

# In this Present Isolation

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 42  
**Preached on:** Sunday, March 29, 2020

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You know, Christians find their spiritual experiences expressed in the Psalms of David and the other authors of the Psalms, in those 150 Psalms, that worship book of the nation of Israel that we now use in the Christian era, we find our experiences reflected in them. Whether it be in times of joy or sorrow, confession of sin or the expression of the exaltation of praise in our hearts, we find the Psalms giving voice to the feelings of our hearts and the motions and the thoughts of our minds, and they give us a reliable guide to help us through the different aspects of life that we go through, and I believe that Psalm 42 is especially pertinent for us in the times that we are living in here today. I would just say this, you know, speaking pastorally to you as best as I can through this medium, you know, I'm just especially mindful as I think of Truth Community Church at least, that there are dozens of you that find this time of separation from the body life, from the regular fellowship of the saints as particularly difficult for you. You're unmarried, perhaps, and you're going through life a little bit alone, or in some ways even more difficult, you are unequally yoked to an unbelieving spouse and there's not spiritual encouragement for you there. We think of others who are going through life, widows, widowers, divorcees and all of these things that have you in a position of life where you're especially isolated in a way that goes beyond those of us that have families and are isolated from the way of fellowship here that we're going through right now, and so Psalm 42 has something to say especially to you in those times of loneliness that you're feeling and you particularly feel the absence of the fellowship of the saints that you enjoy so much.

Psalm 42 is going to have good words of encouragement and direction and help for you in terms of how to respond to that, and one of the things that I love about the Psalms that you can't always find in Christian writings and in Christian circles is that when you come to the Psalms, you find words of God-inspired sympathy for the trials that we go through. The Psalmists give voice to our confessions of sin and the shame and the guilt that we feel when we have sinned against God, violated his law and gone against that which we know to be true and right, and in those times where our hearts throb with pain and the discouragement of life and the reality of our own failures, are right there in an undeniable way as we look at the mirror to find in the Psalms a God-inspired, a Spirit-inspired voice to the things that we would say and the things that we are feeling is one of the greatest gifts that God has given to his people in his word.

That's why we've studied through Psalms over the past several years, we still have a couple more years to go probably, but today we have the opportunity to return to one that we looked at several years ago here in Psalm 42, and in Psalm 42 the writer of this Psalm is profoundly discouraged as we'll see as we go through the text, and what he is doing in the midst of his discouragement is he is fighting a spiritual battle and he is calling upon his own soul to respond in faith to God and to respond in confidence and in hope that God will change his present circumstances to one of joy in God's wisdom and in God's good time. And what that does for us here today, what it does for those of you trudging and trudging down a lonely path in your spiritual life, it gives us a place to turn and a pattern to respond to the isolation, the isolation of our present day and the isolation that some of us have in all of life.

Now this Psalm is called "A Maskil of the sons of Korah" in the inscription. You can see it there in most of your Bibles. It is an artistic song that is expressing wisdom, that's what a maskil is, and Scripture tells us that the sons of Korah served in the temple, including singing and playing instruments. That's an important aspect of understanding what's going on in this Psalm, is that this Psalm was written by someone who was accustomed to the joyful aspect of temple worship. It is written by someone who found comfort and meaning and significance in the gathering of the people of God for worship. It's what he loved. It's what he gave his life to. It was his spiritual duty and responsibility, the delight of his heart was all found in the corporate gathering of the people of God and expressing this heartfelt worship in response to the God who had set them apart as a nation and who loved them and who was directing them. But as much as he loved that, something at some point in time had intervened in life and he had been plucked up and removed from that position of responsibility, that position of joy and delight, and now he finds himself walking in the midst of enemies who actually mock his faith; rather than leading the people of faith in worship, he is in the midst of the opponents of faith, the adversaries of God are surrounding him and taunting him in his weakness and in his inability to go back to the things that he loved.

