

What to Do When You're Down

Psalms 42-43

Introduction:

1. The enemy cannot take away your salvation, but hurt our usefulness
 - a. If he could, he would love to take away your spiritual wealth
 - b. He would be thrilled to decoy you from your walk with God
 - c. He would be excited to disable you for spiritual warfare.
2. One of the ways that the enemy goes after us is to get us emotionally and spiritually “down.”
 - a. We might call this – being down in the dumps or having a case of the blues or being discouraged.
 - b. In some cases, it could even be full-blown depression
3. Every Christian, experiences, from time to time, in one degree or another, what the psalmist calls, a “soul that is cast down”
 - a. He says that three times in these psalms
 - b. 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?
 - c. 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?...
 - d. 43:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?...
4. There are many possible causes of a “cast down soul”
 - a. Economic problems
 - b. Maybe family problems
 - c. Maybe physical problems
 - d. It could be guilt – real or false
 - e. Maybe it stems from having been rejected or hurt by others
5. We see many people who were greatly used of God who struggled with this “cast down soul” – discouragement – depression
 - a. Three OT characters became so discouraged that they prayed to die
 1. There was **Moses** – Num 11:14-15 – “kill me here and now”
 - a. He was weary, he had people all the time griping / complaining
 - b. He was burdened down, he was fatigued
 2. Then there was **Elijah** – 1Ki 19:4 – threatened by Queen Jezebel
 - a. He thought that the great victory on Mount Carmel would bring sweeping revival throughout the land of Israel
 - b. He ran 30 miles – longer than a marathon
 3. And then there was **Jonah** - Jonah 4:3 – “take my life from me”
 - a. When God did not wipe out the Assyrians after they repented
 - b. Jonah was worn out – remember the whale incident

- b. Others struggled with a “cast down soul”
 1. Charles Spurgeon often struggled with a cast down soul
 2. Abraham Lincoln suffered bouts of depression
 3. Winston Churchill said depression followed him like a black dog
 4. William Cowper (Cooper) born 1731 died in 1800
 - a. He attempted suicide three different times
 - b. He was in an insane asylum for a time
 - c. “I was struck with such dejection of spirit that none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack lying down and then rising up in despair.”
 - d. In his later years, Cowper was cared for by his friend John Newton, who wrote Amazing Grace.
 - e. In spite of his problems, God mightily used, Cowper.

One of his poems goes like this....

There is a fountain filled with blood,
 Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains.
 E’re since by faith I saw the strength
 Thy flowing wounds supply
 Redeeming love has been my theme
 And shall be till I die.
6. Psalms 42- 43 give us insight into some of the causes of a “cast down soul” and how to deal with them
7. In older Hebrew manuscripts these two psalms were one.
 - a. They were written as one psalm and should be considered together
 - b. They fit together
8. The heading calls this a “Maschil” psalm
 - a. “Maschil” means instruction
 - b. This psalm was written for our instruction – to teach us what to do when we are down or “down cast of soul”
9. These psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah
 - a. They were a musical family and generation after generation they were involved in the temple music
 - b. Though David did not write this psalm himself, it seems to be based on his life and experiences
10. We are going to be jumping around through these 2 psalms and hopefully it will all come together in the end
11. We are going to see that if you are down then there are some things to stop and some things to start.

I. Stop Looking at Self and Start Looking at God

A. Stop Looking At Self

1. I understand there is appropriate looking inward / self examination
2. But sometimes it is taken too far
3. Those who are too introspective often end up with a downcast soul
4. When things are not going well and we come before the Lord in repentance and with a desire to know what the problem is – I think that the Holy Spirit will show us what is wrong
5. It generally does not take weeks and weeks of introspection for him to show us what is wrong
6. In Ps 42 and 43 there are 51 personal pronouns
 - a) “I” = 14x “Me” = 16x “My” = 20x
 - b) *This is a hint as to the problem of the psalmist*
7. Most of the times we get down are preceded by undue focus on self
 - a) *Maybe it was the way someone treated us*
 - b) *Maybe our expectations were not met*
 - c) *Someone hurt our feelings, rejected us*
8. **Ps 42:4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.**
 - a) *David’s plans and expectations were not fulfilled*
 - b) *Maybe this was when Absalom rebelled against David and he had to flee Jerusalem for his life*
 - c) *He could no longer go to the tabernacle – the place of worship*
9. The formula for a downcast soul is Disappointment or problem + Anger + Self-pity = Depression or a downcast soul
 - a) *I know that does not describe all depression or discouragement*
 - b) *Some might have an organic basis*
10. There is a total focus on self and my rights, my expectations
 - a) *I have a right to be angry because I did not get my way*
 - b) *I have a right to feel sorry for myself, because I didn’t get my way*
 - c) *Maybe he was miffed with God – 42:3, 10 “where is your God?”*
11. Author and counselor Dr. Charles Solomon calls depression an internal temper tantrum.
12. Dr. Carl Menninger was a famous psychiatrist, who finished giving a lecture and was just beginning the question and answer time. Someone asked, “Dr. Menninger, what would advise a person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on. Everyone figured that Dr. Menninger would say, “Consult a psychiatrist.” But he didn’t. Here is what he said, “Lock up your house, go across the railroad tracks. Find someone in need and do something to help that person.” What was he saying? Get the focus off yourself.
13. Volunteer to work in one of the ministries at church

