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Sermon

Introduction.

a. The struggle to overcome a broken life is full of encouragements and setbacks. The war within is between the rebellious feelings of the heart and the soul and mind. By the grace of God the soul and mind are seeking to break the cycle of self-centred feelings that accuse the Lord of neglecting his duty towards his children. The renegade feelings of the heart are fixed upon the goal of keeping the depressed person *thoroughly self-centred and disappointed in the Lord*. In **Psalm 42:10** David reveals that the taunts and threats of his enemies inflicted severe pain on his heart. The pain is described as the *'shattering of bone.'* The rebellious feelings of the heart used the reality of this pain to strengthen the argument against hoping in God. **Psalm 42** closes with David taking stock of his life once more by asking himself the questions, *'Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?'* and then exhorting himself, *'Hope in God'* and finally focussing on his goal, *'For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.'*

b. In **Psalm 42:9** David encouraged by his soul and mind sought to draw near to the Lord in prayer. The high and lofty thoughts of God being David's *Rock and life* were swept away by the feelings generated by the pain his enemies were inflicting upon him. The renegade feelings did all they could to stop David from drawing near to the God of grace. It is impossible to draw near to the Lord without seeking him through prayer. The sin that continues to dwell in the believer knows how vital prayer is and therefore will do all it can to stop the depressed person from going to the Lord in prayer. The most common tactic is to have rebellious feelings ambush the person with a broken-life from drawing near to the Lord. Believer's going through a time of depression need to watch over their prayer lives as this will be under attack. After taking stock, David at the close of **Psalm 42** once more gives himself to draw near to the Lord in prayer. The prayer contained in **Psalm 43: 1- 4** can be divided into two parts. In the first part of his prayer in **verses 1-2** David prays for vindication and is once more ambushed by his feelings as he approaches the Lord. The second part in his prayer in **verses 3-4** David cries out to the Lord to restore fellowship with him.

1. Contesting against the rebellious feelings of the heart in seeking the Lord in prayer.

a. Listen again to the prayer in **Psalm 43:1-2**, *'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?'* It is important to note the threefold progression in this part of David's prayer, he commences by asking God to vindicate him from deceitful, unjust and ungodly enemies, then he moves on to give his argument why the Lord should come to his aid (*for You are the God of my strength*) and then he is ambushed by his rebellious feelings. His renegade feelings tell him that God has cast him off. The rebellious feelings of David's heart are committed to destroying his prayer life. If David does not bring his feelings under control they will continually sabotage his prayer time. When we come before the Lord in prayer all of our inward being needs to be engaged in drawing near to God. The soul, mind, heart and will must all approach the Lord with humility. If we do not come with all our inward being our prayer times are distracted and most often unsatisfying.

b. This is the second time David's rebellious feelings have ambushed his prayer time, however we do need to grasp that progress has been made. David's soul and mind have been hard at work and have gained some ground. His rebellious feelings are being challenged by the soul and mind. Rebellious feelings are a bit like the *pufferfish*. When a *pufferfish* is threatened, it puffs up to about twice its normal size by gulping water; it does this to deceive its predators. Our rebellious feelings frequently seem huge and very strong simply because they are puffed up by self-pity and pride. David's soul and mind knew this and set about deflating the rebellious feelings. The soul and the mind call on the Lord to be part of the debate going on inside of him. The King James Version translates the opening verse of **Psalm 43** as follows; *'Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.'* The soul and mind are eager to have David stop judging himself and to submit himself to God's judgement. David must not be the one who judges whether or not he has a right to feel the way he does, he must give that right to God. **Spurgeon** suggests that the argument taking place inside David went along the following lines. *'Others are unable to understand my motives, and unwilling to give me a just verdict. My conscience is clear concerning its intentions and therefore Lord I bring my case before you. I am content as I know that you will impartially weigh my character, and right my wrongs. Lord, if you judge and accept my conduct that will be enough for me. I can laugh at all human misrepresentations if my conscience knows that you are on my side; your verdict is the only one that really counts.'* David's soul and mind have put a stop to him being a victim to his feeling or to the taunts of his enemies, by applying the truth that God's judgements hold supreme authority. If you know that God approves of what you are doing you can disregard every other voice that condemns you. As **Spurgeon** says, *'Popular opinion weighs with many, but divine opinion is far more weighty with the gracious few. One good word from God outweighs ten thousand railing speeches of men.'* God's judgement can never be wrong, therefore David will submit to God's verdict.