So we find a mirror of our own experience and our own ability to meet together in the experience of one who had an even greater difficulty that he was responding to, and so what we find here is we find the response of faith in times of deep discouragement. Before we get into the twofold aspect of the Psalm that I want to bring out for you here today, I just want to emphasize this particular point: the Psalmist's struggles here were profound, they were real. This was not academic to him. His heart was overturned with grief. He was in a cauldron of discouragement that really truly weighed him down greatly and so he is writing from the depth of a sorrow that bleeds through its tear-soaked lines. So we need to understand that his feelings are deep and profound, and I don't want to necessarily say dark as he wrote this, but he is deeply discouraged as he pens these words, and so what we find here is God's word giving understanding and giving sympathy to those of us that find ourselves in times like that, problems overwhelming us, people taunting us. We come to God's word and we find there was a saint who has gone before us down this path and found his way out on the other side, a saint who found words to express his faith and gives us a pattern to follow in the midst of that. This is a Psalm of great significance and importance to us.

That leads us to our first point here this morning, is to simply see the reality of discouragement. He is desiring God's presence in the midst of intolerable sorrow, intolerable sorrow. Look at verse 1, for example. He says in Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants after You, O God." In verse 3 we see the depth of the anguish of his soul. He says in verse 3, "My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" He's spiritual thirsty. His body is aching from the physical aftermath of all of his weeping during this time, and so we see his discouragement. Look at verse 6, he says, "O my God, my soul is in despair within me." Discouragement, despair, weeping. You get the sense that this was no superficial matter to him. This wasn't something that was going to get better in the morning, he had the sense and the understanding that when he woke up in the morning, it was going to be the same circumstance that had discouraged him today, and so there is a depth and an ongoing aspect to his discouragement that comes through throughout the Psalm.

Look at verse 9, he says words that some today would rebuke him for but not us, we want to learn from him, not to correct him. He says in verse 9, he says, "I will say to God my rock, 'Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?'" You can see why he opened the Psalm with the picture of a dehydrated deer needing water, needing refreshment, needing something to satisfy his thirst and finding no brook from which to drink, and that dehydrated deer pictures someone who is thirsty for God's presence. He has unfulfilled spiritual desires that he is longing for and that he cannot have satisfied, and he needs God, he needs the God of power, the God of strength to help him and to act, and to intervene into his situation. And here's the thing that we want to see as we look at the reality of his discouragement here today, is to realize that one of the aspects and one of the ways that we deal with discouragement is to understand and to look for the things that are causing it in the first place, not simply to respond to the emotion of it and to deal with it at that superficial level of trying to get our emotions lined up and, you know, find some stability there, it's much much more than that. What we find here in this Psalm is that the Psalmist has identified the fact that there are discernible reasons for his melancholy spirit, there are reasons that explain why he feels this way and to understand the things that are causing our despair, causing our discouragement, gives us an objective way to start to deal with them and the Psalmist teaches us that.

So for the Psalmist here in Psalm 42, what are some of those reasons for the depth of his despair? Well, first of all, in a way that you and I can particularly relate to here today, he is spiritually isolated. Why is he discouraged? First of all, he is spiritually isolated. Somehow, and we go back and look at the text a little bit more closely here, somehow in some way his circumstances have kept him from joining with the people of God.

Look at verse 2, he says, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" Now remember that in the Old Testament economy, God had uniquely set apart the temple in Jerusalem to be the place of worship. God uniquely manifested his presence to them there. It was the appointed place of sacrifice and the appointed place of praise, and so his desire to appear before God indicates that he misses

the temple, he misses God's presence, he misses the appointed worship, and as one of the sons of Korah, the singing and the aspects of that were things that were dear, that were precious to him and yet he could not enjoy them. Even though – watch this – even though these were God-appointed, godly things that he desired for, these were things that God approved of, his circumstances kept him in a position where he was not able to engage them. You could say he's isolated, in a sense, against his will. The things that he desires to express in worship, the things that he wants to enjoy in fellowship with God's people, circumstances are forbidding him from doing that and so he's spiritually isolated. That's why he is discouraged in this time.

