

Walking Together In Light and Truth

Psalm 43:1–5

Series: The Joys of Corporate Worship

Sermon by Ken Puls

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Open your Bibles this evening to Psalm 43. Tonight, we return to our study of Psalm 42 and 43. These two psalms are two halves of a single psalm. Together they form a lament with 3 stanzas and 3 refrains.

The Joys of Corporate Worship.

- I. (42:1-4) The Joy of Seeking God and Delighting in Him Together
(42:5) *Refrain*
- II. (42:6-10) The Joy of Finding Strength and Encouragement in Times of Suffering
(42:11) *Refrain*
- III. (43:1-4) The Joy of Walking Together in Light and Truth
(43:5) *Refrain*

In this psalm, the psalmist expresses sorrow. He is afflicted and oppressed. He is separated from the people of God. And he is providentially hindered from being in Jerusalem at a time when the nation is gathering to worship God. His heart longs to “go with the throng” and join with the “multitude observing the pilgrim festival.”

In this study we are specifically interested in what we can learn about worship. What are the joys that come from corporate worship? What are the blessings that the psalmist longs for and desires to experience again?

In the first stanza in Psalm 42:1-4 and its refrain in verse 5, we looked at the first joy of corporate worship:

The Joy of Seeking God and Delighting in Him Together

The Psalmist longed to be in God’s presence in the midst of God’s people. His chief joy in worship was seeking God and delighting in God with the people of God.

When God brought Israel out of bondage and established them as a people, He promised to be their God, to be near them, to tabernacle among them. This great truth—**God dwells with His people**—fills the Old Testament and finds its fulfillment in the coming of Christ, the Messiah, who is Immanuel, “God with us.”

The presence of God with His people was the psalmist’s greatest joy in worship.

In the second stanza in Psalm 42 (verses 6-10) and the second refrain in verse 11, we discover his second joy—

The Joy of Finding Strength and Encouragement in Times of Suffering

The psalmist remembered the times and places where God had brought deliverance to His people. He was encouraged and drew strength when he saw and heard about God working in the lives of His people.

He also longed to return to worship so he himself could testify of God’s goodness in delivering him from his trial. He desired that his own suffering be turned to praise and thanksgiving. He looked forward to the time when he could bring a peace offering of thanksgiving and testify to the gathered congregation that God had heard and answered his prayer. All the people of God would rejoice and give thanks when they saw him—his joy and thanksgiving to God would be multiplied many times over in the context of corporate worship! His experience would bring encouragement and strength to others who were facing difficulty.

This evening we are going to consider the third joy of corporate worship. It is found in the third stanza (Psalm 43:1–4) and the final refrain (43:5).

We begin by reading both Psalm 42 and 43.

PSALM 42 To the Chief Musician, A Maschil of the Sons of Korah

- 1 As the deer pants for the water brooks,
 So pants my soul for You, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
 When shall I come and appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my food day and night,
 While they continually say to me, “Where is your God?”
- 4 These *things* I remember as I pour out my soul within me:
 How I used to go with the throng,
 Leading them to the house of God
 With a voice of loud singing and thanksgiving,
 A multitude observing the *pilgrim* festival.
- 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
 And *why* are you disquieted within me?
 Hope in God, for I will again give thanks to Him.
 In His presence *is* salvation.
- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me;

Therefore, I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,
And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar.
7 Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.
8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night His song shall be with me—
A prayer to the God of my life.
9 I will say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
10 As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me,
While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I will again give thanks to Him,
The salvation of my countenance and my God.

PSALM 43

1 Vindicate me, O God, And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;
Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!
2 For You are the God of my strength; Why do You cast me off?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle.
4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy;
And I will give thanks to You with a harp, O God my God.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I will again give thanks to Him,
The salvation of my countenance and my God.

Translation from Kenneth Puls, *Musical Praise and Thanksgiving in the Old Testament: Word Studies on Hebrew Terms in The Old Testament Related to Praise and Thanksgiving in the Context of Music* (PhD Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998).

Stanza three begins in Psalm 43:1 with a petition:

Psalm 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;
 Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!

Earlier, in Psalm 42, when the psalmist was lamenting his suffering, he said in verse 9 that he would pray to the Lord. Now in Psalm 43 we hear the words of his prayer. He prays in verse 1 for justice and asks God to deliver him from those who are deceitful and unjust. In the following verse he addresses God as “the God of my strength.” He confesses that only God has the power to preserve him.

Psalm 43:2 For You are the God of my strength; Why do You cast me off?

Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

The Psalmist then recalls his complaint from stanza 1 (Psalm 42:3).

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night,
 While they continually say to me, “Where is your God?”

Others have seen his suffering and have mocked him, claiming that his distress must be a sign that God has forsaken him. The Psalmist himself expresses his doubts in stanza 2 (Psalm 42:9).

Psalm 42:9 I will say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me?
 Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

Hebrew is a very picturesque language. The Hebrew word for *mourning* in 42:9 literally means “darkness.” The Psalmist compares his troubles and his feeling that God is no longer present with him as going about in darkness or gloom.

