

Psalm 43

Introduction – Psalm 43 is likely placed immediately following Psalm 42 as a supplement of the psalm-singer's meditation on this theme of preaching to oneself in times of trial (42:5, 11, 43:5). Providentially, this psalm explains to us why theologically and emotionally we find ourselves driven to meet here, in a parking lot, in these uncertain times, so that we can together explode in song before our God and King.

Defend and Deliver Me, O God! – The psalm-singer cries out for vindication from an ungodly nation and for deliverance from "*the deceitful and unjust man*" (v1). For David this could have been referring to Absalom or Ahithophel (2 Sam 15-17). For Jesus it was the Jews who conspired to destroy Him (Matt 12:14). You may or may not find yourself individually needing to cry out for such deliverance. But the body of Christ is under assault today more and more from an ungodly nation and from deceitful and unjust men, and so this is a corporate prayer as well.

Of course, even the afflictions are from the hand of Providence (which is another reason we know that He can deliver us). The unbelieving culture and governing authorities are a judgment upon the apathetic church which has refused to defend life, sexual fidelity, marital faithfulness to vows and God's purpose for marriage and family, her refusal to instruct parents to take responsibility to educate their children in the Lord, to worship God according to His Word, and to take responsibility to bring every thought captive, discipling this nation to govern according to God's law. God has given us over to our sins for judgment begins here, among His people (1 Pet 4:17). As in the time of the Judges, we must repent and seek God for deliverance. Time and again, this has been the story of God's people, and God in His kindness has brought forth glorious reformation and revivals (Micah 7:8-9).

The God of My Strength! Where are You? – David knows that God is His strength, the only source of deliverance. And so he complains, "why do you cast me off?" (v2). Psalms 42-43 mention God by name 22 times. He is omnipresent in a poem which complains of His absence. That sense of absence is painful for the believer and yet drives him to sense the very presence of God in the same way that separation from home and loved ones makes memories more intense, present, and painful. God uses the afflictions to drive us back to Him.

The psalm-singer cries out as if lost, needing help to be led back to God (v3). He prays for God's light and truth to lead him (has he been following some other god's "light" and "truth?" Have we?). The cry of the Reformation was "*Back to the sources!*" God's Word is His light (Psalm 119:105). God's Word is His truth (Psalm 119:160, John 17:17). God is using this separation, this affliction, to drive all psalm-singers back to Him. Jesus is our strength and our salvation. He is the Light of the world and He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Bring Me to Your Holy Hill – Where does deliverance begin? Where do we find our vindication? Where is there comfort and joy? Where does the psalm-singer want to go? To God's holy hill, to the tabernacle, and to the altar of God (vv3-4). He wants to be in the assembly of God's people before the Lord in worship (Psalm 84:1-2, 10-12).

Each Lord's Day, our worship services are a celebration of the coronation of Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords. Each Lord's Day, the church (ekklesia – the "called out" ones) are called out of the world, and join the saints and angels in the heavenlies where we join with Jesus in ruling the world (Eph 1:22-23, 2:6, Heb 12:22ff). It is here, as we worship, that we find that in Christ, we are not being besieged, we are the besiegers and the gates of Hades cannot stop us (Matt 16:18). This gathering is the center of our warfare. That warfare continues on through the week as we walk in the good works He has prepared for us – and it is not an easy warfare. And that is why we long to come back here each Lord's Day.

And what does our faith teach us? What does this worship accomplish? That Jesus reigns at God's right hand until all His enemies are made a footstool (Psalm 110:1). That the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). That all of the nations of the earth will flow to this holy hill (Isaiah 2:2). What is it that overcomes the world? Is it not our faith (1 John 5:4)? And it is with this in mind that the psalm-singer returns to the chorus (v5), "*Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him.*"

My Exceeding Joy and Song – This corporate gathering is both militant, exuberant, and violent, along with being personal, intimate and satisfying. You have come to Mt. Zion and you have come to your "*exceeding joy*." He is the source of complete and unending pleasure (Psalm 16:11). This pleasure is in God Himself. He is the end of your search, not the means to some further end (HT-John Piper – who would go on to coin this phrase: "*The chief end of man is to glorify God BY enjoying Him forever*").

And when you have found your chief end and your exceeding joy, you will find yourself overflowing with songs of deliverance (v4). The one who is forgiven little loves little (Luke 7:47). The one who is complacent has little to sing about. But God often brings us through great trials because it is the only way to produce magnificent, soul-satisfying, culture-shaping music. God doesn't bring us up into heaven so that we can stand around and hum. For the wine to be made, the grapes must be crushed. For the songs of deliverance to come forth, the people must be afflicted first (HT – Douglas Wilson). And when we are still in the affliction, under the discipline, we sing "*Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*"

What songs do you sing? What do you love? What causes you to break forth with exceeding joy? You are invited to find it all here, in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are invited to walk out into the world with that joy, with that victory, clothed with garments of praise to Your saving King, washed with the blood of the Lamb Who forgives your every sin, stamped with the Holy Spirit of promise for an eternity of pleasures forevermore. And the gates of Hades will not prevail.

Over and over again we are summoned to believe the victory of the Cross and the truth of the Gospel: Jesus Christ came to save sinners, to save the world, to restore His creation to its rightful place under His gracious Lordship. Jesus was a Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3). But not anymore. Now, He is greatly rejoicing, clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. And in Him, so are we. And through Him, so shall the nations be.

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:10-11).

And so, we sing - "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*"

Dave Hatcher – July 26, 2020