

Place: Lurgan Baptist 28:8:2005

Reading: Psalm 42:1-11

DEFEATING DESPONDENCY

Buzz Aldrin went to the moon. He returned to earth and found he could not cope with life on earth. He then went into serious depression, and then he went into print, and on to talk shows to share his experience. Winston Churchill one of the greats of human history suffered terribly from depression. One night in an elevator Lady Astor said to him, “*you are drunk.*” He retorted, “*you are ugly but tomorrow I will be sober.*” On another occasion she said, “*If I were married to you I would give you arsenic (poison).*” He said, “*If I were married to you I would drink it.*” But Churchill suffered greatly from depression. He called it “*the black dog.*” What about the President Abraham Lincoln? He also suffered greatly from depression! Hans Christian Andersen lived in Copenhagen and wrote delightful books for children that are famous to this day, but he suffered all his life from depression. On one occasion he wrote in his journal, “*I have no future anymore, nothing to look forward to, no ideas I am washed out.*”

Depression is a drastic problem around the world. It is estimated that there are over 2,000 suicides a day worldwide. In the U.S.A. alone there are more than four million who require special help for depression every year. Depression is a serious problem in today's world.

It is costing employers millions of pounds because their employees either are not on the job, or if they are on the job, they are not productive. But what is depression? Someone defined it like this, “*depression is feeling extreme discouragement, dejection, despair, hopelessness, there's the desire to quit, you just can't make it.*” Have you ever been there? Are you there now? You see no-one is immune to depression, not even the Christian, indeed the best of God's servants have found themselves in what John Bunyan called, “*The slough of despond.*” Martin Luther, the founder of the Reformation was known to have deep fits of depression. Listen to his own words “*For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all of my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation.*”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was often in the “*pits.*” In the latter years of his life his office-bearers sent him for months at a time to the French Riviera to escape from the pressures and problems that complicated his life. During much of the time there Spurgeon was physically and emotionally in despair. He wrote a letter to his church after being gone several months. Part of it went like this, “*the furnace still glows around me. Since I last preached to you I have been brought very low. My flesh has been tortured with pain and my spirit has been prostrate with depression. Nights of weeping and days of watching have been mine, but I hope the cloud is passing. There are dungeons, beneath the castle of despair.*” Spurgeon often found himself in those dungeons. What about the psalmist? In Psalms 42 and 43, three times we find the Psalmist asking, “*Why are*

thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me ?” The Psalmist was “ *in the pits.*” You name it ... he was depressed, disappointed, discouraged, down, stressed out. He was feeling “ *mighty low.*” He was wondering if he would ever get out of the dark pit of depression. ***Is that where you are ? Has your world fallen apart ? Are you wondering where God is ?*** Now many scholars feel that these two Psalms were written by King Hezekiah. After David, he was the greatest king ever to sit upon the throne of Judah. He did more to bring the nation back to God than any other king. Two tremendously significant events took place in his life. The first was **an illness** which threatened to be **his last** and from which he recovered only **by a miracle of healing** sent by the direct intervention of God. (Is 38:1) The other was **an invasion** by the Assyrians which threatened to be Judah's **last** and from he was rescued only **by a miracle of help** sent by the direct intervention of God. (Is 37:36)

Now it seems that Psalm 42 may be connected with the first of these events and Psalm 43 with the second. Here then was Hezekiah facing serious illness and obvious invasion from the north and he was submerged in doubt.

“ *Why art thou Me ?*” (42:5) Now I want to talk to you this from these psalms about **Defeating Despondency**. I think we have here a hint as to,

(1) THE REASONS FOR DEPRESSION

The psalmist says, “ *Why art thou cast in me.*” (42:5) That phrase “ *cast down,*” can mean “ *in the*

dumps, sad, discouraged.” The Hebrew term for “ *disquieted,*” conveys the idea of an unpleasant sound, a commotion, or clamour. It refers to unpleasant music in the soul. Of course, the roots of depression may lie in many things. Marital breakdown, persistent anxiety, wayward children, business worries, financial concerns. The underlying cause may be mental, physical, emotional, financial, moral, spiritual or whatever. Hezekiah says, “ *Why ?*” “ *Why am I like this ? What is the reason for my depression ?*” Well, what was it that brought about this despondency in the psalmist ? Well, it may have been,

(a) PHYSICAL:

I did say that this psalm was connected with Hezekiah's healing. Indeed he refers in (42:11) to “ *the health of his countenance.*” This has been taken by some in an absolutely literal way as referring to his face, a face marred and disfigured by the disease which afflicted him. (2 Kings 20:7) Can you imagine the revulsion with which his servants attended him in the sick chamber ? Afraid that the disease which has gripped Hezekiah may grip them. *Can you imagine the disgust the king feels when he looks into the polished brass which serves him for a mirror and sees his face ?* He cannot bear to look upon himself. He knows that he is about to die about to be cut off, when he and he alone is the hope of his nation. He has been the most godly king in fourteen generations. Why this ? Do you know that depression is brought about sometimes by something physical ? Erratic blood pressure, abnormal blood

sugar, and other chemical imbalances can contribute to depression.

