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Psalm 143

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Bible
at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Psalm 143.

Topics.

- Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy.
- judge not your servant; no one is righteous before you.
- Hide not your face, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.
- Let, your spirit lead me on level ground, for your name's sake, O LORD.
- Deliver me from my enemies I have fled to you for refuge.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

BOOK FIVE (PSALM 107-150)

1

PSALM 143:1

A Psalm of David.

Hear my Prayer, O LORD; Give Ear to My Pleas for Mercy.

- **Psalm 143:1:** Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

David asks the LORD to hear his prayer and hear his pleas for mercy. David does not assume God is listening, obviously God would hear David's prayer, but it shows humility and courtesy toward God by the one praying and carries the idea that God would not only hear his prayer, but also answer it.

PSALM 143:2-6

Judge Not Your Servant, No One is Righteous Before You.

- **Psalm 143:2-6:** Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. ³For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. ⁴Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. ⁵I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands. ⁶I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah*

David is aware that he is flawed and falls short of God's Holiness and because of this awareness of his own nature he points out to God that just as he is not perfect in righteousness nor is anyone else perfectly righteous no matter how faithful they are in God's Kingdom. His enemies

have pursued and persecuted him with such relentlessness that he feels he is like those already dead. He fears God is going to use them to judge and punish him. David's spirit is so faint (meaning weak) that he is shocked that he feels so spiritually low especially when he remembers all the LORD had done for him in years gone by. He longs to see God's favour toward him and to feel spiritually alive as he did in previous years in contrast to feeling like a thirsty man in a parched desert. It was not wrong for David to think that God might be using his enemies to bring judgment upon him since God does use secular nations in this way and David viewed everything that came upon his life as being under the control of God. The following verses show that God uses secular nations to achieve His plans and purposes and to bring about His judgments:

In the prophecy of Jeremiah God said:

- I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. (Jeremiah 25:1-9).

God used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon as His servant to bring destruction to Jerusalem, the land of Judah and the surrounding nations (see also Jeremiah chapter 49, 50, 51, 52). In the prophecies of Ezekiel God said:

- Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. (Ezekiel 26:7).

God used Babylon to bring about His judgment against Tyre. In the prophecies of Ezekiel God said:

- Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare, yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had performed against her. ¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. ²⁰I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 29:18-20).

God paid Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon wages because he and his armies laboured and worked for God. The land of Egypt was the wages God paid King Nebuchadnezzar. In the prophecies of Ezekiel God said:

- Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. (Ezekiel 30:10).
- I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms (Egypt), and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. ²⁵But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. (Ezekiel 30:24-25).

God not only used Babylon to achieve His purposes and bring about His judgment against Egypt, but also strengthened the armies of Babylon to bring this great judgement upon Pharaoh king of Egypt. In the prophecies of Joel God said:

- The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it? ¹²"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me (Judah) with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. (Joel 2:11).
- And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. (Joel 2:25).

God's great army in these verses is given the following titles:

- The locusts, the cankerworm, the caterpillar and the palmerworm.

Though Babylon is not actually mentioned in the chapters and prophecies of Joel the history of Judah spoken of in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel etc., clearly show that the titles Joel gives to the armies he mentions refer to Babylon invading the land of Judah, burning the city of Jerusalem and destroying the temple of God and taking the people into captivity for seventy years. (It may also echo a future time and a greater fulfilment when Christ returns in glory).

Rising above depression: it is interesting to notice when David and many of the writers of the Psalms are down, they speak to their soul (their inner most being), telling it to arise up out of its despair, depression and negativity. They talk to their soul as though it is a separate person to themselves controlling their mental well-being. The common language used in these circumstances are, "why are you cast down O' my soul", meaning why are you depressed? Or, "arise O' my soul and sing for joy", meaning stop being so depressive and change your negative way of thinking and meditate upon what is good.

The Old Testament believers may not have used the language we use today to teach that the way we think has power over how we feel or how positive mental attitude can lift our minds out of darkness, but they understood the principle of positive thinking. They rose above themselves and spoke to their soul (inner most being or mind) telling it to stand up and get out of its despair and depression. It's almost like they saw themselves as the boss of a factory (the factory being their body and mind) with an employee (the inner most being) who is constantly trying to bring the factory to ruin, but because they were the boss they had authority over the employee and demanded that they pulled their socks up and did right by the factory (their body and mind).

David's prayer: David asks God not to judge him, but answer his prayer in His righteousness because no-one is righteous before God. He is aware if God legalistically judged Him according to the demand of the law He would be justified to condemn him that is why he asks God to judge him in His righteousness, meaning in God's love, mercy and grace because he is also aware that no man or woman no matter how faithful can stand before God without the LORD'S mercy.

PSALM 143:7-8

Hide not your Face, Lest I be like those who Go Down to the Pit.

- **Psalm 143:7-8:** Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. ⁸Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

The pit: refers to a huge hole in the ground that people are buried in sometimes an area within this massive pit where the dead bodies lie is called the grave. During the Old Testament it was common for twenty-thousand men to be killed on a battle field in one day. To prevent disease, and wild animals and birds eating the decaying corpses they would be buried in a mass grave.

The same thing is done today when there is a plague or too many bodies and not enough men to bury them all in separate graves, this mass grave was called a pit. These verses imply that David is extremely weak and feeble so feeble that he feels he is near death and may die during the night and not see the morning light. He prays God will not hide his face from him (meaning ignore his prayer) he knows God will hear his prayer, but he is also aware that God may choose not to act on it for reasons only

God knows that is why he pleads so often for God to act on His righteousness meaning according to His mercy, His grace and His love and prays that the LORD would deliver him from the pit (i.e., the grave) so that he will awake in the morning and know God's steadfast love.

