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Subject: WHY ARE YOU DOWNCAST, O MY SOUL? (Check out the song)

This morning, after learning of yet another death in the “one-die-a-day” trend that began this past Thursday, I decided to spend some time on the Psalm that I consider “THE SHRINK & THE NGAMBE MAN’S WORST NIGHTMARE”, namely **PSALM 42**. In my opinion, this Psalm has the potential to force both “professions” out of business and into bankruptcy. In fact, if I were in the anti-depressant manufacturing business, I would find it hard NOT to pray that people NEVER read or take it to heart! I happen to believe that God created Man (that includes Women and Children by the way), and I have no doubt that The Bible is His Word. From that standpoint, I consider myself a “MANUFACTURED PRODUCT” and my Bible an “OPERATOR’S MANUAL” which is there to be consulted and strictly adhered to in order for the “product” to function at optimum capacity.

For me, it is a simple “common-sense” kinda issue: De day wey ah comm’ot for TOYOTA DEALERSHIP wit mah moto, manual be dey inside de glove box. If de moto hambock, what do I do? Ah either go back for de “MANUFACTURER” i.e. De TOYOTA (**NOT RENAULT or PEUGEOT**) DEALERSHIP, or ah take de MANUAL read’am well-well - or “all of de above”!! Likewise, when all is NOT well with me, I either go back to HE who, according to Psalm 139:19 “created my inmost being” and “knit me together in my mother’s womb”, or I go to the manual which HE, knowing me BETTER than I could ever know myself, has provided – THE BIBLE, NOT “PA 4 EYE” for MOLIWE wey bettah no dey for e seff-seff or “MISS CLEO FROM JAMAICA” whose crystal ball failed to tell her the IRS was coming!!!

I don’t know about you, but it is tough, with all the depressing news of deaths and other calamities like oil spills and Haiti, to stay buoyant and joyful. Fortunately, our God knows that, and His Son who experienced it firsthand while He was here on earth understands it too. That is precisely why I believe we have scripture like Psalm 42. Here, as simply as I can put it, is what I got out of reading that Psalm today:

1. IT IS NOT “UN-CHRISTIAN” TO FEEL SAD or DEPRESSED: There is a segment of the population (some Christians included) that seems to subscribe to the idea that a Christian ought to be this ALWAYS happy person with a smile stuck permanently to his face, who is never upset, sad or, (God forbid), ANGRY! Where they get that notion from, na only dem sabi, because that is definitely not what the Bible portrays! Jesus wept over Jerusalem and the death of His friend Lazarus; He wasn’t smiling when He rebuked demons; He was upset enough to call the Pharisees a “Brood of Vipers” and “Whitewashed sepulchers”; He was “flaming” ANGRY enough at the disrespect shown and desecration done to His Father’s house to get a MOLONGO and drive the cattle traders and money changers away, scattering their coins and overturning their tables in the process! (Since I’ve mentioned Jesus Himself, I guess I need not bring up Moses whom God did NOT fault for getting so upset and angry at his calf-worshipping brethren that he had the audacity to break the set of stone tablets upon which GOD had written the 10 commandments - WITH HIS OWN FINGER! Massa! He made GOD do “double work” and God was “down with it”! And as for sadness, I don’t think any human being has ever or will ever experience the kind of pain Jesus experienced during His last week on earth, particularly in the Garden of Gethsemane. The character described in Psalm 42 is in such bad shape that he says: “My tears have been my food day and night.” His soul is “thirsty”, “downcast” and “disturbed”. He is taunted by cynics (maybe I should have said “haters”), who ask him where his God is, to the point that he himself asks God why He has forgotten him!

LUCKY YOU, (more like FAKE YOU), if your life’s so great you cannot identify with any, if not all of these feelings!!!

2. **THE ANTIDOTE:** Manufacturers and Manuals, if they are worth their salt, don't just stop at "diagnosing", identifying or listing problems; THEY OFFER SOLUTIONS. Well, so does the Bible! Right in the same Psalm 42, I see 3 ways to deal with our "downcast" souls, and as you might already have guessed, WALLOWING & DWELLING in our "affliction" is NOT one of them! Here's what's recommended:

- **REMEMBER:** Reflecting on God's Record of Faithfulness in the past definitely helps. As a child, I used to wonder why God liked to "waste peoples' precious time" by making repetitive statements OVER & OVER AGAIN like: I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who did "such and such"! I had to get a little older to realize that it's because the God who created us knows how SHORT our memory tends to be! Let's go back to Exodus one quick second: God shows His MIGHT by unleashing 10 bone-chilling PLAGUES on Pharaoh's Egypt to get the Israelites freed from bondage. Yet, what happened very shortly afterwards when they got to the RED SEA? De people wan chop Moses raw!! Did anybody stop to think that a God who was mighty enough to send the plagues and who had PROMISED to lead them into THE PROMISED LAND would SURELY know how to deal with the situation? No-oh!!

- **TRUST:** I have never seen any passenger who, once they board a plane, walks up to the pilot and demands to see his license; we usually all just file past the flight attendant, look for our seat, force our over-stuffed bags into the overhead compartment, fasten our safety belts and **TRUST** the pilot to take us safely to our destination! Why don't we do the same for God now? The pilot could even turn out like quite a few we've heard about lately, to be drunk but OUR GOD has a SPOTLESS UNCHALLENGED RECORD for delivering every single one of His children safely to their final destination, 100% of the time! If we believe that He knows the end from the beginning since HE IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END, then we really ought to cut down on the fretting and "skin-nacking"! All I know is, the GOD who fashioned me knows exactly how many days He plans on having me on this planet and NO ONE can take me out of it any SOONER or any LATER than HE HAS ALREADY ORDAINED, nyongo, famla, otomokpo and kanda stick notwithstanding! Don't think so? Read the book of JOB again. Job's affliction *did* come from Satan quite alright but if you read the 12th verse of JOB 1, it is very clear that God ALLOWED it all to happen! Satan had to seek permission from God and have it granted first before he could do a thing to Job, and God had His plan to restore Job completely (plus dash), even BEFORE Satan started to execute his horrible plan. I really find it hard to believe that when "something bad" happens, a whole GOD, who set the 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 estimated stars in the sky and knows each one by name is wringing His hands in shock, despair and panic saying: "how ah go do eh"? If we can just understand that what comes to us suddenly, or as a shock, GOD ALREADY KNEW because He is OMNISCIENT, we would realize that He is A GOD INTO WHOSE LOVING CARE we can entrust our very lives. (What, may I ask, is the alternative, by the way? Trust ENRON, my 401k or Oprah??!)

- **HOPE:** This is the logical outcome of trusting. If we can TRUST God, then we can have "strength for today and bright HOPE for tomorrow" as the hymn says.

So when those when all those Psalm 42 questions come knocking:

- Where is your God?

- Why have you forgotten me?

- Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?

And when you find yourself asking: "Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? As you "pour out your soul", Remember the trusting and hopeful answer, NO MATTER WHAT, is found in the same Psalm:

**Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.**

O FOR GRACE TO TRUST HIM MORE!!

In Sisterhood,

Egbe Mbiwan Monjimbo.

P.S. In case anyone's interested, here's A VERY POWERFUL "POUR OUT YOUR VERY SOUL TO GOD" SONG by, (you guessed it), a Ghanaian singer called CINDY THOMPSON. She sings this song (AWURADE KASA) with such a soulful voice that I have never once succeeded in listening to it without tearing up or just crying. It is one heck of a "leff'am for God e hand" song for me. Hope it does something for you!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JqE7-SzUas>