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A Remedy for a Cast-down Soul

SERMON preached by Mr. H. Dawson, at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on
Sunday morning, January 4th, 1959

Psalm 42: 6

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

The Psalmist was an unusual character inasmuch as he was concerned about his soul's welfare, and, when any poor sinner is the subject of such a concern it makes such an one to be an unusual character.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me." I wonder how many of you in this assembly are here with souls cast down. Souls cast down because you cannot feel that things are right between your souls and God as you desire them to be. There are things that you desire God to do for your soul, which as yet, as you feel, He has not been pleased to do. Somewhat He has done in begetting in you a concern about your soul and the salvation of it; but you want new evidences and tokens for good, and that He will put the great question out of question that you may feel "It is well with my soul".

I would, as the Lord shall help me, look at this subject from two or three view points. The setting of it is instructive and suggestive, and I would make this plain that it is not against you if you should be in the attitude of worship with a soul cast down. A soul cast down concerning the eternal welfare of it will never be a soul cut off - a lost soul; no, and yet that may be what some of you are cast down about as to whether you will ultimately be a lost soul. It is a calamity unspeakable, indescribable, and no calamity that you can name beneath the sun can parallel the calamity of being a lost soul. A very solemn consideration, and yet, as soon as a sinner is born again, and realises (as he does then) "I have a soul, a never-dying soul," he is made aware that he is born for an eternal state, either to be lost or saved. His early impression is that he will be lost because he feels to be such a sinner, hell-deserving, underserving, and he knows a little of what the Psalmist describes elsewhere: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow, then cried I: 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul'". "My soul is cast down within me because I think of it being born for an eternal state, and where shall I spend it"? Now, first of all, let us look just a little at what was the Psalmist's case, as at this time the Psalmist had entered into a very solemn experience, and one that he never dreamed would ever befall him as he journeyed on through life. The Psalmist was Israel's King, and yet he had stepped down from Israel's throne and fled as a fugitive into the wilderness of Judea. Absalom, his unfilial and ungodly son, had risen up in rebellion against his godly father, and for a while seemed to be triumphing therein. O it must have been an amazing experience for the dear Psalmist from the view point of being Israel's King, for he could go back and remember when God had made it very plain that he was to be Israel's King when Samuel poured the anointing oil upon his head, signifying he was to succeed Saul and reign on Israel's throne. Now this

epoch had come into his life in the evening time of it, so that he actually steps down from Israel's throne, and is found in the wilderness of Judea. A very solemn, humiliating experience for godly David as Israel's King, yet there was something deeper down than that, for the Psalmist was Absalom's father; and, what must his feelings have been when he contemplated Absalom, his son, seeking to usurp his position as Israel's King. He must have had some very solemn reflections about it, and he had many a sigh and cry and groan before God, with Whom he had to do, that he had failed so much as a father in training up Absalom in the way wherein he should go. I have told you, not once or twice, in my long ministry, that David was an over-indulgent father, and it is very easy for fathers, though they be godly fathers, to be over indulgent, and to make mistakes and to spare the rod, and, therefore, spoil the child, as the Word of God declares. And so the Psalmist must have had many searchings of heart being Absalom's father, and he had to lament his failures in being that which he should have been as a godly one wherein it says: "The father to the children shall make known Thy truth". "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." But then, deeper down still, the Psalmist was a godly man, a man who had been eminent for godliness, who had set forth the deep things of God in many a Psalm heretofore, a man who had climbed up in to heavenly places with Christ Jesus; and now this chapter has come into his life's history and he knows not what the future will bring, but he is given grace to behave aright. What does he say? "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar". And one thing is so evident with godly David as we read the Psalms which are his own Psalms as I have told you before, but I will remind you that you will often read in the heading of the Psalm whereabouts the Psalmist was when he entered into the experience and the exercise of mind which is outlined in the Psalm itself. One thing you will not find in reading the Psalms of David, and that is you will not find the Psalmist going into any details of what his trouble was to mention by name who was the troubler if it was to do with man. No, it is a most beautiful characteristic of godly David that when he came into straits, and he was inspired of God to put down what his exercises were, that they were all to do with his soul, and you might be surprised if you searched it out in the Psalms of David, how often the dear man says: "My soul, - my soul, - my soul". "Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee, and let Thy judgments help me." Whatever his troubles were, ultimately the Psalmist wanted to get something for his soul therein; do you? It is a good sign of being a sinner born again

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Gathers thick and thunders loud",

and you are concerned that your soul shall be made lively in the things of God as the outcome of it, - to have sanctification of the trouble, and get good for your soul. The Psalmist gives us a beautiful insight as to what his concern was: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God". I like that word 'panteth', it is very suggestive, it is very helpful. I do not know how you find things in your every-day life, but I

cannot always find adequate words to set forth what I feel; and the longer I live, the more glad I feel that:

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near".

