

Karl Buchan - Smith / General

Lockdown sermon / Depression; Hope / Psalm 42  
Overcoming soul depression

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## Introduction

Our passage is [Ps 42](#)

in May the Washington post headline stated how the corona pandemic was pushing America into a mental health crisis, as many people responded to the virus by becoming depressed, substance abuse, suicide, post traumatic stress disorder

an article written by the University of Minnesota in September reads how depression has tripled in the USA amid the Covid 19 Stressors

Maybe you might be feeling the same way, as we enter 2021, once again separated, churches closed, and Thursday's case count in SA was 18000 new cases.

Even as I was preparing for this sermon, God allowed me to have a taste of something that could easily lead to a feeling of despair as my computer blue screened on me as the hard drive crashed. Then to top it up, when I tried to find a computer repair shop, all were closed due to it being holiday.

Maybe some of you enter into this new year depressed and overwhelmed with all the trials.

Even if you are the most mature and strongest believers, you may still face extreme discouragement and despair.

God's word today provides divine vaccination against a heart in full despair.

[Ps 42](#) is a Lament psalm

In Lamenting psalms the author opens his heart honestly to God.

Often what you see is a heart filled with sadness, fears, anger and even pain

These are often emotional psalms that are desperate for God's deliverance, to be rescued in the day of extreme trial. (Steve Lawson)

Some introductory comments

as we look at the title

It was written to the choirmaster, the Music director

**Psalm 42:title ESV**

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

A Maskil is a musical term which means being wise or instructed.

This psalm of lament is provides you with wise counsel to look to God in very difficult times

The unknown Psalmist is one of the sons of Korah, who were Levites, descendants of the Father Korah, who was known for rebelling against Moses

They produced music in the tabernacle and continued even after the temple was built.

Originally [Ps 42](#) &43 appeared to be one Psalm, as the repeated chorusses connect these psalms [Ps 42: 5,11](#) and [Ps 43:5](#)

The Psalmist writes about the severe trials he had endured and then encourages his soul to look to God for the Divine solution.

## Proposition

Heavens answer for 7 causes of soul depression, that I will explain through 9 points, because 2 of these points refer to the same solution.

1. Thirsty soul (Facing isolation from God) vs 1-2
2. Grieving soul (Grieved by verbal ridicule) vs 3
3. Nostalgic soul (Recalling the pleasant past) vs 4
4. Heavens answer for the despairing soul soul
5. Depressed soul (Physical separation) vs 6
6. Drowning soul (overwhelmed by trials) vs 7
7. Questioning soul (Facing oppression) vs 8- 9
8. Fearful soul (Facing death threats) vs 10
9. Heavens repeated answer Vs 11

## Reading

### **Psalm 42 ESV**

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH. <sup>1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food

day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”<sup>4</sup> These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation<sup>6</sup> and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.<sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.<sup>8</sup> By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.<sup>9</sup> I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”<sup>10</sup> As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”<sup>11</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

What is the 1st cause of soul depression

## 1. Thirsty soul (Facing isolation from God) vs 1-2

### **Psalm 42:1-2 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

### **1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,**

The Psalmist opens his soul and honestly shares the condition of his heart.

The soul refers to the psalmist the inner life,(his heart)

He unveils his soul using a simile(which makes a direct comparison between two realities)

He pulls you into an image of a thirsty deer in desert like conditions, thirsting for flowing streams.

Its like being in a scorching hot day,

and having run 50 km, exhausted

having had no water to drink.

Your tongue sticking to the roof of your mouth,

The sweat dripping off your body.

And all you can think about is the ice cold coke in the fridge waiting for you.

You get the picture, now connect this with the next phrase

## **so pants my soul for you, O God.**

The term pants is used metaphorically refers to that deep longing after God.

So his inner life, is emotionally and spiritually a desert.

Its that experience when:

- you have had a famine of Biblical input
- maybe its because:
  - You have been away from church a long time
  - Or dust has formed over your bible since you stopped reading it
- you have just been in a church , which was pursuing the emptiness of experiences, rather than the solid meat of God's word

- you had weeks of dry devotions or no devotions
- your mind cannot even recall the last deep meaning full fellowship you had with God

Being isolated from God, from his word, will leave your soul craving spiritual sustenance.

A biblical cause for a depressed soul is the absence of God in a souls life, the extreme example is the life of an unbeliever

### **Ephesians 2:12 ESV**

<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But this is true also for believers who , purposely or by circumstances crowded God out of their live.

