

# Psalm 143 • Bring my soul out of trouble!

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Psalm 143, is known as a Penitential Psalm because it contains David's confession of sin. It also expresses his desire to turn from his sin. And by the way, there are 7, what we call Penitential Psalms. And this is the last of the 7. And it begins this way,

*"1 Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!" (ESV)*

And I want to remind you again, that mercy is not getting what we do deserve. And you only cry out for mercy when you know that you deserve to be punished. But you're asking God to forego that punishment. That's what mercy is.

And whenever somebody uses that term, you know that they're aware of the fact that they've done wrong. They're aware of the fact that they have sinned. He says *"In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!"*

Look at verse 2.

*"Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you."*

He tells the Lord, or asks the Lord, if you will, not to enter into judgment with him. In other words, not to judge him. And why? Because he says, nobody can actually be righteous before You. There's nobody that can stand perfectly righteous before You, God. Don't enter into judgment with me. Because I know that I'm not going to come out very well. And frankly, no one will.

But then David goes on, verse 3 and following, to speak of his troubles. And he says,

*"For 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."*

*4 Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled."*

Did you notice how he's talking about inward attacks here? Did you notice here? Verse 3, what has the enemy pursued? His soul. His soul, which is the seat of emotions and intellect.

He says, he's crushed my life to the ground; made me sit in darkness so that my spirit faints and my heart is appalled. He's talking about inward attacks. He's talking about an emotional, an overwhelming, emotional tide of difficulty now.

He says in verse 5,

*"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.*

*6 I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land."*

Verse 5 particularly is very good. We were talking and I made mention of it actually just this last Sunday while we were doing Communion. Was that last Sunday? Yeah, just this last Sunday. They all kind of run together.

But we were talking about remembering as we went into Communion. But in our study of Joshua that we've been doing on Friday morning, we were dealing with that whole issue of Stones of Remembrance. And how those things can cause us to reflect back on the faithfulness of God, and the hand of God to deliver and sustain us, and that sort of thing.

And I want you to notice that what he's doing here in verse 5 is he's doing that very thing. He says, I meditate here on days of old. He's not just saying, I'm remembering the good old days. That's not the point of what he's saying.

He's saying, I'm remembering the days that You sustain me, and cared for me, and delivered me. I'm remembering Your works. I'm remembering Your faithfulness toward me. He says I'm pondering the work of Your hands.

Why? Why? Because it builds faith. And when you're going through a rough spot, you need your faith built up. Because I tell you, if you don't do things to build up your faith, when you're going through a tough spot, you will be depleted in no time. I mean, just in no time. You got to do things.

It's really interesting, isn't it. When we go through a rough time, do you know that I think the majority of people when they're going through a really stressful time, and I'm talking Christians, will tend to stay away from church rather than to go.

They'll actually tend to stay away. Because they're just... They're agitated and they're upset. And they feel like their faith is being attacked. And they're angry, or depressed, or discouraged. And it's like, I just don't want to go to church. And it's exactly where they need to be. It's exactly where they need to be.

They need to be encouraged. They need their faith built up. They need to hear the Word of God. They need to be worshiping with brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. And they need to look somebody in the eye who they know and trust in the Lord, and say, I need you to pray for me because I'm a wreck. I am a train wreck. And I need my faith built up because I am at the end. I am running on fumes here.

Isn't it interesting, though, that when we go through those seasons, we back away. We stop reading our Bible. We stop praying. We stop fellowshiping. And that just exacerbates the problem. We're low on faith anyway. Now we're not getting refilled. And now we're just going to be a sitting duck for the enemy. And he can whisper all kinds of ridiculously, deceptive things. And we just gulp it down because our faith is so low.

David says, I remember. I mean, he's forcing himself at this time of difficulty to meditate. To ponder upon the things You've done in the past to remember. To have my faith built up.

But he admits in verse 6. Look again with me in verse 6. He says, *"I stretch out my hands to you;"* because, listen *"my soul"* is thirsty and I am *"like a parched land."* And I... He's admitting to the Lord, I need to be filled up and refreshed. And I'm reaching out to You to do that.

