

Psalm 143

“Teach me to do thy will”
A Psalm of David.

Psalm 143:

Again David is beset by enemies, and again he knows to whom he must turn.

After addressing the LORD (verses 1-2), he pours out his lament (verses 3-6), recalls God’s help in former distresses (verse 5), and offers his petition to the only One who can correct the matter (verses 6-12).

The pressing nature of his request is revealed clearly in the 11 entreaties directed to God in the final six verses.

Verses 1-12:

No specific background is known for this Davidic psalm which is the final penitential psalm (compare Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130).

- I. David’s Passion (143:1-2);
- II. David’s Predicament (143:3-6);
- III. David’s Plea (143:7-12).

Psalms 143:1 "Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, [and] in thy righteousness."

“Faithfulness ... righteousness”:

David fervently appeals to God’s character.

I love the fact that David said, in thy faithfulness answer me.

He did not say according to my faithfulness.

God's faithfulness is perfect.

By saying hear and give ear, it shows how earnest he is in wanting God to hear his request.

David does not claim any righteousness on his own, he speaks of God's righteousness.

Psalms 143:2 "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

“No man living be justified”:

David admits his own unrighteousness and realizes that if he is to be delivered for righteousness' sake (compare 143:11), it will be because of God's righteousness, not his own.

David is just like all of us.

He does not want justice from God, he wants mercy.

He knows that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Jesus Christ justified each of us with his shed blood for us.

Acts 13:39 "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Romans 3:20 "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin."

Our justification (just as if we had never sinned), is in the Lord Jesus.

Our only hope is that He justified us Himself.

Psalms 143:3 "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead."

Has persecuted me; has sought my life.

"He hath smitten my life down to the ground":

He has, as it were, trampled me down to the earth.

The word rendered "smitten" means to break in pieces.

To beat small, to crush (see Psalms 72:4; 89:10; Job 6:9).

His very life seemed to be crushed out as one that is trodden down to the ground.

"He hath made me to dwell in darkness":

He has made my life like that of one who dwells in darkness.

He has made it a life of sorrow, so that I have no comfort, no light.

"As those that have been long dead":

A similar expression occurs in (Lam. 3:6).

"He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old."

The same Hebrew words are used.

The word rendered "long" means, age, duration, eternity (Psalm 139:24).

The idea here is, that his condition was like that of those who had been long in their graves.

Who had long since ceased to see any light. Whose abode was utter and absolute gloom.

Just like David, our enemies are trying to destroy us any way they can.

The greatest adversary that we have is the devil.

He does get you down so far that you are in a hole looking up.

Satan will keep you down and even dead if he can.

The thing that does away with all this darkness and gloom is the Light of Jesus.

Psalms 143:4 "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate."

He is covered over with grief, borne down with sorrow, ready to sink and fail (see the notes on Psalm 142:3).

"My heart within me is desolate":

Destitute of the spirit and presence of God, and with respect to the exercise of grace, and filled with fears and misgivings":

Or "astonished", at the providence he was under.

Like one stunned and filled with sore amazement, not knowing what to make of things, or what the issue of them would be.

So David's antitype was "sore amazed" in the garden, when his troubles and agonies came upon him (Mark 14:33).

David is so down because the enemy has overwhelmed his spirit.

To be so low and depressed would nearly break your heart.

Psalms 143:5 "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."

Former times he had read and heard of, in which the LORD had appeared for his people that trusted in him.

Or the former part of his own life, his younger days, when the LORD delivered him from the lion and bear.

And from the uncircumcised Philistine, whom he slew.

And made him victorious in battles, and preserved him from the rage and malice of Saul.

If this was written on account of Absalom, those times of deliverance he called to mind, in order to encourage his faith and hope, and cheer his drooping spirits.

"I meditate on all thy works, I muse on the work of thy hands":

The works of creation and providence, in order to observe the instances of divine power, wisdom, and goodness in them.

And from thence fetch arguments, to engage his trust and confidence in the LORD.

He both thought of these things within himself, and he "talked" of them to his friends that were with him, as the last of these words used may signify.

And all this he did to cheer his own spirit, and the spirits of the men that were with him, in the time of distress and danger.

The comfort that he has, is in remembering the great things that God has done in the past.

There is only one thing that can be good about looking back and that is in a learning process.

This is what David is doing here.

He is building up his most holy faith by remembering the wonderful things of God from the past.

Psalms 143:6 "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul [thirsteth] after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah."