A thirsty soul is a weakened soul, and leads to soul in trouble, a despairing soul.

The psalmist says in the next few words

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

The psalmist feels cut off from God, and specifically the living God.

He is aware of the absence of God

Most likely surrounded by the dead idols of the world, he thirst for the living God.

Living means you can have a relationship with him.

Its so hard to have a relationship with a brick, why? because it is not living.

## **When shall I come and appear before God?**

The Heb would read, when shall I can I come and be seen by the Face of God

When can we have swallow ship together ( fellowship combined with a meal)

Like you read

### **Revelation 3:20 ESV**

<sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

### **Psalm 23:5 ESV**

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

## **Application**

Worshiping your own heart idols in this world, will leave your soul parched, desiring strongly to see and to be seen by God.

The souls heading for despair is a soul malnourished by the lack of fellowship with God and His word

Causes for not meeting with God and His word include:

- Your not a believer, which has only one answer:
  - repent and believe in Christ as Savior and Lord, trust in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, and commit your life to truly

walking in obedience to Him.

For believers

- Not repenting, of known sins
- Idolatry: Not putting away your idols, When you covet something more in the world than God, then you are in fact worshiping an idol. And God hates idolatry.
- not having a time with God in his word
- having time with God's word, but doing it out of ritual or legalism and not out of relationship

If this is you, repent, put away your idols, put on worshiping God, times of devotions and being honest to God with where your heart is.

a Second cause of soul depression

## 2. Grieving soul (Grieved by verbal ridicule) vs 3

**Psalm 42:3 ESV**

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

The Psalmist extreme longing for God is intensified by the hostile remarks he faces from enemies.

The psalmist may have been in exile, and facing the ridicule from enemies who



were attacking his faith

The one longing for God, thirsting for God , instead of getting fresh water is getting the salty water of his tears.

A grieving heart, a grieving soul often may lead to a sense of hopelessness.

In this case the psalmist is grieving because he is continuously buffeted with the ridicule of people who question Him, where is His God.

He himself is longing for the presence of God, and so that longing is now even escalated as others ridicule him about the absence of God.

So grief over ridicule or loss, may lead to a soul that feels hopeless (depressed)

## **Application**

Grief over some loss, maybe a loved one, maybe the loss now due to Covid, may leave you in a condition of tears day and night.

Or it could be due to ridicule you face in life, in your home, at work, people questioning your faith, questioning your God's lack of visible presence.

Maybe it comes in the form of questions like: If God existed, where is your God in these pandemics, in the loss of your loved one.

Where is He?

Its often people that are the closest to you, that bring the most pain with these kind of questions.

This brings us to the third cause of soul depression

### 3. Nostalgic soul (Recalling the pleasant past) vs 4

#### **Psalm 42:4 ESV**

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

You and I know how when things get tough, we recall the past happier times.

You recall these times but you also compare.

But this process does not bring relief to the depressed soul (the soul that is in despair)

The Psalmist remembers the past does this as he pours out his soul= (as he expresses without restraint, pours out his heart,) to God amidst deep agony.

Like Hanna

#### **1 Samuel 1:15 ESV**

<sup>15</sup> But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

In that context the psalmist remembers his past participation in worship festivals.

**I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.**

So he recalls these past experiences

- Walking in the city streets, with the masses, walking in the front going towards the temple
- the cries, the shouting, the exuberant voices of great joy , thanks giving
- The songs, oh the glorious songs of worshiping God, the psalms they sang as they ascended the temple mount [Ps 120-Ps 130](#)
- The festivals, the Passover feast, the feast of the first fruits, the feasts of the tabernacles

So as he pours out his heart to God, he tries to find solace in remembering the joyful past religious experience.

But sadly living in the past, does not comfort the heart, does not restore a despairing heart(a depressed soul).

The reason, recalling past joyful events does not change the present reality.

### **Application**

Trying to find solace for a depressed heart by remembering past joyful events does not solve your present reality of pain.

In fact as you compare you live with a greater awareness of loss.

I think many in SA want to live in the past times without the new stressors of the pandemic, and all it does is bring about a greater sense of loss and despair.

I often struggle with this with regards to meeting new families in the church, and when having built relationships over time, and then suddenly due to some offence or sin, or conflict, or the fact that the person is an unbeliever and wants to avoid becoming a believer with the commitments it involves, people break ties and communication with you.

I find myself recalling the past joy of fellowship with them, but it does not still

my heart for the heart ache of the loss over the present reality.

