

## **Psalms 42-44**

**Psalms 42:5,11, 43:5 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.**

Psalms 43 continues the pattern of Psalms 42 and so we will consider them as one Psalm. The verse above is repeated 3 times in the 2 psalms. Psalms 44 contrasts the past generations experience of blessing with present struggles and seeks an answer from the Lord.

**Psalms 42,43:** Psalms 42 begins with one of the most poignant expressions of spiritual thirst to be found in the Bible. We may have the impression that deer are shy and skittish but this is not always the case. My son was on a backpacking trip and changed out of his sweaty shirt for a fresh one and then left camp. When they returned the deer were greedily licking the salt from the shirt and they wouldn't leave. My son and his buddy had to drive the deer out of the camp. The Psalm sees the deer in such a state over their need for water and compares that to thirst for God. He confesses that he has shed tears in the night in thirst for God and remembers times of joy and praise in worship. He consoles

himself and questions his own sense of distress with the expression of faith, "Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him..."

The second section begins in v. 6 and again the psalmist is discouraged. He associated the good works of God with the geography of Israel and characterizes God, "The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime and in the night His song shall be with me..." Still the present circumstance did not assure and his enemies ask again, "Where is your God?" These doubts are questioned and the assuring thought is repeated... "Hope in God..."

The third section is Psalms 43. The psalmist prays for vindication and assurance while asking why he is so distant from God, why he feels distress and abandonment. He remembers the hope and inspiration of Scripture, the joys of worship and praise and so he again questions his doubts with his mantra of confidence," Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him... "

**Psalms 44:** The question posed by this psalm has no immediate answer. The story begins with inspiration. The old tales of God's direct interventions on behalf of Israel and how He gave them their land, a land they acquired by His strength rather than their own have created an expectation

that God should do now just as He did then. Next there is a confession of commitment and trust in God for victory to be won not by human resources but by God's strength.

The twist in the psalm is the complaint that God has broken with His people without justification. Vv. 9,10, "But you have cast us off and put us to shame, and You do not go out with our armies. You make us turn back from the enemy, and those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves..." After levying the complaint the psalm goes back to a claim of innocence and fidelity to God on the part of the psalmist and those whom he represents. What God is doing and what is known of God seems to be completely at odds. The psalm closes with a summons to God to wake up and do the right thing.

Some observations - The history of Israel is not accurately represented by this psalm. Israel's sin caused the demise of the nation in a pattern of behavior that persisted to the exile. The perceptions offered by the psalmist were certainly sincere. There are times when the absence of blessing cannot be explained with a spiritual thermometer. The psalmist could be short sighted and impatient in his analysis. God welcomes these questions. They lead to truth and redemption.