

PSALLO

Psalm 43:1–5

We begin this year's installment of Psallo where we left off last year, in the Psalm 42–43 collection, continuing our work with Psalm 43. As we said last year, the phrase, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *Who is* the health of my countenance, and my God" forms a refrain in both of these Psalms by which the Psalmist encourages himself in troublous times. And, while we may not know the specific historical circumstance of the Psalmist, we understand that he writes in a day of reduced freedom, in which he does not have free access to the Temple of the Lord, and the worship that belongs there, as this complaint is set before the Lord in both Psalms. Further joining Psalm 42 to Psalm 43 is the absence of a title, while though not a conclusive evidence for this Psalm's relationship to the former Psalm, speaks of a continuation from the previous human author (the Divine Author being always the same!).

We might then consider that the term we saw previously in the title of Psalm 42, *Maschil* (meaning wisdom or instruction), would apply here as well, seeing that there is evidence of common authorship, a continuation of thought, and the same topics being considered of oppression, and palpable separation from God and His ordinances.

However, here in Psalm 43 there is a continuation of the argument of the prayer of the Psalmist that the Lord would do justly on His behalf, and that God Himself would take the part of his advocate, his defender. The word the Psalmist chooses, translated as *plead* in the KJV, is the Hebrew word פָּדַי, meaning to conduct a legal process or case, to hold a trial. In other words, the Psalmist is committing his case before the just Lord in order to be delivered from the oppressor. The construction is in the emphatic Hebrew construction, "*pleading, plead for my cause*". This speaks of the urgency of the Psalmist's need, being seemingly abandoned, kept from the public ordinances of worship, and under the irreligious and deceitful sway of an ungodly oppressor. These are dire circumstances indeed!

Little is said to identify the oppressor, but there is some information given by the author. First, he speaks of his oppressor

as a perverse or irreligious nation. We note here then that the oppression is a national one, that one of Israel's enemies has risen up and enjoyed a measure of success against the Lord's people. Secondly, there is one oppressor singled out by the Psalmist, who seems to be the leader of this oppressing people, and he is identified as a deceitful trickster, a man of injustice and malice. Again, while we cannot say with certainty who this oppressor is, we also understand that it is not necessary for us to do so, for here we have in him an archetypal enemy pictured, one who oppresses the people of God, using deceit and malice. The student of the Scriptures does not have to look far to identify many candidates for this ignoble position.

It is in the face of this enemy that the Psalmist instructs us, in his *Maschil*, that the arm of flesh is of no avail. Our strength, our prowess, our engines of deliverance are of no avail—the battle, the trial, the justice is the Lord's, and to Him we as His people must cry in times such as these. It is here, in the throes of injustice and oppression that the prayers of God's people must ascend in an ever increasing frequency and magnitude, until the deliverance of the Lord is realized.

What then is the substance of the prayer? Note that the Psalmist prays that the Lord would send His light, and His truth. Here, as in the rest of Scripture, the Word of God is the primary means of deliverance for God's people, for our primary need is a spiritual need, which can only be met by the Word of God. This is the heart cry of every Christian, to come under and remain under the influences of the Spirit of God, by means of the Word of God. It is only by a proper understanding of that gracious Word that we are rightly able to bear up under such difficulties, and to flourish even in troublous times.

We note also where the Word of God leads the Psalmist—to the Holy Hill of God, to the tabernacles, that is, to the place of God's dwelling. As we saw in our study of Psalm 42, the public ordinances of God are sweet to the Psalmist, and although he is able to partake of his private worship, there is a longing for that place where the presence of the Lord is specially set forth to His people, in the covenantal, public worship. The Word of the Lord in Psalm 43, is that which leads the Psalmist to the Hill of the Lord. This is not a figurative communing with the Lord, but communing with Him, in the context of both Psalms, "with the multitudes that kept holy-day" (Psalm 42:4). Let that light and that truth today lead us to, not away, from the present day hill of the Lord, to the public worship where the Word of God is preached, and the foolishness of preaching has its due course, where the reading of Scripture is heard, where the praises of the Lord are sung with the heart, the prayers of God's people are offered up, and the Sacraments of the Lord are rightly administered—there truly, is our freedom from oppression, and with the Psalmist, enjoying these blessings, we will also cry, "for I shall yet praise Him". ■

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Psalm 43:1-5

Shafteyni Elohim

Todd L. Ruddell

1 Judge me O God, con - tend for my cause a - gainst a na - tion per - verse:
 2 Be - cause a - lone Thou art my Strong God: why dost Thou me cast a - way?
 3 Send forth Thy Light! And send forth Thy truth! Let these, let these me com - pel,
 4 And I will go to th'al - tar of God to God my joy's de - light,
 5 Why so cast down, art thou my soul? Why art thou trou - bled in me?

From the de - ceit - ful and ly - ing man, O God do Thou me pre - serve.
 Why as a mourn - er do I go forth, op - press'd by the en - e - my?
 Let these me lead, to Thy ho - ly hill, ev'n to Thy tab - er - nac - les!
 And up - on harp, O God my God, my prais - es will take flight.
 Wait up - on God, still Him will I praise, my Sav - ior and God is He!