

Just Checking In
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Be Your Own Best Counsellor Psalm 42

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It is our prayer and hope that these devotionals encourage and strengthen you in your walk with Christ and your work for Christ. He alone is worthy!

Psalm 42 The Battle with Depression, Discouragement, and Despair

An old Jewish saying: "In the Torah, God talks to His people; in the Psalms, His people talk to God
The Psalms are filled with praise and grief, joy and anger, awe and sorrow, reminders and questions. The entire range of human emotions are seen in the Psalms. God included it all in His Word because God includes everything in our lives in His plan. He knows all, He knows us, He knows all about us better than we know ourselves.

Nobody struggles like a believer... except a believer! Not the atheist, not the humanist, Hindu or Buddhist...
We struggle uniquely and deeply because we know and believe in a personal God of sovereign power, infinite wisdom and endless love! And yet we live as broken people in the midst of a broken world, and our God has not removed this brokenness or its consequences in daily experience, yet. Therefore, we struggle. We struggle with our own sin, others sin, pain, grief, hurt, loss, loneliness, tragedy, illness, injury, stress, fear, guilt, confusion, doubt... and more. Many Psalms give vent to these feelings. Psalm 42, Psalm 43, Psalm 53, Psalm 55, and Psalm 73 are just some of those examples. The entire Book of Job, the very first book penned in holy Scripture, is a candid look at the struggles of the godliest man on earth. In it all, we see God's grace towards us in our struggles, carrying us along in our darkest hours.

Psalm 42 is the first of the second book of Psalms. The Psalms are arranged thematically in coordination with the themes of the first five books. You will see at the heading above Psalm 42, the words "Book Two". Psalms 42-72 are the second book of Psalms, and the theme of the second book of the Law, Exodus. These are Psalms whose writers are struggling like the Jews in Egypt, in Exodus, with oppression and sorrow, pain and grief, looking for deliverance and rescue. This Psalm is written with the exiles in Babylon in view, who longed to return to worship God in His temple in Jerusalem. Like in Egypt, they are mocked for their faith in God, and struggle with depression in the midst of hard, hard circumstances.

The one main take-away I want to impress on you is the Psalmist's determination to listen to the right voice, though surrounded by wrong voices, and to be his own best counsellor. The words "O my soul" ring out as he questions and counsels himself to remember and believe God's promises. We all talk to ourselves. But what are we telling ourselves? What are we telling ourselves over and over and over again? We must learn to speak truth to our own hearts! Be your own best counsellor!

Psalm 15:2 "he speaks the truth in his heart"

David has a wonderful, faithful, loyal, encouraging friend named Jonathan. When David was living in exile for 10 years among the Philistines, Jonathan, Saul's son made a secret trip to encourage David to remember God's promise. He strengthened David's grip on God!

1 Sam 23:15-18 So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest. **Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God.** And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that." So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

But then his best friend was killed and his other friends turned against him and a terrible tragedy came. SO what did David do? He became his own best counsellor!

1 Sam 30:1-6 Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way. So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. **Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**

This Psalm is a wonderful instruction on being our own best counsellor.

Psalm 42 To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.

His Deep Desire to Stand in the Presence of God – to know His presence & peace

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, **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?

Battle 1 His Deep Discouragement and Depression, Grief and Torment

3 **My tears** have been my food day and night, While **they continually say** to me, "Where is your God?"

Remember - His Recalling of Blessed Memories of the Past

4 **When I remember** these things, **I pour out my soul** within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

Reminder - His Self-Counsel

5 **Why** are you cast down, **O my soul?** And **why** are you disquieted within me? **Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.**

Battle 2 The Battle Returns with Discouragement and Depression – it's a war, not just one battle!

6 ¶ O my God, **my soul is cast down** within me;

Remember - His Recalling of Blessed Memories of the Past

6b **Therefore I will remember You** from the land of the Jordan, And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar. 7 Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me.

8 **The LORD will command His lovingkindness** in the daytime, And **in the night His song shall be with me-**
A prayer to **the God of my life.**

Battle 3 The Recurring Battle with Discouragement and Depression – it's a war, not just one battle!

9 **I will 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 **breaking of my bones,** My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Reminder - His Self-Counsel

11 **Why are you cast down, O my soul?** And **why** are you **disquieted within me?** **Hope in God;** For **I shall yet praise Him,** The help of my countenance and my God.

The Psalmist is struggling to overcome the voices of mockers and the downward pull of his own discouragement. He knows he shouldn't listen to those voices, but he can't seem to escape them. Those words have burned a scar on his heart that won't be extinguished easily. So he purposes to do three things over and over and over and over again...

#1 Be honest with God in prayer – he doesn't hide his hurt, sorrow, and pain, or pretend everything is fine when it isn't!
(My soul is cast down... cast down = depressed -

#2 Remember the blessings of God – remember His presence, His power, His love experienced in times past.

#3 Remind yourself that this pain is temporary and God will bring you through it and into everlasting joy in His time.
Counsel your own soul to place your confidence in God with anticipation of His goodness and grace.