B. Start Looking to God

1. The psalmist confessed where he is in 42:5, 42:11 and 43:5
 - a) *He is confessing that he has a problem – he’s down, scared*
 - b) *“cast down” literally means to “sink, depress”, to bend low*
 - c) *“disquieted” – to be in turmoil, an uproar*
2. He opened this psalm looking to God – vs 1

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

 - a) *He is desperate for God here*
 - b) *Like a deer being chased by dogs or hunters, desperate for a drink*
 - c) *When you’re cast down repent of the anger and self-pity and seek diligently after God*
3. How do we seek after God? We seek him in praise

Ps 43:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

 - a) *When you’re soul is cast down – admit it – quit saying that you’re all right – you’re not – admit it*
 - b) *I’m not saying here that praise is some therapeutic tool to get over a cast down soul*
 - c) *We praise God because he is worthy of praise, not because it will help us feel better*
 - d) *Praising God takes your focus off yourself and your discouragement and you begin to focus on God again*
 - e) *A cast down soul and a heart filled with praise cannot co-exist*

II. Stop Looking at the Past - Start Looking at the Future

A. Stop Looking at the Past – 42:4

- 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.**
1. Not all looking at the past is hurtful
 2. When we look at the past and see God at work, then that is encouraging – gives us hope for the future
 3. We look at the past and contrast it with where we are in the present
 - a) *“I remember when I didn’t feel this way”*
 - b) *“I remember when people liked me.”*
 - c) *“I remember when things were going better than they are now.”*
 4. The psalmist is contrasting happy times in the past with the painful times of the present and his soul is cast down
 5. Remember that the “good ole days” were never really as good as you remember them.

B. Start Looking at the Future – 42:5b

5b ... hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

- The psalmist gives his soul a good talkin' to
 - Hope in the Bible is the confident assurance that God, in His time, will accomplish everything that He has promised
 - Notice some of the things that he is hoping for
1. Ultimate Victory Over All Enemies – 43:1
1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
 - a) *The psalmist is resting on the promises of God*
 - b) *God's justice will prevail*
 2. Lean on God's Strength – 43:2a
2 For thou art the God of my strength...
 - a) *God may not change your circumstances, but He will give you strength to go through them*
 - b) *We get to experience his power*
 - c) *Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
 3. Look for God's Leading – 43:3
3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
 - a) *Don't make major decisions in your life when your soul is cast down*
 - b) *Isa 50:10 Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. 11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*
 4. Appropriate God's Joy – vs 4
4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.
 - a) *Even in an unpleasant situation there can be joy as we rest in a sovereign God*
 - b) *God is still on the throne*
 - c) *We have God's sufficient grace to enable us and strengthen us*
 - d) *Discouragement has an element of hopelessness in it*
 - e) *Where there is a suicide or a suicide attempt a person has reached a point of hopelessness*

III. Stop Asking for Explanations and Start Resting on God's Promises

A. Stop Asking for Explanations

1. There are 13 questions in psalms 42 and 43
2. He asks "why" ten different times
3. It is not wrong to ask God questions, but it is wrong to question God.
4. Sometimes asking God questions is essential
 - a) *"God, what are you doing in my life?"*
 - b) *"What do you want from my life?"*
 - c) *"How can I best serve you?"*
 - d) *"How can I become more like Christ through this?"*
5. Job finally gave up on all the "whys" and in chapter 13 he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

B. Start Resting on God's Promises – Ps 42:8

8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

1. Everything I experience comes from God's love and there is nothing that his grace is not sufficient for
2. The psalmist knew that God was singing over him – Zeph 3:17
17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.
3. We have so much more than the psalmist had
 - a) *We have all the books of the prophets that were written after this time*
 - b) *We have the gospels and the epistles*
 - c) *We have the book of Revelation and we can see how it is all going to turn out*
4. When God lets us go through trials and circumstances. The important thing is not that we get out of it. It is what we get out of it.