

Psalm 44 • In the Midst of It

Introduction

There are Psalms which express what it's like to be disciplined because of sin or doing things one's own way, and there are Psalms which express what it's like to experience evil or injustice undeservedly. In this Psalm is expressed the situation of what it's like in times of spiritual testing which may come about even though we have continued to walk faithfully in the Lord. The Psalmist here notes what we may feel during those times when physical circumstances are contrary to our spiritual walk.

¹O God, we have heard with our ears,
Our fathers have told us
The work that You did in their days,
In the days of old.
²You with Your own hand drove out the
nations;
Then You planted them;
You afflicted the peoples,
Then You spread them abroad.
³For by their own sword they did not
possess the land,
And their own arm did not save them,
But Your right hand and Your arm and
the light of Your presence,
For You favored them.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What is specifically being referred to here?

A: The conquest of Canaan and the possession of the Promised Land by Israel.

Q: What is the main theme being addressed?

A: What God accomplished in the past:

1. "...Your hand drove out..." (v.2)
2. "...You planted..." (v.2)
3. "...You affected..." (v.2)
4. "...Your right hand... Your arm..." (v.3)
5. "...Your presence..." (v.3)
6. "...You favored..." (v.3)

Q: What is the important point being made concerning man's role in these events?

A: According to v.3 it's that none of this came about by their own strength or will, but only in concert with God's grace.

Application: When we look back at times when we think there was great spiritual growth or revival, how well do we separate what were the works of men vs. the reality of the working of God? Do we mistakenly believe we can change circumstances on our own for better or worse? How is true spiritual success achieved?

⁴You are my King, O God;
Command victories for Jacob.
⁵Through You we will push back our
adversaries;
Through Your name we will trample
down those who rise up against us.
⁶For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor will my sword save me.
⁷But You have saved us from our
adversaries,
And You have put to shame those who
hate us.
⁸In God we have boasted all day long,
And we will give thanks to Your name
forever. Selah.

[Read v.4-8]

Q: How do these verses build upon the framework of the previous verses?

A: These verses take the past tense of the previous verses and apply them in the present tense.

Point: Just as the Lord was sovereign and in control in the past, so is He now; just as He provided victory in the past, so is able to provide it now; just as the outcome was in God's hands then, so is the present.

Application: Just as past spiritual endeavors could not have been successful without God, neither can the present ones. How do we ensure that the things we desire and undertake are actually subject to His will and ways and not simply our own desires being played out?

⁹Yet You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor,
And do not go out with our armies.
¹⁰You cause us to turn back from the adversary;
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.
¹¹You give us as sheep to be eaten
And have scattered us among the nations.
¹²You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.
¹³You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.
¹⁴You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the peoples.
¹⁵All day long my dishonor is before me
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,
¹⁶Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

¹⁷All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You,
And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.
¹⁸Our heart has not turned back,
And our steps have not deviated from Your way,
¹⁹Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals
And covered us with the shadow of death.

²⁰If we had forgotten the name of our God
Or extended our hands to a strange god,
²¹Would not God find this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
²²But for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
²³Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O LORD?
Awake, do not reject us forever.
²⁴Why do You hide Your face

[Read v.9-16]

Q: So although the first section contrasted God's ability to bring victory in the past to present in the second section, what do we find is the actual situation in the present?

A: They are not being led to victory, but instead experiencing defeat and failure.

Q: Who is causing this to happen?

A: God, the same one credited with bringing victory in the past:

1. "... You have rejected us..." (v.9)
2. "You cause us to turn back..." (v.10)
3. "You give us as sheep..." (v.11)
4. "You sell Your people..." (v.12)
5. "You make us a reproach..." (v.13)
6. "You make us a byword..." (v.14)

Q: What is the greater spiritual lesson being taught here?

A: God is in control of the circumstances whether they're "positive" and leading to victory or "negative" and inducing testing and trials.

Application: We cannot make a judgment about what is happening based solely on the circumstances. God is sovereign and leads through times of testing and hardship as equally with times of blessing and victory. It is the same God in charge regardless of external appearances one way or the other.

[Read v.17-19]

Q: How are God's people holding on during this crisis?

A: By holding firmly to His Word ("Your covenant") from the heart.

Point: Regardless of external conditions – good or bad – the overwhelming consideration is to remain spiritually faithful to God's Word and ways.

Q: What is the author trying to express in v.19?

A: This is a dramatic way of expressing the fact that in spite of experiencing the worst circumstances imaginable, they are still remaining faithful to God.

Application: Do we believe that is we're "good" that we won't experience bad things in life or that we won't have to be tested? Do we recognize that in every circumstance – good or bad – God is effecting something greater in our life spiritually?

[Read v.20-26]

Q: How might this last section compliment what was expressed in the opening sections?

A: Whereas the opening sections acknowledge nothing can come about except by God's hand, so it is again confirmed here. God is acknowledged as having been in control in the past, and regardless of how things look now He is still in control.

Q: So what is the true test that is taking place here?

A: They know God can bring victory but they have yet to glimpse it. They are still in the midst of the test from which they desire to yet be rescued.

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And forget our affliction and our
oppression?

²⁵For our soul has sunk down into the
dust;

Our body cleaves to the earth.

²⁶Rise up, be our help,

And redeem us for the sake of Your
lovingkindness.

Q: What are the questions in verses 23 & 24 actually asking?

A: It's a dramatic way of asking how long these trials will continue.

Point: *It's OK to speak frankly to God in times of trial, especially in the course of seeking His grace and strength to get through it.*

Q: What is the quality of God's character to which they ultimately appeal?

A: "Your lovingkindness", which is the Old Testament term for God's grace.

Point: *It's not a test of knowledge but faith; it's not an issue of personal strength or circumstances but God's grace.*

Overall Application

- *That which God has accomplished for us in the past is supposed to serve as the basis for the quality of our trust in Him where the present is concerned.*
- *It does not matter whether the present situation is "good" or "bad", God is in control regardless.*
- *It all ultimately comes down to the issue of God's grace, which should actually be of extreme comfort to Believers.*