

Preach the Gospel to Yourself, Part One

When Your Soul is Downcast

Psalms 42-43

David Sunday September 2, 2018



We've come to the month of September which means we're going into my favorite time of the year. Fall is just around the corner and this is going to be a special September for us. At the end of this month, September 28-30, we're hosting a "Refresh and Reset" conference here with David and Shona Murray. It's about finding hope in the midst of anxiety, burn-out and depression. It's for all of us. As Charles Spurgeon said, "The road to sorrow has been well-trodden. It is the regular sheep track to heaven, and all the flock of God have had to pass along it."

It's the truth. So if you don't think you need help with anxiety, burn-out or depression right now, maybe someday you will. And if you're thinking, "Well, this isn't really a struggle for me personally," I'm sure there's someone in your life for whom this is a struggle—and this conference is designed to equip and help us encourage one another.

As we prepare for "Refresh and Reset" this month, I want to preach four sermons on preaching the gospel to yourself. Thanks to Mary Rose for this great graphic, the sticky note reminder. I'm hoping these messages will be a reminder and a faith-strengthening exercise for us. We're going to read Psalms 42 and 43. I think as you hear these two psalms, you'll recognize that originally they were very likely one psalm because there's a unity in them.

Let's worship God together as we read His holy, inerrant and all-sufficient Word. This is Psalm 42, with the subtitle, "To choirmaster, a Maskil," which means a psalm intended to instruct or to bring wisdom. "A Maskil of the Sons of Korah," the worship leaders of Israel. Listen to God's Word.

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?" ⁴ 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.

⁵ *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 salvation⁶ 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.⁷ Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.⁸ By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.⁹ I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, “Where is your God?”

¹¹ *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.*

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!² For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

³ *Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.*

⁵ *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.*

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You for giving us access into Your presence through the death and resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus, Who taught us that in this world we will have tribulation. But He said, “Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.” Father, we believe in the triumph of Your Son, yet the trials of this world and of our own hearts can at times overwhelm us. We're not always of good cheer. Sometimes we're downcast.

So we thank You for giving us psalms like these to instruct us and lead us in wisdom. We pray that through the help of Your Spirit, You would forge more deeply into us the kind of faith this psalmist had, so that it would be true of us that though we are afflicted in every way, we would not be crushed. Though we are perplexed, we would not be driven to despair. Though we are persecuted, we would remember that we are never forsaken. And though we are struck down, we would not be destroyed.

When Satan tempts us to despair, as he may be doing this very moment in some hearts in this room, O Lord, lift our gaze upward to see Him there Who made an end to all our sin and Who purchased for us everlasting joy in Your presence. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

True or false? God will never give you more than you can handle. I would put that right up there with platitudes like "God helps those who help themselves." It's right up there among the unhelpful things Christians say. When you tell someone who's suffering, "God will never give you more than you can handle," it can feel like you're saying to the person, "If only you were stronger, this wouldn't be so difficult for you. Buck up."

Or if you think it's true that God will never give you any more than you can handle, it might reveal that you actually believe the Christian life is something you can handle on your own. The truth is God will never give us more than He can handle, but the Lord does put His children in situations that are far greater than we can handle on our own. Just look at verse seven.

The man who wrote this psalm says, "*All your breakers and your waves have gone over me.*" Imagine you're stepping into the ocean. A few waves come and hit you in the ankles, then in the knees, so you might lose your balance for a little bit. But you keep on walking, moving further out into the ocean. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a huge wave comes and you can no longer feel the bottom. You're swirling around in the breakers and you're completely submerged and disoriented. You cannot handle this. You cannot rescue yourself.

Some trials are like that. It's like you've been taken under by the current, you're swirling around and you can't find your way up for air. So we're not talking about your garden variety trials here. We're not talking about a flat tire or a fender bender or a bad grade at work or a friend who moves to another city or the Chicago Bears losing. We're not talking about those kinds of trials.

