

Psalm 43

A prayer for deliverance from the ungodly

Psalm 43: Again (Psalms 42 and 43), are two psalms that should probably be taken as one for several reasons (42:5, 11 and 43:5), provide a threefold refrain for the poem. The theme is the same; 43 is the only psalm in the second book that lacks a superscription. And the two psalms are in fact joined together in some Hebrew manuscripts. Using the refrain “Hope thou in God” as a marker, the poem yields three stanzas. First, the psalmist expresses his deep longing for God (42:1-5); second, his sad lament and dejection before God (42:6-11); finally, his sure confidence in God (43:1-5), the third stanza here (in Psalm 43). The three stanzas reveal the changing moods of the psalmist: from longing and regret to perplexity, then to trust and assurance. This is the third stanza. If only every downcast soul could end up in this third stanza!

Verses 1-5: Psalm 43 might be conceived of as an epilogue to Psalm 42. The psalmist moves away for introspection toward invocation. However, as verse 5 will indicate, the psalmist’s problems had not ended, at least not fully and finally. Nevertheless, spiritual progress is evident. By interrelating the psalmist’s two modes of communication in Psalm 43 and then by comparing them with the laments of Psalm 42, one observes indications of that progress as he continued to deal with his despondency.

- I. Prayers to God (43:1-4).
 - A. Righting Wrongs (43:1-2).
 - B. Restoring “Rights” i.e., proper, or appropriate things: (43:3-4).
- II. Pep-talks to Oneself (43:5).
 - A. Exhortation (43:5a-b).
 - B. Encouragement (43:5c-d).

Psalm 43:1 "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."

"Judge me, O God": This does not mean, pronounce sentence upon me. But, undertake my cause; interpose in my behalf; do justice in the case. He regarded his own cause as right. He felt that he was greatly wronged by the treatment which he received from people, and he asks to have it shown that he was not guilty of what his enemies charged him. That he was an upright man, and a friend of God.

"And plead my cause": Which was a righteous one; and therefore, he could commit it to God to be tried and judged by him. And could put it into his hands to plead it for him. Literally “Judge me, O God, and argue my case”. This combination of legal terms demonstrates respectively that the psalmist was requesting God to be both his Divine Judge (compare Judges 11:27; 1 Sam. 24:12; Psalms 7:8; 26:1), and Defense Attorney (compare Psalms 119:154; Prov. 22:23; 23:11;

Jer. 50:34; Lam. 3:58). On both concepts together, as here, (compare 1 Sam. 24:15; Psalms 35:1, 24; Micah 7:9).

"Against an ungodly nation": Meaning either the Philistines, among whom he was; or his own nation, when they joined his son Absalom in rebellion against him. Some understand it of the great numbers that were with Saul, when he was persecuted by him.

David does not mind God judging him, because he knows his heart is right with God. David is like many of us. He knows that he would not be judged fairly by these unjust men. David is asking God to show these ungodly men that God is on David's side.

Psalm 43:2 "For thou [art] the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

"Why? ... why?": Since God was his refuge of strength, the psalmist questioned why this divine rejection and why his dejection?

Who being the strong and mighty God was able to deliver and save him, as well as to plead his cause. And was the author and giver of strength, natural and spiritual, to him. And was the strength of his heart, life and salvation. And is a good reason why he committed his cause unto him.

"Why dost thou cast me off? This is the language of unbelief. It being what was not in reality, only in appearance. The psalmist was ready to conclude he was cast off and rejected of God, because he was afflicted and left in a desolate condition by him. And he did not immediately arise to his help and deliverance, and had withdrawn the light of his countenance from him. But God does not cast off or reject any of his people. They always continue in his love, and in his covenant, and in the hands of his Son. They are always in his sight and family, and shall never perish eternally. And whoever casts them off, or casts them out, he will not.

"Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? (See notes on Psalm 42:9).

If David really knows that God is his strength, why is he whining? Have you ever asked God why? God does not mind us asking why. He does not want us doubting that He is our God, but He does not mind us asking Him questions. Perhaps, the following Scripture is the answer to the question.

John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Psalm 43:3 "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles."

Thy light and thy truth: let them lead me": These are bold personifications for divine guidance. He desired that these "messenger-attributes" divinely direct. Compare such "leading" and

“guiding” (in Gen. 24:48; Psalms 78:14, 53, 72; 107:30; Isa. 57:18), so as to bring him successfully to his destination, i.e., Israel’s designated place for worship.

I pray very often that the Lord Jesus will keep His Light before my feet, that I may see clearly the path that He has chosen for me to walk. That is what David is saying here. If we walk in His Light, it will lead us to heaven. The tabernacle that David means, here, is the place where he could go and meet with God. The eternal tabernacle is in heaven with God.

Psalm 43:4 "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God."

Which was in the tabernacle, either of burnt offerings, or of incense, there to offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for mercies received. The altar under the Gospel dispensation is Christ, on which such sacrifices being offered, are acceptable to God (Heb. 13:10).

"Unto God my exceeding joy": As over the mercy seat, upon a throne of grace, and as his covenant God. Or this is exegetical of the altar, which is Christ, God over all, blessed for ever. And who is the object of the unspeakable joy of his people, in his person, righteousness, and salvation.

"Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God": The harp is a musical instrument, used in that part of public worship which concerned the praise of God under the former dispensation. And was typical of that spiritual melody made in the hearts of God's people when they sing his praise (see Rev. 5:8).

David would be forever praising God for rescuing him. The children of Israel soon forgot that God had delivered them from Egypt. David is saying that he would not forget, but would sing and play his harp before God in praise and worship. The greatest deliverance of all was Jesus delivering all who will believe, from death and hell. We too will sing praises around the throne for so great a deliverance.

Psalm 43:5 "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."

The refrain (of Psalm 42:11), is here repeated in so many words. And the plaint of the exiled monarch is brought to an end. The burden of the refrain is hope and confidence. Notwithstanding the woes of the present, the writer has no doubt in respect of the future. He will yet have occasion to "praise" God, whom he feels to be "his God, his Health and Salvation.

Worship blesses God. It is also one of the healthiest things people can do when they are sad, fearful, or distraught (3:4; 42:5, 11).

This is the very same verse that the 11th verse of the 42nd Psalm gave. I might ask this question of David myself? The only hope, that any of us or David has, is in God. Stop looking at the circumstances, and look to the Lord who is the author and finisher of our faith.

Psalm 43 Questions

1. Who is David willing to judge him?
2. Why do Christians suffer in this life? Answer with a Scripture.
3. What 2 things does David ask God to lead him with?
4. Where is the eternal tabernacle?
5. What 2 ways did David promise to praise God?
6. Stop looking at the circumstances, and look to the _____.