When circumstances begin to overwhelm us and we lose sight of God; it is like walking in darkness or oppressive gloom. The one remedy, when we find ourselves distracted and drifting in darkness, is for God to bring light to our path. This is the psalmist prayer in the next two verses:

Psalm 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me;
 Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle.
 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy;
 And I will give thanks to You with a harp, O God my God.

Here is the joy of worship expressed in this third stanza:

The Joy of Light and Truth!

A couple weeks ago, when we began the study of Psalm 42 and 43, and I asked you the question:

What do you find most enjoyable and desirable about corporate worship?

I hope this was one of the delights that came to mind. One of our joys in worship is the joy of pursuing the truth of God’s Word together. Corporate worship offers us a time and a place where we can leave the distractions and cares of the world. Here we can come together and focus our thoughts on God. Here we can reorient our minds to truth.

Turn for a moment to Psalm 12. I want to show you why the psalmist in Psalm 43 so longs after the truth. Why is resting in God’s truth so necessary for our wellbeing?

Psalm 12 is very similar to Psalm 43. Both begin with petition. Notice David’s words in Psalm 12, beginning with verse 1:

Psalm 12:1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases;
 For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

Both Psalm 43 and Psalm 12 begin abruptly with a cry for help. In fact, the first word that David utters is the word *Help!* David sees the widespread sinfulness of his day and he cries out to God.

The Hebrew word for *Help* הָשִׁיעַת (hoshi'ah) in verse one is translated other places in Scripture as *Save*. In Psalm 3:7, for example, David prays, "Save me, O my God." The first word, "save," is the word that begins Psalm 12, "Help, Lord." The verb is from the root יְשֻׁעַ (YSH') from which the name Jesus is derived.

The sin that David laments in Psalm 12 is the sin of deceitfulness and evil speech.

Psalm 12:2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbor:
 With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

In verse 3 then, David expresses his hope that God will hear his petition and come to his aid. There will come a day when the Lord will judge the wicked for their evil actions and words.

Psalm 12:3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
 And the tongue that speaks proud things:
12:4 Who have said,
 With our tongue we will prevail;
 Our lips are our own:
 Who is lord over us?

Verse 5 reveals the answer to David's petition.

Psalm 12:5 For the oppression of the poor,
 For the sighing of the needy,
 Now will I arise, says the LORD;
 I will set him in safety for which he yearns.

There is connection here in verse 5 (where God answers David's prayer) with David's petition in verse 1. The connection is obvious in the Hebrew, but not in our English translations.

The Hebrew term translated *in safety* בְּיֹשָׁעָה (b^eyesha') in verse five is in fact the noun form of the verb *Help* הָשִׁיעַת (hoshi'ah) which begins verse one. The use of this word reveals that God is directly answering the petition that began the psalm.

David is facing oppression and cries out for help. God promises to set him in "help" or in safety, but notice what that safety is! The following verses contain the answer:

Psalm 12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words:
 As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
12:7 You shall keep them, O LORD,
 You shall preserve them from this generation for ever.
12:8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

Although evil and troubles will continue to be a part of this life, we have a place of refuge, a place of safety. This place of safety is in **the truth**, revealed to us in the Word of God.

Did you notice what the psalmist prayed in Psalm 43:3?

Psalm 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me;
 Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle.

What is it that entices the Psalmist to go to worship at the tabernacle? What draws him to the assembly of God's people and brings him to the holy hill?

It is not programs and activities.
It is not contemporary music.
It is not canvassing neighborhoods to find out what people really want in a church.
It is not numerous other methods that modern church growth experts have suggested.

It is simply the truth of God set forth in His Word!

The Truth of Scripture is central to our worship.

Truth must **guide** our worship. We must look to the Word of God to teach us how God desires to be worshipped. Truth must **fill** our worship. We are to saturate our services with the Word of God. We must read Scripture aloud. We must pray in light of Scripture, according to its promises. We must sing Scripture, sound biblically based texts.

In Scripture and through Scripture we dialog and commune with God.

God has revealed His attributes and character in His Word, all that He desires that we know about Him. **We respond** by reflecting the wonder of God's character as we see Him high and lifted up in our praise and adoration.

God's Word also shows us our sinfulness and our need for Christ and His righteousness. **We respond** by confessing our sinfulness and rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

God's Word reveals what God's will is for our lives. It is in the Word that we know what God desires of us. **We respond** by hearing the Word and applying it to our lives, seeking to walk in obedience and in submission to the Word.

This is the **joy of corporate worship** that stirs such longing in the heart of the psalmist. Worship is where we gather as God's people to seek God together in His Word. It is where we rejoice in the truth that God has revealed in His Word. It is where God's Word points us to God's Son, who is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). It is where God's people are sanctified together in hearing, applying, delighting in, and responding to God's Word.

Psalm 43 then concludes with the third statement of the refrain.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
 And *why* are you disquieted within me?
 Hope in God, for I will again give thanks to Him,
 The salvation of my countenance and my God.