The Psalmist says: "So panteth my soul after Thee, O God". Panting for breath, as it were, panting to breathe the atmosphere of heaven; and he says in another Psalm: "I opened my mouth and panted". "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God." O, that is a beautiful characteristic in the dealings of God with a poor sinner, when that sinner is willing to come to the light, whatever troubles have befallen him or his. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." And says the dear Psalmist: "When shall I come and appear before God". I believe - shall I say this? Yes, - I believe that is the last thing that some of you would desire this Sabbath morn, - to appear before God, knowing you are what you are and where you are, and that you have no concern whatever about your soul. Blessed be God, many of you have come to appear before God, and in coming you have felt:

"What is the house to me,
Unless the Master I can see?"

Glad you will be if you can feelingly appear before God and realise His Eye is upon you, and rejoice in His Smile, and prove His Blessing. It is a good evidence of being taught of God, to have that concern within: "When shall I come and appear before God". You can picture in your mind what must have been said in Israel's land when this trouble happened to the Psalmist. It must have been a surprising matter to multitudes of Israelites that godly David should have stepped down from Israel's throne, and fled into the wilderness of Judea. Not only so, hundreds, thousands of them were on Absalom's side. And now, this was a crooked thing that only God could make straight, and the dear Psalmist says: "When shall I come and appear before God?" "Vain is the help of man in this matter which has befallen me". The Word of God says: "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good" and the dear Psalmist was indeed handling this matter wisely, like dear Job, when he said: "I would seek unto God, and unto Him would I commit my cause". "When shall I come and appear before God." Now, let your consciences tell you this Sabbath morn if you have got that concern within you to appear before God as you are here in the attitude of worship; and if you are saying: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me"; "O do make matters right between my soul and Thee", if you feel like that, poor sinner, the Lord bless you. "O, my God, my soul is cast down within me." The Psalmist felt his soul to be cast down because there was such a contrast between what his past experience had been, and where he was in the wilderness of Judea. He was not only in the wilderness of Judea, but he had got a wilderness inside. His past experience had been a wonderful one,

especially in the days of his youth, but here he is in a wilderness state: "Leave not my soul destitute" - "Make not my soul bare". And then he says, in the context - I wonder what you know about this, dear friends - "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me". There is a helpful and instructive expression for you: "I pour out my soul in me". Some of you know that is as you go about your every-day duties, your avocations in life, whatever they are. At times you are pouring out your soul inside, but you are doing it before God. It is a sigh, a cry, a groan, a wish, a breathing, and the same Psalmist says elsewhere: "All my desires are before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee," and he says: "I showed before Him my trouble". "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me, for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day." The Psalmist could remember holy days in his soul's experience, good days in the house of God; when his heart was in tune, when he could utter the voice of joy and praise. Now he did not know when he would worship God like that again, and his soul was cast down through the miss of it. Do you miss the worship of God, when you cannot be in your usual place in His earthly courts? Is there an aching void within which the world cannot fill? Is there something deep down that makes you say with David, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness?" Do look at this word "holyday"; change the "y" into an "i" and you have got the difference between heaven and hell, and between life and death. "Holiday", make the Sabbath day a holiday, as thousands, tens of thousands do, and the end of a life like that is hell. If the Sabbath to you is a holy day, and you are helped to worship God aright therein, the end of such a life, beyond all questioning, is heaven, - remember that. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Such was the Psalmist's case.

Let us look at the second view point of the subject: the Psalmist's complaint. "My soul is cast down." As I said earlier on, some of you may be here with a soul cast down. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul." Is it because things are not right between God and your soul? Are you aware as to why it is that things are not right between God and your soul? Is there something which is before your mind's eye which you know is a hindrance to things being made right between God and you? Is there an idol set up? Is there some secret snare you have fallen into? Is there something in your life that has brought you to be at the ends of the earth, and at a distance from God? I would have you weigh these things up, and examine yourselves in the light of the Word of God. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." It is a wonderful mercy when you are made willing to be searched and tried, and, at whatever cost it is, to have things made right between your soul and God. You may be cast down in your soul because you are getting further openings up of what a sinner you are, and you must expect that line of things to be wrought in your soul's experience if you are taught of God. The Word of the Lord is plain: "Turn again, son of man, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these".

"The Holy Ghost will make the soul
Feel its sad condition;
For the sick, and not the whole,
Need the Good Physician."