Secondly, why is he discouraged? Well, not only does he lack the positive aspect of worship in his life, he is, secondly, he is surrounded by enemies. He's surrounded by people that hate him and despise him and mock him, and this is the constant drip of discouragement that is in his life day by day, hour by hour. He has this constant taunting of people who are mocking him and mocking everything that he holds dear, and it irritates him. And so we see this in verse 3, for example, he says, "My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" You claim to have this God and yet look at the miserable circumstances in which you find yourself. What kind of God is that? Is he angry with you because you're in these bad circumstances? Or maybe he's not God at all? And this is so discouraging to the Psalmist and those of us that live in the midst of, you know, a matter of people who oppose us in the faith, can understand this. We know what is true and yet God is giving room and giving time in his providence for people who voice wicked opposition to him and seek to undermine and to discourage us in our faith, and there is nothing to point to by way of circumstance or vindication to show that our faith is real, that our faith is true, and that our God truly does reign. And so for a time, the enemies have the opportunity to voice their ungodly taunts against the godly and there is nothing in the present circumstance to refute them. They are getting away with the sin of blasphemy against God and great torment of his people and the Psalmist here in Psalm 42 is uniquely on the receiving end of that and you have the sense that he is completely alone in the midst of it.

Surely there are some of you that are listening here today that know something about that. You're in a household, a family, where you are the only true believer and maybe it's just the indifference of loved ones, earthly loved ones to your faith, or maybe it's the active hostile discouragement that they provide to you and they reject you because of your faith, and now particularly in a time like we're in today, you have no one there to be your spiritual support and encouragement. Well, what you are going through is nothing new. This has been the experience of saints in the past and it's one of the reasons that God put Psalm 42 in the Psalter, in his word, was to be an encouragement to people just like at just such a time as this and you can find you're not alone. You may be alone physically but spiritually you are walking the path of noble saints before you. There is an aspect of nobility to your current spiritual experience that is justified and vindicated by the word of God that we're looking at here today.

So he is surrounded by enemies who are taunting him and these reprobates were making sport of his discouragement, and let us remember something very vital here, is that he

was writing centuries before the time of Christ. Do you know what? Our Lord Jesus walked this lonely road himself, didn't he? He knew what it was like toward the end of his life when he was being mocked, "If you're the King of Israel, come down from the cross." They put a purple robe on him before the cross and mocked him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And out of the wicked mouth of these pagan soldiers and out of the wicked mouths of the Jewish leaders of the time, everybody mocking and denying him and Christ in order to fulfill the reason that he came, did not retaliate, he did not stop them. He endured those taunts of his enemies in his day. Well, don't you see, my Christian friend, don't you see from Psalm 42 and from the life of the Lord Jesus that God understands that sorrow and the Lord Jesus Christ understands your sorrow by direct personal experience, and while there may be no earthly ear to hear your sorrows, there is a heavenly ear that is in full sympathy with what you're going through, and a heavenly ear that delights to hear the prayers that you have to express even if it is only to express the sorrow and discouragement of your heart. God received this Psalmist's prayer, God received the prayer of his Son, the Lord Jesus and raised him from the dead, don't you see that God is with you in your sorrow and that God is one who you can appeal to knowing that there is a sympathetic ear for you to find in this time?

Well, Psalm 42 shows us this. He was spiritually isolated, he was surrounded by enemies and there's a third aspect to his sorrow in that he misses his prior role of leadership. He misses his prior role of leadership. This Psalmist wasn't simply one amongst the congregation, he was one who was upfront and his discouraging present, the now circumstances in which he writes this, are such a contrast with his earlier role of spiritual leadership.

Look at verse 4, he says, "These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival." He had the privilege of spiritual leadership and he had the joy of seeing people follow his spiritual leadership and seeing the joy and exuberance and the spiritual prosperity that it brought to them as he did so, and because he loved God vertically and he loved the people of God horizontally, this was a place of privilege that he consciously enjoyed and consciously found great meaning in the exercise of that responsibility that he had. And all of the prior joy and leadership in the community of faith contrasts so sharply now with the isolation amongst the enemies of God and he has nowhere to go. No one is following him now. Now instead of surrounded by joyful worshipers who support him, he's surrounded by reprobates who oppose him and mock him. There is just such a jarring contrast in life that weighs deeply on his soul, and so his circumstances were now a reversal of that earlier joy. He was not leading worship. He was not at the temple, and he was with the enemies of God instead.

