

9 August 2020

To all members of the St James Traditional Services

A Weekly Word of Encouragement: Why are you downcast?

Psalms 42, 43 belong together – a single hymn with three stanzas addressing God, each stanza ending in a repeated refrain, talking to yourself: Read them reflectively.

In our current season of change and uncertainty, it is easy to feel discouraged and depressed. Will life ever be the same? Will it return to some recognisable normality?

These psalms express a real sadness of heart causing a deep spiritual depression – a real feeling of isolation: spiritual isolation from God (v.1 , 2), physical isolation from God’s people (v.4); isolated by a mocking, unbelieving world (v.3, 9; 43:1,2).

Depression and discouragement often have physical symptoms: crying, fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, emotional and physical pain – all are present in these psalms. When we are discouraged and low in spirit, we listen to the fearful speculation of our emotions: “What if this happens? Will this ever end? Where is God?”

What will we do? The answer is found in v.5, 11, 43:6 – a repeated refrain. Talk to yourself; take yourself in hand; do not give way to emotional feelings and fears, to self-pity or resentment.

“Why are you downcast?” is the question, and the psalmist answers himself with the remedy: “Put your hope in God.”

Look up to the living God; remind yourself of the loving things God has done (v.6-8), and that God is working within your troubles (v.7 God’s waves). God is your stronghold, your Rock, your joy and delight, your Saviour. Speaking the truth of God to yourself is a vital spiritual discipline. “Faith rebukes despondency and Hope triumphs over despair.”

Prayer

Lord, You are my stronghold, my joy, my delight, my Saviour. I need to learn to speak to myself about who You truly are, and not to give way to my feelings, my emotions or listen to worldly discouragement. Because You are my God, why should I ever be downcast? Help me to look up to You and to put my Hope in You. Amen.

Remember

- keep praying daily
- keep reading God's Word
- keep in touch with one another, and know that I am only a phone call away: 0438 455 493.

With Christian love,
Rob