It is a painful line of things to learn, but everyone taught of God is made painfully aware of his or her sinnership. "Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart." What will make you cast down in your soul at times is to realise:

"They who fain would serve God best
Are conscious most of wrong within",

and you pore over it, you look within; and, while it is well to know the plague of the heart, you need grace lest you should be too introspective regarding your soul's experience. The Hymnwriter gives good counsel:-

"Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;"

and what does the Psalmist say: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me", and he does not go on to take up more time to diagnose all the things which bring about the cast-down state, but he dwells on what is the antidote for the cast-down soul, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember Thee". I will remember Thee as the sinners' Friend. I will remember Thee as One Who delightest in mercy. I will remember Thee. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." You may be cast down, some of you, because you have not those clear-cut evidences yet that you are a sinner born again. You listen to the Gospel, and you love it, you delight in the setting forth that "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins"; but your soul is cast down because as yet, you cannot feel as you would like to feel, concerning Jesus Christ in all that He is as the sinners' Friend - "My Lord and My God". Much might be said along that line of thought. You may be here with a cast down soul because you have nothing very clear-cut as to the good work being begun within, nothing definite. There are many people taught of God like that, especially now-a-days, wherein it seems to be "a day of small things" regarding the Holy Spirit's work. Many are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward; and many are saying, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me" - "Am I a pilgrim to Canaan bound; am I in the right way with heaven at the end of it? O that I could be assured that matters are right between my soul and Thee." Now this is hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and the dear Saviour says: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled". You may feel your soul is cast down through the wear and tear of everyday life. When you set out in the life divine - (go back to the early dealings of God with you) what high hopes you had, what zeal possessed you, what love abounded, and how you desired to be a real Christian and to live unto God, live for God; and the years have rolled on, and instead of looking forward, you often look back

over a lifetime, wherein you have to lament that as to being a real Christian: "It is so high, I cannot attain to it", as I understand a real Christian should be. "The good that I would, I do not, the evil I would not, that I do." "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." "I would do good, but evil is present with me." Remember the antidote for it, poor sinner, "Therefore will I remember Thee". I will remember Thy Righteousness avails for poor sinners who have none of their own wherein to appear before Thee. I will remember that lovely word, "From Me is thy fruit found". Not in your life as you have lived it; you do well to have it in your heart to be a real Christian, but, when all is said and done, the Word of the Lord is: "Ye are complete in Him". Yes, and you will never have more religion than this, and God grant you the mercy to have as much:

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Thy kind Arms I fall;
Be Thou my Strength, my Righteousness,
My Jesus and my All".

"I will remember Thee." "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Sometimes you feel cast down because of indwelling sin, what you are by nature, your besetment. O how it weakens your witness for God, if you fall a prey to it.

"Watched by the world with jealous eye,
That fain would see our sin and shame".

Can any of you, whose names are on the church roll, and any of you whose names are not there, yet love the truth that you listen to, week in and week out, reflect on your life as you have lived it, and not say: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me". O how often you and I have missed an opportunity to "do good unto all men, and especially they of the household of faith". How often you and I, with a slip here, and a wrong word there, a spirit not the spirit of Christ, have been a hindrance to others looking on, and especially the world without seeing conduct inconsistent, and hearing conversation not what it should be from people taught of God. Preacher and people must all plead guilty here. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." You and I have been like Peter; "and he followed afar off". And, too often, you and I follow, O so far off. It is good if you ever get a concern like this:

"Nearer, nearer to Thee clinging
O may my helpless soul be found".

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember Thee." You may have a cast down soul because of your lack of fruitfulness in your lips and lives. Some of us have had our names long on the church-roll, and there are some Scriptures I look at and they search me, and (I nearly said, and I will say it) sometimes they frighten me. A Scripture like this: "But grow in grace, and

in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ". Think how long you have been following on to know the Lord, and yet how little you know of Him and His truth; although His goodness and mercy have attended you all the days of your life, what little progress have you made in the life of the righteous, living unto God. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." You may be cast down because of your cross. Is it your cross? Yes, but if you could only look at it like this: "Not only is it given unto us to believe on His Name, but also to suffer for His Sake", and realise your cross is His cross which He has chosen for you, and you carry it for Jesus' sake, as well as your own, it would be a wonderful help to your cast down soul. If you keep looking at your cross, pondering on it, dwelling on it in your thoughts, you will have a cast down soul. The Word of the Lord is: "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds". "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember Thee." I will remember the Cross of Christ. As you get help to think on that, contemplate that, what a Cross it was, how He bore:

"All Incarnate God could bear
With strength enough and none to spare",

your cross will
be light in your soul's experience, and you will feel a gracious willingness
to carry it for Jesus' Sake as well as your own. Remember that

"Did Christ my Lord suffer,
And shall I repine?
His way was much rougher,
And darker than mine".

Much might be said about a soul
cast down and what produces the cast-down state.