Let's pause right there for a moment, even though there's not a Selah in the text. Let's just pause there for a moment and let that sink in a bit. Here he is, he's writing this somber Psalm of expressing his discouragement and, my friend, what I want you and I to do here this morning is this, is that you and I need to come alongside the Psalmist, as it were, and sit under his instruction with a sense of sympathy, with a sense of understanding, to enter

into the depth of his discouragement if we are going to get the full benefit of this Psalm. This is not a Psalm to be handled roughly by those who would criticize him for his spiritual discouragement. There are people that do that and I just don't understand how a teacher of God's word could do that, but that's for another time. This is also not a Psalm to be considered lightly or, you know, in a superficial way. This is a spiritual leader pouring out the depth of discouragement of his heart. We need to respect that. We need to kind of step back and rather than being, you know, in the language of James, we could say we need to be quick to hear and slow to speak at a time like this.

So, as it were, if we come along it's, in a sense, seeing Job sitting on the ashes here, not that Job's the author of this but you get what I mean, seeing Job in his pain and in his loss, and in his discouragement we see him sitting there, what is it that we should think and how should we consider the Psalmist that is writing this? Well, in light of everything that we've said, in light of his past leadership and his present circumstances, this isn't complicated, beloved. As we look at the Psalmist in this situation, what should reverberate in our minds is, "Of course this is hard for him. Of course this is difficult." Just as it is difficult for us when we lose things that we value and we find ourselves displaced from prior positions that we enjoyed, and it's difficult for us, well, multiply it even more by the spiritual sensitivity of this man who loves God and loves his people and loves the appointed worship, and all of that has been taken away from him. Of course it is difficult for him, and of course that's going to find itself agitating his soul and manifesting itself in the discouragement that he is expressing.

Beloved, we need to understand that in a day that, you know, sometimes honors macho guys and all of that and that's not what we're looking at here. We're looking at a man who has tender desires, spiritual godly desires that are being utterly frustrated and dismissed. The fulfillment of them are withheld from him and they are even under attack and what are we to think about this and bringing the point closer to home, what does this teach you about how you can deal with your own spiritual depression, or looking outward, how it is that you could help someone who is going through this kind of discouragement, even if you're not discouraged yourself, what can we say about it? Well, the modern author Sinclair Ferguson says this in writing about Psalm 42, he says and I quote, he says, "This Psalmist experienced discouragement. He traces it to particular causes. There are specific reasons for his condition and realizing that is half of the remedy that he needs."

So my Christ friend, do you find yourself discouraged here today? Do you find yourself under the weight of a mental load, a spiritual load that you can't get out under and maybe has gotten the upperhand on you in recent days? Have circumstances kept you from the fellowship of God's people that you've once enjoyed? You know, maybe you look back before the crisis began and now you realize that you missed out on some of the fellowship of God's people just due to your own laziness and indifference and now you can't get back to it. Well, let that sink in. Let that shape and form some of your convictions for how you'll live after this is over with. Has a major life change come upon you like death or a job loss, something like that? A child that is very sick? Maybe you're living in the midst of constant hostility from family or friends or coworkers that have no sympathy for your spiritual desires. Friend, here's what I want you to see, is that you don't

have to give into the feelings of discouragement that those things naturally and understandably provoke in you. Those feelings are real and they are understandable. There are reasons for them and it is helpful for you to try to understand why they are there because it will give you a sense that you can trace your present feelings back to a prior cause and that understanding starts to give you some perspective on why you're in the spiritual difficulty that you find yourself in.

Here's the thing about Psalm 42. Once we have accepted and understood where the Psalmist is coming from and we sympathize with him, we appreciate him for his spiritual desires, we see his pattern in identifying the things that cause him difficulty, friend, here's what I want you to see and this is what's so important for you today here in 2020, March 29, here's what's so important for you today: the Psalmist did not stop there. The Psalmist did not stop and simply dwell in the midst of his feelings. You know, it's possible for us to kind of enjoy the discouragement. There are people who have a little bit of a, you know, a mixed up approach to things sometimes and we learn to like the bad feelings that we have. You know, that's not where we are supposed to find ourselves. Furthermore and perhaps more importantly is that it is not the Christian response for you to simply pity yourself and to give in to a sense of self-pity that says, "Oh, it's so hard for me and this is so difficult and I can't, you know, I don't know what I'm going to do." No. That is not how we respond as biblical believers. We have to move beyond the reality of the discouragement, we have to move beyond the reality of the discouragement and find the remedy for the discouragement.

