

May 5

Scriptures: Read Psalms 42, 43 & 44

Key Verse: “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.” (Psalm 43:3)

Overview

Psalms 42 and 43 were originally one composition. The beautiful poetic style is the same in both, as is the subject matter. It appears from the title that the poem was written by a leading member of the Levitical musical guild (43:4) from the Kohathite division of the sons of Korah (1 Chronicles 6:31-37). No doubt the psalmist was a captive of an ungodly nation (42:9b; 43:1) and may have been en route to a foreign country when he penned these words.

He finds himself far from Jerusalem, northeast by the headwaters of the Jordan on the slopes of Mount Hermon (42:6), along the caravan route between Syria and the far east. His strongest desire is to commune with God. He needs this as much as he needs water to live, for God is his fountain—his source of life (cf. Jer. 2:13; Psalm 63:1; 84:2; John 4:14; 6:35). He longs to go once again to Jerusalem and worship the Lord “with the voice of joy and praise” (42:4b); but since he could not, he was extremely sorrowful. As he sees and hears the rapids of the Jordan, he feels waves of grief coming over him (42:7).

His enemies constantly taunt him regarding the seeming indifference of his God: “Where is your God?” (42:3b, 10b). Surely he retorted that His God would deliver him, but questions flooded his mind and he was greatly distressed. Had God forgotten him and cast him off? (42:9; 43:2). In his heart he knew that God was still watching over him and that God would still give him a song to sing (42:8). With faith he declared that there was still hope and he would one day lift his voice in praise to God again in the tabernacle on His holy hill (42:5, 11; 43:5). He turns from despair to hope, from doubt to assurance, and from confusion to a resolution of strong faith. He prayed that God’s light and truth would lead him back to the Lord’s presence (43:3). The Light and truth of God have been personified in Jesus Christ, and He is the One to lead us into the presence of God (John 1:4-5, 9, 17).

Psalm 44 is another psalm ascribed to the sons of Korah. The psalmist writes of a disturbing military defeat and a captivity of his people. The historical occasion this psalm addresses is unknown. The psalmist complains bitterly to the Lord that there was no justification for Him to allow such a thing to happen. He claims that Israel/Judah had remained faithful in following the Lord, and so the psalmist is confused and upset that God allowed such a calamity to overtake them. In the past, God had always fought for them and saved them (44:4-7). If they had turned to idolatry, then the psalmist says such a thing would be understandable and even expected, but they did not; they were faithful to the Lord. Why then had this terrible calamity come upon them?

The psalmist, like any other person, could not understand the ways of God, but we know that the Lord has a purpose in whatever He allows to happen to His children, and it is for their ultimate good, although to them it may not seem so at the time. The situation described is in effect asking, “Why do the righteous suffer?” At that time, they did not have the fuller revelation of God which

teaches us that it is not unusual for the godly to suffer (Matt. 5:11; John15:20, 25; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:36; 2 Tim. 3:12). Trials are a means God uses to refine His people. Their suffering and exile would sift them like wheat. Those who are truly committed to the Lord will remain faithful to Him, and those who are not will be caught up in the idolatry of the surrounding nations and be blown away like chaff in the wind. Thereby, God is reserving a faithful remnant for Himself.

The psalmist was in turmoil and confusion about the whole situation, but he still had the faith and sense to call upon God, for truly the Lord is merciful and hears the prayers of His people.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, our desire is to worship You and daily grow closer to You, even though this growth may require trials and testings. With joy we will endure, knowing we are part of Your faithful remnant (James 1:2-4).