"A thirsty land":

As a drought-struck land yearns for life-giving water, so persecuted David longs for his life-giving Deliverer.

I discussed in a previous lesson how it is very important to have the palms of our hands open when we reach out to God.

This is a way of drinking in the things that the LORD has for us.

He can not give you anything if your fists are clenched.

If you hunger and thirst after righteousness you shall be filled.

Psalms 143:7 "Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit."

"Thy face":

An anthropomorphism picturing God's attention to the psalmist's plight.

David thinks here that his life is slipping away.

He must have help soon, or he will die before the help comes.

Not only is this speaking of physical death, but spiritual despair as well.

Verses 8-10:

Three times David prays for guidance.

"The way wherein I should walk" references his individual calling.

"Teach me to do thy will" settle priorities, making the goal not self-fulfillment but pleasing God and finishing His work.

"Lead me" are words of humility from one who knows his need of shepherding, not merely, of having the right way pointed out to him.

Psalms 143:8 "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."

The voice of thy lovingkindness, or thy mercy and favor.

Permit me to hear thee addressing me in the language of kindness, and also with the assurances of mercy.

"In the morning":

Early; speedily; with the first rays of the morning.

Let it be, as it were, the first thing in the day; the first thing that is done.

The idea is not that he would wait for another day, but that he would interpose as the very first act, as when one enters on a day (see the notes at Psalm 46:5).

Where the margin is, when the morning appears.

Hebrew, In the faces of the morning.

"For in thee do I trust":

I have no other confidence or ground of reliance; but I have confidence in thee.

"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk":

The safe way; the way in which I may find safety (see the notes at Psalm 5:8).

David is asking here, to know the will of God for his life.

The darkest hour is just before the dawn.

The lovingkindness of the LORD would cause all this gloom to fade away.

David has promised that he will walk in the will of the LORD, if he just knew what the will of the LORD was.

Psalms 143:9 "Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me."

Either Saul and his courtiers, or Absalom and the conspirators along with him.

Who were many, and lively and strong, stronger than he.

And therefore God only could deliver him, and to him he sought for it, and not to men.

And so deliverance from spiritual enemies is only from the LORD.

"I flee unto thee to hide me":

From their rage and fury.

Who was the only asylum or place of refuge for him, where he could be safe.

It may be rendered, "with thee have I hid"; that is, myself.

The LORD is our hiding place.

He is saying, after you have delivered me, keep me hidden in you so that they will not be able to find me again.

Psalms 143:10 "Teach me to do thy will; for thou [art] my God: thy spirit [is] good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

“Thy Spirit”:

Refers to the Holy Spirit (compare Psalms 51:11; 139:7; see note on Psalm 51:11).

I have said so often in these lessons; how important it is to do the will of the LORD.

We cannot do the will of the LORD, unless we know what that will is.

David is asking God to teach him how to do God's will.

The very best way to learn to do the will of God is to study His Word (Bible), and pray that the Holy Spirit will teach you more fully what the Scriptures are saying to you.

God has a perfect plan for each of our lives.

To be truly happy in our life, we must learn what that will is and then fulfill God's will in our lives.

Psalms 143:11 "Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble."

“For thy name’s sake”:

David appeals to God’s benefit and honor, not his own (compare Psalms 23:3; 31:3; 79:9).

Jesus is the Quickening Spirit which brings new life in the spirit.

The breath of life is a gift from God.

The gift of new life is from the very same place.

This is new life that David is asking for.

It will not only be good for David to give him new life, but it will show the world the mercy and love that comes through new life in Jesus.

Psalms 143:12 "And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I [am] thy servant."

“Thy servant”:

To attack God’s servant is to attack God, thus bringing God to the rescue.

David declares his loyalty to the LORD, when he says he is God's servant.

He is just asking God to stop his enemies from destroying him.

Psalm 143 Questions

1. Whose faithfulness is David depending on?
2. What does David call himself in verse 2?
3. Instead of justice, what does David want from God?
4. What does justification mean?
5. Who is the greatest adversary that all of us have?
6. What does away with all the darkness and gloom?
7. In verse 4, what is really down about David?
8. What comfort does David have?
9. What is the only reason for looking back?
10. When we reach out in praise to God, what position should we have our hands in? Why?
11. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you shall be _____.
12. What reason did David give for God hearing him speedily?
13. Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the _____.
14. When is the darkest hour?
15. What must David know to walk in the will of the LORD?
16. Who is our hiding place?
17. What is the best way to learn what the will of God is?
18. What must we do to be truly happy?
19. Who is the Quickening Spirit?