

Series: Pathway Through the Psalms

# MY SOUL THIRSTETH AFTER THEE

## PSALMS 143

Text: Psalms 143:6

### ***Psalm 143:6***

<sup>6</sup> *I stretch forth my hands unto thee: **my soul thirsteth after thee**, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

Introduction:

I read a story not long ago about a preacher who had just lost his family to a tragic fire, and had fallen into deep depression was walking down a city street.

He came upon a construction crew that was erecting a new church.

He stopped to watch them as they worked. As he watched, he observed a worker who was busy carving a triangle out of stone with a chisel and hammer.

Stepping closer, he asked the stonecutter what he was carving.

The worker pointed to the steeple of the church and said, "Do you see that small opening up there near the steeple?"

Well, I am carving this stone down here so that it will fit in up there.”

The preacher was stirred in his heart. He realized anew the faithfulness of God and came to understand that the valley he was in at that moment was God's way of carving him down here so that he would fit in up there.

We live in a world that is filled with people just like that preacher. There are people all around us who live their lives in depression, despair, despondency and defeat.

I know that many people do not want to believe it, but God is in charge of all of life – whether on the mountain top or in the valley.

In this psalm we will see the characteristics of the valleys revealed.

These characteristics should teach us why we should never waste the valleys God sends our way.

Note:

Sermon Content:

# 1. THE PAIN IN THE VALLEY

## A. The Pain of Darkness – No Help (vs. 3)

### **Psalm 143:3**

*<sup>3</sup> For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.*

This was a reference to the rebellion of Absalom and the revolt of Ahithophel.

### **Psalm 41:9**

*<sup>9</sup> Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

It is especially painful when family and friends rebel and revolt.

Sadly there are many in this valley today.

Illustrations:

Spouses at time revolt causing pain to one another and to the children.

Children often rebel which leads to a painful valley.

Notice not only the Pain of Darkness but also:

B. The Pain of Depression – No Heart (vs. 4)

**Psalm 143:4**

*<sup>4</sup> Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.*

The word “overwhelmed” carries the idea of total darkness; to become faint, feeble.

Again there a lot of people who deal with depression, and desolation.

Notice not only the Pain of Darkness and Depression but also:

C. The Pain of Despair – No Hope (vs. 7)

**Psalm 143:7**

*<sup>7</sup> Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.*

Note the word faileth.

This word means to be at the end, finished or about to perish.

David feels that he has reached the end of his rope and that if God doesn't lift the veil of his darkness, then he is no better off than those who go down into death!

Again there are many walking in this valley this evening.

Understand not all valleys are the same. We don't all pass through the same places.

There are valleys of sickness, death, financial turmoil, emotional distress, spiritual upheaval.

These valleys touch the body, soul, mind, and the family.

There are valleys of every description and kind.

We all pass through valleys.

Note these verses.

**Ecclesiastes 2:2**

*<sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?*

**John 16:33**

*<sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

**Job 14:1**

*<sup>1</sup> Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*

Valleys will come, but remember God permits us to go through them.

Them come because He is in the business of perfecting us.

God carves us here so that we will fit up there.

We shouldn't waste the valley experience we go through.

God wants to teach us while we are in the valley.

Note: 2 Corinthians 12:7-11

## **2 Corinthians 12:7-11**

*<sup>7</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. <sup>11</sup> I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.*

We have considered the Pain in the Valley. Note secondly:

## **2. THE PRIZE IN THE VALLEY**

Notice:

### **A. The Prize of Remembrance (vs. 5)**

#### **Psalm 143:5**

*<sup>5</sup> I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*

David had much to remember!

The stories of what God had done for Israel, and closer home, the great things God had done for him personally – the lion, bear, the giant, Saul etc.

When walking through the valley remember what God has done.

- His salvation
- His blessings
- His refreshment
- His encouragement

Illustration:

William Cowper, the great hymn writer often lived in the depths of depression and despair.

He hired a carriage driver to take him to London Bridge.

His plan was to throw himself into the river and end his life.

However, when the driver picked him up and started for the bridge, they found themselves driving for hours in dense fog.



Frustrated, Cowper demanded that the driver stop and let him out to walk.

When he stepped from the carriage, he was shocked to find that he was standing in front of his own door.

It became apparent to him that the Lord still had a use for his life.

He entered his home and penned the words to this famous hymn: God Works In Mysterious Ways

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;

Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

Notice not only the Prize of Remembrance but also:

B. The Prize of Reliance (vs. 6)

***Psalm 143:6***

*<sup>6</sup> I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

David knew he couldn't produce what he needed.  
Therefore, he looked to God.