The psalmist again addresses his soul and preaches truth to himself. He returns to the sold ground of God's promises and reminds himself to hope in God. He is confident that God will save him and that he will "again give thanks to Him."

Conclusion

These then are joys of worship that the psalmist longs to taste again:

- The presence of God in the midst of His people
- The work of God in lives of His people
- The truth of God as a light for His people

These are the very things that Solomon desired when he blessed Israel at the dedication of the Temple. Turn for a moment to 1 Kings 8:54–61. Consider Solomon's words.

1 Kings 8:54–61 And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the Lord, that he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers. And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day."

- He asked that God be with them (verse 57).
- He asked that God incline their hearts to the truth (verse 58).
- And he asked that God be at work, maintaining their cause in His service (verse 59).

This must be our desire as well.

Let's consider in closing some **applications**. There are at least four ways that the message of this psalm should impact us.

1. The message of this psalm should impact how we think about our church.

We must desire these qualities in this church. When we think about Grace Baptist Church, this is what should come to mind:

- Here is place where God is present.
- Here is a place where God is at work in the midst of His people—a place where I can be encouraged and strengthened by the testimony of other believers.
- Here is place that loves truth—a place where truth is taught and proclaimed with boldness.

As you pray for our church, make these longings a matter of prayer:

- Pray that God would be present in the mist of His people as we gather for times of worship.
- Pray that God would bless our times together and work in and through our relationships with one another—that we would be a strength and an encouragement to one another.
- Pray that God would bless the proclamation of truth as it goes out. Pray that truth would fill our services and spill over into our conversations.

2. The message of this psalm should impact how we prepare for worship.

As you prepare to come to church, take time to ready your heart.

Pray that God would give you a love for worship.

- A love for pursuing Him in worship
- A love for being with His people in worship
- A love for hearing His truth in His Word

Pray that He will stir your heart to come:

- You need truth to feed your soul
- You need the encouragement of other believers
- And you need to encourage others.

What God has done for you this week, what He has taught you from His Word, may be just what someone else needs to hear.

This doesn't always happen just in the Sunday School classroom or from the pulpit. Ministry in the fellowship of the saints is not confined to our Sunday School lessons and the sermon. Maybe it is just a brief word of encouragement in the hallways. God can use our relationships to sanctify and strengthen us.

Pray as you come that God will use you in midst of His people to serve Him—that your praise and thanksgiving will saturate your conversations with others and point them to Christ. As you prepare for worship, pray that God would remove every obstacle that would keep you away from times of worship. Then, make every effort to be here.

3. The message of this psalm should impact how we come to worship.

We must come to this place expecting God to be here.

We must come anticipating the work of His Spirit among us. We should never come expecting things to remain the same. We should not come simply to have church, enjoy the time together, and go home.

- We must come expecting God to be at work among us.
- We must come expecting to hear truth proclaimed—expecting to grow in our knowledge of the truth.
- We must come intent upon serving and ministering to one another. Take time to speak to one another.

I know this is one exhortation that I need to preach the most to myself. I arrive on the Lord's Day with many things to do, many preparations to make—In all the activity, it is easy to miss why we are here:

We come to meet with God in His Word, together as His gathered people.

It was these simple things that the psalmist in Psalm 42 and 43 most missed when he was prevented from gathering with Israel to worship God.

Finally, number four—and this is especially for our young people, those preparing for graduation, those looking ahead to college, those who will face life changes in the days ahead.

4. The message of this psalm should impact how we choose a church to serve.

We must desire these qualities when, in God's providence, we must seek a new church home. Young people, when you graduate from high school and go off to college, when you marry or change jobs and move to a new location, **how will you find a good church?**

The longings of the psalmist here can provide you some direction and insight.

When you visit a church, ask questions!

As you participate in the worship service, your **first question** should be:

1. Does this church realize that God is present in this place? Is there a longing for the presence of God? Do they seem aware and sensitive to the presence of God among them?

Is there a reverence, awe, and humility apparent in their prayers, in the music they sing, in their demeanor as they come to worship that suggests GOD IS HERE.

Sometimes churches can get so caught up in themselves, they become oblivious to fact that God is there. Their attention and affections are drawn aside by their programs, their activities, their style of

music, even their pursuit to understand the deep details of theology—so much so that the simple truth that they are there to meet with God is lost.

Second question:

2. Does God appear to be at work in this place?

Could this church be named among the places where God is doing a work in the midst of His people? Is there a spirit of thanksgiving among the people for what God is doing in their lives? Does God spill over into their conversations, into the things that they're excited about, into their love for another?

Or do they seem more concerned about finishing on time, so they get home to the roast or the football game?

And the third question:

3. Is there a love for God's truth in this place?

Does this church love truth? Is doctrine important? Are they in submission to God's Word and seeking continual reformation as God give them understanding of His Word? Does the light of God's Word lead and guide them?

When you find such a church, rejoice and give praise to God! May God continue to make Grace Baptist Church such a place of refuge and refreshment for the people of God.

Let us pray.

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