

Psalm 102:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

Analysis

The heart 'smitten like grass' that withers evokes the biblical metaphor of human frailty (Ps 90:5-6, Isa 40:6-8). The psalmist's loss of appetite ('forget to eat my bread') indicates deep depression. This honest portrayal of spiritual and physical collapse demonstrates Scripture's realism about human weakness. The Puritans called this 'the dark night of the soul.' Yet even in such depths, the psalmist continues addressing God, modeling persistent faith. Christ sustains believers through similar valleys (Ps 23:4).

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, refusing food was a sign of extreme grief or penitence (2 Sam 12:16-17). The withering grass metaphor would resonate powerfully in a semi-arid climate where vegetation quickly dies without water.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between clinical depression requiring medical attention and spiritual darkness requiring pastoral care?
2. What spiritual disciplines help you persevere when your emotional and physical strength fails?

Interlinear Text

מִאָכֶל שֶׁ בְּחִנּוּי הַזֹּבֶחַ כַּעֲשֵׂב יָבֵשׁ לְבָבִי כִּי so that I forget to eat

is smitten like grass and withered My heart H3588 so that I forget to eat

H5221 H6212 H3001 H3820 H7911 H398

לְחִנּוּי

my bread

H3899

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:2 (Parallel theme): For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

Isaiah 40:7 (Parallel theme): The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

Psalms 77:3 (Parallel theme): I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

Ezra 10:6 (Parallel theme): Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.