

**SBC – Sept. 15, 2024**

**Psalm 43 (NKJV)**

**“Plea to God in time of Trouble”**

Because of the recurring refrain found in both Psalm 42 and 43 (42:5, 11; 43:5), many believe that originally Psalm 42 and 43 were one Psalm. In fact, in some ancient manuscripts they are combined as one.

Certainly, at the very least, they are TWIN Psalms.

*“This psalm is either a part of the previous one or is closely connected with it.” (G. Campbell Morgan)*

*They are probably separate psalms, linked by a common problem: spiritual depression. – David Guzik*

*“We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore [later in life] he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner. As an appendix it needed no title.” (Charles Spurgeon)*

Whatever the case they thematically are very closely related. I have titled Psalm 43 “Plea to God in time of trouble”. David Guzik titles it, “From Depression to a Procession of Praise”.

Again, we don’t know for sure who wrote this Psalm, nor do we know the exact occasion.

But the writer was harassed by wicked enemies, and he longed to be back in Jerusalem at the place of centralized worship.

### **Slide # 1**

#### **Psalm 43**

***“Plea to God in time of Trouble***

- v. 1 A Plea for God’s Intervention
- v. 2 WHY is this happening?
- v. 3 A Plea for God’s Guidance
- v. 4 Anticipation of Answered Prayer
- v. 5 A spiritual “Pep-Talk” to Self

**Psalm 43:1–5 (NKJV)**

**1 Vindicate me, O God, And plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!**

The writer assumes the position of integrity and is asking God, as the divine Judge, to rule in his favor. “Vindicate me, O God” is more literally, “Judge me, O God”. But then he also asks for God to plead his cause. In this, He is asking God to defend him. So, in a mixture of legal metaphors, he is asking God to be both his Divine Judge and His Defense Attorney.

The writer clearly felt he was being falsely accused, and he brought his case to the exact right place – namely, directly to God. This is the right thing to do. We are not to avenge ourselves, but rather we appeal to God to set things right (cf. Rom. 12:19).

The people the writer was dealing with were ungodly, deceitful, and unjust. Not only did they do wrong in a very ungodly way, but then they went about to deceitfully cover it up.

**Slide # 2**

It is difficult to determine whether these enemies were Gentiles who were not a part of Yahweh’s covenant or Israelites who were disloyal to the covenant. - **HCSB**

The writer clearly saw whoever they were as wicked and deceitful, and they were very unrighteous in their ways. In chapter 42 we note that the enemy was constantly mocking by saying “Where is your God?” (42:3, 10).

**2 For You are the God of my strength; Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?**

The Psalmist affirms his faith and that God is his strength. There was no denial of God or what he means to this person. He recognized that he had no strength of his own, but rather that God was his strength. It is good sometimes in the midst of the battle just to pause and remind ourselves that God is our strength.

But that being the case he can’t understand why God isn’t showing Himself strong on his behalf. He can’t make sense of this situation. And so this issues in the WHY questions which are so typical to us humans who are fragile and weak.

He cries out, "Why do you cast me off?" When prayers seem to go unanswered and there seemingly is no response it feels like God is rejecting us – that is casting us off.

I think the writer knew better but this is how he felt. And since he is right with God (as he assumes the position of innocence as one wrongly attacked) he therefore can't understand WHY God Who he recognizes as his strength has not moved in power for him. Why is God just sitting this out?

I submit to you there are many situations in life where God's people who know God, who are serious about God, who recognize their dependence upon God as their strength, at the same time find themselves in circumstances where it seems like God has rejected them in the sense He is not responding to their prayers. What seems like the "silent treatment" from God is very hard to take.

In such a case it is good to come back to places like Psalm 43 and realize we are not the first to experience this feeling.

The writer further asked, "Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" Again we don't know exactly what the nature of this oppression was but we do know they were ungodly, deceitful, and unjust. And it seemed like they had the upper hand and just would not let go.

The writer is in constant misery under their oppression, and God has not intervened. He believes in God as his strength, Who could intervene, but He has not yet done so, and so he asks the proverbial 'WHY' questions.

### **Slide # 3**

The repeated asking of *why* is familiar to the tested people of faith.  
- **David Guzik**

How true this is: Often times we just don't have answers and that is very hard.

In Job 1, God challenged Satan, saying, "Have you considered My servant Job..." (Job 1:8). Satan responded, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (Job 1:9). The issue was over WHY Job was MOTIVATED to fear God. Was it simply because of WHO God is as God, or was it because of WHAT God did for Job?

Satan contended that if God removed His protective hedge, then Job would curse God (cf. Job 1:11). Thus, God allowed Satan to afflict Job, resulting in the loss of his possessions and his children in short order. Job's response was to WORSHIP, and the Bible says, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." (Job 1:22).

ROUND TWO: In Job 2, God again challenged Satan, saying, "Have you considered My servant Job..." (Job 2:3). And note the divine commentary at this point: "And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

Observe carefully that according to God what was happening to Job at this point was "without cause". This was not happening to Job because of some specific sin in his life or because of something that he had done! In fact, the emphasis in both chapter 1 and chapter 2 is that Job was "blameless" (cf. Job 1:1, 8; 22; 2:3).

