

Speaking to the soul



Discouragement

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Saviour and my God! Psalm 42:11

We all face times of discouragement, when nothing seems to be going right, as it's an inevitable part of the ups and downs of life. But sometimes those times of discouragement can dominate all our thinking; that is clearly how it was for

the psalmist. He reflects that his tears have been his food day and night and people were taunting him all day long with the words: "Where is your God?" He thinks back on the happy days when he would lead the worship procession up to the temple, but that's all a distant memory now. He paints a very sad picture. But his feelings of despair don't have the last word, because amid the grief he knows that God will not let him down. He puts his hope in God, knowing that there will come a time when he will be able to praise God again.

We are told that depression is extremely common and that about 50 per cent of people will experience it at some time in their life. At any one time, about 20 per cent of people suffer from a degree of depression. If this is your own personal experience then I encourage you to take heart from the psalmist. Amid the confusion and darkness of your depression I urge you to hang on to the fact that God has never, and will never, abandon you. He loves you and is committed to you whatever happens, whether it feels like it or not.

For many of us depression is outside our personal experience. We need to be acutely sensitive to those we will work and live with for whom this is a deep and agonising experience. We need to be ready to listen sympathetically to their experience with the humility that comes from knowing that they are walking a path that we have not trodden. We need to be very prayerful and offer our companionship before anything else, in the knowledge that God is always reaching out to them with hope.

QUESTION

What have you learned about God when you have faced times of discouragement?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the honesty of the psalmist. I praise you for the confidence that he had in you even when everything seemed to be going wrong. Amen

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