It might be helpful to look at what the Psalmist says about his consolation. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." I want to emphasize what the Psalmist says: "I will remember Thee". No preacher can really tell you what was in the Psalmist's mind when he speaks about "the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar", but it might well have been that he was going back to the days of his youth, and to the early dealings of God with his soul, when he delivered the sheep from the paw of the lion and the bear, and when he laid Goliath low. He may have remembered when he said: "I come unto Thee in the Name of the living God", and he triumphed over the giant thereby. He might be remembering those days when he thought: "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul", and yet he was delivered and he succeeded Saul on Israel's throne, and he might have remembered again when Samuel poured the anointing oil on his head. It is good to have a remembrance of the dealings of God. For you it will not be "the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar", but you will have the equivalent of it. If you are helped to remember the way that God has led you, you will have some places in your soul's experience wherein

the hand of God was upon you for good, wherein you looked on, and saw His goodness passing before you in the way, wherein He wrought deliverances for you, wherein He enabled you to say: "Blessed be God, for He hath heard my prayer, nor turned away His mercy from me". It is a sweet occupation when grace is afforded to engage therein, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness". "Therefore will I remember Thee." I will look back on Ebenezers set up in bygone experiences. I will think of hill Mizars I have raised in times of trouble - the margin reading is "the little hill". You have some things which are outstanding, and it may be in between you have set up the equivalent of a little hill; but one thing is evident: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed and because His compassions fail not". There is consolation in that remembrance. Peter says: "Account that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation". "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, neither hath He rewarded us according to our iniquities." "Therefore will I remember Thee; - Thy sparing mercies, Thy providing mercies, Thy protecting mercies; yes, "I will remember Thee". I will remember Thee as a God of all Grace. Best of all, I will remember Thee as a God who is approachable. What a favour that is, it seems an elementary truth to keep stating, but I would have you learn it, dear friends, as grace is given, and God help you reduce it to practice. "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." You will get your cast down soul comforted then. You will get light on the dealings of God with you. You will see the why and wherefore of His dealings. You will learn: "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and techest him out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity". "I will remember Thee" in all Thy dealings with me along life's journey hitherto. "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." "I will remember Thee" as the sinners' Friend. I will remember that Thou didst come down into this world to be Emmanuel, God with us. In the Life that Jesus lived, O there is consolation for the cast down soul:-

"In Him the Father never saw
The least transgression of His law;
In Him we then perfection view,
The saints, in Him, are perfect too".

I will remember
what it pleased Thee to do as "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness".
I will remember Calvary's Cross, and what was done thereon, yes. "For He
hath made Him to be sin for us, that knew no sin, that we might be made the
righteousness of God in Him." I will remember what He has done; and what
He is still doing:-

"Awake, sweet gratitude, and sing
The ascended Saviour's love;
Sing how He lives to carry on
His peoples' cause above".

"O my God, my soul is cast

down within me, therefore will I remember Thee." I will remember Thy Name as our Advocate on high, and it is sweet to realise what the Psalmist states in another Psalm: "For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who would condemn his soul." O to realise:-

"Jesus on the eternal throne
For mourners intercedes".

"I will remember Thee." I will remember the Word of Thy grace - Thy exceeding great and precious promises, yea and amen are they in Christ Jesus; and whatever one's case may be, one's castings down, there is one of these exceeding great and precious promises to encourage you to hope in God.

"O what amazing words of grace
Are in the Gospel found,
Suited to every sinner's case
Who feels his soul's deep wound."

The dear Psalmist said in his cast down state - can you say it? - "Remember the Word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope". "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path." I will remember there is a throne of grace, and He, who reigns thereon, stretches forth a Sceptre to encourage and embolden poor sinners to approach unto Him as the sinners' Friend. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "I will remember Thee; - Who Thou art, "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today, and for ever." "I will remember Thee", what Thou art, a Refuge sure and nigh, and seek to do as godly David said: "I flee unto Thee to hide me". "Therefore will I remember Thee." And remember in your cast down state you have got one evidence to cheer you, however cast down you are; you can still think of that word of the Apostle Paul's: "Cast down, but not destroyed"; and you can remember also, poor sinner, in your cast down state, that you would rather be as you are then be out in the world, and of it, and be after the flesh, the things of the flesh. While you cannot say much about the dealings of God with your soul, and declare a confession of faith like others taught of God may be favoured to do, you can venture to declare:-

"Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes,
Above your highest mirth
Our saddest hours we prize,
For though our cup seems filled with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all".

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me"; but my soul is alive unto God, and there is within an aching void which the world cannot fill. The dear Psalmist was in want, and his soul was a panting soul, a thirsting soul, a soul alive

unto God. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

"For the wonders God has wrought,
Let us each our praises give;
And by sweet experience taught,
Call upon Him while we live."

Amen.

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