Of course, this does not mean that Job as a man was absolutely sinless in his entire life, as Job himself admits (cf. Job 13:26). It simply means that what was happening to Job was not because of some specific sin in his life. Sin WAS NOT the cause!

Satan at this point said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that man has he will give for his life." (Job 2:4). Satan then alleged that if Job's health was taken from him he would curse God to His face (cf. Job 2:5).

Satan knows people quite well. He knows that for people generally nothing is more important than their physical well-being. It is for this reason that the false teachers who promote a "health and wealth gospel" are so popular. People are vulnerable to this. Satan claimed that if everything was taken from Job, including his health, that he would no longer reverence God. And so God allowed Satan to afflict Job physically with the exception that his life be spared (cf. Job 2:6).

Job's affliction was so great that even his wife said, "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). Yet, Job reproved her saying, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10) And the text goes on to say, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

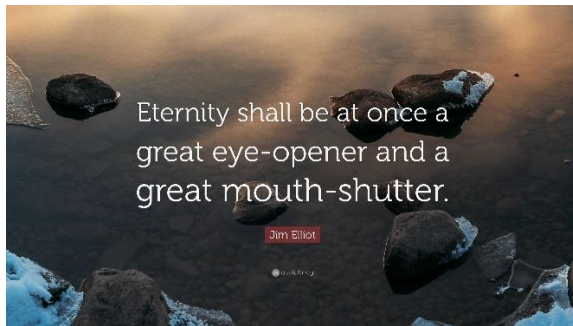
Job had lost all his possessions, all his children, his health, and the support of his wife, and here comes his so-called "friends". From afar they did not even recognize Job in his state of deteriorated health. They lifted up their voices and wept and sat down with him on the ground. No one spoke a word for seven days because they saw that Job's grief was very great (cf. Job 2:11-13). Up to that point they were doing great. Then they opened their mouths, and all wisdom left them.

Job 2 emphasizes that a loss of health is not necessarily because of some specific sin. God said that what was happening to Job was "without cause". We live in a fallen world. Things happen, and we don't always know why.

One of the key points in the Book of Job is that we won't always know the "WHY," and we are wrong to demand an answer. In the end, God does not indict Job for any specific sin, but He does indict him for IGNORANTLY demanding an answer from God (cf. Job 38:2; 42:3).

Job never did get a specific answer as to WHY this happened to him, but in the end, he did get a greater vision of God, and when he did, he put his hand on his mouth (cf. Job 40:4-5).

#### Slide # 4



The writer of Psalm 43 had "Why" questions but he also had a specific petition.

**3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle.**

The Psalmist here personified God's light and truth and asked that they, in effect by his guides to bring him to the holy hill of God in Jerusalem at the Tabernacle.

The light here is thought to represent God's favor in the sense of light of God's countenance or His presence (cf. Num. 6:25-26).

**Slide # 5****Psalm 89:15 (NKJV)**

**15 Blessed** are the people who know the joyful sound! **They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.**

Truth represents God's faithful Word which is a sure guide (Ps. 100:5). God's truth speaks of His faithful care for His own.

So the writer was asking for the favor of God's presence (light) and the truth of His faithful care in the Word to guide him.

His specific request is that God's light and truth would lead him to God's holy hill and tabernacle. God's holy hill, often called His holy mountain, refers to Mount Zion, which was the special place where the God of Israel dwelt in the OT (Isa. 8:18; Ps. 74:2). It was here that the Tabernacle was located and later the Temple.

It was here that the OT saints experienced the intimate presence of God in a very special way. Remember that the twin Psalm of Psalm 42 started out in this way...

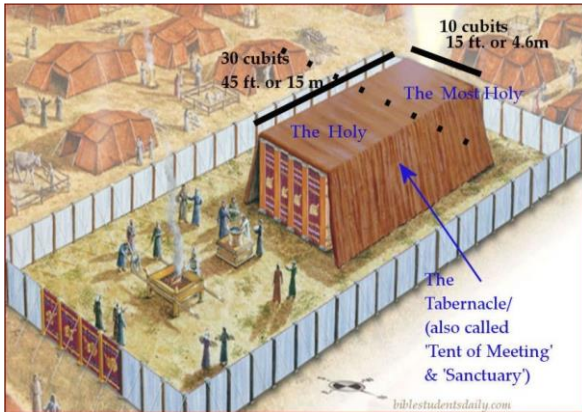
**Slide # 6****Psalm 42:1–2 (NKJV)**

**1** As the deer pants for the water brooks, **So pants my soul for You, O God.**

**2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.** When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalm 43 continues on with this same theme: The writer felt that his greatest need was to experience the intimate presence of God. And so he asks for God's light and truth to lead him to His tabernacle, where he could once again know the experience of YHWH at Israel's designated place of worship.

We sometimes lose sight of how awesome it was to meet with God at His holy mount in Jerusalem. They were literally meeting with God. It was exhilarating. The Tabernacle was also literally called "the tent of meeting" (cf. Ex. 39:32, 40; 40:2, 6, 29). They came here to principally meet with God – to experience and worship Him!