We're talking about the kind of trials that totally submerge you under the water. If you're a Christian who doesn't want to stay in the shallows, if you're someone who wants to go deep with God—you don't want to just be a shallow, superficial believer all your life—count on it. At some time in your life, the waves and the billows are going to crash over you, and you won't be able to outjump them. At that moment, you will have to bank everything you have on what you profess to believe about God. Dane Ortlund is someone who knows what he's talking about. He's gone through some of this recently and describes it like this:

At that moment of life meltdown, we are forced into one of two positions—either cynicism and coldness of heart, or true depth with God. A spouse betrays. A habitual sin, left unchecked, blows up in your face. We are publicly shamed in some way that will haunt us as

long as we live. Identity theft empties all our accounts. Our good name is stolen. We hear words from the lips of a son or a daughter that had only been the stuff of nightmares. A malignant, inoperable tumor. Abuse of a loved one; the kind of abuse that makes us physically nauseous to think about. Sustained, inexplicable depression. Profound disillusionment in some way. Life goes into meltdown.

When that moment comes looking for us, sent by the hand of a gentle Father, remember that. We will either believe that what we said we believe has just been disproven, or we will believe that what we said we believe will sustain us. We must bank on our creed or let our hearts cool and harden. We cannot go on as before.

What does it look like to trust God when all His breakers and all His waves have gone over us? Well friends, trusting God is not equal to the absence of anxiety. Trusting God equals casting your anxiety on Him again and again (1 Peter 5:6-10). Trusting God doesn't mean you'll never experience negative emotions. Trusting God means you keep coming to Him with your anguish. Even when nothing seems to be getting any better, you keep coming. You keep bringing Him your anguished soul. Trusting God means you keep on fighting for hope even when the darkness does not lift. You keep preaching the good news to yourself even when the bad news is shouting louder in your ears. Trusting God is not the absence of anxiety—it's casting your anxiety on Him again and again.

We have an example of such a man in this psalm. He describes himself in three refrains as one who is downcast in soul. He means by that that he is deeply discouraged. He's experiencing what saints of old have called spiritual depression. "And," he says, "in addition to my soul being downcast, my soul is in turmoil within me." That means that along with spiritual depression, he's battling severe anxiety. But he's doing it as a man of faith. He's showing us here how to be miserable in a godly sort of way. You need to learn this, because life's not always going to be happy, happy, happy. There's a way to be miserable in a godly way. There's a way to trust God when you're spiritually depressed and anxious.

Notice that at the end of Psalm 43, outwardly the circumstances of the psalmist have not really changed. Things are still pretty rough. But he's gone deep with God and his hope in God is triumphing over despair.

That's how I want to be. I want this man to train me—to train us this morning. Let him be your personal trainer and he's going to show you three movements your downcast soul needs to master in order to triumph over despair.

Movement #1 – Summon your soul to produce reasons why you are downcast.

If you want your faith to prevail over despondency and you want hope to triumph over despair, you can't be passive about it. You've got to fight. You've got to engage in the struggle. I want to be clear from the outset that not all the reasons for depression and anxiety are spiritual. There are physiological reasons too. There is such a thing as clinical depression. There are people who suffer from severe anxiety and panic and challenges. More people in the church suffer in these ways than care to admit it.

One of the reasons we often don't admit it in the church is we are afraid we will be shamed by people if we do. So listen, friends. You can be spiritually healthy and suffer with real mental health challenges; for this the treatment is not only spiritual. Some of us will need to see a wise and competent doctor. Some of us will need medication. Most of us, at some point in life, are going to need counseling with someone who speaks in and helps us sort through the struggle.

If you are one of these people, please do not feel ashamed. If you're not one of those people, please don't shame those whose trials are different than yours. Don't make jokes or thoughtless comments that imply, "No one who trusts in God should ever be on an anti-depressant or see a counselor." No. God in His common grace has provided a variety of means of healing, so the wise and the humble acknowledge their weakness and don't resist the help God has generously provided. So there are physiological reasons.

There's also a spiritual battle to be fought and the psalmist shows us how. It starts with interrogating your soul. You don't just sit back and let your feelings rule you. You interrogate your feelings and thoughts. You start asking yourself questions. Why? That word "why" is repeated nine times in this psalm. "Why are you so downcast?"

