

Psalm 143: Prayer is Crying Out for God in the Midst of Trouble

1. Cry out to the LORD to hear and respond (1)
 - a. acc to faithfulness
 - i. the foundation for our prayer is the faithfulness of God
 - ii. that is His covenant faithfulness to His people: He is our God who provides, protects, and approaches us in mercy
 - b. acc to righteousness
 - i. promised word
 - ii. justice is God keeping his promise
 - iii. Isn't it strange that the appeal to His righteousness here, but in the next verse is the cry not to judge between the right man and the wrong man?
 - c. This prayer starts with a bang!
 - i. Prayer is, at its essence, asking the Lord for what we need to see Him glorified
 - ii. Deliverance? Joy? Peace? Ability to forgive? Strength to persevere? YES!!
 - d. He repeats this appeal in verse 7 and 9
 - i. Quickly! (7)
 - ii. Appeal to not be far off (7)
 1. Feels alone, like the Lord has hidden from him
 2. This loneliness leads him to feel the pit of death
 - iii. Deliver me from my enemies (9)
 1. Because I have come to You for covering
 2. He trusts in the Lord to cover him
 - a. Like a chick running underneath its mother for protection
2. Prayer Comes to God Based Upon His Righteousness, Not Our Righteousness
 - a. Confession, Repentance
 - i. acknowledgement that his prayer doesn't deserve an answer
 - ii. he is not treating God as a debtor (2)
 - b. Prayer is not coming to God because He owes us His righteousness or His goodness
 - i. Nobody can stand before God as righteous
 - ii. So, the appeal is to God's righteousness toward His everlasting covenant
 1. Hence, faithfulness and righteousness are almost equated with the Lord
 2. It is right for Him to keep His promise and that is the ground of David's appeal
 - c. Jesus stands as our righteousness before the Father
 - i. We know what David didn't know
 - ii. The blood of Jesus Christ has opened the way to the Father
 1. Eph 3:11-12
 2. Heb 10:19-22
 - iii. Jesus has made peace with God for us, so that we can come boldly into the presence of the Father and ask for all that we need to glorify Him
3. Prayer Holds Nothing Back
 - a. Expression of Present Suffering "Holding Nothing Back" (3-4)
 - i. my spirit faints
 - ii. my heart is desolate/devastated
 1. enemy pursues my soul
 2. enemy crushes my life to the dirt
 3. enemy causes me to dwell in darkness
 - a. like one already dead
 - b. Audacious Heart-Cry
 - i. God-honoring prayer is audacious and unconcerned with propriety and formality (Luke 11:5-12)

- ii. God desires that we cry out to Him at midnight, when we have no resources left, when our lives have spilled out
 - 1. When we cannot do it alone any longer and we need help
 - 2. He wants us to be unconcerned about convention and rather to cry out to Him to ask for the things that we need in order to see Him hallowed
 - iii. Prayer is not quaint and tidy, pious or technical. God-honoring prayer is raw, authentic, cries of utter helplessness and shameless pounding on God's door. It's being unconcerned about formality and gaining the good opinion of others. It is simply to ask for his help to build His Kingdom, to live His calling, to be His witnesses, to forgive others, to escape temptation, and to see His great renown until He gives you the divine resources to feed the spiritually poor and walk to the front lines again.
 - 1. If you're a new believer and a little intimidated by praying, know that God cares not for convention and appropriate behavior or formal pious words in prayer. He wants you to SEEK HIM and to ask Him for the divine resources to glorify Him by serving others. Don't worry about how you appear, knock on the door at midnight!
 - 2. If you've been a believer for a long time, don't be afraid of what people think of you as you seek the Lord. To a degree, don't be afraid that you're bothering God by asking for the same things over and over. He wants you to passionately seek Him for the power to live missionally, that is for His glory!!
 - a. Drop your pride and become shameless in your praying
 - b. Stop trying to sound religious by using pious jargon and technical terms (What does 'lifting up' really mean?)
 - 3. Get to the heart and simply ask, with transparency and no concern for the appearance of formality, for the divine resources that you need to glorify God and reveal the mystery of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ask such things for others, too.
4. Prayer Recalls the Wonders of God (5)
- a. Remember
 - i. the days of old
 - ii. God has made promises according to His own will and purpose
 - iii. He is faithful to keep these promises: prayer remembers these and rests in them
 - b. Meditate
 - i. all the Lord's doings
 - ii. to "meditate" in this sense to repeat these things over and over again in our minds
 - 1. to think about them
 - 2. to memorize them
 - 3. to let the words of God have their mastery of us so that we may know Him
 - iii. How much time do we spend really meditating on what the Lord has done?
 - 1. Times of quiet solitude recalling and contemplating the promises of God in His Word
 - 2. This implies that we are reading the Word, not merely reading but meditating on it, thinking about it, mentally and spiritually "chewing" on what the Lord has done in the past
 - c. Ponder
 - i. works of His hands
 - ii. to muse upon them
 - 1. David was known for his songs
 - 2. His spirit artistically put the words of the Lord to constant and expressive use
 - 3. "muse" or "ponder" in this sense is to actually speak thoughtful words

