

## **“The Downcast Soul” (Psalm 42)(8.14.22)**

### **Psalm 42**

For the director of music. *A maskil* of the Sons of Korah.

<sup>1</sup> As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, O God.

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When can I go and meet with God?

<sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food

day and night,

while men say to me all day long,

“Where is your God?”

<sup>4</sup> These things I remember

as I pour out my soul:

how I used to go with the multitude,

leading the procession to the house of God,

with shouts of joy and thanksgiving

among the festive throng.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and<sup>6</sup> my God.

My soul is downcast within me;

therefore I will remember you

from the land of the Jordan,

the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

<sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep

in the roar of your waterfalls;

all your waves and breakers

have swept over me.

<sup>8</sup> By day the Lord directs his love,

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 must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?"

<sup>10</sup> My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
"Where is your God?"

<sup>11</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

Psalm 43 (NIV84)

<sup>1</sup> Vindicate me, O God,  
and plead my cause against an ungodly nation;  
rescue me from deceitful and wicked men.

<sup>2</sup> You are God my stronghold.  
Why have you rejected me?  
Why must I go about mourning,

oppressed by the enemy?

<sup>3</sup> Send forth your light and your truth,  
let them guide me;  
let them bring me to your holy mountain,  
to the place where you dwell.

<sup>4</sup> Then will I go to the altar of God,  
to God, my joy and my delight.  
I will praise you with the harp,  
O God, my God.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

**The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"The Downcast Soul"**

INTRODUCTION:

Do you ever have a conversation with yourself? Probably, we all do that because that is how we are constructed. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus and yet we still have elements of our old self, our fleshly self. There is that constant push and pull going on within. We play the what-if game. We play the why-me game. We play the oh-I-should-have-said-this-game.

We look back over our lives and we wonder what would have happened if we had made different choices. We remember the good times and we remember the bad times. We look forward and we make plans. We consider our circumstances and our opportunities. Maybe we think about success. Maybe we think about escape.

The downcast soul of these psalms is wrestling with the past, the present, and the future. He is in a deep dark place, completely overwhelmed. There is a tremendous thirst for God – there is a sense that somehow God has deserted him, or at least is now hidden from him. He is tormented by real enemies. His circumstances are washing over him in a powerful way. Think about one of those movie scenes where a person has fallen into a raging river and it is tumbling downstream.

There is a tremendous inward depth to this person's depression. Their bones suffer mortal

agony. In this song of depression, we hear the refrain three times: Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?

The subject of depression needs to be addressed in this day and age. I will not give you the gory statistics today, maybe in part 2 or part 3. The tragic suicide of one of Boy Scouts happened just a few weeks ago. In a conversation this week with one of the pickleball players, a woman said that she had just been to the funeral of a twenty-year-old the previous week. Another suicide.

Certainly, most people that cope with their depression do not take their own lives. At the same time, it can be a long-term and debilitating battle. Likely, every adult (and many children) have dealt with depression. What can this scripture teach us and how can it equip us for dealing with depression? We never want to get to the point where we are mortally immobilized.

Today, I will lay some groundwork to help us get our footing. We need to have a biblical understanding of what makes a human being. We need to have an understanding of the worlds in which we live. Yes, I said worlds, plural. And, we will begin to look at the reasons for depression.

**BODY:**

Let me just address one bible study issue. In many Hebrew texts, Psalm 42 and 43 are not separated. They are one psalm, or one song. You will notice that while Psalm 42 has a heading, Psalm 43 does not. They also deal with the exact same subject matter. This is further proved by the refrain that appears twice in Psalm 42 and closes Psalm 43:

Why are you downcast, O my soul?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

The downcast soul laments the situation even as he knows the solution.

Seven times in this song, the author refers to his soul. His soul pants for God. His soul thirsts for the living God. He pours out his soul. And four times he speaks about how dejected is his soul. Remember the story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus on that first Easter afternoon. Luke tells us that their faces were downcast because Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified. But here, our downcast soul feels the pain way down in their inner being – in their soul.

What is a human soul? One reference says this: "The soul is the life-force of the person and often refers to the whole being. It needs to be sustained in order for life to thrive, and it is the seat of desires, emotions, and the will. The soul can be in intimate relationship with God or be under God's judgment."

Psalm 62:1 (NIV84) My soul finds rest in God alone;

my salvation comes from him.

Jesus warned in Matthew 10:28 (NIV84)

**"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."**

I don't often give you the original languages of the Bible, but it will become obvious why I am doing it now. The Greek word for the inner self, life, and person is "psyche." Of course, this is the root word in English of all things related to psychology.

