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Reasoning Truth with Ourselves; Psalm 44  
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Introduction – Psalm 42 teaches us to preach truth to ourselves. Psalm 43 teaches us to pray truth for ourselves. Psalm 44 will teach us to reason truth with ourselves. Have you ever reasoned with yourself? I suspect I am not alone in this activity. I am sure, like me, you often reason with yourself. You diagnose a situation before you. You analyze the pros and cons. You weigh the outcomes of options before you. And you choose a direction or a course of action based upon working through the information at hand. We reason with ourselves.

As I study through Psalm 44, I see the psalmist doing this very thing. He moves from one thought to the next, section by section, very methodically. He is analyzing, stage by stage, the situation before him, and through this process of reasoning with himself, he arrives at a course of action.

The key lesson is that we see the psalmist reasoning truth with himself. Truth is guiding him through this reasoning process and that is why he ends up where he ends up. He's not being guided by conjecture or speculation or feeling or hypotheticals, but rather truth. That's huge for us. If we reason with anything other than truth, we are prone to take either the wrong direction or at best an unnecessary direction. Furthermore, the psalmist is not just guided by truth in general, not just conventional wisdom or common sense or basic facts, but by the truth of God. All truth is helpful to a certain extent, but it is the truth of God, found in His Word alone, that is our greatest, surest guide.

- I. God Has Been Our Help in the Past (vv1-8)
  - a. The psalmist begins his reasoning session by recalling the faithfulness of God in ages past and in recent past.
    - i. Notice the psalmist begins with the past, not the present, and that is a tremendously helpful insight for us today.
    - ii. Most of the time when we face a situation or scenario in life that we must think through or reason through, our starting point tends to be our present situation. That is what is before us, what we are facing, what needs a decision. So our analysis tends to be entirely directed to the present.

- iii. It's extremely important that we begin our process of reasoning by looking to the past because the present situation often hides or clouds the grace and faithfulness of God whereas when we look to the past, the grace and faithfulness of God can be seen with great clarity.
      - iv. That is certainly the case with the psalmist.
    - b. He looks at ages past, vv1-3. Read with emphasis. The psalmist is recounting the conquest of the Promised Land recorded throughout the book of Joshua. There were many strong and mighty nations inhabiting the land, but God had promised this land to His people. Those inhabiting the land were going to be judged for their sin by removing them from the land and giving the land to God's people.
      - i. And God did it. From Jericho throughout the rest of the land. God went before His people, strengthened His people, routed His enemies. Yes, God's people marched and fought, but God was with them and was fighting for them. God was demonstrably gracious and faithful.
    - c. He looks to ages past and he looks to his recent past, vv4-8. Read with emphasis. God's faithfulness in ages past has also been the experience of the psalmist in his own recent past. He has lived and experienced the grace and faithfulness of God.
    - d. It cannot be overemphasized that when we begin to reason through a situation, to begin with the past grace and faithfulness of God – a faithfulness that we have read about in His Word and a faithfulness that we have experienced in our own lives.
      - i. Recalling God's past faithfulness yields faith and praise to God in the psalmist's heart even though his present circumstance would hinder faith and praise. V8.
      - ii. The result then is that as the psalmist begins to analyze his present experience, he is doing so through the lens of God's past faithfulness rather than merely through the lens of his present difficulty. And that makes a world of difference for him, and it will make a world of difference for us.
- II. God Has Removed His Help in the Present (vv9-22)
- a. Let me explain what I mean by that. I don't mean that God is not helping at all in the present. But it is clear that the present situation looks much different than the past. The way in which

God helped in the past is not the same way God is working in the present. In the past, God has been shield and defender and protector from foes, from hardships. God has been a refuge from the storm. In the present, God is allowing hardship and not preventing the foes. He's doing something totally different that appears as though He is not helping at the moment.

- b. V9 – that's completely different from v2 and v7. I believe God is judging the nation of Israel for its idolatry and sin, and yet, while most of the people of God have turned away from God, there remains a remnant of true believing saints. There always remains a remnant of true believers. So what is judgment upon those who have turned their backs on God in vv9-16 is also persecution for those who continue to love and follow the Lord, vv17-22.
  - i. We see the judgment of the Lord in vv9-16. I think the context for these verses is probably the time of the Judges. Just like vv1-3 reflect on the conquest of the land in Joshua, what is happening in vv9-16 probably occurred sometime in Judges. Remember the up and down narrative of Judges. God gives His people the land, they enjoy His blessings and forget Him. He allows their foes to overcome them to bring them back to Him. When they repent, He raises up a judge to deliver them, and tragically, the cycle continues.
    - 1. The lesson here though is that God is working just as much in vv9-16 as He was in vv1-8, He's just doing a different work. In vv1-8, God is removing their foes to bless them, in vv9-16, God is raising up their foes in order to bring them back to God. In vv1-8, God is helping them nationally. In vv9-16, God is helping them spiritually. And it's a much different experience. It looks different. It feels different. Life is very different. But none of that means that God is different!
    - 2. May we also remember that when it seems that God is allowing us to be disgraced and it seems He has rejected us, that God is doing something good for us. He is teaching us, He is growing our faith, He is bringing us back to Him. He has not forgotten or rejected us, He's just doing something different for us.
  - ii. Then in vv17-22, we see that also existing side by side with those who are being judged by God, there are believers, who

are not being judged, but are being persecuted. Read with emphasis.

- c. Three quick observations/lessons.
    - i. If you can determine that the hardship or affliction you are experiencing is not due to sin, then you can rest assured that no matter how difficult and painful the trial may be, God will bring about good. He will conform us to Christ. He will strengthen our faith. He will deepen our joy.
    - ii. Just because you are not being disciplined by the Lord for sin does not mean the trial is not heavy, v22. Ill. Job's friends
    - iii. If you can look into your heart of hearts and know that you love God, then you have all the hope in the world that somehow God is on your side and will come through. V21
    - iv. That's how the Apostle Paul read this psalm in Rom 8:31-39
- III. God Will Once Again be Our Help (vv23-26)
- a. Because the psalmist has been reasoning truth with Himself, he started with God's proven faithfulness in the past, he acknowledges his heart for God in his present crushing circumstances, and therefore, he can cry to God in full faith that God will answer, He will help, He will redeem.
  - b. Final note – the psalmist grounds his assurance that God will come to his help, not in himself but in God. V26.
  - c. It's not because I love God that God will redeem me. It's because God loves me that I can be assured and certain He will redeem me. In fact, it's because God has set His love on me that I love Him in my heart of hearts. It's because God has demonstrated His love to me by sending His Son to die for me that I can rest assured, He will never, never, never let me go.
  - d. It is precisely because the love of God for me, demonstrated when His Son died to reconcile me to God, that I can know without a doubt, when I cry to Him, "redeem me for the sake of your steadfast love", I am redeemed! Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Conclusion – Starting points and Ending places. When we begin to reason with ourselves, always start with the faithfulness of God. If we start with God, we can look through the present trouble with God, and instead of ending in a place of despair, we can end in a place of faith. O God, Our Help in Ages Past –

Our hope for years to come. Starting point – O God, our help in ages past,  
ending place – our hope for years to come. Our shelter through the stormy  
blast – present difficulty, and our eternal home – ending place.