c. The request David made in **Psalm 43:1** is very similar to the request found in **Psalm 139:23-24**, *'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'* When David's enemies taunted him asking *'Where is our God'* they implied that David had sinned and the Lord had abandoned him because of his sin. Because believers are so sensitive about sin they take the accusation of sin very seriously. The believer with a broken life is in a poor state spiritually, and therefore sinful accusations often take hold of the heart and fire up feelings of guilty and shame. These feelings of guilt and shame may be false, but they have great influence in persuading the believer not to seek the Lord in prayer. David knew this, therefore he asks God to expose and convict him of sin. When the Holy Spirit comes with convicting power he leaves no doubt about the reality of sin. David knows that God's verdict will empty rebellious feelings of all self-pity and pride, and remove their power and influence.

d. David's thoughts turn to his enemies and recognise them for what they are in God's eyes. His enemies are *ungodly, deceitful and unjust*. Are such men reliable in their accusations? Do you expect the ungodly to be concerned about truth and righteousness? When truth and righteousness are not priorities can you expect justice? The puritans said that *'deceit and injustice were bosom companions. From two such devils none but God can deliver.'* David had in a sense been tried by the media; the popular opinion was against him, not because of his action, but because of selective propaganda. The truth is usually the first casualty when a person is tried by the media. David's clear and careful thinking drawing principles from God's word were disarming his rebellious feelings by dealing with the

credibility of his enemy. If accusations cannot stand up to the requirements of God's word we are to dismiss them and stop our rebellious feelings from using the accusations as a turbo-charger for self-pity and pride.

e. David in seeking God's judgement and looking at the credibility of those who accused and mocked him has stopped being self-centred and stopped his feelings from dictating to him. This is the way to climb out of the pit of despair and break habits that have locked the heart onto the situation and circumstance. David needs strength to retain the progress made by his soul and mind. His mind and soul turn him to the fact that God is his strength. The thought is exactly the same as God being his Rock (**Psalm 42:9**) the place to find shelter and rest. David knew he needed to find shelter under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty. This is a place of security, rest and peace; it is the place to be restored and have fellowship with the Lord. David's rebellious feelings do not allow him to go down that track, they attack him fiercely and yielding to them says, "*Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*" In **Psalm 42:9** David accused God of forgetting him, now he makes a much stronger charge against the Lord - *why have you cast me off, why do my enemies continue to have the upper hand?* The feelings are under threat so they respond in a more audacious fashion. The rebellious feelings are being challenged and are vulnerable so they show all the cards they hold. David's heart, even with such vicious rebellious feelings would have known that on the matter of *being cast off by God*, his feelings were lying. In his heart David would have known God would never, never forsake or cast him off. David has caught out his feelings lying to him. This is hugely significant as it is the beginning of learning not to trust or rely on what the feelings are saying. This is the heart beginning to doubt the feelings and listen more carefully to the soul and the mind. David's rebellious feelings are beginning to lose their power and influence. When the believer suffering from depression catches his feelings lying to him it is a victory in one of the many battles that need to be fought. Sadly those suffering from depression need to discover the lying nature of their rebellious feelings for themselves, as they will not listen to those telling them not to trust their feelings. When a depressed believer grasps that his feelings are untrustworthy it makes him question why he is willing to be dictated to by those feelings. This is the point where the need for change starts to grow.

2. Capitalising on the victory over rebellious feelings in seeking the face of the Lord.

a. Having recognised that his rebellious feelings were lying to him, David follows the lead of his soul and mind and prays, '*O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.*' There are five very important aspects to this part of David's prayer that reveal real progress in the restoration of his broken life.