Our valleys are designed to cause us to come to the  
end of ourselves.

Our valleys brings us to a place of utter dependence on  
God – and this is not a bad place to be.

### **Proverbs 3:5-6**

*<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

### **2 Corinthians 4:17**

*<sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

As terrible as the valleys of life can be, they are also extremely valuable.

It is in the valley that we learn the truths about God that energize and strengthen our faith.

Illustration:

It was in the furnace of persecution that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego learned about the God Who controls the crisis.

It was there that Daniel learned about the God Who protects in the valley.

It was there that Elijah, the widow; the disciples, Mary and Martha, and a countless others learned that the valley is a place of pain, and heartache. More than that, they all learned the lesson that the valley is where you find the “lily of the valleys” (Song of Solomon 2:1)

## ***Song of Songs 2:1***

<sup>1</sup> *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

They learned that the valley is where the trees grow the tallest.

They learned that the valley is where God's grace is the strongest, and His lessons the most powerful.

They learned what many of you have also learned.

The valley is not to be wasted, it is to be searched for the treasures that are concealed there. Don't waste your valley.

We have considered the Pain and the Prize of the Valley.

Note lastly:

## **3. THE PATH FROM THE VALLEY**

Notice:

A. The Path of Prayer (vs. 1, 6, 8a, 11-12)

### ***Psalm 143:1***

<sup>1</sup> *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*

**Psalm 143:6**

*<sup>6</sup> I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

**Psalm 143:8**

*<sup>8</sup> Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.*

**Psalm 143:11-12**

*<sup>11</sup> Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. <sup>12</sup> And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.*

Several times in these verses, David refers to his prayers.

I am certain that there were times when David wanted to stop praying, but he didn't!

Pray when God says, "Yes!" Pray when God says, "No, I have a better way!" Pray when God says, "Wait!" Pray! Prayer is more than a religious activity; it is a path out of the valley.

Illustration:

George Washington at Valley Forge in 1776, he didn't give up.

Often he could be seen kneeling in the snow praying for God's help and power.

He kept praying.

Notice the Path of Prayer but also:

### B. The Path of Praise (vs. 10b)

#### ***Psalm 143:10***

<sup>10</sup> *Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: **thy spirit is good**; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

In the midst of this valley, David offers up a word of praise.

He reminds us that God is good.

Every person who walks through a valley should remember that God is good and praise Him for it.

Illustration:

Luther Bridgers wrote the words to this hymn just after losing his entire family in a tragic house fire.

There's within my heart a melody  
Jesus whispers sweet and low,  
Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,  
In all of life's ebb and flow.

All my life was wrecked by sin and strife,  
Discord filled my heart with pain,  
Jesus swept across the broken strings,  
Stirred the slumb'ring chords again.

Feasting on the riches of His grace,  
Resting 'neath His shelt'ring wing,  
Always looking on His smiling face,  
That is why I shout and sing.

Though sometimes He leads through waters deep,  
Trials fall across the way,  
Though sometimes the path seems rough and steep,  
See His footprints all the way.

Soon He's coming back to welcome me,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
I shall wing my flight to worlds unknown,  
I shall reign with Him on high.

Chorus:

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
Sweetest Name I know,  
Fills my every longing,  
Keeps me singing as I go.

Horatio Spafford wrote: "It Is Well With My Soul" after his four daughters drowned at sea.

If we cannot praise the Lord when we are in the valley; we have no business praising Him when we are on the mountain!

Close:

Let me close with just a few observations:

- You will waste your valley if you do not believe it was designed for you by God.

It is not enough to say that God merely uses the disruptions of life.

We must also acknowledge that He designs them just for us.

If He doesn't stop it, then He has a purpose in it for us!

- You will waste your valley if you think it is a curse and not a gift.

It is through what some call a curse that the Christian experiences the tender compassion and gracious care of the Lord.

- You will waste your valley if you spend too much time reading about your valley and not enough time reading about Christ.



In the midst of our pain, we need to turn to the Word of God to look into His face for the help we need.

- You will waste your valley if you allow it to drive you into solitude instead allowing it to deepen your relationships with others.

It may be that God sent your valley to help someone else.

When we cut ourselves off during our valley seasons, we deprive them of the opportunity to minister to us in the love of Christ.

Remember there is help in the valley and hope for the journey.