

Leader Guide



Speaker: Dr. James Long

Series: ~~dys~~Functional

Title: Hope for the Troubled Soul

Primary Texts: Psalm 42-43

Big Idea: When the soul is downcast, God teaches us to bring our pain to Him, preach truth to ourselves, and pursue His presence until praise rises again.

Sermon Outline

1. Introduction – Life After Easter Still Feels Heavy

- We celebrate resurrection, yet still live in a fallen world where sorrow, anxiety, and weariness remain.
- Psalm 42–43 shows that real believers can experience real emotional struggle.
- The issue is not the presence of sorrow, but how we respond to it before God.

2. The Soul Feels the Weight of Sorrow (Psalm 42:1–11; 43:1–2)

- The Psalmist longs for God like a deer for water (Psalm 42:1–2).
- Ongoing sorrow: “My tears have been my food day and night” (42:3).
- External pressure: “Where is your God?” (42:3).
- Internal overwhelm: “All your waves have gone over me” (42:7).
- Honest tension: “My rock... why have you forgotten me?” (42:9).
- Application: God invites honest lament, not denial.

3. The Soul Fights for Hope in God (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5)

- The Psalmist speaks to his own soul: “Why are you cast down?”
- He shifts from listening to himself to preaching truth to himself.
- Command: “Hope in God.”

- Truth declarations: God is “my salvation,” “my God,” “my rock.”
- Future hope: “I shall again praise Him.”
- Application: Faith actively confronts despair with truth.

4. The Soul Follows God’s Light Back to Joy (Psalm 43:3–4)

- Prayer: “Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me.”
- Goal: restored communion with God, not just emotional relief.
- Movement to worship: “God my exceeding joy.”
- Means: Word, prayer, worship, and community.
- Application: Follow God’s truth back into His presence.

5. Christ in the Text

- Jesus experienced sorrow (Matthew 26:38).
- At the cross, He bore ultimate suffering for sinners.
- In the resurrection, He secures hope beyond sorrow.
- Because Christ lives, hope is never ultimately lost.

6. Conclusion – A Path for the Troubled Soul

- Bring sorrow honestly to God.
 - Preach truth to your soul.
 - Follow God’s light back to joy.
 - Faith moves the soul from despair toward praise.
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HEART – "This Is Me"

1. Where do you most feel the weight of sorrow in your life right now?
2. Are you honest with God about your struggles, or do you tend to hide them?
3. What thoughts or lies most often shape your emotional state?
4. Do you resonate with the Psalmist’s feeling of being overwhelmed?
5. Where have you felt distant from God recently?
6. What would it look like for you to bring your real emotions to God this week?

HEAD – "This Is What I Need to Think About"

1. What does the image of the deer teach us about spiritual longing (Psalm 42:1–2)?
2. Why is it important that the Psalmist expresses both faith and confusion?

3. What is the significance of the repeated refrain (42:5, 42:11, 43:5)?
4. What does it mean to 'preach truth to yourself'?
5. How do truth and emotion interact in the Christian life?
6. How does Jesus fulfill the hope expressed in these Psalms?

HANDS – "This Is How I Need to Act"

1. Spend time this week honestly expressing your struggles to God in prayer.
2. Write down one truth about God to speak to your soul daily.
3. Identify one area where you need to choose hope over despair.
4. Engage intentionally in Scripture, prayer, or worship this week.
5. Reach out to another believer instead of isolating yourself.
6. As a group, pray for one another and speak truth into each other's lives.