

# Tested Faith Produces.....

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Date: 22 December 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you would turn back with me please to that portion of the Lord's word that we read in Psalm 42 and will take us our text, Psalm 42 and at verse 5.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hoping God for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God.

It's a time of year where we ought to celebrate all that the Lord has done for us and in particular celebrate at the wonder of Jesus and the wonder of the Gospel.

But also it is a time for many within our congregations, within our families, within our communities. It is a time where it can be very tough, it can be quite difficult because it is a time of reflection.

There are perhaps people who have left the scene of time who we spent so many Christmases and New Years with.

[ 1 : 43 ] For many it is a time of great temptation where the glitz and the glamour of the world really do push itself upon us.

The parties, the work parties and all the rest of it can be good yes for a while but for many they can overdo it and that's the reality of the world in which we live in.

To be human is to feel loss and emotional pain at times and in particular for many at this time it very well may be a very hard time.

In our own congregation in the high free we have lost four elders in the last year alone. So for us as a congregation it's been quite tough but the Lord has blessed us in so many ways so we know that even within our congregation there are families that are mourning the loss of loved ones.

And the Samist here, he is both celebrating and he is reflecting and lamenting all at the same time.

[ 3 : 13 ] The Samist is a human being who has been saved by the blood of Jesus and by the grace of the Lord but he is a complex human being just like you and I are complex human beings we can go through so many emotions in one day.

And the Samist here is telling us about how his faith has been tested, how his faith has been tested and within this testing of his faith he expresses genuine cries to the Lord that he knows so well because faith that is tested and your faith and my faith will be tested.

And faith expresses genuine cries to God from the very depths of our hearts and you see that in the verses marked 1 to 4 and look at in particular at Psalm 42 and at verse 3 my tears have been my food day and night he says and verse 10 he says as with a deadly wound in my bones he says you know the way the Samist feels it is not just an occasional sense of pain or loss but it is a deadly wound he is describing it in verse 10 as it is crushing my bones and crushing is the same verb in Hebrew that is used to describe to kill something the way he feels may be fatal that is the way he feels and that is the way he wants to express himself to this God.

He expresses heart and mockery at the mocking of his enemies you'll see that in verse 3 of Psalm 42 you know his enemies are confounding to his misery it is a clue perhaps the Samist is an exile he's been cast away with the people of God into Babylon for the 70 years and he's been persecuted as if things are not bad enough for him.

He expresses the depth of his pain in verse 7 of Psalm 42 he says deep calls to deep he says at the roar of all of your waterfalls.

[ 5 : 51 ] You know it can be a time of year where people around us and people within our own families are feeling this way and perhaps we don't even know perhaps we don't even know perhaps it's a neighbour perhaps it is a work colleague perhaps it is a child perhaps it is a grandmother perhaps it is a grandfather you know this time of year can be very sore for so many people even in amongst all the joy of the gospel and the joy of Jesus coming.

We have to be aware we have to be spiritually discerned we have to be aware and we have to be challenged as the people of God to be aware of those around us who are feeling this way perhaps you at this time of year are feeling this way and you know exactly you know exactly what the Samist is going through the great preacher Charles Spurge and he suffered terribly with depression now not a lot of people know that you read his sermons and you see the great joy and all that is within his sermons and the wonder of the gospel yet he had laws real laws in his life and listen to the way he describes it he says my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child he says and yet I knew not what I wept for Spurge and battle against what he caused this causeless depression he says all his life this shapeless this undefinable yet all be clouding hopelessness he wrote this cannot be reasoned with he says it is like fighting with mist yet he was used mightily by God to come alongside others and tell them about the wonder of Jesus from a full fit and in everyday life and I wonder how many within that congregation even knew the way that he felt himself deep down you see when your faith is tested it expresses genuine prayers and cries to God see the psalmist here he feels abandoned and even rejected by God look at verse 9 of Psalm 42 what does he say I say to God by rock why have you forgotten me and then it's even intensified because if you go to verse 2 of Psalm 43 he says send out your light and bring me to your holy hill let me bring to your dwelling and if you look and if you look at verse 2 there for you are the God and whom I take refuge why have you rejected me he has he is feeling he is feeling forgotten by God and it's even gone as bad as to feeling rejected by God he is feeling excluded he is feeling expelled he is feeling as he doesn't fit in now I listened to Isabel last night speaking at the at the Carol service and about what the street pastors do and I had no idea exactly what they did and I learned a great deal that they go into the town and they speak to all the people who are out on night side now how many of these people do these street pastors talk to how many of these people go around these streets with smiles on their faces and yet deep down they have that sense of loss they have that sense of pain and they're self-medicating through alcohol and they're self-medicating through drugs and they're self-medicating through anything else that they can get their hands on apart from the gospel and apart from Jesus and I come across that in my own line of work every day I deal with people who have alcohol problems drug problems and people who are lonely and they are all around us and we as the people of God we as the churches of God and we as the communities we must we must be doing something