I think many older people, live and speak about the past events.

Its as if they struggle to live in the present realities which are very difficult due to their bodies deteriorating.

Many struggle to have a conversation about the present.

You do not live in the past

You do not live in the future.

You live now.

Do you think its possible to find contentment in the present, and joy and hope in the present?

So where do we find the answer?

The forth point reveals heavens answer to soul depression

## 4. Heavens answer for the despairing soul Vs 5

### **Psalm 42:5-6 ESV**

<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation <sup>6</sup> and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

### **5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in**

## **turmoil within me?**

Notice that these two questions follow on from vs 4 implying that even though the Psalmist tried to calm his heart by living in the past, his heart is still in this state of depression.

That why he asks these questions

His soul is cast down =means to melt away, to be in despair, the idea of sinking, its what the world and modern day physiologist label depression.

His soul is described as being in turmoil= heart that makes a noise, tumultuous, anxious, uneasy, grieved, troubled, full of confusing thoughts

Why soul are you depressed, why soul are you in turmoil.

Now here we begin to see the solution.

Instead of:

- listening to his thirsty soul
- listening to his grieved soul
- listening to his nostalgic soul

He begins to question his soul.

Not listening to his soul, but questioning it

Self examination, introspection to the state of your own heart

Soul, why are you in this condition?

He pursues the cause, to discover the cure.

But more than that, he is establishing that this should not characterize the heart?

If you are a true believer, your heart can and should be in a different condition.

He then discovers that the cure is not found within himself, nor in his circumstances

The cure is found in God.

Heaven's cure for soul depression, the despairing soul is hope.

Hope, not the unsure wishful thinking hope of the world...hope things would get better.

Rather it's the firm hope in God

## **Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.**

Heaven's answer to a soul in depression, a despairing soul, a soul that is melting, sinking in turmoil is hope in God

The psalmist commands his own heart to hope in God.

The Heb term for hope also means to wait

Hope is the future expectation of good based on the promises of God.

Hope means to wait confidently knowing God will bring about deliverance with his presence

The ENG translation does not do the Heb justice

**Direct translation would read:**

Wait for God, for again I shall be caused to praise him (for) the saving acts of the face of God within me.

The reason or the cause for hoping in God is that you will be caused to praise Him for His deliverance by His divine presence which is within you.

The OT believer experience Gods indwelling presence at times, but for you and I that are believers we have His ongoing presence

**1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV**

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Every true believer has God the HS within them

As you hope in God,

God then changes your heart from a depressed heart to a worshiping heart

The content of the worships God is His saving acts and His abiding presence within you.

His saving acts include:

- spiritual salvation through repentance and faith in the gospel
- saving and restoring a despairing soul to become a soul worshiping God

A key reason is that Christ through His spirit indwells believers and Christ is defined as Hope

### **1 Timothy 1:1 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

Without Jesus, you have no hope, no forgiveness, no purpose for suffering in this world, nothing to look forward too.

Heavens answer:

- examine your heart
- commanding your heart to hope, (wait) upon God
  - the reason is that soon you will be worshiping him for his acts of salvation through his presence, God within you.

We continue with the 4th cause of soul depression, which is our 5th point of the sermon

## 5. Depressed soul (Physical separation) vs 6

### **Psalm 42:6 ESV**

<sup>6</sup> and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

The psalmist likely in exile was geographically removed from the land of Israel.

His soul is downcast as he remembers having worshiped God in his home country.



The Sons of Korah had been removed from the places of worship.

They remember the Jordan river north an east of Jerusalem, the Heights of Mt Hermon and Mt Mizar, which means little hill, possibly a lesser peak of The Hermon mountain range.

So being removed from the comforts of his homeland, from the places of worship, the meeting places with God, leads his soul to despair.

## **Application**

Your soul may be in despair, simply because circumstances moved you away from the places close to your heart

Maybe it was due to

- study reasons,
- work reasons,
- health reasons
- family reasons

Is your soul responding in despair because your away geographically from where you perceive God was.

remember that God is everywhere, He is all present.

We come to the 5th cause of soul depression, which is our 6th point of the sermon

## **6. Drowning soul (overwhelmed by trials)**

## vs 7

### **Psalm 42:7 ESV**

<sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.

The Psalmist shifts from the imagery of longing for water to the imagery of drowning by water

Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls refers to the waves of the deep conspiring together in their efforts to drown the psalmist.

