



The following sermon has been downloaded from the website of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia ([www.prc.org.au](http://www.prc.org.au)). If you have any questions of comments on the content of this sermon, please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@prc.org.au](mailto:info@prc.org.au).

## Sermon Meta Information

Title:	Broken Lives (Part 4)	Location:	Brisbane South
*URL:	<a href="http://www.prc.org.au/resources/trevor-marshall/html/tm-20070120.html">http://www.prc.org.au/resources/trevor-marshall/html/tm-20070120.html</a>	Date:	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2007
Preacher:	Trevor Marshall	Series Number:	4
Passage:	Psalm 42-43		
Sermon Series:	Broken Lives		

\* Note that other formats of this sermon (such as sermon audio) may be available at the URL shown above.

---

## Sermon

### **Introduction.**

- a. In **Psalms 42** and **43** David gives a glimpse into the working of his inner-most-being as he struggles to come out of a time of depression. The struggle that goes on in a depressed person is a huge and complicated struggle. David's soul and heart are out of step with each other. While his soul desires to fellowship with the Lord and to once more enjoy the reality of God's presence in his life, his heart is running with feelings of sorrow and pain caused by circumstances and the seemingly endless taunt of his enemies asking, 'Where is your God?' David's soul and mind are agreed that true hope is to be found in the Lord. Christian hope is the confident expectation that the Lord in his grace and mercy will take action and do what is good for his much loved children. David's soul and mind are striving for the same goal; that he would praise the Lord with all that is within him. David longs for his life to be a witness and encouragement to others.
- b. David's soul and mind have joined forces to fight against the out of control feelings of his heart. The soul and mind have been strengthened by remembering the LORD. David has remembered who the Lord is and his own experiences of God's presence and blessing. There can be no doubt that David turned to the word of God to strengthen his soul and mind through the internal ministry of the Holy Spirit. David by God's grace has begun to climb out of the spiral of despair and gloom. We know that due to the laws of gravity it is much easier to slide down a slippery slope than it is to climb up the same slope. The only way out is to walk with the Lord and depend on his strength to enable you to get your feet onto solid ground. Believers who are depressed need to burn the words of **Philippians 4:13** into their minds and hearts, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' This is the statement of absolute truth. The truth for every believer is they can do whatever the Lord requires them to do. As a believer you can never say to the Lord, 'I cannot do what you require me to do.' The believer at the bottom of the pit of despair cannot say, 'I can't get out of this.' With the strength of Christ Jesus and doing things God's way the believer can get out of the pit of despair. With the strength of Christ the believer can do everything God tells him to do. This truth greatly

strengthens and encourages the soul and the mind in the fight against the rebellious feelings of the heart.

- c. When the soul and the heart join forces to fight the lying feelings of the heart the real struggle begins. The struggle to get out of the pit of depression is a hard, long and complicated struggle. When we talk about getting out of the pit of despair we need to recognise that this is a figure of speech. The reality of overcoming depression is that of restoring a broken-life; your inner most being has become dysfunctional. David in ***Psalms 42*** and ***43*** gives us great insight into the process and progress of coming out of a state of depression. Those who are depressed are told what to expect as they struggle in the strength of the Lord to restore their broken lives.

