

## THE FIRST 15

Friday, November 8, 2024

By: Thomas Mitchell

Today is Friday, November 8, 2024 and we are studying Psalm 42 – praying that God would move our hearts from despair to hope!

### OPENING PRAYER

*In this season, we pray together:*

*May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone. AMEN.*

### SCRIPTURE

*I say to God my Rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?”  
My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”  
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.  
Psalm 42:9-11*

### REFLECTION

We've heard this before haven't we? The Psalmist is covering familiar ground. He's returned to the language of verse 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.*

Throughout the psalm, we may be tempted to find a contradiction between expression of the writer's feelings of despair and confidence in God. However, the experienced saint knows the key: *there is no contradiction*. It is precisely *because* the psalmist has confidence in God, he can bare his soul.

Within the security of God our rock we are free to examine our emotion and consider: is a single bitter moment our whole story? When we look through God's enduring history with humanity, we see a pattern of faithfulness that transcends our worst hours. As it has been said: “the hours

should be silent, in order that the centuries should speak, lest one's hour speak a word that falsifies the witness of the ages." *Moments of pain don't negate God's goodness.*

The psalmist's inner dialogue displays an important balance. "Why are you downcast, O my soul?" he asks, confronting both his disquiet and his trust. Anguish and hope coexist as he remembers God's faithfulness and acknowledges the distance he feels. He illustrates the rhythm of a believer's life, where trust and loneliness, memory and hope, add up to praise in the long run of obedience in the same direction toward God.

This rhythm— highs and lows, movement and pause—reflects God's wise design, moving us through cycles of emotion that keep our spirits alive. Seasons change, from spring to winter or summer to fall. Remember how good the first fall day feels when the summer heat finally breaks? We're living it right now. What a relief and gift. It certainly brings me back to life.

Yet there's a danger in letting our moods drift with life's changing cycles, losing sight of God in the highs and lows. The psalmist's example calls us to engage each mood, using it to deepen our connection to God's presence. I've heard it said that feelings are great servants but terrible masters. How you feel is not always how you are. The psalmist knows this to be true. By consciously leaning on Him, we find a real sense of God not only when He feels near but even in times of perceived distance.

### **Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, you are our living water. We thirst for you. We confess and release our false sources of strength and sustenance. We bare our souls to you because you are our Rock. You direct your love to us and we receive it in thanksgiving. We put our hope in you. We praise you – our savior and our God! Amen.*