



## Psalm 43 - Prayer to God in Time of Trouble

### Introduction to Psalms 42-43

While each of these psalms can be taken separately, Psalms 42-43 go well together as a song with three stanzas: they share a refrain (42:5, 42:11 and 43:5); 43:2 is almost the same as 42:9; and they both express the longing to return to God's presence in the sanctuary (42:2 and 43:3-4).

In these psalms the singer laments his circumstances, connected with enemies who despise God and oppress his faithful servants, which keep him from attending worship at the central sanctuary. Singing this in corporate worship would especially foster a sense of yearning and expectation in the faithful, so that they would learn to attend worship looking for God's presence, to mourn any circumstances that prevent them from attendance, and to count their attendance at worship as a great gift from God, certainly not a burdensome duty! Other psalms that express yearning for God include Psalms 63 and 84.

This psalm is either a part of the previous one or is closely connected with it. In fact, in a number of ancient Hebrew manuscripts Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 are joined together as one. They are probably separate psalms, linked by a common problem: spiritual depression.

### Psalm 43:1-5 - Vindicate Me So That I Can Come Back to the Temple

In the third stanza of Psalms 42-43, the singer focuses on the ungodly people and the deceitful and unjust man who torment him with their taunts (42:3), asking God to vindicate him against them (v.1); refer also to the comment made on Psalm 26:1-3. He personifies God's light and truth as if they were guides sent to lead him back to the sanctuary at God's holy hill (v.3). The stanza closes, like the others, with encouragement.

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause  
against an ungodly people;  
from those who are deceitful and unjust  
deliver me!

#### Psalm 43:1

Vindicate me, O God. The psalmist repeated a familiar theme in the Psalms, a cry for vindication. He felt unjustly accused and took his sense of injustice to the right place, to the throne of God, and he left his vindication up to God.

From those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me! The psalmist knew the difficult of dealing with deceitful and unjust people, because they not only do wrong but they also know how to cover it up with deceit. In such a tough situation, the psalmist did the right thing, he cried out to God.

2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge;  
why have you cast me off?  
Why must I walk about mournfully  
because of the oppression of the enemy?

#### Psalm 43:2

For you are the God in whom I take refuge or the God of my strength. If the psalmist did not have a relationship with God, he would not have this problem. Yet he did love the Lord, and his trust was in the strength of God and not his own strength, so he wondered where God was at his critical moment of need.

Why have you cast me off? Why must I walk about mournfully? The repeated asking of why is familiar to the tested people of faith, such as: <<**Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?**>> (Habakkuk 1:3a). The psalmist wondered why God did not do things according to his thinking, especially when the answer might seem obvious.

3 O send out your light and your truth;  
let them lead me;  
let them bring me to your holy hill  
and to your dwelling.

### Psalm 43:3

O send out your light and your truth. The psalmist knew that his light and his truth were not enough; he needed the light and truth of God: <<*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'*>> (John 8:12), and: <<*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'*>> (John 14:6). It was not within him, so if God did send it, he would have it.

Let them lead me. This was a prayer of submission. “Lord, I do not want you to send out your light and truth just so I may admire them. I want to submit myself to your light and your truth and have them lead me. I need a leader, so lead me.”

Let them bring me. The ‘them’ of this statement refers back to the light and truth of the same verse. The psalmist wanted God’s light and truth to lead him to a specific place, to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Here was the second step in the procession of praise. Led by the light and truth of God, the psalmist came to the dwelling place of God, to temple where God met his people. Any place God’s people gather together to meet him can become a dwelling place: <<*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?*>> (1 Corinthians 6:19).

To your holy hill and to your dwelling. The psalmist wanted to go to the temple. He wanted to because:

- He knew the Lord was there is a special way.
- He knew that God’s people were there.
- He knew that it was a place where he could focus on God.

The same principle applies today. People can meet with God anywhere, but there is something special about meeting with him in church setting surrounded by others doing the same: <<*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching*>> (Hebrews 10:24-25).

<sup>4</sup> Then I will go to the altar of God,  
to God my exceeding joy;  
and I will praise you with the harp,  
O God, my God.

### Psalm 43:4

Then I will go to the altar of God. Full of faith, the psalmist anticipated God's answer to his prayer and declared that he would offer a sacrifice, i.e. go to the altar, when the answer came. This would not be a sacrifice of atonement for sin, but for gratitude and celebration of fellowship with God.

When the writer to the Hebrews stated: <<*We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat*>> (Hebrews 13:10), he likely referred to God's provision at the Cross, the ultimate offering on the ultimate altar of God. Christians can go to the altar of God by going in faith to the Cross of Jesus and thinking deeply upon his work and victory there. Under the New Covenant animal sacrifices are no longer offered, but believers still bring the sacrifice of praise. Hebrews 13:15 states that: <<*Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name*>>, i.e. the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. A believer's words and songs of praise become a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

I will praise you with the harp. The psalmist would not only praise God with animal sacrifice, but also with music and song. He reached his destination on the procession of praise, led by the light and truth of the Lord, he came to the house of God, to the altar of God, and then it culminated in praise.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.

### Psalm 43:5

Why are you cast down, O my soul? This same self examination was undertaken in Psalm 42:5 and 42:11. The psalmist had hope of God's redemption, but it had not come yet. In the meantime, he would not surrender to his feelings of depression and discouragement. Instead, he challenged those feelings and brought them to God. He said to those cast down and disquieted feelings, "Hope in God. He will faithfully answer again, because he has before."

My help and my God. The psalmist knew to look for help in God's countenance, that is, the approving face of God. He found a better place by challenging his sense of gloom and seeking after God's face. In seeking God's help the psalmist understood that the answers were not within himself, but in the living God. He did not look within; he looked upwards.