### **1. The pattern of the struggle to recover from a broken life.**

- a. The struggle to recover from a broken-life vacillates between times of great encouragement and times of deep despair. It is a real roller-coaster ride because your fight is against your misguided and mischievous feelings. We need to understand that our *feelings* are a very important aspect of our lives. A person without feelings is a zombie. There are feelings that are good and glorifying to God and there are feelings that are inappropriate and dishonour God. Your feelings interact with all of life, your relationship with the Lord, family, friends, work colleges, neighbours and strangers. Your feelings are always interacting with your situation, circumstances and environment. When a person has a broken-life a large number of his feelings have formed habitual ways of responding to life around him. A habit is difficult to break because you do it without thinking, it is an automatic response. A bad habit needs to be dislodged and replaced with an appropriate response so that a new habit is formed. In ***Psalms 42*** and ***43*** David reveals that road to recovery is full of starts and falls, advances and retreats, promises and disappointments, failures and frustrations. The heart influenced by the legacy of the sinful nature will fight with all its might to keep its bad habits. David understood this pattern and so by God's grace, strength and mercy regularly takes stock of his life. His stocktaking agenda is given to us in ***Psalms 42:5, 11*** and ***43:5***, '*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.*' Between the stocktaking there are signs and times of encouragement and despair. It seems as if every time he takes a step forward he slips back two. Things seem to get better, then they get worse.
- b. It is important to fully identify the goals of the warring parties. The soul and mind have the goal of *praising God with all that is within*, while the inappropriate feelings of the heart have the goal of *being thoroughly self-centred and disappointed in the Lord*. The inappropriate feelings of the heart would have you convinced that God has treated you badly, neglected, forgotten and abandoned you. You need to be focussed on the goal that glorifies God. The deceitfulness of the heart is amazing and it will launch a major propaganda campaign to get you to abandon the high and lofty goal that the soul and the mind desire and have you settle for the goal of *feeling better*. Feeling better seems like a very attractive goal as it seems to provide a platform from which to reach out to other things. The heart will claim that when you feel better you will naturally turn to the Lord and rejoice in his presence. To the suggestion of this alternative goal say, '*It is written, the foolish man built his house upon the sand.*' Rather than listen to your heart ask *what does the Scripture say about such a goal?* Trying to build a platform for future action on *feeling better* is to build on sinking sand. The only platform to build on for future action is the Lord and his revealed will in the word. For the person with a broken life *feeling better* seems wonderful and full of promise therefore the temptation to settle for *feeling better* is great and many yield to it. David experienced all these things, but strengthened himself by being honest and frequently taking stock of his life. To climb out of the pit of despondency is hard, complex, slow and takes a great degree of effort. There is no elevator or escalator out of the pit; you have to walk out leaning and depending on the strength of the Lord.

### **2. The work of restoring hope in recovering from a broken life.**

- a. David in **Psalm 42:8** says, *'The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime and in the night His song shall be with me.'* Is David being arrogant and presumptuous when he says that the LORD will command his lovingkindness to help him? There is no arrogance or presumption in David as he is leaning on the promises of the Lord. Has the Lord not made wonderful promises to his covenant people? Are members of the covenant not right to expect the actions of God to be full of love, gentleness, kindness, goodness, mercy, and patience? The Lord will not deny his children what he has promised them. If you sought counsel from me in a time of trouble and temptation, and I told you as a believer that God will command his grace and mercy to help you, would you think I was being presumptuous? All I am doing is holding on to the promise of **Hebrews 4:16** which says, *'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'* The promises of God are given to help and encourage us and to assure us of God's great love for us. Believers have every right to expect the Lord to give them all he has promised.
- b. The word *command* is very forceful, particularly when it is God who gives the command. If God issues the command it will accomplish its purpose. For David's downcast soul the fact that the Lord will issue the command is very reassuring. It is important to grasp that David is using the promises of God to restore his hope. Christian hope is the confident expectation that the Lord in his grace and mercy will take action and do what is good for his much loved children. God had made a promise therefore David could have a confident expectation that the promise would be fulfilled. It is extremely encouraging to grasp God's commitment to you in the promises he made. David expects God to act in *lovingkindness* which means action clothed in love, compassion, grace, mercy, tenderness, kindness and helpfulness. This truth would be hugely encouraging to a person who has not known the Lord's presence or enjoyed fellowship with him for some time. To know that God's attitude towards you as one of his children with a broken-life is that of loving kindness is very comforting and assuring. The Holy Spirit uses the promises in the Word to strengthen our hope in God.
- c. David is confident that he can expect to see God act in lovingkindness in the day and during the night *His song shall be with me*. What does this mean? I did not find a commentary that gives a satisfactory explanation. Most commentators simply twist the text to make it David's song to the Lord. The text however clearly refers to God's song. John Calvin is helpful when he says, *David asks...why should I not expect that God will be merciful to me, so that in the day-time his loving-kindness may be manifested towards me, and by night upon my bed a song of joy be with me?* It is the song of God that enabled David to anticipate sleeping with a sense of peace and joy. I think Calvin is right but would add that it also refers to God's presence.
- d. You may have noticed that I did not quote **Psalm 42:8** fully. I left off the bit that says, *'a prayer to the God of my life.'* I did that to make it easier to follow the process David is passing through. His thoughts of God's *lovingkindness* and *song* urged him to seek the Lord in prayer. David's going to pray with the theme; *'God is the God of my life'* in his soul and mind. David's mind and soul have been forging ahead in putting things into perspective and have brought David back to the place where he sees that his life in every aspect is wrapped up in God. God gave him life, sustains his life, determines his life, rules his life, directs his life, and God is his life. These thoughts are vital as perhaps for the first time in a long while David's thoughts are not self-centred. The brokenness of his life is not overwhelming and consuming him as it was. This stirs up the desire of the soul and mind to go to prayer and fellowship with the Lord. David was going to prayer with an anticipation of delighting in fellowship with the Lord. David is greatly encouraged and by all accounts making good progress in his climb out of the pit of despair. What could be better than David going to prayer fully expecting to delight in the Lord? For a believer to go to prayer with such an expectation is wonderful.