Just think about waking up in the morning (not my favorite thing to do). The alarm goes off on your phone and what goes through your mind in those first waking moments? "Oh, great. Another impossible day ahead. What's my boss going to demand of me today? I hate my job. This house is such a mess. Why didn't the kids mow the lawn? Why didn't my friend respond to my text? How come only ten people liked my Instagram post? I can't believe what that person said to me yesterday. Boy, I'm going to set them straight. I have so much to study before my final—I'm never going to get it all done. Why am I so tired? I need coffee right now!"

All of that in the first 60 seconds of consciousness. You start the day on a negative note, grumbling, worrying, ruminating. You're casting your soul into a downward spiral. Martyn Lloyd-

Jones wrote a wonderful book called Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure. It's a marvelous book and I highly recommend it. He famously diagnosed the problem like this: "Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?"

Wait a minute. I thought people who talked to themselves were in trouble. No. Who talks to you more than anyone else in your life? You do. You talk to yourself more than anyone else talks to you. So Lloyd-Jones says the main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand. You have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to yourself, "Why, soul, are you cast down? What business have you to be disquieted within me?" Instead of letting anxious worry and discouraging thoughts control your mind, identify them, sequester them, interrogate them. As you do that, you may discover that there are some very serious reasons why you are feeling so downcast.

Let's just look at a few of the reasons the psalmist describes regarding why he is downcast. First, in verse one, "*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.*" Don't think here of a peaceful scene of a deer in the woods drinking by a cool, refreshing stream, kind of like you'd find embroidered on a pillow on your Grandma's couch. It's not that kind of idyllic scene.

Think of a drought in the desert and an emaciated animal. You can see the ribs pressing against the flesh, lungs heaving, desperate for water, dying of thirst. "That's what my soul feels like," says the psalmist. "I'm in a spiritual drought. I'm panting for the presence of God in my life; I'm feeling cut off."

Verse two: "*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*" Physically, he's far off from the temple in Jerusalem and that distance is made all the more painful by the remembrance of days gone by when he had led God's people in worship on festive days, praising God in His house. But now he feels put on the shelf. Now there aren't any spiritual resources available to nourish him. Now there aren't any friends around to fellowship with him and spur him on. He's all alone.

Being cut off from the worship of the temple, he's feeling isolated. Look at verse six: "*My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.*" We don't know exactly where hill Mount Mizar is, but it means "little hill." The point is, he's far, far away in the north; far from where he had experienced the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem.

Friends, there's an aspect of this reality that's still true in the lives of Christians today. Through Jesus, it's true that we do have access into the presence of God all the time (1 Peter 2:5).

But there's another side to this. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that as long as we're in these bodies, we are away from the Lord. Believers, we know this. We are longing to see Jesus face to face, aren't we?

Jesus told us He will satisfy our spiritual thirst. He said in John 7:37-38, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." This is the gift of His Holy Spirit, Who satisfies our thirst. But the Spirit satisfies our thirst in such a way that He makes us thirsty for more. We long to see Jesus face to face. Right now we're away from the Lord while we're present in these bodies.

There are times when the waves and billows knock us down, when the worries and fears engulf us. We feel so battered and beaten down, we start to imagine we've lost our connection with God. Our souls become downcast, like where this psalmist was. He lost his appetite. In verse three, while he thirsted for the living God, the only water he could drink was the salt water of his own tears: "*My tears have been my food day and night.*"

Anyone ever been there? So cast down, you're at the verge of tears all the time—and you don't even know why sometimes. Charles Spurgeon, one of our great heroes, knew this. Throughout his life he suffered bouts of severe depression. When he was 24, in the year 1858, he wrote of one of his battles like this: "My spirits were sunk so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, yet I knew not what I wept for. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more. But the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways and die over and over again each hour." That's what the psalmist is going through. He's sensing the absence of God to comfort him.

At the same time, he's experiencing the presence of people who mock him. Look at verse three and picture him in his misery. People are coming up to him all day long, taunting him, saying, "Where is your God?" They see the trouble that's on him and think, "God must be against him," just like they did with Jesus on the cross. "Where is your God? What's He doing for you now? He's left you, hasn't He? He's forgotten you—can't you see? What good is your faith now?"

They're taunting him. They're playing with his mind. They're getting under his skin, and they're tormenting him—and he's starting to believe them. Look at verse nine. "*I say to God, my rock: 'Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?'*" It's so painful, he says, it's like "a deadly wound in my bones." Anyone ever had a wound in your bones? That's what it feels like for the godly soul when God seems absent and the mockers are very present, saying to you all day long, "Where is your God?"