A fixed, constant attention to the promises, and a firm belief of them, would prevent solicitude and anxiety about the concerns of this life. It would keep the mind quiet and composed in every change, and support and keep up our sinking spirits under the several troubles of life....Christians deprive themselves of their most solid comforts by their unbelief and

forgetfulness of God's promises. For there is no extremity so great, but there are promises suitable to it, and abundantly sufficient for our relief in it. ~Samuel Clark

- d. All of these things are a fitting foundation for praise
5. Prayer Seeks the Highest Comfort: God (6)
- a. Hands stretch out FOR YOU
 - b. Soul thirsts FOR YOU
 - i. like shriveled up land
 - c. Note well the psalmists desire is for the Lord Himself
 - i. Are our prayers *this* personal?
 - ii. I can easily want the Lord's deliverance, blessing, etc. because I know what I'm getting, but with the Lord (as with any person) there is still much to be known and accepted because He is God
6. Prays for Godliness (8,10)
- a. Need to hear of God's covenant love and faithfulness (8)
 - i. Promise of God
 - ii. Faithfulness of God
 - iii. The first thing of the day
 - 1. Priority of time and place
 - b. Need to know of God's desires(8)
 - i. He is asking for wisdom to live rightly
 - ii. Because He trusts in the Lord
 - c. Request to be taught the Lord's will (10)
 - i. To know God and His desires
 - ii. *Because* He is *my* God
 - iii. Trust in the Lord's Spirit to guide
 - 1. Desire to be led on level ground
 - d. Have we prayed lately asking God to make us godly? Does this enter into our prayers often?
7. His Prayer of Rescue is Based Upon the Glory of God (11-12)
- a. "For Your name's sake"
 - b. "your righteousness"
 - i. It is right and faithful for You to deliver me
 - ii. "Lord, do what you have promised"
 - 1. Again, not because I am righteous, but because You are righteous (v2)
 - c. David's trust that the Lord will cut off His enemies is based upon the Lord's covenant love, not based upon David's greatness or rightness in the situation
 - i. Based upon the fact that he is the Lord's servant
 - ii. His faith is founded upon the faithful, covenant-keeping God
 - d. This prayer ends with expectant hope in God's provision and protection
 - i. Note also his trust that the Lord will keep His promise, "you will cut off my enemies..."
 - ii. God always keeps His promises!
 - 1. Whether here or now is the matter of our prayers (we want it now! 😊)
 - 2. But every prayer ought to end in hope if it has truly been reflective upon the Lord and His past faithfulness and seeking Him as the end.

Conclusion: People who know God pray. They pray, not because it is merely their duty or because they're sick and would really like to be comfortable above all else. They pray because they want to know God and His faithfulness, seeing Him glorified through their joy and restoration. Those whose hearts have been transformed hunger for God, and thirst for Him like the parched and arid desert. They long for His faithful answer, His covenant renewed to their souls in hope springing forth from His faithfulness to His promise. They seek the glory of God, His name to be renowned through their answered prayer and the deliverance of their souls. They hold nothing back in prayer, as messy as it may be, as childlike and even *tantrumish* as they may be at times, trusting in His Spirit to lead them on the level road, to correct them in their ignorance and to ground them upon His righteousness. So, if our hearts are being transformed by Jesus, why don't we pray like the psalmist? Paul Miller will sum up for me with words more eloquent than mine:

“The difficulty of coming (to Jesus) just as we are is that we are messy. And prayer makes it worse. When we slow down to pray, we are immediately confronted with how unspiritual we are, with how difficult it is to concentrate on God. We don't know how bad we are until we try to be good. Nothing exposes our selfishness and spiritual powerlessness like prayer...

“(But) this is the gospel, the welcoming heart of God. God... cheers when we come to Him with our wobbling, unsteady prayers. Jesus does not say ‘Come to me, all you who have learned how to concentrate in prayer, whose minds no longer wander, and I will give you rest.’ No, Jesus opens his arms to His needy children and says ‘Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ (Matthew 11:28.) The criteria for coming to Jesus is **weariness**. Come overwhelmed with life. Come with your wandering mind. Come messy.”

– Paul Miller, *A Praying Life*

Fly today to Jesus Christ, the Righteous and Faithful One! With all of your brokenness and your sinfulness, fly to Him! David didn't let the fact that he was sinful keep him from prayer. In fact, it was his position as the broken one before God that drew him to run to the faithful one and plead with God to be faithful to His promises, for David's were not worthy. Prayer is the means by which we draw near to the Lord as dependent, empty-handed, mud-covered children. We come with our tears, our souls parched and dried up, longing to be filled up to all the fullness of God in Christ. We come longing.