about that now I'm not going to start dissing the church here in any way shape or form we are all we are all weak and feeble in many ways but we are all called to come alongside those that we know are lonely those that we know especially at this time of year I used to work before I started working in the council I used to work at third sector hebrides and I used to work in the same office at the organisation called befriending Lewis their remit is to go out into the community and get volunteers and come alongside those who are lonely those who are isolated and I tell you you have no idea how many hundreds if not thousands of people are isolated and they are lonely in our community and they send volunteers out to befriend them and it has made a massive difference now that is what the church ought to be doing as well that is what we ought to be doing as well and I know that churches are very busy I know lots going on and I as an elder I look at myself and I say to myself I am not doing as much visiting as I ought to be doing I challenge myself here in this I challenge myself here and I think the word of God is challenging us here today that we ought to be doing more and you know something I think we live in a culture where it is our culture I was speaking to one of the ladies coming into church and she said to me you know we are out of our comfort zone here today and we are out of our comfort zone here today we don't like to be out of our comfort zones do we but the

Lord wants us to be out of our comfort zones if I was to ask you individually here today do you know anyone in your village do you know anyone in their village who is alone at this time of year I bet you you could say yes do you know anyone in your village or out with this village or anywhere else even on this island who is going to be alone this year who perhaps might not see anybody over

Christmas a new year can you raise your hand if you think yes I can I can maybe it's time to put a stone in our shoe and to challenge ourselves that perhaps yes little old me might be able to go and do something see our culture is we are so reserved as a culture we are we are so reserved as a culture that sometimes we feel that we can't do any good for anybody else but that is absolutely wrong we can be used mightily by God the psalmist here he is expressing this abandonment and rejection by God but he's a child of God he can never be forgotten by God and later he will say

I will put my trust in this God still you know he's longing after God look at the verses Mark 1 to do of Psalm 42 like the deer pursued by its hunters it needs water to give it life we too thirst after God and we think this psalmist is in a bad place this this psalmist in a bad place do you know something this psalmist is in a good place do you know why because he is thirsting after God he is thirsting after the one that he knows can be the only one who can do anything for him in an eternal sense he is in a good place because he is in a place of prayer this man is on his knees this man is in despair yes and he's going through a hard time but he's on his knees and he's crying out to God he is in a good place God has put him in this place and he knows that and it reminds me of another one who was in a garden in the garden of Gethsemane and he's crying out to who the Lord Jesus he's crying out to God and he's saying even if this cup can pass from me but not my will oh God let your will be done I am in this place because you have put me in this place and I am willing to be in this place I will suffer and I will die because I love my people because my people are broken hearted they are lost they are like sheep that have gone astray and I will do your will and I will do it with joy in my heart for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross when the Lord Jesus went to Calvary there was a joy within his heart because he knew that everything that he was about to do would save you everything he was about to do would keep you out of hell everything he was about to do would bring you into the family of God and he did that with a joy within his heart now we as the people of God we must cry out and say to the Lord Lord what would you have us to what would you have us to and it's quite interesting here because the Sam reminds us about the grace of God because if you look at the superscription of Sam 42 what does it say to the choir master a masculine of the sons of Korah do you know who the sons of Korah were if any family within the Old Testament knew anything about the grace and the love of God it was the sons of Korah because they have a family history they were the worship leaders in the tabernacle they were the worship leaders in the temple and they knew what forgiveness was because if you go all the way back if you go all the way back to number 16 when the children of