Another reference says, "In a narrower sense the soul denotes man in his varied emotions and inner powers. For instance, man is called to love God with all his heart and soul. The soul comes close to what today would be called the self, one's person, personality, or ego."



How does the human spirit relate to our soul?  
What is a human spirit? From the same reference that defined soul: "Spirit refers to a living "intangible essence" with rational, emotional, and volitional attributes. The Bible primarily uses the concept of spirit for the non-material living essence of human beings (soul, spirit, inner life) and for the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God"

Wait a second, that is a little confusing because it sounds like there is a lot of overlap between the soul and the spirit. Yes, you are correct. In fact, I compared The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary definitions of soul and spirit and found there to be a very strong connection too.

In Mary's Magnificat, she considers them in parallel: Luke 1:46–47 (NIV84)

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

The Lexham Theological Wordbook explains:  
"Theologians debate whether the Bible presents human nature as containing three major components—body, soul, and spirit—or only two. Advocates of the bipartite view argue on theological grounds that soul and spirit cannot be

clearly distinguished. From this perspective, the Greek terms ψυχή (*psychē*; "soul") and πνεῦμα (*pneuma*; "spirit") belong to the same semantic field."

But then we have at least two scriptures that argue for human nature having three components:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV84)

<sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV84)

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

You might say that man has a spirit but he is a soul. That doesn't seem completely adequate for me. "Usually spirit indicates the vitalizing, energizing, empowering agent." And, we know that without the spirit, the life-breath of God, our mortal bodies die. Also recall Jesus' words in John 3:6 (NIV84) "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

Why have I spent so much time developing these ideas of soul and spirit? Because we must understand what and who we are, according to the scriptures. This will equip us to face life – like our downcast soul who is wrestling within himself in our scripture. Through this sermon series, I will also develop the idea that this knowledge is indispensable for dealing with depression, anxiety, and spiritual warfare.

This discussion of our soul and spirit directs us towards some critical conclusions. There is another realm, it is the realm where souls and spirits dwell. Paul tells us that when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. This means there is an afterlife, which is a huge deal that we take for granted. Oh yeah, I believe there is a heaven and a hell; I believe in eternity. Do we really? If these things are true, we should be earnestly evangelizing to communicate God's love and wrath.

Having established that we are more than our bodies, what are the implications? Our bodies can get worn down and tired. After prolonged stress, we are subject to sickness and injury. There is disease. Our bodies need proper rest, exercise and nutrition. My friends, all those things apply equally to our soul and spirit. We must be intentional about maintaining our spiritual health – to eat

properly – our daily bread (manna from heaven) – and drink from that rock in the wilderness, the Lord Jesus. And, we must exercise our spirit through prayer, worship, meditation on God’s word, and acts of mercy.

1 Corinthians 2:10–16 (NIV84)

<sup>10</sup> but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.<sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man **except the man’s spirit within him**? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.<sup>12</sup> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.<sup>13</sup> This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, **expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words**.<sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.<sup>15</sup> **The spiritual man** makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment:

<sup>16</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.

Our downcast soul did not have the blessing of Christ in the way that we do. Imagine the implications of you and I actually embracing this promise of God...

CONCLUSION:

One way we satisfy our thirst for God is through Holy Communion. It is a means of grace, maybe the most significant means of grace. It is a channel through which the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are children of the Living God.

In the liturgy of Holy Communion, we establish our need for God's love and forgiveness. We remember what our Savior has already done for us. And, we celebrate the hope of Jesus return.

There is a hymn, "Deeper and Deeper," by pastor Oswald J. Smith. As you hear the lyrics, contrast it with the Downcast Soul of Psalms 42 & 43:

Into the heart of Jesus deeper and deeper I go,  
seeking to know the reason why He should love me  
so—Why He should stoop to lift me up from the  
miry clay, **saving my soul**, making me whole, tho  
I had wandered away.

Into the joy of Jesus deeper and deeper I go,  
rising, **with soul enraptured**, far from the world

below; joy in the place of sorrow, peace in the midst of pain, Jesus will give, Jesus will give—He will uphold and sustain!

Into the love of Jesus deeper and deeper I go,  
praising the One who brought me out of my sin  
and woe; and thru eternal ages gratefully I shall  
sing,

“O how He loved! O how He loved! Jesus, my Lord  
and my King!”

Amen and amen. Let us pray.