

Sermon by — Mike Aylestock, Pastor of *Community Baptist Church* which gathers in South Riding, VA.

Preached — at *Community Baptist Church*, August 21, 2016 (available on our website)

Title — Surviving the Grind of Life

Text — Psalm 42-43

Scripture Reading — Psalm 42

Need — Depression

Objective — Teach Christians how to conquer depression.

B.L.U.F.F. — To survive the grind of life, hope in God!

Question — How do you deal with the inner turmoil brought by trouble?

Key Word — Actions

Outline: 1. Talk about Better Days
2. Walk in the Country
3. Soak in God's Word

Surviving the Grind of Life

Psalm 42-43

Attention: Do you have a *churning place*? For some it is in the pit of their stomach, for some their brow. For me – it's the base of my skull. There, whenever I get stressed out, I get tight, and begin to ache.

Need: Do you ever get stressed? Do you have a churning spot that let's you know when you are stressed? Do people and circumstances bring an inner grinding to you?

What do you do? Pills? Drugs? Shrink?

I've got great news for you.....!

BLUFF (bottom line up front): To survive the grind of life, hope in God!

Context: In the ancient Hebrew *Psalms* appeared as 5 books. The 2nd *Book of Psalms* was the collection of what in our Bible is Psalm 42-72. This "set" of Psalms begins with 2 psalms that are believed to have originally been 1 psalm.

Why? For a couple of reasons:

1st – each of the psalms numbered 42-72 begin with a title, except psalm 43. It appears to be the 2nd half of psalm 42.

The title is "To the chief Musician, Maschil." Maschil was not the name of the chief Musician. "Maschil" = instruction. This writing was given to the musician because it contained important instruction to the people. So important was it's contents that it was to be put to music and sang continually. *Music shapes lives!!!* Parents, remember that when you shape the musical tastes of your children through your entertainment.

This instruction is needed! This needs to shape the lives of God's people!

2nd – more importantly, is what is IN these two psalms. It is one unit. It tells the story of *how to survive the grind of life*.

These 2 psalms blend into a remarkable instruction on *how to survive the grind of life*. But first, you have to feel the state of the psalmist's mind.

Let me show you two things about the content of these 2 psalms that show they are really blended into one fantastic psalm

Hints of Trouble:

- 42:2b – desire for escape
- 42:3a – tears
- 42:3b – ridicule
- 42:9a – God has forgotten me
- 42:9b-10a – oppression from enemy
- 42:10b – daily ridicule
- 43:1a – unmerciful (ungodly) group of people
- 43:1b – lying & unfair man
- 43:2a – seems like God has pushed me aside
- 43:2b – enemies oppress me

What do you whisper to God when listing your problems?

- Is it health?
- An enemy at work who has it in for you?
- Has your commitment to Jesus Christ cost you a promotion? A job?
- Are you being lied about?
- Do antagonists see the trouble you are in and mock you with “Where is your God?!”

What causes your churning spot to begin to tighten up?

These were hints of David's stressful life. But notice what he kept saying throughout these psalms (which shows their unity as 1 psalm).

Collapse of Strength: 42:5, 11; 43:5

Three times. The conclusion of three stanzas of song. We're being instructed on the subject of *how to survive the grind of life*.

Life leaves us....

“cast down” = crouch, bow down, reduced to fetal position.

“disquieted” = growl as a wounded animal, moan internally.

See the impact of the *grind of life*....feel the impact! The churning spot is in full drive. Tightened up. Twisting and turning.

BUT, the psalmist asks – “Why am I like this? Hope in God! I shall yet praise Him!”

Each stanza contains a vital truth about *how to survive the grind of life*.

Each stanza in this ancient psalm ends with the author revealing that his hope is in God.

Learn something! The psalmist was not driven to a therapist. He did not make an appointment with a psychiatrist. He was driven to God! See 42:1-2.

These three stanzas contain vital truth about *how to survive the grind of life*.

However, this is not a self-help, 3 steps and the trouble vanishes. The trouble of life brought the psalmist to depression. Such trouble ignited a passion to draw close to God. *He needed God!*

BLUFF (bottom line up front): To survive the grind of life, hope in God!

Question: But what can he do to experience God again? How can he hope in God and praise Him?

What can YOU do to experience God again when your churning spot reveals that you are stressed out?

Here's what the psalmist did to be able to hope in God again. They are three practical actions that accompany a passion for God.

Transition: ... three practical actions...

First action:

1. TALK ABOUT BETTER DAYS 42:4

I talk to myself.

I tell myself my problems.

Then I rehearse good stories of better days!

David remembered great memories of his past – when he was part of a crowd of people going to church, singing, happy, praising.

He remembered the times of the “holydays.” When Jewish families would take off work and gather at God’s House and celebrate God in their lives. It was filled with singing, dancing in circles, praising God...and of course good food!

Their 7 Holydays – Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles.

God was real! This was before you turned holydays into holidays. Before time off to celebrate and seek God was traded for sports and entertainment.

