

# Hope in God

SJSM Sermon

9-10 November 2024 | Ven Wong Tak Meng

# We could talk about the Theological, Spiritual and Pastoral Issues of various common Mental Disorders

- **Anxiety disorders**, e.g., Panic Attacks, Obsessions, Compulsions (possibly in **King Saul, Prophet Elijah**, etc.)
- **Mood disorders**, e.g., Depression, Bipolar Disorder (possibly in **King David, Prophet Jeremiah**, etc.)
- **Psychosis** (break from reality), e.g., Schizophrenia (possibly in King **Nebuchadnezzar**, etc.)

# Something more important to talk about – A Common Misconception

- Strong Christians live on mountain tops in the presence of God.



- Only weak Christians live in dark valleys of depression, doubt and distress away from the presence of God.



# Spiritual distress is part of the normal Christian experience (Psalm 42)

- Feeling that God is far away: **thirsting for God** (1-2), **where is your God** (3, 10)
- Our prayers seem unheard: **why have you forgotten me** (9)
- **Internal storms**: tears (3), joyful worship and ministry a distant memory (4b), mourning, sadness and turmoil (5-6, 9-10)
- **Endless external struggles**: oppressive taunting voices (3, 9-10), upheaval, deep calls to deep, waterfall, breakers, waves (7)
- **Obsessing over desired outcomes** deepens the cycle of despair (4-5)
- **Temptation**: to give up on faith, and even life itself.

# Where is God during times of spiritual distress?

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”  
Psalm 121:1-2

# 1. God is still “our God”

- My God (6, 11) – God knows each of us by name
- The God of my life (8) – Our very breath is a gift from Him
- My salvation (5, 11) – He is working out something good for our lives
- My rock (9) – On Him we can stand, in Him we can find our footing and strength

## 2. God holds our circumstances in His hands

- Remembering the mighty river Jordan and the lofty peaks of Mt Hermon (6) – God is all-powerful (omnipotent)
- The storms and the deep (7) are not beyond His control (“your waterfalls, your breakers and your waves”)
- Our troubles are not wasted, as God is making something beautiful out of them.



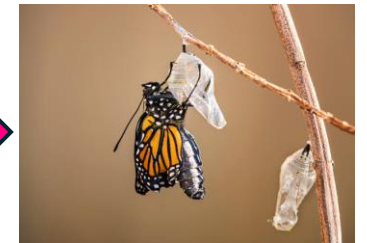
Pebbles smoothed by the waves



Caterpillar



Pupa



Butterfly

# 3. God is present with us and working in us for good

- God commands His steadfast love by day and sings to us by night (8)
- In turn, He hears our prayer deep into the night (8)
- God's intentions are all-loving, all-wise (omnisapient), His working is all-powerful (omnipotent), and He is personally all-present (omnipresent) with us in our deepest trials.
- “And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

**8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.**



# Application: Leaning on the grace of God

- “**My grace** is sufficient for you, for **my power** is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 12:9)
- For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.** (2 Cor 12:10)
- Cling to God, let go of our own understanding, surrender our desired outcomes and embrace the new gifts He is bring out in us.

**Hope in God;  
for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.**

# Psalm 42:1-11

Psa. 42:0 To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

Psa. 42:1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,

so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before  
God?

3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while they say to me all the day long,

“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember,  
as I pour out my soul:

how I would go with the throng  
and lead them in procession to the  
house of God with glad shouts and  
songs of praise,  
a multitude keeping festival.

Psa. 42:5 Why are you cast down, O  
my soul,

and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise  
him, my salvation

6 and my God.

# Psalm 42:1-11

My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of  
Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep  
at the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your breakers and your waves  
have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his  
steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock:  
“Why have you forgotten me?

Why do I go mourning  
because of the oppression of the  
enemy?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me all the day long,

“Where is your God?”

Psa. 42:11

Why are you cast down, O  
my soul,

and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise  
him, my salvation and my God.

- Dryness and thirst for God, when He seems far away, are a normal part of the spiritual journey (1-2).
- Nagging external and internal voices of doubt are also normal – “Where is your God?” (3, 10)
- Thinking about what we used to do for God (4) may not help, but leads instead to greater disappointment, turmoil and despair (5a, 11a)
- Our true and only relief comes from reflecting deeper on God Himself – Hope in God (5b-6a, 11)
- He is pleased to still be “my God” (6)
- He is aware and holds in check the circumstances, the storms—waterfalls, breakers, waves— (7)
- He is all-wise (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), all-present (omnipresent) and all-present with us in our trials (8)
- Experience says “forgotten”, faith says “my Rock” (9) – which voice will you listen to?
- Our response—not self-pity (9-10), but prayer and hope in God (11)