith speaking to himself he will yet praise him that's not just true of David writing 1000 years before Christ this is true for the believer tonight why are you cast down on my soul and why are you disquieted within me hope in God I shall

again praise him my help and my God amen thinking of that in the way we have we come to who to believe