PSALM 143:9-12

Let, Your Spirit Lead Me on Level Ground, for Your Name's Sake.

- **Psalm 143:9-12:** Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge! ¹⁰Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground! ¹¹For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble! ¹²And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul, for I am your servant.

It is interesting to notice the following four steps David forms his prayer with:

1. He humbly asks the LORD to hear his prayer.
2. He pleads his case and makes his petition and appeal.
3. He presents to God all the good things he has done (seemingly in the hope they might give God greater reason to answer his prayer).
4. He tells God how much he loves Him and then gives him praise.

Deliver me from my enemies I have fled to you for refuge: (v10) the word refuge comes from the Hebrew word (chacah) and means to flee for protection, to hide for refuge, to trust in, to be confident and sure of. Until that glorious day when the Lord returns to gather the faithful to himself those who are patiently waiting for him are called to rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him during whatever trials troubles or hardships may come upon them. To take refuge in the Lord means to surrender our will to his will and trust that our lives are in his hand both in the high moments of joy and the low times of grief and sorrow and rest in his promise that he will raise us to eternal life and everlasting happiness.

Many times when David prayed he complained and moaned before God he expressed his true feelings, emotions and thoughts (good and bad) and prayed for a positive outcome, but underpinning all of his prayer was a deep seated faith in God that no matter what did befall him he would continue to trust in the LORD and rest in the confidence that he would not be cast down to eternal destruction, but raised to eternal glory and everlasting happiness. In the meantime, he continued to cast his burdens upon the LORD and the LORD would continue to uphold him, strengthen him and comfort him by His Spirit, His love and His grace. David had the same great faith as Habakkuk and Job, even though Job suffered great affliction his attitude was:

- Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15).

Habakkuk begins his prayer saying: "Even though his body trembles at the power of the LORD and he feels weak and feeble because of the enemies who are coming to invade his land, he will quietly wait for the day of trouble."

He then ends his prayer with the following great words of faith.

- Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. (Hab. 3:17-19).

We make the Lord our fortress and refuge, in the same way that David, Job and Habakkuk did, which is by making him our greatest love, our best thought and the passion of our heart and mind and rest in the knowledge if everything fails in this life we will be raised to be with the Lord in eternal glory where happiness everlasting dwells and in this life rest in the confidence and faith that the Lord is with us by his Spirit, his love and his grace.

Teach me to do your will: (v10) based upon these types of statements I have heard some believers say that they do not need to read the Bible because they trust the Holy Spirit to lead them, but this is type of thinking is foolishness. David not only had an amazing knowledge of the Scriptures; he was chosen by God to be an anointed king for God's Kingdom and he was a prophet that spoke many amazing things concerning Christ. Besides this what earthly bride would not want to read all the letters of the man she loved? Likewise, what faithful follower of the Lord would not want to read his words to us? The only ways any of us are going to know God's character, nature, plans, promises and purposes and the way to salvation and knowing His will is to read the Scriptures. The key word in David's prayer, "O LORD teaches me to do your will," is the word, "do" this prayer carries the following idea, "God discipline me in whatever way you need, to teach me to do your will. David intellectually knew God's law; the problem was not knowing it but doing it. James the brother of Jesus wrote:

- Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:1-17).

God's general will for all mankind is to adhere to the Ten Commandments since they protect the innocent from harm which means they are underpinned by love. Paul in his letter to the Romans wrote:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

Paul shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the spirit underpinning the law is love, because the spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from all types of harm and hurt, whoever keeps the law will do no wrong to a neighbour (neighbour embraces all mankind not just those in God's Kingdom). Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because it honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith and because it is the right and loving thing to do. Jesus said there is, no commandment greater than the following two commandments:

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30).
2. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:31).

These two commandments are not only the greatest commandments in the entire Bible but also the greatest commandments under sun, the moon, the stars and all the heavenly hosts. Before God and the Lord Jesus Christ there is no other commandment more important than these two commandments. After loving God with all our heart, mind and strength the thing that delights Him the most is when those who belong to Christ are obeying his command to, "love your neighbour as yourself," (Matt. 22:39).

To, "Love your neighbour as yourself," means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

James the brother of Jesus said:

- If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well. (James 2:8).

James calls Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself," the royal law and says if we are keeping this one law we are doing well. The thing God hates the most is when we deliberately do harm to another person, physically, verbally, financially sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground: (v10) level ground means in the right and good path, it could be expressed in the following way, "Help me live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

Preserve my life in your righteousness: (v11) means keep me in your love, mercy and grace, because without being kept in these I have no hope of eternal salvation.

Cut off my enemies: (v12) meaning protect me from all who would seek to destroy me and hinder my faith and my plans to establish your Kingdom according to your will and good nature and love and grace.

I am your servant: (v12) this attitude is in total contrast to the prideful who consider themselves to be a great king, ruler or leader of God's Kingdom. Pride is deceptive and attracted to success like a magnet is attracted to steel. If this attitude of being a servant of the LORD and of the people is not adopted as an attitude of the heart and mind there is a danger that the tentacles of pride will latch onto those who are skill orators, or have great success in their ministries, or have global followers, or large churches or small groups etc. Having the humble attitude of a servant will protect from becoming puffed up in pride.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