John Stott summarizes it like this: "This combination of circumstances has brought the psalmist to depression, even despair. People ridicule him for his faith in the living God, while the living God Whom they mock seems indifferent and far away." Friends, I am so grateful for the

honesty of the Bible. I'm so glad that this isn't just one piece of Scripture, but there are many places in Scripture that talk like this. This is an important thing to understand about life in a fallen world: it can get bleak and believers suffer spiritual depression at times.

Think about it. Do you ever feel like God has abandoned you? Do you ever wonder if He's forgotten you? Have you ever said, "God, why have You rejected me?" Maybe you're an elder in the church and you think, "I could never admit that. Everyone expects me to be a leader." Here's a spiritual leader telling us what's going on inside him. Doesn't it help to know you're not alone, that godly men of great faith have experienced similar trials?

Think of Jesus. Listen to Him in John 12:27. He's entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt in the final week of His life. What does He say? "*Now is my soul troubled.*" Then in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read in Mark 14:33, "*Jesus began to be greatly distressed and troubled, and he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.'*" It sounds like Jesus has prayed Psalm 42 and 43. It sounds like He knows these words. And on the cross, as Jesus died to satisfy the wrath of God against all our sins, what do we hear? We hear Him crying with a loud voice the dreadful shriek of the damned: "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

That's Jesus. So know when your soul is downcast, you are not alone. You have a Savior Who has not only died for your sins, but Who also has born your griefs and carried your sorrows. For whatever reason you may be downcast, Jesus has infinitely more reasons, yet He never stopped trusting His Father.

So when you're downcast, it's okay to ask questions. It's better to be honest than to be fake. It's better to say, "My faith is in the gutter right now," than to say, "I'm fine." When you ask questions like, "God, why have You forgotten me?" be sure that's just your starting point, not your conclusion. You have to take your reasons for being downcast and challenge them. Cross examine them. Put them up against the truth.

Movement #2 – Cross examine despair's reasons with the gospel's truth.

This is the second movement the spiritual trainer wants to teach us today: As we fight this good fight of faith against the giant despair, cross examine despair's reasons with the gospel's truth. You've heard Proverbs 18:17: "*The one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines it.*"

You know what that's like. Someone talks to you and makes a huge case about something, and you're totally persuaded. Then a counterpoint comes along and you realize, "Wait a minute. Who's right now? There are two sides to this story." Here's the deal, friends. Despair can make a

very convincing case, as long as the gospel stays out of the conversation. But when the gospel comes in the room and cross examines the case of despair, despair starts to wither away in shame. It runs away like a dog with its tail between its legs.

So cross examine despair's reasons with the gospel's truth. Start with the truth you've known in the past. Look at verse five: "*I shall again praise him,*" which mean he's praised Him in the past. You're downcast now. You're struggling to lift the voice of praise. You feel as if God has forgotten you. Your enemies are taunting you. The giant despair is getting right up in your face and his breath stinks. You can't stand him talking to you.

Remember. Remember when you've praised God in the past. Can you recall, as your soul runs dry, the days of praise within God's house? That's what the psalmist does. Do you remember, friend, the times when God's gospel was so clear, His people were so near, His sacraments were so dear to you? Do you remember? That's what the psalmist is doing in verses four and six. He's remembering. he remembrance brings sorrow, because it's not that way for him now. But the remembrance also kindles hope, because the God Who seems absent right now was so present before. He can remember those things.

Friends, as I think about this, I hope you realize how vital it is to gather with God's people, Lord's day after Lord's day, Sunday after Sunday. One of the first things that's going to happen to you if your soul has gotten downcast is you're going to think, "I need a break. I need to just back away. I need to just stay away from church for a little while. I need to be staying away from Christian friends." Satan loves to isolate—and that's a killer. Don't neglect to gather together with God's people in worship. Realize that your presence here today is not just for today—it's for five years from now. It's for 20 years from now. It's for a time when you may find yourself alone in a cancer ward or isolated from Christian fellowship in a desolate place. Or in prison for your faith, in terrible turmoil within your soul.