[17:08] Israel were in the wilderness you will remember the original Korah what did he do the original Korah rebelled against Moses he rebelled against God and he took 250 with them and the Lord judged them and the earth opened up and they were sunken into the earth but you know something the original Korah very well may have perished because of the judgment of God but his sons were spared the sons of Korah were spared not only where they spared they were given a work to do they were to become the worship leaders now they knew all about grace and they knew all about the love of God because the Lord spared them so this here is written by a son of Korah and here he is in exile here he is in exile and his memories are haunting him he knew all about the grace and the love of God listen to one commentator talk about this Sam he says the community that uses these Psalms of disorientation is not easily linked with civil religion he says who goes from strength to strength it is rather faith in a very different God it is faith in the one who is present in participating in and attentive to the darkness to the weakness and to the displacement of life the God assumed by and addressed in these Psalms is a God of sorrows and acquainted with grief they are worshiping a savior who is the one who knows all about sorrows and the one who was acquainted with grief he says it is bold because it insists that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God he says nothing is out of bounds in your prayer life nothing is out of bounds he says nothing precluded or inappropriate everything properly belongs in this conversation of the heart Christ can and does sympathize with the weak with the broken hearted with the depressed with those who are struggling that is who Christ sympathizes with Christ himself says and it's recorded in Matthew 26 my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death my father if it is possible may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will but as you will you see tested faith expresses genuine Christ but tested faith also expresses genuine praise to the psalmist does not use the circumstances as a barometer of God's love three times he says in verse five verse 11 Psalm 43 and at verse five he says yet I will still hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God the psalmist acknowledges God as sovereign and as a savior the psalmist is ultimately saying it is the Lord that has placed me in this place for a season the Lord has placed me in this place for a season but I will come out the other end because he knows

that the Lord is sovereign and the Lord will help him and come to his aid what does he do the psalmist preaches the gospel to himself before we preach the gospel or tell others about Jesus we must be reminded of that gospel ourselves we are prone to wonder it is easily forgotten by us in the busyness and the chaos of life the psalmist turns into an evangelist in all his troubles and he

reminds himself of Jesus he reminds himself of the gospel and that is what he does he trusts and he hopes in God you know I always go on about the Heidelberg Catechism don't you well you're going to get more of the Heidelberg Catechism here Heidelberg Catechism question and answer number 16 I think we'll do a memory thing on this one the next time I come you'll have to know it off my heart okay question and answer 16 how are you righteous before God now this is the experience of the psalmist this is the experience of the Christian only by true faith in Jesus Christ only by true faith in Jesus Christ I've got competition here today it's fine it's cool like I can shout a lot louder okay only by true faith in Jesus Christ even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all of God's commandments and I have never kept any of them and even though I am still inclined toward all evil nevertheless he says nevertheless without my deserving it at all out of sheer grace I love that word grace out of sheer grace God grants and credits to me listen to this now the perfect satisfaction righteousness and holiness of Christ as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner as if

I had done everything and I've been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me and all I need to do what do you need to do all I need to do is to accept this gift with a believing heart all I need to do is to accept this gift with a believing heart hence Christmas the greatest gift that God has ever given to this world is this beautiful son Jesus now the question I have for you here today have you accepted this gift with a believing heart and if not I say why not why not you see the Lord has done it all for us all we have to do is to believe this with a believing heart and say to the Lord God I accept this wonderful gift of salvation that you are offering me here this day I accept it I take it and I love you Lord for it he praises God for all that he has done for him and the Sam central point is directed toward God look at Psalm 42 and at verse 8 by day the Lord commands his steadfast love and at night his song with with me a prayer to the God of my life the Lord commands his steadfast love send out your light send out your truth you know it's easy for us to forget the gospel it is easy for us to forget I remember I remember watching Laurel and Hardy anyone like Laurel and Hardy I remember watching Laurel and Hardy a number of years ago and I remember this clip and I remember Ollie is pacing the floor and he's reading this letter and this letter it's really worrying Ollie it's really got him anxious it's really got him down and he's pacing the floor up and down and Stan is pestering him and Stan is out of what's in the letter what's in the letter and so Ollie passes him the letter so Stan has the letter and he's pacing the floor with this letter and Stan passes us back to Ollie and Ollie once again is reading it and he's pacing the floor and Stan keeps pestering him and Ollie turns round to Stan and he says didn't you read the letter and Stan says yes I read the letter but I wasn't listening I wasn't listening and we too we too can read the letter but not listen we too can come to the pages of scripture and read it and not listen see tested faith expresses genuine praise when you've been there and I'm quite sure you've all been there in one way or another because life can be hard and you've come through the other side and the Lord has taken you by your right hand and taken you through the fire and taken you through the water then then your faith that tested faith can express genuine praise because you know that the Lord has helped you every step of the way it's the experience of the Christian and finally and very very very quickly tested faith expresses genuine empathy this is where the rubber is that meets the road this is where you and I get into action this is where you and I work into this community and show people that we belong to Jesus it's not a private thing this is where we get challenged because the psalmist he's empathising with us in our time of need listen to another commentator talk about this he says the crazy damaged people in scripture you read about all these crazy damaged people all the time don't we the crazy damaged people in scripture seem to be the ones through whom God did the greatest things Hannah Elijah David in his or her own way they were empowered by God he says to change the world not in spite of their affliction but because of it and through it in order for them to be effective witnesses for God in this world they had to suffer in order to be complete and in order to serve you see in the economy of God your low points in life can be and will be used by God because the Lord will use you he will use you to come alongside others and to put your arm around them and say listen I've been there I've been there and you can point them to Jesus that's your job that's my job you don't have to stand in that pool but to do it you can do it in the workplace you can do it in the streets of Stonoway do it within your family you can go to that lonely neighbour you know who's not going to see anyone over Christmas that is the challenge I like when he says there it's the crazy damaged people of God the crazy damaged people of God that's bold isn't it that is bold but I like that I like that listen to Sparger again he says when a person has been through a similar experience of depression in his case he uses