- i. **David asks the Lord to send his light.** This request would not have been made unless David recognised that darkness had crept into his heart. Walking in darkness is dangerous, it is easy to trip over something or fall into a ditch, you need light to show you the way. **Psalm 119:105** says, '*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*' To climb out of the pit of despair by the light of the Word is to face issues and deal with things God's way. The rebellious feelings of the heart constantly urge the depressed person to avoid the issues. David has grasped that seeking to get out the pit of despair by his own strength and in his own way only served to sink him deeper and deeper into the miry clay at the bottom of the pit. When David says, *Lord send your light* he is confessing that he *desperately needs* God's light. As only God can meet this need David must seek the Lord to receive this light.
- ii. **David confesses that he is confused and asks the Lord to send truth to end his confusion.** Having realised that the rebellious feelings of his heart had deceived him, David now grasps that discerning what is truth in his situation and circumstance has become very difficult. How can he know what is true and what is false when his heart and mind are saying different things? God's word is truth and we must use it to separate truth from error. When David asks the Lord, *Why do you cast me off?* The word of God must settle the issue.
- iii. **David makes a commitment to follow God's light and truth.** Light and truth must hold David's hands and walk him out of his depression. David commits himself to following God's light and truth. This is a conscious and deliberate decision that must be made. The commitment is made with resolve and determination to lean upon the Lord to grant the needed strength to follow through the commitment. The step that David takes here is very important as it indicates

that the soul, mind and heart are beginning to work together. This is perhaps the first time David's soul, mind and heart unite and take collective action.

- iv. **David puts his trust in God's light and truth to bring him into the Lord's presence.** Trust is an activity, it is something you exercise in a person or object. If the parachutist did not put his trust in the parachute on his back he would never jump out of the plane. If you did not put your trust in the chair you sitting on, you would never have sat down. If you do not trust the bus driver, you do not catch the bus. David will trust *God's light and truth* to bring him to *God's holy hill and tabernacle*. To speak of going to God's holy hill or tabernacle is to speak of the presence of the Lord. David will trust God's *light and truth* to bring him into the presence of God. We can speak of God's presence in three ways; *firstly* the sense that he is omnipresent, *secondly* in the sense that God is present to protect and care for his children and *thirdly* in the sense of God's presence in fellowship. David is seeking the *nearer presence* of God in fellowship. David's desire for this presence is threefold. *Firstly* it would greatly assure him that *God has not cast him off* the feelings that made this claim would be put to death and never harass David again. *Secondly* it would greatly strengthen David in assuring him that the Lord hears his prayers. *Thirdly* it would comfort David and reassure him of the greatness of God's love. David's confidence in the Lord would be restored.
- v. **David contemplates the result of him trusting God's light and truth to lead and bring him in the presence of God.** After enjoying God's presence in fellowship David promises to bring a solemn sacrifice of thanksgiving and a peace-offering to the Lord for delivering him from his broken-life and his enemies. Listen to John Calvin commenting on this verse, '*David calls God the God of his joy, because, being delivered from sorrow, and restored to a state of joy, he resolves to acknowledge openly so great a benefit. And he calls him the joy of his rejoicing, that he may the more illustriously set forth the grace of his deliverance.*' Anticipating this exceeding joy puts a new song of praise in David's heart. David will sing this song of praise so that others may hear of God's love, grace, mercy, goodness, faithfulness and deliverance. This contemplation is important in that it keeps David's focus on the Lord and stops him from slipping back into the bad habit of brooding on his troubles and problems.
 - b. It would have been impossible for David not to have felt much better after contemplating the joy and delight of fellowship with the Lord. David no doubt was filled with Biblical hope; he looked to the Lord with great expectation that would act to deal with him and his troubles. David in his mind, soul and heart had climbed out of the pit to the mountain top and gloried in the grace of God. In everyway we could say that David at that moment was feeling good, excited and positive. It is hugely significant that while David is feeling so good that he stops and takes stock of himself; asking himself the questions, '*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?*' and then exhorting himself, '*Hope in God*' and finally focussing on his goal, '*For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*' This exercise of stock-taking is to secure the gains he has made before his feelings ambush him again. David did not stop at feeling better, but sought to consolidate the footholds he had in climbing out of the pit of despair. The goal of *praising God with all that is within him* had not yet been reached so he is cautious not to drop his guard but presses on to his goal.

Conclusion.

David in seeking to climb out of the pit of despair asks for light and truth to lead and bring him into the presence of the Lord. Jesus our Saviour and Lord is *the Light and the Truth* no one has access to the Father except through him. Jesus came to give his people *the more abundant life*. As a believer you know that Jesus is the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, cry out to him to lead you and bring you into the presence of God that you may glorify and delight in him. Nothing is more important in life than your daily walk in the Lord. Give yourself the time to fulfil the task and duty of putting your life right with the Lord every week.