That's our second point here this morning: the remedy for your discouragement. And what the Psalmist does here is he shows us this, circumstances may explain the feelings that you have but, beloved, what you need to understand is that it is your spiritual responsibility and your spiritual opportunity to go beyond them, and one of the ways that you exercise faith, one of the ways that you glorify God over the course of your life is that when discouragement comes, that you don't collapse under it, that you don't give into it, that you actually engage the battle against it so that your faith might flourish and that the joy and confidence of trust in Christ would be manifest in your life and in your own spiritual heart, and that's what the Psalmist is doing here. There may be, there may be legitimate reasons for your sorrow that you can easily identify but, beloved, that's not where you stop. There may be reasons for your sorrow but, beloved, here's the key, this is a very important pivot point, there are more important and better reasons for you to have hope. There are better reasons for you to have hope than there are for you to be discouraged and that's what the Psalmist shows us here.

And how does he do that? Well, I have often said, probably not often enough, that your most important preacher in life is not me, it's not a radio favorite, it's not somebody that you see on tv, the most important preacher in your life for your spiritual well-being is you. You have to develop the ability and the understanding to speak to yourself and to address your own soul in its times of discouragement, and you use your mind and understanding that is informed by biblical truth and you speak to your soul, you speak to your heart and you call to mind and you address your heart with matters that you know to be true, and you speak to your heart and say, "You need to listen to what is true about

God, and you need to respond to that in faith." Your mind addresses your heart and invokes your will to respond against the discouragement and to respond instead to biblical truth. Instead of responding to the horizontal, earthly, passing circumstances that you are in, you anchor your response to life in the eternal reality of who God has revealed himself to be. Here in the New Testament age, we anchor ourselves and we go back again and again to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that Christ loved us and gave himself up for us at the cross.

You know, your life is not defined, if you are a Christian this is so very important for you to understand, your life is not defined primarily by what you do. Your life is not defined by your problems in life. Your life is not defined by the way that you feel inside and your life is not defined by what other people say about you. Friends, those things are all secondary under a greater primary reality for you as a Christian. Your identity, your life purpose, who you are is defined by the fact that Jesus Christ loved you and gave himself up for you on the cross. For that to be true means that you are a part of the eternal plan of God by which he gave a people to his Son that his Son would redeem and one day bring to be his bride in heaven forever and ever, and you're a part of that. You are identified fully with Christ. You are in union with Christ so that what he did in his death and resurrection applies to you. You share in his victory over the world. You share in his victory over Satan. You share in his victory over sin. Ephesians 2 says that God raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places.

That's what's true about you and that's what's true, that was true before the enemies came and began their taunting for the Psalmist, that's what's going to be true after the enemies are dead and gone. That's what's true of us before this virus hit the world. It's what's true now. It's what's going to be true afterwards. And yes, we're separated from each other for a period of time. We're not able to greet each other and interact with each other as we would like, but that's temporary, it's passing. Nothing about the eternal reality of who you are in Jesus Christ has changed one bit. And so you come back to that, you come back to Christ, you come back to the cross, you come back to the indwelling Holy Spirit, you come back to the truth of the eternal inerrant word of God and you say, "Those are the realities that define my life, and my soul, I call upon you to respond to the truth of that; to respond to the truth of the love and holiness of God that has been shed abroad in your heart, and the joy of the Holy Spirit that is shed abroad in our hearts in Christ." And that's what the Psalmist is doing here, he is reminding himself of what he believes.

