

Wil Owens
Fighting the Fight of Faith, II; Psalm 43
GPBC
1.26.20

Introduction – Remember from Psalm 42 we learned about preaching to ourselves when we are down, discouraged, and depressed. The psalmist speaks about his difficulties in vv1-4, and then he preaches to himself in v5. Again, he speaks about his difficulties in vv6-10, and then he preaches to himself in v11. Even though we find the same words of the psalmist's short, self-directed sermon in Psalm 43, I believe these psalms are separate because they teach two separate ways of fighting for faith.

At first glance, one might conclude that Psalm 43 appears to be the third verse and chorus of Psalm 42. Verse 1: 42:1-4, chorus v5, Verse 2: vv6-10, chorus v11, Verse 3: Psalm 43:1-4, final chorus v5. Why do we have two psalms rather than one? I believe it is because the psalmist is presenting two different ways to fight the fight of faith. In Psalm 42 we learn to fight for faith by preaching truth to ourselves. In Psalm 43 we learn to fight for faith by praying truth for ourselves. Not praying truth to ourselves, but praying truth for ourselves. It is in these two ways that when everything around us and in us pulls and sways us to doubt God, to not believe in what is true, God uses these two means to renew our faith in Him, to believe what is true.

- I. A Prayer of Desperation (vv1-2)
 - a. V1 we see the circumstances that caused so much hardship, doubt, and confusion for the psalmist. The psalmist finds himself in a situation where it seems the ungodly have overtaken, assaulted, and defeated him. Those who have no regard for God have overcome one who trusts in God. The psalmist knows this is not right or just, and yet it has happened anyway.
 - i. This is Joseph, sent to prison for doing the right thing.
 - ii. This is Jeremiah, thrown in a pit for declaring God's word.
 - iii. This is John the Baptist, imprisoned for confronting sin.
 - iv. This is Stephen, stoned for declaring truth.
 - v. This is Paul, beaten and left for dead for sharing the gospel.
 - vi. This is not an isolated incident of a believer. Throughout Scripture and history, believers have been assaulted, persecuted, taken advantage of because of their faith.

- vii. Since Jan 6, in the states of Plateau and Kaduna, Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen, that is, Muslim herdsmen, have attacked and raided many Christian villages. So far 35 people have been killed and 58 kidnapped.
- viii. In our own country, Christian values are increasingly declining and being marginalized.
- ix. This is why we need Psalm 43. It is a song for all believers in every age because we all face similar circumstances.
- b. V2 the troubles endured by the psalmist at the hands of unbelievers has caused him significant doubt and confusion.
 - i. We hear the doubt in v2a. How is it that I take refuge in You and yet the ungodly are mistreating me? Have you rejected me? Am I really a believer? Are you there? Do you care?
 - ii. We hear the confusion in v2b. How is it that the enemy can be so oppressive and me so mournful? Shouldn't it be the other way around? Shouldn't the unbeliever experience difficulty and the believer experience joy? This seems upside down.
- c. The psalmist is experiencing terrible hardship at the hand of unbelievers, and it has caused him a great deal of spiritual anguish. We will for certain experience hardship in this form or in other forms, and we will for certain experience doubt and question and confusion in our faith as well. What are we to do? How do we fight for faith when there's not much fight in us? Just as we learned in Psalm 42 to preach truth to ourselves, here in Psalm 43 we learn to pray truth for ourselves. Preaching truth and praying truth are two of God's means of lifting us, not necessarily out of our circumstances, but lifting up our faith in our circumstances. God uses the preaching and praying of His Word, His promises, His gospel to sustain us through this life's trials.
- d. Let's see how the psalmist prays truth for himself.

II. A Prayer of Faith (vv3-4)

- a. In v3 the psalmist prays for God's light and God's truth to lead him and bring him.
 - i. The psalmist prays for God to send out His light and truth. I need your light God because I find myself in a dark place. I need your truth God because I find myself tempted to believe in lies.

- ii. What is God's light and truth? It is none other than His Word. The Word, Psalm 119:105 says, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The Word of God shines the light of truth and grace through the fog and haze of trouble and trial. The Word, Psalm 19 says, is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. The word shines truth and grace through the fog and haze of doubts caused by foes and by feelings.
- iii. The psalmist cries, send it out. Bring it to my mind, sear it in my soul, write it on my heart. Send out your light and truth. That is what I need most when I'm in trouble and despair.
- iv. Let your light and truth lead me instead of me allowing my trouble and my doubt to lead me. Trouble and doubt lead us away from the Lord.
- v. But your light and truth will lead me to you! V3b. How remarkable is this? Notice that the psalmist prays and believes that holding to God's Word will bring God to him in his trouble when he can't seem to get to God out of his trouble! By grace, in the Spirit, through the Word, a believer can have the peace of heaven while in the middle of hellish darkness.
 - 1. That's how Daniel could sit down by the lion in the den. That's how the Hebrew boys could walk around unharmed in the fire. That's how Paul and Silas could sing in prison. They couldn't get out of their trial to go to God, but God could be with them in their trial. And in the most hellish of places, believers can know the communion and peace of heaven.
- b. In v4 the psalmist reminds himself in prayer where he finds joy.
 - i. This is the most remarkable of all truths prayed. The psalmist is declaring that God is his greatest joy. It's not what God can do for him by delivering him, even though that would be joyful. It's not what God can give him, even though all of His blessings and gifts are a joy. No, the greatest joy of all is God. And the psalmist knows if he can commune with God, if he can be with God in this trial, the joy of God Himself will far outweigh the anguish of the trial.
 - ii. I love Psalm 16:11 – In your presence there is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Jeremiah 2:13

says God is the fountain of living waters. Nehemiah 8:10 says the joy of the Lord is our strength.

- iii. We believe God is love, and that is true. We believe God is holy, and that is true. May we also believe that God is joy, and not just joy, our exceeding joy. Exceeding beyond our expectations, exceeding beyond our trials and temptations, exceeding beyond this life into life eternal.
- c. The psalmist knew his joy is not to be found in his circumstance and not to be found in himself, but that doesn't mean joy can't be found – for God is our exceeding joy!

III. A Faith-filled Resolve (v5)

- a. Now v5 contains the same words as Psalm 42:5,11 but they are here, I believe, for an entirely different purpose. In Psalm 42 the psalmist is preaching this truth to himself in order that he will believe. In Psalm 43 the psalmist is declaring this truth because he believes. This is a statement of faith-filled resolve.
- b. In Psalm 42 he says these words because he's clinging, he's fighting. In Psalm 43 he says these words because he has been fighting, and now he believes. God is going to come through. God is going to keep His promises. God's salvation is not going to fail.

Conclusion – Just as in Psalm 42, there is nothing in Psalm 43 that indicates the circumstances of the psalmist has changed, but what has changed in Psalm 43 is the psalmist. He's no longer drowning in despair. He's no longer questioning God in doubt. That's how the psalm begins. But when the psalm ends, the psalmist is full of faith. What happened in the middle of the psalm is what moved the psalmist from weak faith to strong faith – he prayed truth and God answered that truth-filled prayer by restoring him to a faith-filled heart! You see my friends, one of the main purposes of prayer is not to change God and bring Him into our agenda, but rather to change us by bringing us to God and God to us. May we fight the fight of faith by praying truth for ourselves.