

Psalm 43 — “More Help for the Depressed ... Again”

“[In troubles] The only means of remedying discouragements and unquietness of mind is to **SET FAITH IN ACTION** TO GO TO GOD and take hold on Him, and to cast anchor within the veil, hoping for, and expecting relief from GOD!” ... “A praying soul, believing in God through Christ, has no reason of dejection and discouragement, whatever reason of humiliation he may have... There is no rest to a troubled and disquieted spirit, but by casting anchor on the Rock, and hoping in God.” (David Dickson)

When we are encompassed and surrounded by pressure-filled circumstances, our temptation is to put our hope in changing the situation. We tell ourselves, “If only x were to happen, then life would be better.” Instead of focusing on our circumstances, we need to turn our eyes to the resurrected Christ. We find resurrected life in our resurrected Lord. Instead of trying harder and “pushing through,” we must put our hope in Christ. That is what brings us living hope. There’s no situation so torturous, impossible, agonizing, and depleting of vitality that the risen Lord cannot share His resurrection life with us and see us through it, and if He so wills, even deliver us out of that situation. May we, today, find help, hope, and comfort in Jesus Christ, our living hope. (Jeff Christianson)

INTRODUCTION

William Bridge: “Faith in God is the help against all discouragements... He continued: hoping, trusting, waiting on God, is the special, if not the only means appointed against ALL discouragements”.

Psalm 43 is (1) Brief (2) Heart-felt (3) Real (down to earth/relevant) and (4) Hopeful.

THESIS — Ps 43 gives *more help for the depressed...* What must you do? Hope in God... again! *we’ll see it in 3 God-given & reliable counsels.*

1. Unburden your heart (1-2) **2.** Follow your God (3-4) **3.** Counsel your soul (5)

I. UNBURDEN YOUR HEART (1-2)

v.2 - God of my “strength” (Hebrew: *Uzzi*; a strong place of refuge; where you can find shelter quickly!)

“As children unburden their troubles to their parents, we go to God with our prayers.” (John Calvin)

II. FOLLOW YOUR GOD (3-4)

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His plea for *deliverance* is met with a plea for *guidance*! (v.3).

The source and spring of all gladness and exceeding joy? “Christ loved me & gave Himself for me!”

III. COUNSEL YOUR SOUL (5)

6 pastoral pieces of counsel to know and implement ...

1. **REMEMBER.** recall/reflect the many past working/doings/actions of God
2. **GATHER.** choose and prioritize and get up & go to the assembly of God’s people (don’t neglect it.)
3. **PREACH.** preach gospel-truth, Christ’s atoning death; his perfect life; his resurrection; his intercession to yourself.
4. **TRIUMPH.** victory is won; but the battle still rages on. our enemy hates us. remember Christ leads us in TRIUMPH.
5. **SERVE.** choose to serve others in your church. really. practically. weekly. get up, forget self, serve them tangibly.
6. **PRAY.** run to God. fly to him. Seek his face. pray the psalms. pray Paul’s prayers.

Charles Hodges, a medical doctor & biblical counselor wrote the following:

Recently, a really interesting study has been published by a group of researchers in the United Kingdom, including Joanna Moncrieff of the Division of Psychiatry at the University College London. The article was the product of research that examined a large number of studies dealing with the chemical imbalance theory of depression. Specifically, the article discussed whether or not a lack of serotonin can be demonstrated to be the cause of depression.

For the last 50 years, the popular explanation for persistently sad moods was a lack of serotonin in the human brain or at least an imbalance in the chemicals that allow our nervous system to function. I can remember the print and television commercials showing the empty balloons in our heads that the medication was supposed to fill. Correcting our lack of serotonin was supposed to cure the sadness. It was a simple explanation that all of us could understand. The only problem with it was a lack of proof.

After searching published studies, the researchers concluded that “*The main areas of serotonin research provide no consistent evidence of there being association between serotonin and depression and no support for the hypothesis that depression is caused by lowered serotonin activity or concentrations. Some evidence was consistent with the possibility that long term antidepressant use reduces serotonin concentration.*” And just like that, the curtain fell on the era of the chemical imbalance theory of depression.

As a physician of bodies & a counselor of souls, Hodges said: In twenty-five years of teaching biblical counseling, I’ve been saying that there is no substantiating evidence that chemical imbalances cause depression.

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Martyn Lloyd Jones provides counsel...