Your presence here today is for the day when you will go home at night, having just buried your spouse and you'll be all alone in the house. You cultivate the means of grace today for sustenance you may need down the road. There are seeds that are being planted in your heart today that may not blossom into full fruit until many days from now. But your attendance in worship, your participation in baptism, the Lord's Supper, confession, praise, thanksgiving, singing, intercession and hearing the preaching of God's Word—it's all being woven together by sovereign grace.

Through all these ordinary means of grace, God is weaving a tapestry of remembrance to sustain you in days to come, when your soul may be famished, when you may feel lost and alone. God will remind you then of something you heard many years before. He will bring to your

remembrance a song you have long since forgotten, a person who taught you the Word of God, a face whose radiance in worship always inspired you, a faithful follower of Jesus who now has gone before you into His glorious presence.

God will take sermons you've heard and bear fruit from them in your life decades from now. You may not recall the exact content, but the good seed of God's Word is being planted in the soil of your heart and it will bear fruit in its season—just when you need it. That's why we meditate on the teachings of God in Scripture day and night. That's why we gather in the house of God with the people of God, week by week. We don't just do it for the immediate benefit, friends. We take the long view. We cultivate these rhythms of grace and practice these disciplines of worship so that when the years of drought come, we will remember the days of praise within God's house—and the very remembrance will sustain us.

So never wake up on Sunday morning and play the “Do I feel like going to church today?” roulette. And don't leave the assembly of God's people today being overly critical or introspective about, “What did I get out of church today?” It's not just for today, friends. Trust that God is weaving a tapestry of sanctified memories that will be there to prompt you, to protect you and to preserve you in your faith in days of trouble down the road.

The truth you're learning today will become the truth you've known in the past on the day when despair threatens to swallow you alive. And despair won't win, because the truth of the past will not let you deny the truth that's still true in the present. Let's think a bit more about the truth that's still in the present. The psalmist is downcast—but notice, he hasn't lost his faith. “God is still my salvation,” he says. “He is still my God.” He says it over and over again. “My salvation”—in verse five—is literally, “I praise God for the salvation of His face.” It's like he's saying, “Just to have God look on me, just to have His personal presence with me—that's salvation.” Then in verse 11 he calls God “the salvation of my face.” It's like he's saying, “As God looks on me, my countenance starts to change.”

So, “God is still God, He's still my salvation,” and he acknowledges in verse seven another truth: God is sovereign. How do you see His sovereignty in verse seven? Because he calls the storms of life, “Your waves...Your breakers.” As Alec Patier puts it, “Satan's breakers are Yahweh's waves.” God is sovereign over these trials.

There's another truth that remains that we find right at the heart of this psalm. How many verses there are in Psalms 42 and 43? Eleven plus five equals 16. So where would you find the heart of the psalm, the exact middle of the psalm? Verse eight is the heart of these two psalms. Remember, his soul is downcast, but look at what he says at the heart of the psalm: “*By day the*

Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.”

Wow! This is the only time in all of these verses that the covenant name of Yahweh appears—the LORD. In the midst of all this trial and all this discouragement, he says, “But the LORD still commands His steadfast love. Every day His eternal, unshakeable, unfailing love is commanded to watch over me.” That’s what he’s saying.

So there are two truths this psalmist affirms in the midst of his trouble. Number one, God is in control of all your trials. They’re His breakers. They’re His waves. And number two, God loves you with all His heart. “Soul, God is sovereign. Soul, oh how He loves you with His covenant love—His faithful love.”

Isn’t it a mark of the Lord’s covenant grace in the lives of His children that even in the midst of our darkest trials, we have songs in the night? Have you ever experienced that? Out of nowhere, “Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth. Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.” Two-thirty in the morning, “Great is Your faithfulness. Morning by morning, new mercies I see.” The truth we’ve known in the past, the truth that remains in the present, stirs up our faith to believe that the truth will prevail in the future.

You shall again praise Him. No matter how deeply sinks your downcast soul, no matter how fierce the turmoil within, this too shall pass. It won’t last forever. Your trial will not last forever. There’s a day that’s drawing near when the darkness turns to light, the shadows will all disappear and your faith will turn to sight.