Look at verse 5 with me. He says, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?" There is a soliloquy going on here. He's reasoning with himself. He's talking to himself and he says there at the end of verse 5, "Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him." And what he's doing here, his entire argument to himself and his reason for hope is this, what I'm about to say: even though his circumstances have changed, he is premising his hope on the immutability of God. God has not changed even though the circumstances have. The immutability of God is a theological term that simply means that God never changes. If God has loved me once, he loves me now and he will love me forever, and that underlying current of truth applies and is real no matter how the outward things that I see change around me. And it's



premised on the character of God as it is revealed in the word of God, and because God is immutable – watch this, this is another major pivot point in our time here this morning, this is a significant point in understanding what's going on in Psalm 42 – God is a God of infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite love. He is a God of infinite grace toward his people and that never changes. So what that means is, is that even though the circumstances have changed, God has not changed and therefore it means this: even in these adverse circumstances that I find myself in, you say to yourself, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the love of God, the goodness of God are all still actively at work even though I cannot see it or feel it myself.

So the Psalmist calls on himself to remember the character of God, remember that God is at work in everything that happens and that gives him hope that the future will look different to him than the present does today. It gives him a guarantee that his enemies will not ultimately prevail over him. It gives him a guarantee that his sorrow is not permanent and eternal, that this is a temporary passing phase appointed in the wisdom of God for his life, but it is one that God will ultimately turn around to restore him to the joy that he once knew, not only to restore it to him but to restore it to him in greater measure. That's what he's saying here as he speaks to his soul, "Hope in God for I shall again praise Him. I praised Him in the past, yeah, I'm downcast right now but, my soul, remember that you are going to praise Him again in the future because God will guarantee it by the immutability of his character." And that gives him the capacity to begin to praise God now even though the circumstances haven't changed.

You can think about it this way. Here's an easy way to think about it, is that in the midst of our discouragement we go back to truth, remember who God is and what he's going to do, and in the midst of circumstances that are so oppressive, we borrow, in a sense, we borrow against the future praise that we know is coming and we bring it into the present so that we have a supply for today. We know that there is future praise coming because we know that all of this ends in glory for us and we're going to be around the throne singing, "Hallelujah to the Lamb! Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory, praise and honor!" We know that day is coming because it's revealed to us so clearly in all of Scripture including the book of Revelation. Well, if we know that's coming and we know that that's our ultimate destiny that that's what we're going to see, then we can reach into the future by the hand of faith and draw it back into the present so that it starts to tincture, it gives color and texture to our present spiritual experience and we say, "Hope in God," you say to yourself, "Hope in God for I shall again praise Him. I know I will praise Him and therefore I am not going to utterly collapse under the midst of the circumstances that I'm presently facing."

So we as New Testament believers, remember that Christ died for us, rose for us, saved us, keeps us, will one day deliver us ultimately into heaven, and we look at all of the wonders of our great salvation and with our minds we look at our soul, as it were, and we say, "You hope in God. You remember what the basis of your hope is. It was never about this life. This world is passing away. What I live for and what I love is utterly unchanged by all of the opposition and all of the difficult circumstances that I experience. And therefore," you say to your soul, "soul, you hope in God. You praise Him." That's the

remedy for your discouragement. So the Psalmist is preaching to himself and his mind is speaking truth to his emotions so that they do not run away with him. All of this is rooted in the revelation that we have from God in the Scriptures and it's that God that the Psalmist calls to mind.

Look at verse 6 with me. He says, "O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar." Hermon is a mountain range in northern Israel. Mizar may be a smaller peak within that range. What he's expressing here is he says, "I'm calling out to You, God, from a distance. I'm separated from the temple and all of the appointed worship I don't have to draw upon, but I just call upon You from this lonely spot in this present aspect of my existence, I call upon You and I hope in You and I trust You to hear my prayer."