Our struggle with pain is in our souls, our bodies, our minds, our relationships...

Souls - Emotional pain... downcast, disturbed...

Bodies - Physical pain... bones... hurt

Minds - Mental pain... mourning... oppressed... forgotten

Relationships - Relational pain... "they say"

Be Honest – pour out your soul to God in prayer – He knows!

Be Determined – put your hope in God... Don't give in... keep fighting for hope in Him

Be your own best counsellor! Speak truth in your own heart to your own continually!

I will not be passive in my pain,

I will not be derailed by my depression,

I will not be defeated by this battle.... I will put my hope in God!

Read this amazing hymn written by Horatio Spafford

It is well... with my soul

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.
 - o *Refrain:*
It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.
2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
3. My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
4. For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

5. But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!
6. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

These words were not written during the happiest period of Spafford's life. On the contrary, they came from a man who had suffered almost unimaginable personal tragedy.

Horatio G. Spafford and his wife, Anna, were pretty well-known in 1860's Chicago. And this was not just because of Horatio's legal career and business endeavors. The Spaffords were also prominent supporters and close friends of D.L. Moody, the famous preacher. In 1870, however, things started to go wrong. The Spaffords' only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. A year later, it was fire rather than fever that struck. Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1871, every one of these holdings was wiped out by the great Chicago Fire.

Aware of the toll that these disasters had taken on the family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England. And, not only did they need the rest -- DL Moody needed the help. He was traveling around Britain on one of his great evangelistic campaigns. Horatio and Anna planned to join Moody in late 1873. And so, the Spaffords traveled to New York in November, from where they were to catch the French steamer 'Ville de Havre' across the Atlantic. Yet just before they set sail, a last-minute business development forced Horatio to delay. Not wanting to ruin the family holiday, Spafford persuaded his family to go as planned. He would follow on later. With this decided, Anna and her four daughters sailed East to Europe while Spafford returned West to Chicago. Just nine days later, Spafford received a telegram from his wife in Wales. It read: "Saved alone."

On November 2nd 1873, the 'Ville de Havre' had collided with 'The Lochearn', an English vessel. It sank in only 12 minutes, claiming the lives of 226 people. Anna Spafford had stood bravely on the deck, with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging desperately to her. Her last memory had been of her baby being torn violently from her arms by the force of the waters. Anna was only saved from the fate of her daughters by a plank which floated beneath her unconscious body and propped her up. When the survivors of the wreck had been rescued, Mrs. Spafford's first reaction was one of complete despair. Then she heard a voice speak to her, "You were spared for a purpose." And she immediately recalled the words of a friend, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."

Upon hearing the terrible news, Horatio Spafford boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. Bertha Spafford (the fifth daughter of Horatio and Anna born later) explained that during her father's voyage, the captain of the ship had called him to the bridge. "A careful reckoning has been made", he said, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the de Havre was wrecked. The water is three miles deep." Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn.

The words which Spafford wrote that day come from 2 Kings 4:26. They echo the response of the Shunammite woman to the sudden death of her only child. Though we are told "her soul is vexed within her", she still maintains that "It is well." And Spafford's song reveals a man whose hope in the Lord is as unwavering as hers was. (Taken from Stories of Great Hymns)

Make It Personal:

1) Jesus said the thief (Satan) comes to steal (our joy) and kill (our hope) and destroy (our faith.) But Jesus came to give us life abundant. (John 10:10) What lying voices have been tormenting you recently, as they did the Psalmist... (If your God is real, where is He? If your God is good, why is this happening? If your God is in control, why does He let this happen?)

2) How do you confront these lies with truth and edifying self-counsel?

3) What are 10 verses you should memorize or re-memorize so you have the sword ready to be your own best counselor?

Further Study: Do a study on our Hope in God – Here are a few to start

Ps 131:3 Hope in the Lord Ps 146:5 Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord His God

Ps 147:11 The Lord takes pleasure in those who hope in Him

* Ps 119:81 I hope in Your word 114, 147

* Lam 3:24 The Lord is my inheritance says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him

* 1 Peter 1:21; 3:15; Romans 5:1-5 8:20 12:12 15:13 1 Thess 1:3

May the Lord encourage your heart as you look to Him who is your hope.

O Lord, you know the fight within,
My pain and sorrow deep,
The lies the tempter speaks to me
I lay them at your feet.

The fight is real, the fight is long,
But I shall not give up,
My hope shall ever be in you,
O Lord, refill my cup.

My soul, turn now and look upon
Your blessed Savior's face,
And put your hope in Him alone,
Receive sufficient grace.

These sorrows shall not stand for'ere
This darkness shall not last
For Christ shall lift my heart again
As all on Him I cast

Remember, you are very special to us and we thank God for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron & Val

Seeing the Invisible,
Embracing the Unapproachable,
Declaring the Unexplainable,
Changed by the Immutable,
Running after the Irresistible
With inexhaustible joy
In our inexpressible sorrows,
Spending our time on eternity,
Owning nothing yet possessing everything
That matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY