

## Prestonwood Connection

### Living In The Shadow Of The Almighty #7

#### Discouragement

#### Psalm 42

Wednesday, October 8, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *Discouragement In The Shadow Of The Almighty*] <239>

Thanks Karen Brown and thank you to our incredible Connection praise team and band tonight. Didn't they do a great job leading us in worship tonight. [pause for applause] And a..., Mark Bovee it was great to have you here you on the keyboard tonight. John Carlson, our friend, glad to have you back down here and ministering with us tonight as well, [more applause] and a..., I'll tell you God just continues to give us great people to be a part of these times when we come together and I don't know about you but I just needed that time of singing and of celebrating the Lord tonight and just the ministry that's come through music and a..., I think, in particular I just need to say thank you Rick Briscoe because I love and appreciate you and the incredible job you do preparing every week and leading this team together, you do a great job so [more applause] forgive me for that little personal indulgence but a..., it's just a, a pause worth taking because we've got people who work hard just like you, they're busy, they're doing they're day of activities and a..., many of these who are here and a part of this praise team are busy in jobs at work, rush to get here just ahead of you and to get prepared and to share in the evening and a..., I'm a great beneficiary of their ministry and I appreciate all that they do to make that happen.

If you have a Bible tonight I want you to open it to Psalm 42, because Psalm 42 in verse 1 is one of the most familiar portions of Scripture to us in worship here at Prestonwood. It's a ~~wex~~...verse that we use often a..., to help us, to call us to a time of worship and of focus and of reflection and a..., it's a familiar portion of Scripture. But you know like so many of the most familiar portions of Scripture we tend to zero in on one part or one phrase or one portion of the verse and sometimes we miss the larger context of, of where this is coming from and what this is connected to and tonight in Psalm 42 and then ultimately in Psalm 43 we're going to see something of the life experience of David the psalmist, at a time and season in his life where there was a great sense of need for God. And so I want us to begin reading in Psalm 42 and verse 1, these familiar words, words that we actually were just singing together a few minutes ago:

<sup>1</sup>As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

<sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...

I love that picture. I'm thirsty and I need God. I'm thirsty and I want God and so many times when we sing that song as the deer pants and I'm thirsting for God, we think of it in the sense of moving and swaying and singing and worship and saying, God I just want more, bless me more, fill me more, do more in my life. But don't miss how quickly this Psalm turns:

*<sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? <sup>3</sup>My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" <sup>4</sup>When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me, For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise and, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. <sup>5</sup>Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of my countenance.*

It's not all just about worship, being caught up, being moved in an emotional fashion toward God. There's a desperation in this Psalm. There is an anguish in this Psalm and instead of being a guy who's got it together and who's standing up and saying, let's all just thirst more for God together, it's really that you've got a guy who is pouring out his heart and his life and frankly it's a man who is very irritated with life and it is a man who is very disturbed with God. Have you ever been irritated about life? Have you ever been disturbed with God? Have you ever had a day in your life where things were not going the way you wanted them to go and it feels like though there has been a season of worship where you said, God I want more, I wanna be more, I wanna do more for You and it just seemed that instead of making any progress spiritually it seemed that your life was losing momentum? To put it in a word, that you've come face to face with that very formidable opponent called discouragement. Discouragement, that's what I hear and see as I read this Psalm from beginning to end, a man who is discouraged, a man who is struggling with his walk with God and with what's happening in his life and the reality of discouragement is just constantly pressing against him and weighing upon him. Discouragement, it takes so many different forms doesn't it? Sometimes discouragement comes because we've embarked on a project, something that we were excited about doing and we wanted to do and we thought that we could make happen, we could pull it off, it can happen over a weekend, when you think I'm gonna do this little project at home and you know, you get in to the project and before long 10 things go wrong in the project and on about the 22<sup>nd</sup> trip back to Home Depot, you know you're at the point where you're just discouraged and you wanna quit and you don't care how much it costs, you just wanna pay somebody, but the problem is you need it done today and you get discouraged. You get discouraged in life because a friendship that's been going well begins to seem to lose it's way and it's course and instead of growing and encouraging one another it seems that the friendship is becoming a burden in your life and before long you just feel discouraged by the connections or the disconnections that you have in your life. You can be discouraged because things aren't going as well as you want them to go in your family or as well as you hoped that they were going to go with your children and

because of some of the things that you can face and the challenges and the pressures and the crisis of living life day in and day out, before long you begin to wonder a..., am I going to fail and a..., what if I don't do as well as I wanted to? And I just feel discouraged. You get discouraged in your job. You, you so want to do a good job but there are, there are conflicts with other people and then there's that person that you have to report to and, and there's the boss at work and there's the, the responsibilities and the demands of the job and before long you just find that you're discouraged and discouragement begins to surface in so many different ways in your life. Discouragement can be a heavy, but discouragement can even be something that comes in a, in a, in a different form in life, heh, discouragement's something that can be said to us in sort of a, well, sort of a shrouded way. It's said that Mark Twain once said that, he was responding to someone's request for a recommendation on a doctor and he said a...:

*"Well he has been a doctor a year now and he's had two patients, no three, I think, yes, three, it was three funerals that I attended in the past year."*

[slight congregation laughter] Heh, heh, well, that's a different form of discouragement isn't it? A..., discouragement from someone saying don't go this way, don't do that. But so many of the discouragements of life are the things that just aren't going my way and I'm disappointed and I'm frustrated and I'm discouraged and I'm struggling with it and I find that in my life as I'm sure many of you would find in your life, that when I am discouraged that the greatest need of my life in discouragement, when it comes to the spiritual arena of my life, is that I simply have a thirst within my soul for refreshment from God. Discouragement spiritually is the thirst of the soul for refreshment and because the life of the man that we're reading about here is discouraged, there is a thirst within him to be refreshed of God and that's why the whole Psalm begins with the outflow of this expression of discouragement saying:

*As the deer pants for the water...my soul is longing after You, O God. God I am thirsty because I'm so discouraged.*

And when your discouraged there's nothing that you need more and that you crave more than ultimately the souls refreshment that God alone can bring. Now discouragement is one of the chief tools used by our enemy to undermine our faith and to unseat us in our walk with Christ. There's a story that I'm sure some of you have heard before but I would simply take time to share it with you tonight. It says:

*Once upon a time it was announced that the Devil was going out of business...*

That'd be nice!

*...and would sell all his equipment to those who were willing to pay the price. On the big day of the sale his tools were attractively displayed*

and there was envy and jealousy, hatred and malice, lust, deceit, sensuality and pride, idolatry and other implements were there on display, the tools of evil, each marked with it's own price tag. But, over in the corner by itself was a harmless looking wedge shaped tool, very much worn, but it still bore a higher price than any of the others. Someone asked the Devil what it was and he said, "Oh this, this is discouragement." The next question came quickly and why is it priced so highly even though it's plain to see that it's worn more than all of the others. And the Devil replied, "Because it is more useful to me than all of the others. I can pry open and get into a man's heart with that when I cannot get near him with the other tools. Once I get inside I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It's worn well because I use it on everybody I can and few people ever know that it belongs to me." This tool was priced so high that no one could buy it and to this day it has never been sold. It still belongs to the Devil and he still uses it on mankind.

Satan loves discouragement because discouragement is so much a part of what can and often does trip us and cause us to stumble spiritually.

Well, tonight we open this Psalm, Psalm 42 and actually Psalm 43, because there are incredible insights in this Psalm to help us to deal with the issue of discouragement in life. In fact if you'll look at your Bible and I don't know what translation you're reading from tonight, but most of our Bibles have some sort of a, a..., a description, some sort of an inscription at the beginning of the Psalm and mine simply says:

To the Chief ~~Musican~~...Musician. A Contemplation ~~of the Psalm~~...of the sons of Korah.

Some of yours simply have a simple word there, a Hebrew word a maskil. The word maskil can be translated, contemplation, but it literally means a..., wisdom, insight a..., understanding and what it's talking about is a teaching that is provided for the circumstances of life. And so what we have in this Psalm is a maskil, a teaching, to help us to deal with the circumstances that are unfolding in this portion of Scripture. Now, I shared with you on the opening night that we began this study in the Psalms that we've called, *In The Shadow Of The Almighty*, that the book of Psalms, the 150 Psalms that are found in the entire book of Psalms is really divided in to 5 individual books. I shared with you, on that evening, a chart and I wanna just refer to that once again tonight, that really the 5 books of Psalms ~~paralyze a..., parallel, not paralyze but parallel a..., I hope they don't paralyze anything, they parallel~~ the first 5 books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

And what we find in the Psalms as book 1, a..., which is 1 thru 41 is like Genesis, about the creator God and our need for Him and there are a lot of expressions of God and His creation.

A..., book 2, beginning in Psalm 42 and going thru 72, is a contrast, a parallel, as though it were, to the book of Exodus, where the God's people are captured and are oppressed. Do you get that feeling as you step into

the 42<sup>nd</sup> Psalm here? That this is someone who is oppressed. This is someone who is dealing with a spirit that is captured by the, by the power of discouragement.

And then you can see Leviticus is paralleled in Psalm 73 thru 89, the concerns of worship.

Psalm 90 to 106, the crisis in the wilderness, the wandering and there're a lot of wanderings in the Psalms that we find there.

And then Psalm 107 to 150 is like Deut...Deuteronomy, it's the confidence of deliverance, it's the reminder of our need to praise God.

And so we've simply said that the Psalms parallel those 5 books, but if Psalm 42 is the beginning of the second book in the Psalms, then when we talk about oppression and captivity we're immediately talking about the life experience that we are reading about here tonight. And so what we find is something that is echoed 3 times in Psalm 42 and 43. I just read it for you in verse 5:

*Why are you **cast down**, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, For the help of His countenance.*

If you'll look down again in verse 11, Psalm 42 in verse 11, what do you find there?

*Why are you **cast down**, O my soul?...*

That same passage of Scripture, and then if you go again to Psalm 43 and to verse 5 you find that Psalm 43 ends with that same statement:

*Why are you **cast down**, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*

Three times the psalmist cries out to the Lord in his discouragement. So let's just ask a simply question tonight. Why, was he spiritually discouraged? And why do I get spiritually discouraged in my life? Now there are many different things that we could talk about. I've already talked about many different types of discouragement that we can face in life, but from the perspective of the psalmist as he is echoing his discouragement here we ask the question why do we get spiritually discouraged? Well, let's see if we can gain the insight by simply looking at the text tonight and seeing what the psalmist himself tells us in his life experience. In verse 3 of Psalm 42 after he says he's thirsty for God:

*<sup>2</sup>...When shall I come and appear before God?*

He says in verse 3:

*My tears have been my food day and night...*

**TEARS**, when you hear tears what comes to mind? What image comes to mind immediately? What do you think about immediately when you hear the word tears? Sadness, sorrow, I'd like to put it in a very pungent word, **PAIN!** When I am experiencing pain in my life it is natural for pain to find the response of tears.

**PHYSICAL** pain, heh, I can right this minute, put my hand here, take a hammer and hit my hand and I can tell you right now the first thing I'm gonna feel is not, bless God. Heh, [slight congregation laughter] it's going to be pain. I may even have to mask the interior of what wells up within me. But I can tell you this if it hits hard enough I will have tears in my eyes. I mean you know, you've been walkin through the house in the middle of the night and caught that little toe on the corner of that chair, [slight congregation laughter] I'm telling you just like that tears, [more slight laughter] and then you go, omp, omp, om...omm.....! But physical pain causes tears. Now when we're children there's no problem what do we do? We get hurt and we just, WAAAAA! [more slight laughter] But as an adult we don't do that and so we try to hide it and to hold it. But physical pain brings tears.

**EMOTIONAL** pain brings tears. Just below the surface of some of your lives tonight, if we were to scratch just a little bit, it wouldn't take long until tears would start running down your cheeks, because there is a hurt inside and your tears are ready to surface.

**SPIRITUALLY**, when I have spiritual pain in my life, the grief over someone who is gone wayward from Christ, the reality of someone who is not following Christ, the, the need for someone to come to know Christ. What does the Bible tell us even in the Psalms? [Psalm 126:5]

*They that sow in tears will reap in joy.*

And yet there are tears to be shed and to be sung for those who are without Christ and spiritually in our lives, we can experience a deep sense of pain and what we find ourselves saying when we are dealing with pain is what David said in verse 5:

*Why...?*

*Why...?*

Have you ever asked God why? Have you ever asked God why? Why that you are hurting physically? Why that you or someone you knew was hurting emotionally? Why there was pain spiritually? It is a natural human response when I am dealing with pain for me to struggle spiritually and ultimately to ask the question, why. Why is a searching question and tonight we need to search out why we struggle.

I love the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said?

*"To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self ignorance is not bliss. In this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm. A clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles."*

And sometimes when we're hurting we do have to stop and ask why and we have to ultimately realize that as we wrestle with the why and the pain that is bringing discouragement in life, that many times that pain can be the very source that God will use to strengthen and to help and to encourage us in life by tears, crying out to God. That's why in the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 5 when Paul prayed for the church at Thessalonica he simply prayed this: [verse 23]

*Now may the God ~~of your~~ of peace sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ.*

May you be set apart in peace, because in this world there is pain and pain in this world can be seen as 2 entities in my life. I can either, see and always mark pain in my life as an enemy, something to fight, something to flee. Or I can choose in my life to, at times, see pain as my friend. Did you know that pain is not always your enemy? It's easy to think of it that way. It's easy to consider the fact that pain is just an enemy, something to be resisted, something to run from. But pain is not always your enemy. Physically, it's not my enemy. If I take my hand and put it on a hot stove, one of the greatest blessings I've got is God has given me a pain sensor that says, get away, you're gonna be destroyed and consumed and sometimes pain is there to help me to, to move. But pain is something that God uses many times in my life, for many positive things spiritually. You remember over in the New Testament, keep your hand there in Psalm 42 and look back over in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 12, there in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians we read the account, the life's journey of the apostle Paul, who was dealing with pain in his life. I don't know what kind of pain it was, no one knows. We don't know if it was physical, if it was emotional or if it was spiritual. But we know that there was a pain that was ultimately embraced in the life of the apostle Paul that he described what he did and how he related to it. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12 in verse 7 he says:

*<sup>7</sup>And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup>Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup>And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I would rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities,...*

Literally, I've learned to make pain my friend.

*...in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake...*

Why? Because it's noble to make pain your friend? Hurt me God! No, because he'd learned an incredible truth.

*...For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

What am I saying to you tonight? I'm simply saying that pain is not always your enemy. Huh, you're thinking, this guy is nuts! He has lost it! No I'm just telling you what the Scripture teaches about pain. Notice some of the benefits of pain that come in life. Paul says here that pain can promote prayer in my life. It promotes prayer. He says:

*...I sought the Lord three times that this thing would depart from me...*

Over and over he talks about seeking the Lord in the midst of his weakness and candidly one of the things that can happen when you ~~dis...~~get discouraged is when the source of your spiritual discouragement as pain is that it will **PROMOTE PRAYER** in your life and prayer is a needed part of growth and discipline in the Christian walk with Christ and therefore though I may hurt, one of the greatest things that happens ~~in-praye...in~~, in my pain is that my pain pushes me to God.

There's something else that pain does in life and that is not only promotes prayer but **PROMPTS CHANGE**. Here Paul changed his entire view of what pain was and what this infirmity, this a..., thorn in the flesh was in his life and sometimes we need something to hurt enough to help us to change.

My friend John Maxwell has written many times and I love this, that there're 3 times in life when we change, 3 times that we change.

*"One, when we know enough that we want to. Two, when we hurt enough that we have to and three, when we have enough that we're able to."*

When we know enough that we want to, when we hurt enough that we have to, when we have enough that we're able to. It's that second one I'm highlighting for you. Sometimes you've hurt enough that you have to change. We've heard it always about those who are a..., alcoholics and those who are drug abusers, is that many times they have to hit bottom and for all of those who would want to try to just help them and convince them and enable them, that many times they become enablers to their ongoing problem and their ongoing addiction and we literally have to step back and let the consequences hit.

## **TURN TAPE**

...consequence of what really is happening hits in life, then they hurt enough that they have to. You see we have to do that with children sometimes don't we? As a parent you never want to see your children hurt. In fact we get into this bad habit as parents, every time our kids cry, here, here, here! But sometimes they have to hurt enough that they have to



change. And your job as a parent is not always to avoid the consequences sometimes it's to let consequences take its course. Now we need to be wise in that and we need to be discerning and we need to always show an abundance of love in all that we do. But I'm simply saying to you that pain can prompt change in my life, it promotes prayer, it prompts change. There's something else that Paul tells us about and this is kinda important.

Pain **PREVENTS PRIDE**. Did you notice that he said here:

*...a messenger of Satan was sent to bes...buffet me,*

in verse 7:

*...lest I be exalted above measure.*

We all have that problem don't we? Look at me, I'm in the church, I'm doin good. Me and God, we're tight! [slight congregation laughter] You know? We all get that way. Oh, you haven't read that book? Heh, when I was in my quiet time this morning for 3 hours and 42 minutes, I was praying and considering... [pause for congregation laughter] Pride, Paul said I've had so many experiences in my life spiritually that God gave me a messenger. He even called it a messenger from Satan, isn't that interesting, that little tool of discouragement? That I might be taught to be dependent upon the Lord. And then he says:

Pain will purify my faith. Like nothing in life, pain will make ~~your~~ ~~pa~~...your faith real. Pain will make faith all that it needs to be.

*"No pain..."*

What's the rest of it?

*"...no gain!"*

It's true spiritually. Without pain in your life, your faith will never be made whole or pure. He says here:

*..."My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is perfected in your weakness."*

And then he went on to say:

*...For when I am weak, then I'm strong.*

I've learned that it's not about me. I've learned that it's not in me. I've learned that it's not through me, it's Christ and Christ alone. And ultimately that's what Paul came to in his life and while pain for everyone of us is a dissonance to faith. It doesn't add up, it doesn't harmonize, it' doesn't come together in beauty, it's like on the one hand there's this faith thing of a God who loves me and cares for me and it's

like a lullaby that plays in my heart and then there's these sharp cords of pain that say, oh... what happened to God? But ~~while faith~~, while pain can be a dissonance to my faith it can also be the very source of the development of a faith that is real and that is alive and that is active. You see, pain spiritually is a source of discouragement. But, pain can ultimately be a source of spiritual growth and productivity. I love the words of Jonathan Edwards who wrote a piece called, *Resolutions*. Somebody's havin pain. *Resolutions*, [pause for congregation laughter] and he simply said this:

*"Resolved, when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom and of hell."*

What a response to spiritual discouragement, to pain. There are many of you in this room tonight who could say, the greatest encounters that I've ever had with God have come through the deepest valleys that I've experienced with God. And David said:

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God...the help of my countenance.*

That's not the only thing he told us about. He tells us about something else. Let's take a look at it beginning in verse 6:

*O my God, my soul is cast down within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan,...*

Psalm 42, verse 6:

*...from the heights of Hermon, and the Hill of Mizar. <sup>7</sup>Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me. <sup>8</sup>The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song shall be with me—A prayer to the God of my life.*

But he says in verse 9:

*I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me?..."*

Why have You forsaken me? One of the second greatest reasons for spiritual discouragement in life is not only the pain that brings tears but **SILENCE**. There is nothing harder then to have a deep passionate desire to pursue God and to come to a time, to a season, to a place in your life spiritually where you begin to sense that there is silence with God. I love it when I can open the word of God and it's just like God's talking to me. Slow down Lord, it's just so good. But, oh those days, when I open and I look in the Scripture and I think is there anything here for me? God do You hear me? God do You know? Silence and silence is one of those things that will take me to the place of my life where I struggle as much as anything else spiritually with discouragement. I'm discouraged when I don't feel that God is, is not just answering my call. You know it's been said:

*"Silence is golden."*

Well, that's true, except when it's from God. [pause for slight congregation laughter] And when silence is from God it's not very golden, in fact I begin to feel a distance spiritually, I begin to feel deprived spiritually and one of the greatest sources of anguish and discouragement in my spiritual walk is when there is silence with God. Do you remember the encounter of Job? A man who never know about a conversation that took place in heaven between God and Satan and God ultimately said, you can touch my servant Job and Job began to experience a tremendous series of loses in his life and over in Job chapter 10 in verse 1, Job was crying out to the Lord and was just expressing the frustration over silence and he says:

*<sup>1</sup>"My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. <sup>2</sup>I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; Show me why You contend with me.'"*

God just speak to me about this. Have you ever had a time where there was just silence? Deep is calling unto deep but it just seems that all there is, is just Wewwwwwwwwww...nothing's happening and silence can be a great source of a struggle spiritually in my life. Now Job, though he struggled with the silence of God ultimately said in Job 13, verse 15:

*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him,...*

Even though I don't hear, even though I don't understand, even though I can't explain it, I believe God and therefore:

*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him,...*

It's almost as though Job could have said:

*Why, are you cast down, O my soul? And why, are you disquieted in me? Hope in God, for ~~yet~~...I shall yet praise Him the help of my countenance.*

You see that's exactly what the psalmist came back to again. He cried out and said in Psalm 42, verse 9:

*..."Why have you forgotten me?..."*

But then in verse 11, he said it again:

*Why are you cast down, O my soul?...*

The second reason for spiritual discouragement was identified. There's a third reason for spiritual discouragement that we see here and that's in Psalm 43, beginning in verse 1. I don't know why these Psalms are separated, but I do know that their message is continuous and so he begins again ~~in verse~~, in chapter 43, verse 1 by saying:

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?

What's the third reason that we get discouraged spiritually, not only pain and silence but **EVIL**. Living in a sinful, evil world. I don't know about you but there's some days, I get a, I look at an advertisement, I look at a newspaper, I watch a news headline and it just seems that every thing around me is just corrupt, corrupt, corrupt! And the evil of the world and the, the sickness and the sinfulness and the indulgence and the perversion and the twisting and the, and the violence and the hardness and the rebellion; I just get discouraged spiritually. I just think is my life making any difference at all? Are we doing anything that really is changing anything in our nation and families? It seems that every day I get another report of another family, even in the church that's splintering and fragmenting and, and another man who's come and it's suddenly is seen from underneath he, he's broken down and spiritually he's eroded and he's become a moral failure and another woman who's abandoned her family and, and I see another Christian who's walked away from God and, and has followed money or the world or something that's out there and I see these things and my heart is in anguish and I think, God, why? Why is it that I just am always surrounded by evil? It's not that I'm not evil. It's not that I'm not tempted to sin. It's not even that I believe I'm above any and all these things, but it's that tension between the spirit and the flesh and wanting so desperately in my heart to live spiritually, godly in Christ and yet realizing that every day in my life I am just one viewing point, I am just one conversation, I am just one point away from just indulging in all the things that the world had around me. And living in the midst of an evil and a sinful society is just nauseating sometimes.

I was just reading a few days ago about the College Freedom Tour, being sponsored by the ACLU on all of the major college campuses in America. The ACLU College Freedom Tour, Harvard, the major universities, University of Miami, just a...not long ago and guess who the chief speaker is for the College Freedom Tour for the ACLU? [pause] Larry Flint, the owner, the publisher of *Hustler Magazine*, one of the most lucrative pornographers in American and he's got carte blanche on every college campus that opens the doors and speaks of freedom in America and yet I can tell you right now if I walked on the campus and said I'd like to speak to a group of students about the claims of Jesus Christ, that I would be scoffed, mocked and immediately told that, that was too small of an exclusive view of who God or anything that had to do with spirituality was and they would show me the door. And yet millions of dollars are underwriting this tour. Do you ever get frustrated by those things? Do you ever get mad about those things, or as our pastor said spiritually, ticketh off? [pause for congregation laughter] Do you ever find that your there? I'm telling you it's hard and you're not alone. In the book of ~~2<sup>nd</sup> Kings~~, actually 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, chapter 19 and I can only make a quick reference to this and summarize, but 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, chapter 19 we read the account of a prophet of

God that was used mightily, in fact his name was Elijah and he did something that all of us wish that we could do. Elijah had a day where he said okay we're gonna have a battle of all the gods. He said we're gonna get together and we're going make a big altar and we're gonna put on that altar a sacrifice and we're gonna put wood on that altar and which ever god from heaven sends down fire and does it, he said, that's gonna be the true God. And all the prophets of Baal got together and they circled and they danced and they sang and they intensified their chanting of all the gods and how they were gonna, but nothin happened. Elijah walked around and said, what's the matter? God doesn't hear you? God can't help you? Did he lose his match, what's goin on? So obsessed were they that they began to go into drunkenness and even into flagellation of cutting their bodies and shedding their blood and saying, god help us. And there was no power in their god. But Elijah said, let me tell you something, that you may know that there is a true God in heaven, he took pots of water and poured it over the top of the sacrifice and then he simply said Lord, see, hear and respond and whew... the fire fell. The end result was they had a slaying of all the prophets of Baal and the God who was God was there. But the next morning, heh, Jezebel, the ~~wicked king~~, queen, sitting next to King Ahab, said we're gonna kill that prophet Elijah and 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19 is this story of Elijah running away. He runs off into the wilderness. He, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh and then there's this little scene where he talks to God and says, God isn't it enough that we would destroy these prophets and now they wanna destroy me? And God, now I'm the only one left to represent You in Israel. That's how we are aren't we? God, I'm all You've got, I'm mad at this whole world and God I'm the only one left and nobody's helpin me and I get discouraged. That's exactly where you react...you talk about a prophet in depression, a prophet in the pits, just read 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19. He is just down under it and that's where we get because we live in an evil world. We live in a sinful society and what was the result of this cry in chapter 43, well verse 5:

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God...*

You see spiritually discouragement comes because of pain, because of silence, because of evil. Well, that's a pretty depressing picture isn't it? [pause for slight congregation laughter] Cause, frankly we know all 3 of those things and I could venture to say that is we just did a straw poll tonight and I said, how many of you dealin with pain, how many are dealin with silence, how many are dealin with evil that before we go through we'd be unanimous in this room tonight, we're just all discouraged. [more slight laughter] Pass the Prozac, you know, help us, something! [pause for congregation laughter] You know? [pause for more laughter] I don't mean that bad, honestly, there's a very legitimate use. [more laughter] So let me ask a simple question. What should you do when you're discouraged spiritually? What should you do? Heh, read a piece of advice the other day.

*"When you're depressed listen to country music, the people in the songs will always be more messed up in their lives than you are in your."*

[pause for more laughter] What do you do when you're depressed spiritually? Well, you know if you went to a psychologist they would say you need to talk through some things and you need to talk to yourself. You need to tell yourself what is right. Well, if you look to yourself, you're just gonna get more depressed. But there is a form of self-talk that is helpful and that's tellin myself who I need to look to and that's what the psalmist does.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? What are you disquieted in me? Hope in God..*

What do I need to do when I'm discouraged spiritually? Let me give you a quick 3 step remedy and I'm through. I can't come back and do a second part on this so let's finish it tonight. Okay? How do I deal with spiritual discouragement?