### **3. The treachery of the heart in stopping recovery from a broken-life.**

- a. David goes to prayer thinking and declaring that God is his Rock. There are three thoughts connected to the concept of God being *my Rock*. (i) God is his anchor and solid ground while everything else in his life was like shifting sand. God provided him with security in the flood of troubles that engulfed his life. (ii) The second concept of God being *my Rock* is that of a refuge a place of shelter in a storm. This is the meaning of the hymn; *Rock of ages cleft for me*

*let me hide myself in thee.*' Only in Christ is there shelter from the wrath and judgement of God upon sin. David clearly needed a place of shelter and refuge as he was battered by the circumstances of life. (iii) The third concept linked to the phrase 'God my Rock' is that God does not change. God's attitude towards his people is always the same, it is full of grace and mercy. It is the fact that God does not change that enables the believer to restore his hope by leaning on the promises of God. For David this meant that the God who was with him when he faced Goliath has not changed, therefore he can face his enemies with great confidence in God. I believe that David had every one of these concepts in his mind when he came to the Lord in prayer. I am sure that his soul and mind were rejoicing in the Lord.

- b. Having started his prayer with the grand and lofty statement about God being his Rock we would have expected David to move on to praise God. Rather than giving praise, David lays a complaint before the Lord. Why is there this unexpected twist in David's prayer? What has happened to David? I am convinced that as David's soul and mind started praying they were ambushed and attacked by the rebellious feelings of his heart. Remember the goal of the inappropriate feelings of the heart was to keep David *thoroughly self-centred and disappointed in the Lord*. David is overwhelmed by his rebellious feelings and says, "*Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say to me all day long, where is your God?*" Can you hear his self-centredness and disappointment in the Lord? His feelings have attacked and challenged everything his soul and mind had contemplated about God's lovingkindness and the security, safety and certainty of God being his Rock. His rebellious feelings like a flood have washed all that away. It seemed he was making great progress, but now he is back to square one. The encouragements he had received are crushed and broken by the deluge of his feelings. David sinks back into the pit of despair and focuses on his broken-life.
- c. This attack by the rebellious feelings of his heart was not simply to return to the status quo but to gain ground. In **Psalm 42:10** David reveals that the threats and taunts of his enemies cut deep into his heart. The pain he feels is compared to the *breaking of bones*. The **Living Translation** seeks to capture the sense by saying, '*Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound.*' The Hebrew text literally says the *shattering of bones*. The picture is that of being struck with a sword so powerfully it crushes and shatters the bone. The pain David suffers and feels in his heart from the taunts and threats of his enemies is severe. David's rebellious feelings make this the new focus.
- d. When David says, "*Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say to me all day long, where is your God?*" he is not simply expressing his feelings he is also revealing the argument these feelings put to his soul and mind. These feelings are calling for an explanation of the situation David finds himself in. How does the misery that David is experiencing stack up against God being David's Rock and commanding his lovingkindness towards him? The renegade feelings have given an answer, *God has forgotten you*. This answer has been reinforced with the deep pain which David experienced from his enemies. When an argument is reinforced with pain it is very hard to argue against it. The argument of his feelings brings back the question, *where is your God?* David's rebellious feelings have washed away every encouragement and brought a new sense of despair.
- e. How does David respond to this treachery of his heart in stopping his recovery from a broken life? David responds by taking stock of himself, '*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.*' David takes stock even though it would not have been what he felt like doing. His soul and mind have prompted him to do this. His feelings would be telling him to give up the fight and simply submit to his feelings. '*Give up David, you cannot win the battle, you have tried leaning on the promises of God, but that did not work, so just give up.*' If you asked David how he was going he would say, '*I took one step forward, but have slipped two steps backwards.*'

## **Conclusion.**

After taking stock David returns to prayer, His prayer is recorded in **Psalm 43:1-2** *he 'Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! For You are the God of my strength; Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?'* Notice three things, (i) His prayer is greatly influenced by pain that feels like the shattering of bones. (ii) His mind and soul guide him to hope in the God of his strength. (iii) His prayer is once again ambushed by his renegade feelings. Notice David no longer says that God has forgotten him, but that the Lord has cast him off. The struggle to recover from a broken-life is hard and full of encouragements and disappointments, but as a believer you struggle on because you know *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'* says, Don't give up. Return to prayer, expect your rebellious feelings to be treacherous but know God will deliver you. God is faithful he will never leave or forsake you.