And so he goes on in verse 7 and he's expressing the spiritual urgency and the depth of what he is feeling in his heart. Verse 7, he says, "Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me." What he's saying is, "God, my circumstances here are like waves that have covered me and are pounding against me, but I'm calling out to You even in the midst of that, and my troubles are calling upon me as though one wave upon another; one trial comes upon me and before its done, another trial hits me and then another and then another." I know, I know that as I speak to you, some of you that I trust are watching even now, that your life is like that and it's hard for me as your pastor to watch you go through that. You have a health difficulty, and then a job loss comes upon it, and then a family matter comes on top of that, and then someone that you love passes away, and it's just like these things continue to multiply upon you. Well, know that your elders pray for you in the midst of those times that we see that and we hurt with you in the midst of that, but more importantly than that little bit of human encouragement, I would want you to see that the word of God recognizes that for some in portions of their life, this is what God appoints to us, waves and waves and waves of trials, and it's most important for you to find your footing on the sand, so to speak, the sand of the beach, to stand up as those waves are coming and get your nose up and breathe in some of this truth that we're talking about so that it could be that which would sustain your soul in the midst of these rolling waves of difficulty that the Lord somehow has appointed for you.

You know, I think it's important for us to realize that when you understand in the words of 1 Corinthians 10:13, that no temptation has overcome you but such as is common to man, and God is faithful, he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also so that you may be able to endure it, there's something that you need to understand about your present trials, the repeated nature of them and the truth of that promise from God's word. The fact that God walks you through such deep valleys and allows such repeated trials to hit you is an indication of the depth of the faith that he has worked into your heart. If it was too much for you, God would have shielded you from it. The fact that you as a believer are going through this, is an indication, it's kind of counterintuitive, it's kind of a negative measure of a great positive trait, but the negative difficulties that you are facing is a measure of the faith that the Holy Spirit has worked into your heart, and I just want to assure you on the

authority of God's word, my Christian friend, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus, and God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able and all you need to do in the midst of this day by day is to call to mind the things that we've been discussing here today, and to just exercise that faith and to look to him in hope day by day and trust him, trust his immutable goodness, his immutable faithfulness, that great faithfulness of which we sing to understand that that's operative even in the midst of these rolling trials that just seem to come to you without end. I understand it's difficult, more importantly the word of God understands it's difficult and the fact that the word of God shows us this means that God has given you provision not only to survive them but to thrive in them in the end, and the day will come when what seems to be your weak tottering faith in the midst of these difficulties will one day result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what seemed to be such a weak stammering faith that you have today is going to survive the test and the goal that is left behind in that is something that Christ himself will gladly honor you for and reward you for in ways that have eternal ramifications that go far beyond anything that we could ask or think. And we will stand together in glory one day, I'm speaking metaphorically here, we'll look back on those trials and we'll say with the Apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 4, those momentary light afflictions were not worthy to be compared to the eternal glory that's been revealed to us. That's what God does for his people. That's how good and how gracious he is.

So these times of trial are temporary, they are producing an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, and what you do in the midst of it, we're not saying it's not hard, we've been assuming all along it's really difficult, right? We're not diminishing the trial, we're saying that there is a remedy for this discouragement as we look to the eternal promises and the eternal character of God. That's what Psalm 42 does for us and what God's loyal love, look at Psalm 42:8, he says, "The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night." That word "lovingkindness" is a reference to God's loyal love. The time will come soon enough in the wisdom and timing of God where he commands a change in our circumstances, where he commands a reversal of the present discouragement, and we will see him in the fullness of the light of day, so to speak, and his loyal love will be on display in a way that we could not deny, and we will find that God was loyally loving us and leading us, protecting us and guiding us through all of these trials, he was doing all of that even though we couldn't see it, even though we sometimes doubted it, the time will come when God displays that and we'll be returned to that sense of joy and praise that the people of God so much love. The present sorrow will be reversed. On the authority of God's word, there is no doubt about that. The sorrow and difficulty of your present day, my friend in Christ, is certainly going to be reversed and you can praise God for that today and draw encouragement from that today even if nothing changes about the circumstances that otherwise weigh you down.

Now the Psalmist, one of the things about this Psalm is you can see that he's fighting a battle here in that he rises to heights of faith and then he retreats back into sorrow and we see that even in verse 9. He says in verse 9 and notice the contrast. In verse 8 he said, "The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime." He's confident and yet in

his next breath he's discouraged again. That's the way it goes sometimes. He says in verse 9, "I will say to God my rock, 'Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?' As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" He's saying, "Has God forgotten me?"