**Number 1: REFLECT** on God's record and take refuge. You need to get God's record in your mind, not your experience, not your circumstance, not where you need to get, God's record. What's His record? Guess what? A perfect record. Never has there ever been in a person who needed God, in pain, with silence, or in the face of evil that God has not proven Himself faithful. The Bible tells us in the New Testament in the book of Romans, ~~chapter 14 and verse 4~~, I love this passage, ~~excuse me~~ chapter 15 and verse 4, it says:

*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

We have hope! We have hope, not because we want hope, we have hope because God has given us a record of hope and this book is God's hope record that I can look at people in every conceivable circumstance and failure and pressure of life and I can find that God came through for them and therefore I reflect on God's re...record and I take refuge. The prescription for pain is reflecting on God's record. When I hurt and feel like I can't bear it I go back to God's prescription for pain and I get a hope transfusion when I go to Scriptures and see what He's done for others. And then not only am I to reflect on God's record and take refuge but I'm to...

**FOCUS** on the facts and not just my feelings. A.., it's very easy to indulge your feelings. It's very easy to be consumed by your feelings and may I say that the solution to silence is to focus on facts and not on feelings. If I just indulge my feelings I'm just gonna get madder and madder at God and feel more and more alienated from Him, that's what I feel. But the fact of the matter is, is that God has said clearly: [Hebrews 13:5]

*...“I will never leave you or forsake you.”*

There will never be a moment that you will come to Him, that He will reject you. He says: [Matthew 7:9-10]

*"As a human father, would you come and ask Me for bread and I would give you a stone?...or a serpent?"*

No, no! Focus on the facts and not your feelings. Act on the facts, your feelings are gonna be like a piece of cloth in the wind, just blowin here and there and takin every shape of what happens but you have to focus on the facts. You have to put a hanger in your feelings. And then the final thing is... [1 Chronicles 16:34]

**GIVE THANKS** *to the Lord for He is good!...*

That is the exercise against evil. For all of the ways that I wanna get mad and indulge my tempter and my temperament over the evil around me, the exercise in the face of evil that delivers me from evil is to ultimately:

*Give thanks to the Lord for He is good..*

That's what he says here:

*...For I will praise Him,...*

*...I will praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*

Instead of walking around and just seeing the ugly side of life, I will embrace the God who is good and the God who is able to bring even good out of evil and I will never forget His goodness and His grace to me. The song writer said it this way:

*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*

*Count your blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your blessings, see what God has done;  
Count your blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*

And even in the midst of evil we worship a good God. My daughter Mary Elizabeth's in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and has been involved in a reading project, doing a book report and thankfully one of the books she was able to read this year on the reading list was, *She Said Yes!* The life story of Cassie Bernale the young lady who was killed in the massacre of Columbine several years ago. I was helping her with a little follow up project to that reading assignment and that project involved a... making sort of a collage of facts on her life and we were looking at some background on the life of Cassie Bernale and I came across just a few days ago on the web site of her family these words.

*"Dear friends and family, it has been over 3 years since that faithful day*

*in the Columbine library when our daughter Cassie was killed. She along with 11 other students and a teacher lost their lives while 23 others were wounded. All of this at the hands of 2 suicidal fellow students who had planned on taking as many lives as possible. We will never recover from the lost of our Cassie, but God has been good to us. He has been patient during times when we question His will. He has strengthened us to stand up for our faith and has provided us with an awesome global church family to stand beside us. We believe that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has carried us through the worst days of our lives and will continue to do so and through prayer we are beginning to feel a hope for the future and a purpose for our lives through our loss. Brad and Misty Bernale, the parents of Cassie Bernale.*

Now that's something to be discouraged about.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God..*

You need that hope tonight. Some of you in this room tonight are discouraged and your need that hope that is found in the Lord and in the Lord alone.