

Declaration of Praise to God

Psalm 43:1-5

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Introduction: We come tonight to Psalm 43. Some suggest it was originally a part of Psalm 42 & then later divided (referencing no title given to Psalm 43). I believe they are 2 distinct psalms, yet one continuous message. Whether or not that is true, Psalm 43 does continue the sorrow & song of an exiled Levite who longs to be in Jerusalem where he can once again worship at the Temple. We noted previously in Psalm 42:1-5 the psalmist's desire for the living God as we saw the thirsting, eating, taunting, remembering, questioning, & praising of the psalmist. Last Wednesday we looked at verses 6-11 & noted the psalmist's despair at the absence of being in Jerusalem. We considered his exile from God's House, his expectation from God's hand, & his exclamation for God's heart. Note with me tonight the psalmist's declaration of praise to God in Psalm 43:1-5. It is in the continued form of a prayer as we see his prayer for vindication, his prayer of expectation, & his praise (in prayer) of exclamation.

I. The psalmist's prayer for vindication (:1-2)

A. The **elements** of his prayer (:1)

1. "*Judge me*" > a plea for justice & vindication of his innocence.
2. "*Plead my cause*" > undertake my defense, against a people without mercy.
3. "*Deliver me*" > "O child of God, leave these thine enemies in better hands, remembering that vengeance belongeth not to thee, but to the Lord" (Spurgeon).

Note: "*deceitful & unjust man?*" > "It may describe any bitter, crafty foe. He who designs or perpetuates a wrong against a good man must either be very miserable, or must harden himself in crime by deliberate deceit" (Plumer).

B. The **expression** of his perplexity (:2)

1. He expresses confidence (:2a, "*For Thou art the God of my strength*"):
 - a. "The God in whom all my strength lies (Ps. 28:7)" (Hinson).
 - b. "My stronghold God: my natural refuge & protection" (Kirkpatrick).
2. He expresses confusion (:2b):
 - a.. "*Why doest Thou cast me off?*" – literally, "drive me away."
 - b. "*Why go I mourning...?*" – compare 42:9.

Summary: "The answer will often be because we are saints, & must be made like our Head, & because such sorrow is chastening to the spirit, & yieldeth comfortable fruit" (Spurgeon).

II. The psalmist's prayer of expectation (:3-4)

A. His request for enlightened **direction** (:3a)

1. By God's light > "*Darkness* represents distress & danger; *light*, relief & deliverance" (Plumer)
2. By God's truth > the truth of His Word &/or His faithfulness.

Application: "We seek not light to sin by, nor truth to be exalted by it, but that they may become our practical guides to the nearest communion with God" (Spurgeon).

B. His request for eventual **destination** (:3b-4) [4 images of the Temple]

1. "*Holy hill*" > Mount Zion.
2. "*Tabernacles*" > "The plural may be 'amplicative,' expressive of the Temple as the dwelling-place of God; or it may be used with reference to the various courts & buildings of which it was composed" (Kirkpatrick).

3. “*Altar of God*” > “God Himself is the goal of pilgrimage: the altar is but the means of approaching Him & realizing His presence” (Kirkpatrick).
 4. “*Harp*” > a stringed instrument associated with joy & rejoicing.
- Application: “*O God my God*” > “His focus is no longer on himself, his disappointments, or his circumstances, but on the Lord his God, & that makes all the difference” (Wiersbe).

III. The psalmist’s praise (in prayer) of **exclamation** (:5)

A. His heart-searching **questioning**:

1. Why am I “*cast down*”? > depressed, discouraged.
2. Why am I “*disquieted*”? > restless, disturbed.

Summary: “His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with his sorrows” (Spurgeon).

B. His heart-felt **praising**:

1. The **command** to his soul > his hope is in the Lord; the expression of his faith.
2. The **confidence** in his God > his help is from the Lord; the expectation of his faith.
 - a. “*The health of my countenance*” – “My God will clear the furrows from my brow, & the tear marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head & smile in the face of the storm” (Spurgeon).
 - b. “When by faith we see the face of God smiling upon us (Num. 6:22-27), our own countenance brightens up & becomes spiritually healthy” (Wiersbe).

Summary: “In Psalm 43:1-4, the psalmist talks to God; in verse 5, he speaks to himself. His prayer, though so brief, is wonderfully full. He puts himself at once into God’s hands” (Scroggie).

Note: “The refrain (:5) is once more repeated, & now, we may believe, with a still more unwavering faith & certain hope that his prayer will be answered” (Kirkpatrick).

Conclusion: What can we conclude & apply from these 2 Psalms (42 & 43)? In the Reformation Study Bible’s “Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship” we read: “Believers may experience inward anxiety & despondency, but they need not settle into despair. They know that God is their festival of joy (43:4). Even if they are not feeling joy now, they should stir themselves to hope in God & persevere in prayer for growth in grace & truth. The key for believers is keeping their focus upon God & giving glory to Him.” Consider the answer often given to: “How are you doing?” – “Pretty good, under the circumstances.” To which we might ask, “What are you doing under the circumstances? You should be living above them.” Compare the words of Paul in II Corinthians 1:3-4, & :8-11. Recall the difference between happiness & joy. Happiness most often depends upon one’s “happenstances” or circumstances. Joy is dependent upon one’s relationship to the Lord (see Nehemiah 8:10). I close as we did last week: Is God your hope tonight? Is He your help tonight? Do you long to spend time in His presence & to seek His favor (smile)? May the psalmist’s exclamation of praise in prayer be ours as well: “*Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, & my God.*”