

Study 9

Topic: Made to live forever but now broken

Sub-theme: Made perfect, now broken (3)

Sunday date: June 23

Key ideas: Mortal, fragile, death, disease

Key texts: Gen 3, Heb 9:27

MAN that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.

‘The Order for the Burial of the Dead’, Book of Common Prayer, 1662.

The Psalms are the hymnbook of God’s people. Historically, they cover all of Israel’s history – from the Exodus out of Egypt to the Exile in Babylon. But the Psalms also cover the experiences of life – joy and wonder, sorrow and despair. Through the Psalms, all of life is brought before God. Often rooted in very specific, very personal individual and national circumstances, the Psalms take life and turn it toward God in song. For thousands of years, God’s people have read and sung these Psalms and through them, have taken their own very specific, very personal individual and national circumstances to God.

Throughout the Psalms we find Psalms of lament. A lament is a complaint, addressed to God. There are more Psalms of lament than any other kind.

Read Psalm 42.

1. In groups of 2-3, share with each other what jumps off the page at you? Share with the whole group.

D.A. Carson writes, "There is no attempt in Scripture to whitewash the anguish of God's people when they undergo suffering. They argue with God, they complain to God, they weep before God. Theirs is not a faith that leads to dry-eyed stoicism, but to a faith so robust it wrestles with God".

2. List the words the Psalmist uses to describe how he is feeling.

3. How does the Psalmist describe the physical toll of his suffering?

4. In 2-3s, in what ways does the Psalmist describe his current experience of God?

5. What has been your experience of having a downcast soul?

6. How does the psalmist deal with the state of his soul? What would it look like for you to do the same?

7. On your own, write your own psalm of lament about having a downcast soul. Share if you would like.