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Fighting the Fight of Faith; Psalm 42
GPBC
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Introduction – Have you ever caught yourself talking to yourself out loud? Have you ever caught someone else talking to themselves out loud? And the most embarrassing of all, have you ever been caught by someone else talking to yourself out loud? We usually think all is not well for those who converse with themselves and yet we all do it. The most dangerous time to talk to ourselves is when we are discouraged, down, depressed because our talk is negative and filled with hypotheticals and untruths. Instead, we need to preach to ourselves!

In Psalm 42 the psalmist is preaching to himself because he is fighting the fight of faith by speaking truth to himself. In 1 Tim 6:12, Paul instructs Timothy to “Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...” In other words, we fight the good fight of faith by taking hold of the gospel, of the good promises made to us in Christ. We remind ourselves, we preach to ourselves the faith when our faith is being tested. We fight to believe what is true when we are being pressed to believe in what is not true. That’s what the psalmist is doing in Psalm 42. He’s preaching to himself. He’s fighting the fight of faith because his faith is being sorely tested.

- I. External and Internal Hindrances of Faith
 - a. For some reason, the psalmist has been separated from corporate worship with the people of God. And it grieves his soul. He terribly misses the encouragement of worshipping with other believers and the joy of coming before the Lord together.
 - i. He strongly desires to worship the Lord. Vv1-2
 - ii. He greatly misses not only taking part in corporate worship but in leading corporate worship. V4
 - iii. While Psalm 42 doesn’t name David as the author, it does fit with David’s flight from Jerusalem when Absalom devised a coupe. Many believers through the ages have undergone this trial of separation from corporate worship.
 1. Ill. I’m reminded of the letters of Samuel Rutherford. Rutherford was a 17th C pastor in Scotland who was said to be always praying, always preaching, always visiting the sick, always catechizing, always writing

and studying. Rutherford was banished from his church as being part of the nonconformity movement. Non-conformers were Protestants, like the Puritans and the Pilgrims, who were not part of the Church of England, and that was illegal. During his exile from his church, Rutherford wrote many letters, and he would often write about the pain and anguish of what he called his many dumb Sabbaths. Meaning, it pained him much to be restrained from preaching and worshipping with his church.

2. Believers today in hostile places often speak of the pain of not being able to gather with believers.
 3. Bonhoeffer, in his classic work *Life Together*, writes about how we so often take corporate worship for granted and how being able to gather and worship the Lord together is a grace of God.
 4. I fear we have enjoyed the freedom to assemble for so long in our country that we too often neglect corporate worship for far lesser reasons.
- b. Not only is he suffering from being separated from corporate worship, he is also suffering from the taunts and ridicule of unbelievers. Vv3,10
- i. At every turn he faces the jeers of unbelievers constantly calling into question his faith. Where is your God now? What good did it do you to believe in God? When will you come to your senses and admit that there is no God?
 - ii. We too will often face those looks of pity, those sly comments of questioning our beliefs, the ostracism of those who vehemently or condescendingly look down on us for holding fast to the truth of God's Word and the Gospel. And it has an effect. It wears you down and weighs on you.
 - iii. Sometimes it's our own voices telling us those lies.
- c. The psalmist knew the anguish of separation from believing fellowship and the constant weight of ongoing taunting of his faith. These external trials led him to a place of internal anguish.

II. A State of Confusion, Depression, and Doubt

- a. The psalmist finds himself confused over having the right desires for God but yet enduring great suffering, he finds himself

depressed because he remembers the days of enjoying the goodness of God but it seems that God is now too far out of reach, and that has prompted the psalmist to have lingering doubt.

i. Listen to these words of confusion, depression, and doubt.
Vv6-9.

1. V6a – depression
2. V6b – recalling God’s goodness to His people
3. V7 – confusion - I know you are good to your people because I have read about it and heard about it, but you are drowning me
4. V8 – fledgling, weakened faith – I know you’re good, I know you are with me, even though it doesn’t feel like it, so I’m trying to pray
5. V9a – doubt – Now God hasn’t forgotten the psalmist, but that’s how he feels, and when he musters the strength to pray all he can say is why!
6. V9b – confusion – Why does this oppression and opposition and persecution cut me down so low and send me for such a spin when I know you are my rock? Why am I so weak? Why am I so defeated?

b. The psalmist is at a point in life that all he has is his faith, and it is extremely weak. So there’s only one thing to do for him and for us when we find ourselves in the same situation, fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of God, the promises of God, and the gospel. Take the faith of Scripture and fight to believe what God has told us in His Word is true. Fight to believe in what God has given us to believe rather than falling prey to believing in the lies that the world, the Enemy, and even ourselves will tell us. That is fighting the good fight of faith. Preach to ourselves.

III. How to Fight by Faith, with The Faith

a. Lessons from the psalmist on fighting the good fight of faith.

i. Preach to yourself. The psalmist is getting outside of himself and speaking directly to himself. He’s looking in the mirror and correcting himself.

1. Preach to yourself how ridiculous it is to doubt God.
2. Preach truth to yourself. Confusion, depression, doubt, anxiety all cause us to distort reality, misconstrue and misperceive reality, create

hypothetical fears and worries. When that happens, preach truth to yourself. Tell yourself what is really real, what is truly true, what is actual reality. We have to preach to ourselves the difference between perception and reality.

- ii. When you are plagued by all that you do not understand and do not know, preach to yourself the things that are absolutely certain.
 - a. Go back to the character of God. Circumstances come and go. Doubts come and go. Feelings come and go. God remains the same!
 - b. Go back to the promises of God.
 - c. Go back to the gospel.
- iii. Preaching to ourselves is not a quick fix, it is a means of keeping our faith alive and our heads above water in the middle of our trials.
 - a. V6 – Notice the fight did not cease but continued.
 - b. V11 – Notice the psalmist had to keep fighting. Just kept repeating the same truths.
- iv. When we preach to ourselves, when we go back to what we know is true, back to God, back to His promises, back to the gospel, we are fighting the fight of faith. We are fighting to believe what God has given us to believe.
 - a. Sometimes the victory isn't in winning the fight and totally defeating our circumstances and our feelings and our opposition. Sometimes the victory is simply the fight.
 - b. Notice that the fight wasn't over for the psalmist after v5. He had to keep fighting for faith in v11. And that, my dear friends, is the victory. Hardships will come. Opposition will come. Discouragement and doubt will come. And they will always come throughout this life. May God give us the grace to meet our trials with faith and keep meeting our trials with faith and keep fighting the fight of faith until at last faith become sight!
- v. Note what the psalmist preached to himself.

1. He directed his soul to the right activity – hope in God
2. He directed his soul to the true future – I shall again praise Him
3. He directed his soul to the right place – my salvation and my God