Notice the note of hope that the Psalm ends on. Some people think Psalm 43 was originally a part of this and that it was one Psalm, we're just going to treat Psalm 42 on its own here today. But in those verses 9 and 10, it seems like his present circumstances are inconsistent with that love. "God, have You forgotten me? Have You overlooked me in the midst of the outworking of Your purposes?" But look at the note of faith that Psalm 42 ends on. "Has God forgotten me?" We need to get this exactly right and then we'll look at verse 11. We ask the question, maybe you ask the question in the midst of your sorrows, "Has God forgotten me? This has been going on so long. It's been going on so long, don't you understand? Has God forgotten me?" Your spiritual response to that, the answer of faith to that is this: in light of the faithfulness of God, of course not. Of course not. "Of course God has not forgotten me. He cannot forget me because He cannot change."

And so the Psalmist says in verse 11 as he recalls this faithfulness of God once again and in response to what he had said in the prior two verses, he says this to himself, he says in verse 11, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God." The joy of the Lord is our strength, it says in Nehemiah, and when we are walking in this kind of faith of which we've been expressing, it shows in our countenance. He says that God is the help of his countenance. God is the one who helps his faith display a sense of joy even in the midst of the trials because it is built on an inner reality of faith that is displaying itself in the countenance of the one who is speaking.

So here's what I want to say to you, beloved, as we close our time here together, is for you to realize this, is that there is a remedy for your depression, there is an answer for the anguish of your soul, but I want you to understand that it's not found in you simply trying harder and trying harder in your quiet time or praying more or necessarily even reading the Bible more. Those are good things to do, to read Scripture and to pray, they can just be outward actions that we go through without entering into the spiritual reality that they are designed to produce. You see, the remedy is more than renewing those outward forms. Friend, brother and sister in Christ, beloved, you have to learn to preach to yourself and to talk to yourself in terms of truth. You tell yourself the truth about God's loyal love. You look back at the cross of Jesus Christ and remember in the language of 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." You look back at that and say, "There's love displayed and God has saved me in accordance with that love." And you preach that to yourself and then as you do that, you consciously turn your trust to his faithfulness. You say, "I'm not going to let my inner life be driven by the circumstances around me. I'm going to walk by faith here, not by sight. I'm going to walk by faith in the revealed word of God. I'm going to walk by faith in the Christ who loved me and gave Himself up for me. And I'm going

to trust those realities to determine the outworking of life for me rather than falling into despair by reason of the pressure of the circumstances that are around me, for the sorrow that fills my soul."

You see, my friend, your convictions about Christ tell your emotions how to respond to the circumstances, and I'll say this: sure, it can be a battle, and sure, it may take time for this to work itself out in your soul. You don't do this one time and then it's over, even as we see in the Psalm, this is something that we're repeating to ourselves often, sometimes throughout the same day, sometimes through the same hour, "God, I trust You. Oh, this is so hard but, oh, my soul, believe it. Oh, it's hard." And you're fighting a battle, and so sure, it's hard, sure it's a battle, sure it can take time, but my friend, on the authority of the word of God and on the authority of the faithfulness of the God who loved us in Christ, I'm here to tell you it's a battle you can win.

Let's pray together, shall we?

*Father, we think of the wonders of Your faithfulness to Your people and we are so grateful for them. We thank You for the eternal love that is ours in Christ, that is unchanging, those circumstances wave around us. Father, I pray for each one that has listened in to this message. I trust that You've encouraged the souls of many through Your word here today, and we pray that by the abiding presence of Your Holy Spirit, that this would bring forth abiding fruit in the lives of those Christians that are deeply discouraged for understandable reasons, Father. Lead them to the remedy that is found in Christ alone.*

*Father, I pray for those watching and whose hearts are hard and who have not entered yet into Christ yet. Father, we pray that by a work of Your gracious Holy Spirit that You would manifest Your eternal love to them, that Your Spirit would unfold the glories of Christ to their heart, the wonders of redemption, the wonders of an atoning sacrifice at Calvary would convict them of sin in such a way that they themselves would turn for the first time in saving faith to Christ in response to that regenerating work of Your Holy Spirit. Yes, Father, do a work in each one for which we will give You thanks and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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