Its like sailors on a boat, being tossed to a fro, taking in water as waves crash over them like waterfalls or water spouts pouring down upon them.

Notice the pronoun “your” referring to your breakers and your wave implying that God is in control of these waves that are overwhelming the psalmist.

Here we see the OT imagery of waves of God that represent the wave upon wave of trials that appear to overwhelm the believer .

## **Application**

When you feel overwhelmed by the trials of life, remember these are God’s trials

God mighty tools to teach you to trust Him, to shape you into his character, to find joy in God rather than life, to reveal your heart to you, to test the genuineness of your faith that results in worship.

It’s so easy to despair in these stressful trials, but remember God is in control of every single one, designed for you cause He loves you very very much and knows you need them in your life.

We come to the 6th cause of soul depression, which is our 7th point of the sermon

## 7. Questioning soul (Facing oppression) vs 8- 9

### **Psalm 42:8-9 ESV**

<sup>8</sup> By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. <sup>9</sup> I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

The psalmist knew that God commanded His loyal or covenant love towards him.

And at night, the times when the heart can be in greater despair, he sings songs to God.

He was also praying as well to the God of his life

- the God who gives, sustains and controls his life

He understood that God controlled not only the trials of life, but his very existence as well

So he prayed saying to His God, His rock, His anchor in life, his unassailable fortress, the protection from the crashing waves.

Why have you forgotten me?

His prayer life is not seeing the relief, and so his faith begins to falter.

Has God forgotten Him?

The problem he was facing was that his eyes were so focused on his current

circumstances that they were distracting them from God.

He had come to think that God remembering Him = relief from trials

But people were still dying around him, possibly as enemies were killing them in exile

and he was still mourning (wearing funeral clothing), grieving the loss of people he knew, loved

It's in these dark times that maybe you and I might think God has forgotten you?

When your loved one passes away, do you also think God has forgotten you?

This may cause your soul to be in despair

We look at a 7th cause soul depression which is the 8th point of the sermon

## 8. Fearful soul (Facing death threats) vs 10

### **Psalm 42:10 ESV**

<sup>10</sup> As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

"Deadly wound in my bones" = refers to the shattering of bones = describes the act of murder and killing.

The Psalmist was facing death threats from his enemies.

They were threatening to murder him

Not only that they constantly question God's apparent absence.

We are going to kill you, so where is your God.

When Ahab had told Jezebel how Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal 1 King 19:44

We reads of Elijah reaction of fear which led to depression

### **1 Kings 19:2-4 ESV**

<sup>2</sup> Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” <sup>3</sup> Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

## **Application**

Death threats may lead to fear and depression.

Does Gods have a new solution to the depressed soul :

- geographically removed
- overwhelmed by trials
- struggling with the question :has God forgotten me
- facing death threats

What is heavens answer?

The same answer mentioned in vs 5

## **9. Heavens repeated answer Vs 11**

### **Psalm 42:11 ESV**

<sup>11</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

The repetition emphasizes the main point, the main instruction of the Psalm.

Heavens answer remains the same

- questions your soul
- instruct your soul to hope in God

and soon you will praise God for his acts of salvation because He is present even within you.

God's solution to a depressed Elijah involved

- Rest, food 1 king 19:5-8
- He traveled then to MT Horeb and God questioned him,( like you would question your soul)
- Then God met Him and instructed him with Hope filled words.

**1 Kings 19:13-14 ESV**

<sup>13</sup> And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

He instructs Elijah to anoint King Hazael over Syria, Jehu over Israel, Elisha in his place ([1Kings 19:15-17](#))

But notice vs 18

### **1 Kings 19:18 ESV**

<sup>18</sup> Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

These are hope filled words

Your not alone Elijah, 7000 in Israel remain who have not become Baal worshippers.

## **What should you and I take away from this psalm**

1. there are many different cause for depression:
  - a. lack of fellowship with God and His word
  - b. Grief
  - c. Remembering the past happiness and comparing it with the present sadness
  - d. physical separation from your home
  - e. overwhelming trials
  - f. being oppressed by people
  - g. facing death threats

But the Biblical solution remains the same

1. Confront your heart, challenge its condition of despair and turmoil
2. Command it to hope in God

3. the reason given is that soon you will be praising Him for his deliverance by His divine presence within you.

(you have a doctor for your soul residing within you, His name is Jesus, and He is the source of true hope.)

## Conclusion

Heavens answer for 7 causes of soul depression

1. Thirsty soul (Facing isolation from God) vs 1-2
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