

“Hope in God”:
Praying Through Depression
Sermon Notes

➤ **When sorrows like sea billows roll, prayer is not your last resort - it’s your first line of defense**

**So pray, knowing that in Christ...*

1. God is your impenetrable refuge (vv.1-2)

2. God is your exceeding joy (vv.3-4)

3. God is your only hope (v.5)

Next Week: Psalm 56 - “When I Am Afraid”:
Praying Through Anxiety

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 2nd-8th

Getting Started

1. What is prayer (in general) like for you? Comforting? Difficult? Encouraging? Disorienting? Exhilarating? Disappointing? Have you ever prayed: “Lord, teach us to pray?” (Luke 11:11). If so, what was the result? If not, why not?

Digging Deeper

2. When you find your mood begins to sink (whether into genuine depression or simply experiencing a bad day), what does praying look like for you? Do you tend to avoid prayer or to cling to it in such cases? Explain.

Open Your Bible to Psalm 43...

3. Many Bible readers have noticed a tight connection between Psalms 42 and 43, to the point where some speculate that they may have the same author or even been part of the same psalm. Compare them with one another. Read them each through out loud. What similarities to strike you in terms of vocabulary, tone, and structure?

4. The psalmist puts three distinct petitions to the Lord in verse 1. What are they? Do you pray this way? How did God answer? Can you think of any recent examples that you might share with the group? If you don't tend to pray this way, why do you think that's so?

5. In verse 2, we read that the psalmist regards the Lord as “the God in whom I take refuge”. Nevertheless, he feels as though the Lord has “rejected” him. Though virtually unknown today, this suggests the biblical doctrine (well developed by the Puritans¹) of desertion. Desertion means that the Lord may for a time (for our good, in his own sovereign wisdom) remove our sense of his presence in our lives. Consider the

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<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/when-god-withdraws-the-sense-of-his-presence/> ; Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*. Soli Deo Gloria: Grand Rapids, MI. 1977. Pp.63-136;
https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ref-rev/05-2/5-2_beeke2.pdf .

following texts: Psalm 22; Lamentations 2:3; Ezekiel 5:11; Hosea 5:6. Though it's clear why he does this for those in apostasy, what purpose might he have for this in the lives of faithful believers? What effect did it have for the psalmist as Psalm 43 develops (see vv.3-5)?

6. The next request comes in verse 3. What does the Psalmist pray for here? Why is it absolutely mission critical that we learn to petition the Lord for his "light" and "truth" in the midst of spiritual depression? To ask it another way, what is the thinking in our hearts typically filled with as we descend into emotional darkness? What specific biblical truths (chapter and verse) tend to help you the most when you're feeling dejected and downcast?

7. In verse 4, the one praying goes on to refer to God as "my exceeding joy" (lit. the gladness of my joy). Up to that moment, he speaks of God's "holy hill", "dwelling", and "the altar of God". How is Christ himself the ultimate fulfillment of these important Old Testament places (if you're struggling, consider John 1:14; 2:18-22; 4:21-26; Hebrews 10:1-10)? As you reflect on these truths, do you sense your affections lifting? Why? How so?

8. The final verse finds the psalmist shift from praying to the Lord to preaching to himself. In his 'sermon', he asks two questions of his soul, issues one clear imperative, and then grounds it in a proposition. What are the questions, the imperative, and the proposition? Does your daily walk with the Lord look like this? What do you tend to do more often, listen to yourself or preach to yourself? Why can the former be so dangerous (Jeremiah 17:9), and why is the latter so essential (2 Corinthians 10:5)? As you reflect back over the content of this psalm, what practical truths have you learned about praying through depression?