As I have said C.H. Spurgeon one of the truly great preachers of all time was subject to depression. The main explanation in his case was undoubtedly the fact that he suffered from a gouty condition which finally killed him. Doctors tell us that a tendency to acute depression is an unfailing accompaniment of the gout which he inherited from his family. Do you remember how depressed the prophet Elijah was after his battle on Mount Carmel ? He was exhausted physically and what he needed was some sleep, some good food, and a new vision of the greatness of God. Tenderly the Lord cared for Elijah, helped him rest and gain strength, and then the Lord re-commissioned him for service.

My are you having days of discouragement and despair because you've overworked, even in the service of the Lord ? It's when the mind is weary, the body tired, the nerves frayed that we're susceptible to depression ! There's an old Greek motto that says, “ *You will break the bow if you keep it always bent.* ” Do you need to “ *come apart and rest a while ?* ” (Mk 6:31) If you don't come apart you may come apart. (a)

(b) DIABOLICAL:

Here was godly King Hezekiah under the threat and intimidation of the vicious Assyrian army ! Now you think about Hezekiah's situation. His kingdom was about to totter, his throne was about to fall, his city was about to be destroyed, his God was about to be

dishonoured for behind the vicious Assyrians was all the power of Satan. *Could it be that this is one of the causes of your depression ? The Devil !* He is the accuser and the destroyer. He wants to discourage us and he will do all in his power to make us despair. He throws his monkey wrench into our works ! He knows from past experience what weapons to use and of his most effective is depression. The story is told that the devil was having an auction selling off some of his most effective tools. One of the tools was unbelief and it went for a great price. Another being sold at the auction was doubt but the tool that sold for most in the auction was depression. *Do you know why ?* Because this creeps in where doubt and unbelief don't. My has the devil being reminding you of your failures and past sins ? Has he been getting you to look at yourself so much so that you've forgot to look to Christ ? Is your depression the result of the attack of Satan ? (a) (b)

(c) SPIRITUAL:

Hezekiah was so wrapped up in himself that he had trouble seeing God. So often depression is selfish, when we focus on ourselves too much, when we begin to dwell on our problems, our needs, our wants, our desires. Do you know something ? There are fifty-one personal pronouns in these two psalms ? The pronoun “ *I,* ” is mentioned 14 times, “ *me,* ” 16 times, “ *my,* ” 21 times. On the other side, God is referred to only 20 times and “ *the Lord,* ” only once. The psalmist has an unhealthy fixation upon himself, his ego. “ *Me, my, mine.* ” He was taken up with himself that he could not see God. He is caught in the throes of seeing life as a

mirror instead of a window ! He needed to look through his circumstances and see God. Is this the cause of your depression ? Have you got your eyes off the Lord and on yourself ? Do you feel sorry for yourself ? Are you all wrapped up in your own problems and pains ?

My self-pity is one of the most dangerous attitudes you and I can ever cultivate. It poisons our system so that nothing looks right, everything that people say and do gets out of proportion. If you want to stay depressed then major on yourself. Examine yourself, think of yourself more than others. My what's the reason for your depression ? Is it Physical ? Is it Diabolical ? (Satanic) Is it Spiritual ? Have you taken your eyes off the Lord ? Is it Circumstantial ? “ *Why art thou cast down in me ?*” (1)

(2) THE RESULTS OF DEPRESSION

What a picture of despair that's brought before us in this psalm. What an accurate description of a man looking downcast and dejected. Have a look at him for in looking at him you may be looking at yourself ! Look at him !

(a) *HIS FACE IS LIFELESS:*

Did you notice the difference between (42:5) and (42:11) Look at (42:11) Here the psalmist speaks of “ *My countenance.*” But in (42:5) he speaks of “ *His countenance,*” and he declares that the sight of Gods countenance is always helpful but in (42:11) he speaks

of “ *my countenance.*” In other words the man who is dejected and miserable who is unhappy and depressed always shows it in his face. You take, one glance at him and you see his condition. But says the psalmist when I really look at God, as I get better my face gets better also. “ *He is the health of my countenance.*” I lose that drawn, haggard, vexed, troubled, perplexed, introspective appearance and I begin to look composed and calm balanced and bright. You see, if we are depressed and unhappy whether we like it or not, we will show it on our face. Have you heard the expression, “ *If your happy then tell your face ?*” You see what you are is often written all over your face. If we're walking with the Lord then inevitably that will express itself in our countenance ! I'm not suggesting that we should all be going about with a false grin showing off our false teeth ! But I know this. That when Moses came down from the Mount after forty days and nights of fellowship with God, “ *the skin of his face shone.*” (Exod 34:30) But when you're in the darkness of depression your face is drawn, troubled, and vexed. Do you know what I'm talking about ? Is your outward countenance this revealing your inward condition ?

(b) *HIS FOOD IS TASTELESS:*

How do you fancy having tears for your Sunday lunch ? Well, that's what the psalmist had. He says (42:3) “ *My tears have been my meat day and night,*” He is weeping and tearful. Everything seems to be on top of him. He cannot control his feelings. His depression is so acute that its affecting his very appetite. Are we not

familiar with this phenomenon ? If you are worried, anxious, depressed you lose your appetite, you don't want food ! Are you beginning to see the picture the psalmist is painting ? Are you able to identify with it ?