another tone of voice altogether he knows that even if it is nonsense to the strong it is not so to the weak he uses another tone of voice altogether Sinclair Ferguson tells the story of how he used to drive Martin Lloyd-Jones around Glasgow at the tent meetings in the 60s and in the 70s and Martin Lloyd-Jones told him a story about himself and another elder had been outside the church and this young student minister was on the pulpit and he had preached a sermon and the two elder Lloyd-Jones and the elder were talking and Lloyd-Jones turns to the old elder he was well advanced in years and he says to him well that was a wonderful sermon and the old elder says yes it was but he's yet to be broken by God was the reply of the elder yes it was a wonderful sermon but he's yet to go through the trials of life and I'll never forget that I'll never forget what Ferguson said there you know so it is with us so it is with us you know to be broken means that our sin and our pride is dealt with he praises

[ 31 : 17 ] God because he knows that God understands he praises Jesus in particular because he knows that Jesus has been there he knows that Jesus has been there genuine cries genuine praise and then genuine empathy I hope we've been challenged here today I certainly have been challenged over this last year I certainly have I remember in conclusion reading a testimony of a woman called Linda Linda was from Florida and Linda she had lost so many people in her own life and she I can just find it here if you bear with me put it aside listen to Linda story when he was 12 years old he was diagnosed with synovial sarcoma which required the total amputation of his right arm my son's illness persisted over a six-year time frame and we tried many cancer treatments she says some help temporarily others not at all finally the cancer took his life and this loss was the most difficult and traumatic for me a secondary loss she says was already in place and beginning to erupt she says my faith was temporarily shattered and I no longer understood the God who I had loved and worshipped since my youth she recounts earlier in her life her mother had been run over by a drink driver and killed she tells the story of how her dad died on the operating table due to a medical error she tells the story of her first husband who committed suicide she tells the story of her second husband who died in a car accident and all that was left was her and her daughter and she recounts in her testimony how she cried out to God she recounts in her testimony how she continued to praise God and then finally she recounts in her testimony how she used all of these experiences to come alongside and to empathise with others what did she do with her life what did she do with her life well after losing so much and holding tight to her only daughter and granddaughter now she went out and she gained a PhD in psychology and an MA in clinical psychology and an MED in guidance and counselling for ten years Linda has trained health professionals all over the United States addressing the issue of trauma and grief counselling she was even used by her own denomination of the

United States to train pastors how to come alongside and pastor their flocks and listen to her words she says have I turned to normal after all these losses she says absolutely not to return to normal implies that I am the same person I was before I encountered all of these tragic events she says a person is forever altered by traumatic grief and we choose what we do she says we choose what we do with all of those experiences and you know what she says she says it is all because she relies on who the one who comforts us in all of our afflictions so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction second Corinthians chapter 1 verse 4 there is the challenge for us I rely she says on the one who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction her faith was tested so she offered genuine cries her faith was tested she offered genuine place and thirdly her faith was tested as was the samest that she offered genuine empathy the Lord will use our experiences and this is the time of year where we look inside and we say Lord where will you have me go over these next few days who will you have me go to see over these next few days let us pray gracious Lord indeed we thank you for your word and we know Lord that there are many within our communities who are lonely and broken hearted at this time of year and Father we pray that you would indeed guide us and use us to come alongside them to empathize with them and sympathize with them and Lord if they are strangers to grace help us to point them to Jesus the one indeed who can sympathize with us and the one who knows our struggles and the one who knows our weaknesses Lord would you use us and would you go before us for we ask it in Jesus name always and forever amen.