He says,

*"7 Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails!"* You and I might say, my faith fails.

He says,

*"Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit."*

And again, that's just very poetic language to say, Lord, if You don't take care of me here, I'm going to die! Because You're my last hope. I have nobody else to turn to beyond You!

He says,

*"8 Let 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."*

Notice at the very beginning, he said that the enemy has pursued his soul. And now he says to the Lord, I lift up my soul. I lift up my emotions. Our emotions can be so powerful. Can't they? To keep us either in slavery, or slavery to depression, discouragement, despondency.

When we are... When we're hurt, when we're hurting, and our emotions are just wrecked, it affects everything. It'll affect you physically, spiritually and it's just overwhelming. And David is admitting here that the enemy has been pursuing his soul.

And now at toward the end of this prayer, he says, Lord, to you, I lift up my soul. I lift up my emotions. I cannot live by these things. And that's something we've seen so many times in the Word. That emotions are a wonderful, wonderful, gift from God. But you and I cannot live by them. We cannot.

If we try to live by our emotions... Oh, talk about a roller coaster from hell. It's awful. It's terrible. And life is going to be up one minute and down the next. And then you're going to be flat on your back and not even know how you got there. There's got to be something more stable. Because our emotions are all over the place.

But when we're at a place where my emotions are dominating my life, and very possibly ruling my decision making processes, that's when I have to, and you have to, go to the Lord and say, Lord, to You, I lift up my soul. I lift it up to You. Because this is not what You told... gave me to control my life. I am to be led by the Spirit, not by my emotions. I am to be Spirit led, not emotionally led. Emotions, oh...

I had a young man write me. I'd never met this young man before. He learned of my email address from somebody else I'd been talking to. And he wrote me a note. I don't know how old. I'm pretty sure he's a teenager. And he wrote me and just told me that he was in turmoil about some things.

I shared some Scriptures and some thoughts with him. And he wrote me back. And he said, I thank you. I feel better now. And I wrote him right back. And I said, I don't care how you feel. Because you know what? That's not what's

important. Don't write me a letter and go, okay, I feel better now. Thanks pastor. Bye! That's not the goal, is to make you feel better.

Because you know what? Five minutes later, that can be gone. Five minutes later something else happens. And you're back in the pit. There's got to be something more stable, more regular, more real, more genuine, more lasting than your emotional well-being. And it's faith. It's putting our faith in God.

Trusting Him, even when the emotions say, no, don't do it. You're going to come back like David and say, no, He will deliver me. The Lord will take care of me. The Lord will see me through this time. I know my emotions are in the garbage right now, but I'm going to stand by faith and trust the Lord I love this about David. I just... I lift up my soul to You.

Deliver me... Are we at verse 9? Is that where we are? Yeah.

*"Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge.*

*10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!"*

Look at that. Let Your Spirit lead me, not my emotions. Let Your Spirit lead me. You lead me, Lord. I'm tired of leading myself. Your emotions will lead you like a hook in the nose. But the Lord will lead you in peace and grace. And it's... It's something to desire. And that's why David prays for it here.

Verse 11. He says,

*"For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!"*

Notice that David acknowledges that his emotions are wrecked. Right? He's not pretending like it's not happening. That's ridiculous. Why do that? There's no reason to ignore what's happening in your heart. We're not telling you to repress your emotions.

David is acknowledging. He says, God, I need You to bring my soul out of trouble. My soul right now is in trouble. I need You to help me. My emotions are a wreck!

But he says in verse 12,

*"And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, (Sometimes my enemies are myself, by the way.) and you will destroy all the adversaries (look at this,) of my soul, for I am your servant."*

Isn't that great. Wow! God is the champion of my emotional turmoil. He's the answer for my emotional turmoil. If I will just bring my emotions to Him and tell Him. Lord, my emotions are in turmoil! I need You.