

## Put Your Hope In God

### Introduction:

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. In Bible times, they didn't have cameras but some of the contributors to the Bible drew pictures with words. Word pictures are clever devices for illustrating an important truth, for driving home an argument, for helping someone to see an idea in concrete terms.

The Lord Jesus used this device many times. Many of his parables for example depend on his hearers using their imagination to see a sower who went out to sow; a woman sweeping the house until she found her lost coin or the shepherd carrying the lost sheep on his shoulders with the ninety-nine other sheep safely in an enclosure.

### IN THE PITS:

The Psalmists also used word pictures. We see this in Psalm 42:1 where we read: *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you O God.* The psalmist who wrote Psalms 42 and 43, which may have originally been one Psalm, seems depressed or at least 'down in the pits', for he writes: *Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? My tears have been my food day and night. I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"*

We don't know the circumstances which gave rise to this believer's depressed state but it had to do with enemies and feeling forsaken by God. Three times he writes the same words about being downcast and disturbed, in 42:5 and 11 and 43:5.

## Put Your Hope In God

A huge percentage of Australians suffer from depression, anxiety, stress and burnout. Some seek medical help and some suffer quietly without anyone else knowing. Sadly, many seek what they think is the only way out and take their own lives. There may be people here today who are struggling with an issue, a relationship or with life itself.

### OUT OF THE PIT

The whole tone of Psalms 42 and 43 is of course one of prayer by a devout believer. He is wrestling in prayer. Sometimes when things get tough the last thing we feel like doing is praying and reading the Bible. People cut themselves off from others and withdraw, even from God. But not this person!

He knows the solution to his predicament and records the words three times in 42:5 and 11 and 43:5: *Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.* This is the way out of the pit of despair. This is the way to get rid of the 'black dog'.

The Psalmist could envisage the day when he would return to the Congregation and praise the Lord with songs of praise. We know that he is a believer because he refers to God as *my Saviour and my God.* Maybe he'd been rescued from depression before and in that sense been 'saved' or maybe he is referring to his rescue from sin.

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Some questions come to mind concerning the words *put your hope in God*. Is he speaking to himself? Many of us might speak to ourselves occasionally, sometimes out loud and sometimes in our minds. *Come on, get your act together! You can do this! Now where did I leave my keys, my wallet or my husband!* The Psalmist tells himself: *Put your hope in God*. Later, after he is feeling a lot better, having been rescued from the pit, he may say to others in similar situations, *put your hope in God!*

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO *PUT YOUR HOPE IN GOD*?

Here's another question about this phrase: what does it mean?

The word *hope* means different things. We can *hope* that bananas are cheaper this week or that the relatives can't come for Christmas! In this context it is a flabby and weak word.

In the Psalms before us the word *hope* is a strong word. It means to put one's absolute trust and confidence in God. Rather than looking at our problems and being discouraged and down-hearted by them, we look to our Sovereign God for a way out of the problem and for strength and courage while we suffer.

In the New Testament, the word *hope* is a strong word as well. In Romans 15:13 we read a wonderful prayer about hope: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*. Here's a prayer that we can pray for others and for ourselves.

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God is described in this prayer as the source of *hope*. This *hope* for which we pray is the confident expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus as the judge of all. For those who have become Christians through repentance and faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus is our *hope*. As we experience the joy and peace by being in a right relationship with God through Christ alone, through faith alone and through grace alone, it is anticipated that we will *overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*. It isn't just a little bit of hope but a "Clancy", an *overflow of hope*.

### Conclusion:

When things are going well for Christians with our health and life in general, in the words of our Psalms we should be *thirsting* for God, *panting* for God. This will involve reading the Bible, spending time in prayer and regularly meeting for Church with God's people.

When things are not going well, when we feel down in the pits, we may be tempted to put God on the shelf for a while.

Let's take the advice of the Psalmist to *put your hope in God*.

When we see others struggling, let's gently prayerfully encourage them to *put your hope in God*, through trusting in our only Saviour, Jesus Christ.