(c) HIS FUTURE IS HOPELESS:

All he knows about is *floods of tears*, (42:3) *floods of turmoil*, (42:7) *floods of testing* (42:10) as the enemy rears his head and asks, “ *Where is thy God ?*” My is this what Satan has been whispering in your ear ? “ *Where is your God ? Why does He allow you to suffer like this ? Why doesn't He come to your rescue ? Doesn't He care ? Is He unable to do it ? How will you survive in the future ?*” My is this what you have been asking yourself ? “ *Where is God ? Where is God in the midst of my pain ? Where is God in the midst of my heartache ? In the midst of my mental stress ? In the midst of my illness ? Where is God in the midst of my broken relationship ? Where is God when my loved one is taken from me ? When my husband leaves ? When my business fails ? When my health gives in ? When my roof caves in ?*” Well, what can we do on the midst of despair and depression ? When the unsaved comes to despair do you know what they to do ? They turn to drugs, alcohol, recreation, or sex ! But think of,

(3) THE RESOURCES IN DEPRESSION

Of the Christian. For one thing, we can,

(a) TALK TO THE LORD:

This is what the Psalmist did in Psalm 42 and 43. He

told the Lord how much he hurt, how disappointed he was in the way things were going. He honestly unburdened his feelings and complaints. Look at what he says in (42:6) He recalled when he went into the house of God. He reminisced about what God had done in his life in the past. He laid his troubles at the Lords feet. Do your troubles, discouragement, depression lead you to God ? Do they cause you to fall on your knees and come to God ? Which God ? The *Living God*, (42:2) the *Helping God*, (42:5) the *Delivering God* (42:6) the *Commanding God* (42:8) *My God* (42:11)

**“ *Have we trials and temptations ?
Is there trouble anywhere ?
We should be discouraged:
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*”**

Do you know something ? God never gets *discouraged* !
(Is 42:4) says, “ *He shall not fail nor be discouraged.*”
God will never get discouraged therefore go to someone who never gets discouraged and get some encouragement from Him. Is this what you do when you're in “ *the slough of despond* ?” Do you go into His presence fall at His feet and tell Him all about it ? Do you talk to the Lord ? And then do you,

(b) TRUST IN THE LORD:

“ *Why art thou cast hope thou in God.*” (42:5)
“ Put your whole confidence in the Lord.” You see,

(1) WITH GOD THERE IS HOPE:

Look if you will at (42:5) And the answer to depression is hope and our hope is not in ourselves but in God. My downcast in heart with overcast skies the King, Hezekiah was going about like one in mourning. (42:9) But notice the “ *yet,*” in (42:8) you see there is hope that God will penetrate the gloom, lift the burden, and still the storm ! Just as with Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, so in the darkest hour God can prove His power. My with God there is always a silver lining. Are your circumstances such this that you've lost hope ? “ *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?*” What is it that is bothering you ? Are you down in the dumps because your children are wayward ? You cannot meet this months payments on the house ? You've been passed over for promotion at work ? Your loved ones are unsaved ? My hope in God for God cannot let you down. He has said, “ *All things work together for good purpose.*” (Rom 8:28) (1)

(2) WITH GOD THERE IS HELP:

Look at (42:5) “ *The help of His countenance,*” God is not sending help, He is the help ! “ *God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble.*” (Ps 46:1) God is our refuge He hides us, God is our strength He helps us. My does life seem to be collapsing around you ? Is the storm blowing ? Is the battle raging ? Well, don't forget that God hides you so that he can help you. When we go to Him for refuge He strengthens us. He enables us to return and face those depressions, those discouragements, changes ! (1) (2)

(3) WITH GOD THERE IS HEALTH:

“ *The health of my countenance.*” (42:11) Hezekiah's illness had brought him to the very door's of death. But God had healed him. God was the health of his countenance. God had delivered Him. He looked in the mirror. His face was fair and fresh. God had worked a miracle ! What does your face reveal this ? Is it tearful, downcast, pained ? My God can bring a change to your face because He can bring a change to your heart ! William Cowper was the man who wrote some of our great hymns. At the age of 32 he passed through a great crisis in his life. One night he hired a man to drive him to the River Ouse so that he could finish it all off. A dense fog came down that night and the coachman got completely lost. William Cowper groped his way to a door and he discovered that he was standing at his own doorstep ! Frustrated and angry at this he went into the home and he tied a rope to the ceiling, and he tried to hang himself. He was found unconscious but alive on the floor. The next morning he fell on a knife, only for the blade of that knife to break, and his life was spared again. The next morning in an unusual fit of joy that just seemed to come upon him he lifted the Word of God from a shelf and he opened it at the epistle to the Romans and whatever he read, he felt great strength and immediate relief and he penned these words as he thought of the experiences through which he had passed.

***“ God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform***

*He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain
God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain.”*

My your Father loves you and He will see you
through ! Trust Him !