

**DSC Community Group**  
**Sermon Summary, 03/18/2012**

Title: "Unpacking Depression: Why are you Downcast?"  
Series: "Pour Out Your Heart to Him: A Study Through the Psalms"

Text: Psalm 42-43  
Preacher: Ryan Kelly

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In Psalm 42-43 speak to the important matters of the diagnosis and the prescription for depression. Two weeks ago we discussed the prescription of preaching to ourselves, and this Sunday we are looking at the diagnosis. The Psalmist repeats a question three times: Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why in turmoil? It's rhetorical and the question is a way of challenging that turmoil. But he is also genuinely wants to understand, *why?*

**Q1: Why are you downcast, O my soul?**

1. Perhaps, under the circumstances, it's an appropriate response
2. Perhaps there are physical, practical dynamics. He's not eating or sleeping. We can consider the place of diet, exercise, busyness, temperament, lack of sunlight, etc. Spurgeon: "*He who forgets the humming of the bees, the cooing of the pigeons in the forest, the song of birds in the woods, the rippling of rills among the rushes, and the sighing of the wind among the pines, needs not wonder if his heart forgets to sing and his soul grows heavy.*"
3. Are there unwarranted and unfulfilled expectations? Prov. 33:12.
4. Are persistent sin and unrepentance involved? In this case, being miserable is a good sign.
5. Has there been a neglect of the "means of grace"? Are we neglecting the tools necessary to growth in grace, such as Bible, prayer, church, fellowship, etc (2 Pet. 3:18).
6. Have you forgotten that the kingdom is "now and not yet"? 2 Cr. 4:7-10; 2 Cor. 5.
7. Are you giving into doubts? Perhaps you are listening and not preaching to yourself.
8. Maybe there's no good reason, and you need to own that. *Why are you downcast!?!*  
Not unrelated to the above, perhaps it is biochemical. There's a complex connection here which means we should have a chastened approach, not thinking that emotional/spiritual things aren't connected to chemistry, but not thinking that the sole answer is medicine. If you are on pills, they must not be the total of your fight. If you are thinking about going on pills, consider the many alternatives first. Consider practical/physical dynamics: diet, exercise, rest, work, temperament. Consider spiritual dynamics (sin, spiritual habits, repentance, trust). **Ed Welch:** "*Compassion cannot ignore unbelief or sin. Too often, family and friends think the depressed person is very fragile and cannot handle any frank discussion about sin or hard-heartedness. But to ignore these issues when they are obvious in someone's life is to treat that person without love and compassion.*"
9. Maybe God has withdrawn the sense of his presence for a time. God may do this so that we long for Him more.

**Q2: Has God withdrawn from me?**

- There are certainly many verses on God not forsaking us: Ps. 9:10; 27:10; 37:28; 145:18; Deut. 31:6; Jn. 14:18. But there are many verses about a longing for God: Ps. 42:1, 4, 7, 9; 22:1-2; 42:9; 77:9; 10:1; 13:1; 88:14; 89:46. It seems that God, sometimes, for some people, and for His own mysterious purposes, withdraws the sense of His presence.
- Why God Allows Desertion, Gisbertus Voetius, *Spiritual Desertion*, 1646: 1) that we may be tested and so become better known to ourselves and others; 2) that the desire for grace and glory may increasingly be strengthened in us; 3) that hidden sins may be uncovered and future sins prevented; 4) that we may be taught tenderness of conscience; 5) that we may become empty and poor of spirit [it humbles, it chills out]; 6) that we may be weaned of external, earthly joy and consolation; 7) that we may obtain an aversion to this world and a longing for heaven; 8) that we may learn to be fed with tears as the only delicacy of consolation when the Comforter does not seem to be present; 9) that we may cling to his God all the more firmly; 10) that the graces of God, indeed even the smallest crumb and tiniest feeling, be all the more precious and pleasant; 11) that the faint and thirsty soul may be flooded by a new stream of consolations, inundated by an entire sea, and possess a new heaven on earth.
- Charles Spurgeon: *This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry; the cloud is black before it breaks, and overshadows before it yields its deluge of mercy.*

*Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing, a John the Baptist, heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer benefits.*

- It appears that God has planned for there to be a spiritual ebb and flow, not to our responsibility to pursue Him or to his actual presence, but to the experience of His presence.

### Q3: What shall I do?

- False remedies: Change of scenery/circumstances; distractions like entertainment; achievements busyness.
- Real Remedies:
  1. Know you are not alone. Charles Spurgeon: *"I have to speak today to myself and while I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and downhearted, I shall be preaching...to myself for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why I cannot tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me; I feel as if I had rather die than live... I need your prayers."*
  2. Investigate yourself/diagnose yourself
  3. Do what you know, both physically and spiritually
  4. Pray. Take your trouble to Him, ask Him for help, ask Him to show you His nearness. Pray Numbers 6:24-26.
  5. Preach to yourself
  6. Look backwards to the gospel and forwards to heaven.
  7. Wait, not passively but actively.
  8. Repeat. Notice that the psalmist repeated his main refrain three times. Keep inquiring and seeking.

### Sample Questions

- Ryan started his sermon by relating his own experience with depression. Could you relate? Have you known the heaviness and darkness and emotionlessness that he spoke about? What's your story? What was the diagnosis and what was the prescription? Do you think you got those two things it right?
- How can we explain the varied forms of depression we know and what are some pitfalls to avoid as we do so?
- At the start of his sermon, Ryan said that God knows this darkness. What did he mean by that? How has God known the darkness of the removal of His own presence? (Christ in Gethsemane looks to the cross where he will be forsaken by the Father for us).
- When we sense that a friend or loved one is experiencing depression, how should we go about loving them? Applying what we learned about depression from the sermon, outline several steps or phases in the process of helping someone diagnose their turmoil and address it for the glory of God.