

# Psalms 42:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

## Analysis

**Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.** This verse repeats the refrain from verse 5 with one significant addition: "who is the health of my countenance, and my God." The repetition emphasizes the psalm's cyclical nature—returning to despair yet repeatedly choosing hope. The addition intensifies personal appropriation of God and acknowledges Him as source of restored joy.

The first portion ("Why art thou cast down...hope thou in God") echoes verse 5's analysis. The soul remains "cast down" (shachach—bowed, depressed) and "disquieted" (hamah—turbulent, restless). The psalmist hasn't yet experienced emotional relief, yet refuses to surrender to despair. The repeated question "Why?" continues examining emotions' foundation, refusing to accept depression as final word. The command "hope thou in God" repeats the imperative of verse 5—this is deliberate choice, not feeling. Hope based on God's character transcends present circumstances.

"For I shall yet praise him" (ki-od odenu) maintains confidence expressed in verse 5. Od (yet, still, again) indicates certainty that present distress is temporary, future praise inevitable. The psalm models persevering faith—not one dramatic moment of choosing hope but repeated, sustained choice to trust despite ongoing struggle. The repetition itself demonstrates persistence: when tempted to despair again,

return again to hope; when cast down again, command soul again to hope in God.

"Who is the health of my countenance" (yeshuot panai, יְשׁוּעָת פָּנָי) modifies verse 5's "help of his countenance" to "health of my countenance." Yeshuot (plural of salvation) means deliverances, victories, saving acts. Panai (my face/countenance) shifts from "his face" (verse 5) to "my face." God's face turning toward the psalmist will result in the psalmist's face being restored—facial expression reflecting inner joy. Depression shows in the face; restoration will show there too. Proverbs 15:13 notes: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." God's salvation will transform visible expression from sorrow to joy.

"And my God" (ve'lohai, וְאֶלְךָ) concludes with intimate personal claim. This addition to verse 5's refrain emphasizes personal relationship—not merely "God" generically conceived but "MY God." The possessive pronoun appears throughout Psalms expressing covenant relationship (Psalm 18:2, 31:14, 63:1, 118:28). Despite feeling abandoned (verse 9), the psalmist claims God as his own. This is faith's defiant declaration: however I feel, He is MY God. However circumstances appear, He is MY God. However long this lasts, He is MY God.

## Historical Context

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The refrain's repetition (42:5, 11; 43:5) served liturgical function in corporate worship. The congregation could join in this repeated section, affirming together the choice to hope despite despair. This communal dimension is significant—individual suffering finds voice in corporate worship, and the community's affirmation strengthens individual faith. When one person's faith wavers, the community's faith upholds them.

The transformation of countenance from sorrow to joy appears throughout Scripture as visible evidence of God's work. Hannah, after praying in temple, went away "and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Samuel 1:18). Nehemiah's sad countenance revealed his broken heart over Jerusalem's ruins (Nehemiah 2:2). Moses's face shone after encountering God's glory (Exodus 34:29-35). Stephen's face "as it had been the face of an angel" testified to God's presence even as he

faced martyrdom (Acts 6:15). The face reveals the soul's condition; restored joy becomes visible in transformed countenance.

The phrase "my God" carries profound covenant significance throughout Israel's history. When Ruth committed to Naomi, she declared: "thy God shall be my God" (Ruth 1:16)—covenant pledge creating new identity. When Jesus cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, quoting Psalm 22:1), He claimed God as His own even in abandonment's depths. After resurrection, Jesus told Mary: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17)—extending this relationship to all believers.

The psalm's repetitive structure models realistic spiritual life. Growth isn't linear progression from weakness to strength but cyclical pattern of struggle, choice, faith, renewed struggle, renewed choice. The psalmist doesn't pretend to move immediately from despair to joy but honestly acknowledges returning waves of discouragement while repeatedly choosing hope. This validates believers' experience across church history—faith involves not single crisis decision but sustained, repeated choice to trust God despite contrary feelings.

For contemporary readers, this verse's realism offers comfort. Spiritual maturity doesn't eliminate struggles but develops capacity to repeatedly choose faith amid struggle. The psalmist's pattern—questioning despair, commanding hope, declaring confidence, affirming relationship—provides framework for moving through depression without being defined by it. The concluding "and my God" is faith's anchor when feelings offer no relief.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. Why does the psalmist repeat the refrain? What does this suggest about the nature of faith and the persistence of struggle?

2. How is 'the health of my countenance' connected to God's saving work? In what ways does inner restoration become visible externally?
3. What is the significance of concluding with 'and my God' rather than merely 'God'? How does personal appropriation strengthen faith?
4. How can believers practice this pattern of self-exhortation when depressive episodes recur despite previous victories?
5. What role does corporate worship play in strengthening individual faith during prolonged seasons of spiritual darkness?

## Interlinear Text

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מָה	תִּשְׁתַּחַת	וְתַחַת	יְה	וּמָה	בְּנֶפֶשִׁי	וְתַחַת	מִ	עַל
H4100	Why art thou cast down	H7817	O my soul	H4100	and why art thou disquieted	H1993		H5921
			H5315					
within me	hope	and my God		for I shall yet	praise			
H3176	H430	H3588	H5750	H3034				
וְשׁׁוֹעַ	תְּ	בְּ	נֶ	וְאֶלְפִּיְנִ				
him who is the health	of my countenance	and my God						
H3444	H6440	H430						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 42:5** (Resurrection): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

**Jeremiah 30:17** (Parallel theme): For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

**Jeremiah 33:6** (Parallel theme): Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

**Psalms 43:5** (Resurrection): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

**Matthew 9:12** (Parallel theme): But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

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