**Slide # 7**

We should be excited to come together to worship – to meet in holy convocation with our God.

**Slide # 8****1 Corinthians 14:24–25 (NKJV)**

**24** But if all **prophecy**, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

**25** And thus the **secrets of his heart are revealed**; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that **God is truly among you.**

Prophecy here is used in the sense of the power of God's word. Before the NT was completed the gift of prophecy was operative. It was "thus saith Lord" in terms of direct revelation.

But what I want to point out is that the power of God is revealed in the giving forth of His Word. It is by the Word that the secrets of the human heart are exposed. It is the Word that is living and powerful, which exposes the very thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). It is in this way that God reveals His presence in a very special way. It is in this way that people sense the presence of God in the midst of His people.

God's presence and His truth go together. They lead us. And the Psalmist desires that they would lead him to the ultimate experience of God on earth (as he knew it), which was in Jerusalem at the holy hill of Zion at the Tabernacle.

And note the attitude of submission. In the saying of God's light and truth, "**Let them bring me,**" he indicates his submission to God's guidance. He desires this and is submitting to it.

**4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.**

This is a statement of anticipation that God indeed is going to answer his prayer in verse 3 to guide him so that he can come to Jerusalem to the special place of worship. He here anticipates this special time of worship.

Note the progression of thought in verses 3-4.

**Slide # 9**

To Your holy hill  
To Your Tabernacle  
To the altar of God  
To God my exceeding joy

The true worshiper is satisfied with neither a geographical location nor a building nor an altar. He must get through to God Himself!

**– William MacDonald**

The altar was the place of sacrifice by which the people of God in the OT approached God. There were various kinds of offering denoting various things. There were burnt offerings, grain offerings, fellowship offerings, purification offerings, and guilt offerings. Some were for sin, but others were simply matter of worship in the sense of thanksgiving or celebrating fellowship with God.

When the writer to the Hebrews stated, *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle 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. We 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 we no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we still bring the sacrifice of praise. [Hebrews 13:15](#) tells us how: *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.* Our words and songs of praise become a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

**- David Guzik**



Just the thought of coming to the place of worship was exhilarating for the writer. He calls God “my exceeding joy”. Nothing can compete with God in terms of JOY! He Himself is our ultimate joy! No wonder Paul says...

**Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)**

**4** Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

The fruit of the Spirit is first love then joy (Gal. 5:22). To spiritually delight in the Lord is among the greatest experiences in life that one can know.

And note he says when he comes he anticipates worshiping on the harp as he sings praises to God. Musical instruments enhance our worship experience. We see this throughout the Psalms.

And God was very personal to the writer as he exclaims, “To God my God.”

**5 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.**

In spite of the upswing in his spirits and his anticipation of God working to bring him back to Jerusalem, yet the battle was not over and so once again in the cycle of the battle he gives himself another spiritual “pep-talk”.

This is the third time in Psalm 42 and 43 that we have this exact refrain (cf. Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5).

Life involves a series of spiritual battles. And when we are the midst of a struggle and prayer doesn’t seem to be answered – even though we know God’s truth – yet we struggle. And we often return to giving ourselves “a spiritual talking to”.

Once again we have the refrain of “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” Often our feelings run contrary to what we know is true theologically. We know that God is in control. We know He is our strength. We know He works through prayer. We know the truth of God’s light and truth, and yet we have these waves of spiritual depression. The battle is real and often lingers.

But then note once again he counsels himself: “Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”

It always comes back to this reality. God is our HOPE. God is our HELP! He gets us through. His grace is sufficient! His promises ever remain true!

“Is there a cure for depression? Yes. But it is not in us. It is in God. The cure is to seek God’s face, so ours will not be downcast, which is what the psalmist does.” (**James Montgomery Boice**)

**I was talking to Mary Ann Knipp**, and she was sharing that she had been talking to someone about what it means to have our minds renewed, as Paul spoke of in Romans 12:2. She wondered if the writers of the Psalms are often not a great example of this. They start out all bummed out but as they go along they come to put their FOCUS on God and end up on a high note.

That is a great application. So often, we go through hard times, and we are down. Over and over, we have to come back to the truth of God and what we know about Him. That is renewing our mind – getting our thinking back to where it should be as centered on and focused on God. And that changes everything!

Psalms 42 and 43 are an example of this. In the cycle of the battle of spiritual depression – again and again he comes back to renew his mind in the HOPE and the HELP that is in God!

**When I was a young man** early in the ministry I had a cousin who was murdered by her estranged husband in Omaha. She was like 21 years old. The funeral was HUGE and very very sad. My Grandfather’s brother (Sam Oswald) had the funeral. We wondered what he would bring to us – what he would share at a funeral like this. He was a seasoned pastor who had ministered for many years. I have been to many funerals since that time and have forgotten most of what was shared, but I still remember that funeral and what was shared.

He shared from Psalm 42 and 43 the recurring refrain...

**Psalm 43:5 (NKJV)**

**5** 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.

I submit to you in the lowest times in life this is the truth we must come back to. It is in this way we renew our minds in the spiritual battle.

No matter what we are going through, “Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him”. He is the help of our countenance. He is our God!