Then God will do what the psalmist prays for Psalm 43:3. He will send out His light and His truth. They will lead us to His holy hill and to His dwelling, there we will appear before God, our exceeding joy. He will be our God and we will be His people; we shall dwell with Him forevermore. As Isaiah 51:11 says, “*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*” That is the rock-solid truth that will prevail for every believer for all eternity.

Praise God! That’s what sustains us now. So the only question left is, “What are we going to do with all this?” We know these truths, but these truths are not necessarily going to turn your sorrow into joy immediately. These truths aren’t necessarily going to change your circumstances. You’re still going to get sick. You’re still going to have tribulation in this world. You’re still going to die. But these truths have the power to make you a person who is of good cheer, if you believe them.

Movement #3 – Command your soul to submit to the verdict of gospel truth.

Say to yourself, “Soul, despair has made its case and it’s been persuasive. But did you hear the gospel? Did you hear your Savior rise and come to your defense? Do you hear the good news that He speaks? Soul, who are you going to believe? Are you going to believe the dark giant of despair? Or are you going to believe your Redeemer, Who turns your weeping into dancing and removes your sackcloth and clothes you with joy? Soul, go with the gospel. Let it defend you from the giant despair.”

Bank all that you are and have on the promises of God in Jesus. You’re going to have to fight for this. You’re going to have to command your soul. Someone has said, “Despair can be a stronger temptation than lust.” Having battled both, I can tell you despair is stronger. And sometimes you have to take a stand against despair with all your might, saying, “You’re not going to pass through here. You’re not going to take over my soul, because the gospel speaks a better word.” Preach that gospel to yourself.

What does that look like? You say, “Soul, when did God choose you to become His child, the heir of His covenant mercies? When did that happen?” Your soul should then say, “He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world, that I should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined me to be adopted as His son” (Ephesians 1). Good. Then the next question, “Soul, at what cost did God purchase you to be His holy child?” Your soul responds, “God did not spare His Own Son, but gave Him up for us all. God made Jesus, Who knew no sin, to become sin for me, so that I might become the righteousness of God in Him” (Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Good reply!

“Soul, when was this transaction completed?” The answer? “When Jesus died on the cross in the third decade of the first century, He said, ‘It is finished.’ Then He was raised for my justification on the third day. That’s when my salvation took place” (John 19:30). Good!

“Soul, how do you know your sins are forgiven, your guilt is removed and your future in glory is secure?” Answer: “I know I’m a sinner, but God has made a covenant in the blood of His Son for all who trust in Him, saying, ‘I will be merciful toward your iniquities and I will remember your sins no more’” (Hebrews 8:12). Okay!

“Soul, if Jesus died and was raised and is now at the right hand of God interceding for you, is there anything that can separate you from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? I mean, what if they kill you all the day long? What if they regard you as a sheep to be slaughtered? Is there anything that can sever you from God’s love in Christ, Soul?” Answer: “No. In all these things we are more than conquerors

through Him Who loved us, for I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

What then shall I say to these things? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him.

I love how John Stott summarizes these psalms:

The cure for depression is neither to look in at our grief, nor back to our past, nor around at our problems, but away and up to the living God. He is our help and our God. If we trust Him now, we shall soon have cause to praise Him again. Thus faith rebukes despondency and hope triumphs over despair.

Isn't that good? O soul, are you weary and troubled, no light in your darkness you see? There's light for a look at your Savior, and life more abundant and free. His Word will not fail you, He promised. Believe Him, and all will be well. Then go to a world that is dying, His perfect salvation to tell.

Come, weary saints, though tired and weak
Hide away in the love of Jesus
Your strength will return by His quiet
streams
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Come, wandering souls, and find your home
Hide away in the love of Jesus
He offers the rest that you yearn to know
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Hear Him calling your name
See the depths of His love
In the wounds of His grace
Hide away

Come, guilty ones weighed down with sin
Hide away in the love of Jesus
The freedom you long for is found in Him
Hide away in the love of Jesus

Come, hopeless hearts, do not despair
Hide away in the love of Jesus
For ten thousand joys await you there
Hide away in the love of Jesus

(Hide Away In The Love Of Jesus,
Sovereign Grace Music)

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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