

Faith In Dark Days

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Text: Psalm 42

Introduction

Many years ago a young Midwestern lawyer suffered from such deep depression that his friends thought it best to keep all knives and razors out of his reach. He questioned his life's calling and the prudence of even attempting to follow it through. During this time he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not." But somehow, from somewhere, Abraham Lincoln received the encouragement he needed, and the achievements of his life thoroughly vindicated his bout with discouragement.

Today in the Word, MBI, December, 1989, p. 20, Swindoll, *You and Your Problems Transformed by Thorns*, p. 58.

Being a person of faith when all is well with us and our life and our outlook is positive is much easier than during times of great struggle. When days seem dark and our feelings and thoughts become our enemies, faith gets a little more difficult. For days to seem dark and difficult, life doesn't have to be terrible—it just has to feel terrible.

As we look into Psalm 42, we will see the Psalmist's *struggles* with the dark days he is facing and the hope he is desperate to find.

I. Dark Days Expose the Desperation of the Soul (vv.1-5).

¹ As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" ⁴ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

A. Dark days can cause a longing for God to meet our needs.

"Like a person spending his first Christmas Eve alone, he remembers the joy-filled family times of precious years gone by. Happy memories of yesterday only deepen the depression." - George O. Wood

B. Dark days can cause a longing for better days.

II. Dark Days Increase the Despondency of the Soul (vv.6-10).

⁶ My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. ⁷ Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls, all your waves and breakers have swept over me. ⁸ By day the Lord directs his love, 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 must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” ¹⁰ My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

A. Dark days can leave us feeling we're hit bottom.

"Years ago a ship rammed an S-4 submarine off the coast of Massachusetts. The sub sank immediately and the entire crew was trapped in a prison house of death. Every effort was made to rescue them but all failed. Near the end, a diver placed his ear to the submarine and heard a tapping from inside which he recognized as Morse Code. It was a question, forming slowly: Is there any hope?"

B. Dark days can leave us feeling forgotten.

III. Dark Days Reveal the Determination of the Soul (v.11).

¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

A. Hope in God is found in the soul.

Charles Swindoll found an illustration about hope in a book he read on vacation called, "Adrift." It's a story of a man who built a vessel that was to sail him through the whole of the Atlantic, sort of a large loop. He hit bad weather and his vessel went down. He existed on a raft for almost eighty days. The thing that kept the man alive was hope. His lowest days were the days when he could see no hope and he could not see the possibility of being rescued or making it to the islands or coming into the shipping lanes and being found by one of those vast vessels on its way on the trade routes. His hope kept him alive. Someone has said, 'We can live forty days without food, eight days without water, forty minutes without air, but only a few seconds without hope'" (Swindoll, Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes, Thomas Nelson).

B. Praise is the result of finding that hope.

Conclusion

"Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitudes toward life. The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it.

I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope. When my attitudes are right, there is no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me." – Chuck Swindoll