“The trouble with this man was that his thoughts had been turned in on himself and so had got into a vicious circle. We start thinking about things in this way, we become miserable and unhappy, and we do not want to see anybody. We do not want to mix with God’s people. We become preoccupied with our troubles—the hard times we are having, the feeling that God is not fair to us and that we are being treated very harshly. We are miserable and feeling very sorry for ourselves, and there we are, going round and round in circles of self-pity. Self is always the centre of this problem. The first thing to do, therefore, is to stop this preoccupation with self and stop turning round and round in circles on the natural level! But how does one break out of the vicious circle? *I suggest that there are three main things here.*”

1. Put first what the psalmist put first – literally going to the house of God. “What a wonderful place God’s house is. Often you will find deliverance by merely coming into it. Many a time have I thanked God for His house....The house of God has delivered me from ‘the mumps and measles of the soul’ a thousand times and more—merely to enter its doors...we go to the house of God, and to our amazement we find other people there before us...the healing process is going on, the cure is being continued....We look around the congregation and suddenly find ourselves looking at someone whom we know has had an infinitely worse time than we have been having...it puts our problem into a new perspective immediately [1 Cor 10:13]. Where the devil gets us is just here. He persuades us that nobody has ever had this trial before: no-one has ever had a problem like mine, no-one else has been dealt with like this. But Paul says, ‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man,’ and the moment you remember even that much, you feel better. All God’s people know something about this, we are such strange creatures, and sin has had a strange effect upon us. We are always helped in our suffering by hearing that somebody else is suffering too!”

2. Turn to the Bible. “Turn to it in the home or in the church, it does not matter where, and it will immediately make you think spiritually. It does so in countless ways. One of the reasons why God has given us this Word is in order to help us to deal with this problem that we are considering. The mere history of the Bible is invaluable, even if there were nothing else. Take a Psalm like this one and its story. Merely to read what this man went through puts me right, and all the histories do that same. But that is not God’s only way of giving this great teaching. Begin to read your Bible and its great teaching and doctrines and you are again reminded of God’s gracious purposes for man. And at once you begin to feel ashamed of your foul thoughts. So in varied ways the same result is produced by the Scriptures.

3. Pray and meditate. “I wonder whether there is someone who is surprised that I have not put prayer first, or at least before this. I am sure there are some, because I know a number of Christian people who have a universal answer to all questions. It does not matter what the question is, they always say, ‘Pray about it.’ If a man in the Psalmist’s condition had come to any one of them they would have said, ‘Go and pray about it.’ What a glib, superficial and false bit of advice that can often be, and I am saying that from a Christian pulpit. You may ask, Is it ever wrong to tell me the make their problems a matter of prayer? it is never wrong, but it is sometimes futile. What I mean is this. The whole trouble with this poor man, in a sense, was that he was so muddled in his thinking about God that he could not pray to Him. If we have muddled thoughts in our mind and heart concerning God’s way with respect to us, how can we pray? We cannot. Before we can pray truly we must think spiritually.”

How do we think spiritually? By returning to the Word of God again, again, again, and again. When your thinking turns inward so habitually that you find yourself in the vicious circle of self-pity, begin to break free by following MLJ’s counsel. Only Scripture is consistently perfect, filled with reviving power, sure, wise, pure, clean, true, and altogether righteous (Ps 19:7-11). Turn away from your self-focus to the mind-clarifying power of the Word.

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

1. A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

2. Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabbaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

3. And though this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His Truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure,
One little Word shall fell him.

4. That Word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him Who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's Truth abideth still.
His kingdom is forever!

Words/Music: Martin Luther (1483-1546), Trans. Frederic H. Hedge (1805-1890).

PSALM 43: THE PSALTER

Tune: Jesus shall reign

Vindicate me, O God, my God;
plead for my cause against the vile.
Save me from godless, cruel men;
save from the man of sin and guile.

You are my God and strong defense;
why have you then rejected me?
Why must I go about in grief,
while foes oppress me constantly?

Send out your light; O send your truth!
Let them direct and lead the way;
O let them bring me to your hill,
into your holy dwelling place.

Then to God's altar I will go,
to God my joy, my great delight;
and for your praise, O God, my God,
I will make music with the lyre.

Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why are you so disturbed in me?
Trust God, for I will praise him yet;
my saving help, my God is he.

*Words: 2018 Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture (CCLI#: 21652586).
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