Recalling such memories of better days, thinking about the impact God had made in his life, reliving the highlights of his walk with God – all this caused him to ask...

“Why am I depressed? Why am I groaning? Hope in God!”

Second action:

2. WALK IN THE COUNTRY 42:6-8

Now David will take another action to help with his depression and bring relief to his churning spot.

He'll leave Jerusalem, get away from all the hassles, go down to the Jordan River and travel north to above the Sea of Galilee heading up toward Mt. Hermon. There, from a smaller mountain (Hill of Mizar) he can spend some time out in the country...in the mountains.

He notices that the spring snow was melting off Mt. Hermon and was rushing down the ravines, cascading down toward the Sea of Galilee. The loud waterfalls (waterspouts) brought wave after wave of water down upon him.

There “deep calleth unto deep...” v. 7

- the deep reverberations of the waterfalls called to the deep agony of his soul.
- wave after wave of cascading water matched the wave after wave of depression and agony he was experiencing.

He wanted God!!!

Perhaps he walked through the wooded hills, climbed the ravines, walked through the streams, sat under the waterfalls feeling the water cascade over him.

v. 8 – His mind began to race back to the days, when just a boy, he enjoyed the solace of nature (God’s first book!).

- days leading his dad’s flock of sheep from hillside to hillside finding nourishment and water.

- nights lying under the star-studded sky looking up and thinking about God.

He calls out.....read vs. 8!

Yes! He needs God and finds Him in His 1st Book – nature.

Sometime you need to get out of the office. Leave your laptop and cell phone. Drive out into the country. Take off your shoes and walk through a stream. Sit under a waterfall. Lay under a star-studded night sky ***and enjoy God!***

You might just think “Why am I depressed? Why am I groaning? Hope in God!”

But there is one more action....

Third action:

3. SOAK IN GOD’S WORD 43:3-4

After repeating again the source of his churning and depression, he cries out... 43:3a.

“I need God’s Word!”

Not just to read His Word (“truth”) but to *understand* His Word (“light”).

Turn to God’s Word. Read. Study. Understand.

- Let God’s Word lead you.
- God’s Word will lead you to His Holy Hill (Calvary, Mt. Moriah, Mt. Zion) – where sin is dealt with at the cross. Where the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin.
- God’s Word will lead you to His House (tabernacles!).
- You’ll find yourself at the altar where bloody sacrifices atoned

for sin. It’s the blood that cleanses from sin. Jesus’ sacrifice on Mt. Calvary!

DON’T MISS THIS!!!!

You will come to learn that even in your difficult times in life that God is your exceeding joy!

This is a name for God – “El Simchath Gili” = God my Exceeding Joy.

“Gili” = a revolution, an age, a season of time.

God can be your exceeding joy ***right now in this season of your life when your churning spot has pushed you into a fetal position and you are groaning!!!***

You might just think “Why am I depressed? Why am I groaning? Hope in God!”

Why? – “He is the health of my countenance!” He is the one who saved my face from that distraught look of agony. He put a smile on me from ear to ear.

CONCLUSION – What are the results of igniting a passion for God by 1) Talking of Better Days; 2) Walking in the Country; and 3) Soaking in God’s Word?

I will find God to be:

- ⇒ My exceeding great joy in this season of life.
- ⇒ My refreshing outlook on life (health of my countenance).

Some of those I have taught in college have found humor in my response to how I’m doing – “I’m super!”

In West Virginia (Weston – Hope’s Point Baptist Church VBS,

2016) someone asked me how I was doing. I replied “Doing great! Top of the world!” to which they quipped “Walking on Sunshine!” I said, “Hey, I like that!” So I adopted a new saying – “I’m Walking on Sunshine!”

The next day someone heard me say that and they replied that the saying was from a song. That worried me. Kyle Calhoun Googled it for me and said the Veggie Tales sang it as a pop song from the 1980's. Well, if cucumbers and tomatoes sing it then it can't be bad.

Then I was with preaching for Ricardo Payne (Light House BC, Southeast DC). When he heard me say “I’m Walking on Sunshine!” he said “No, don’t say that! Over hear that means you’ve been smoking reefers!”

Well, I can say that I don’t need drugs to be “Walking on Sunshine!” But I do need to be panting after God and finding Him to be my exceeding great joy in the difficult seasons of life and even changing my face from oppressive defeat to brilliant victory.

Running through these psalms...

- Complaints about what brought his despair (“my enemies...”)
- Expressions of surprise about his depression (“Why are thou...”)
- Encouragement to hope in God (“hope thou in God”)
- Confidence that he will be an overcomer (“I shall yet...”)

This isn’t a neat and tidy formula that removes the struggle. It is the strange mixture of trouble, shock, hope, confidence and a God who is amazing. But in the midst of it all God tells us how we can best emerge from the fetal position to walk on sunshine with a smile – talk to yourself about better days, walk in the country and soak in God’s Word.

Not a simple formula, but actions that will accompany your passion to seek God during the grind of life.