

Psalm 44:1-26

When It Seems that God Has Not Answered Your Prayers

Introduction: This psalm is part of book 2 of the Psalms. This may have been a “responsive reading” type of psalm, in light of the switch from singular to plural pronouns as I will note later. This psalm conveys grief and sorrow as well as frustration and perplexity over God’s failure to help them. (Ross) Note how each unit grows progressively shorter.

Superscription: *To the music director. Of the sons of Korah. A Maskil* (designed to impart wisdom).

1) We know what God has done in the past and it builds confidence—44:1-8

- a) We have been taught well—44:1
 - i) ¹ *O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, a deed which You did in their days, in the days of old.*
 - ii) There is value in recounting these stories to our children and grandchildren.
- b) We heard about the stark contrast during the Conquest—44:2-3
 - i) God intervenes:
 - (1) ² **You** (emphatic), *with Your own hand, dispossessed the nations but them (our ancestors) You planted;* (Josh. 3:10; Exo. 15:17)
 - (2) *You afflicted the peoples but them (our ancestors) You spread out.*
 - ii) God has a reason to intervene:
 - (1) Stated **negatively:** ³ *For they did not conquer the Land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them;* (Josh. 24:12-13)
 - (2) Stated **positively:** *but by Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance (favor, goodwill), because You delighted in them.* (Exo. 6:6; Num. 6:24-26)
- c) And it’s personal—44:4-6 (I choose to embrace my ancestors’ faith)
 - i) Prayer:
 - (1) A creed of submission: ⁴ **You** (emphatic) *are my King, O God;*
 - (2) Request for rescue: ordain/command *victories/salvations for Judah.*
 - ii) Hope: (like a wild ox)
 - (1) ⁵ *Through You we will drive back/gore our adversaries;*
 - (2) *by Your name/character we will trample our enemies.*
 - iii) Confidence: ⁶ *For I will not trust in my bow nor can my sword save me.*
- d) Our collective response to God’s past work—44:7-8
 - i) God alone has done this: ⁷ *But You have saved us from our adversaries and have put to shame/disgraced those who are hating us.*
 - ii) God is worthy of our praise: ⁸ *In God we have boasted all day long, and we praise/give thanks Your name forever. Selah.*
 - iii) We are always indebted to God and always have reasons to praise Him.

2) But it seems like God is not answering our prayers now—44:9-16

- a) We are demoralized—44:9-10
 - i) ⁹ **But** (emphatic; i.e. this is hard to believe) *You have rejected us and humiliated us; You do not go out with our armies.*
 - ii) ¹⁰ *You have made us turn back from our adversary and those who are hating us have taken plunder for themselves.*
- b) God doesn't care about us like He used to—44:11-12
 - i) ¹¹ *You have given us like sheep for food, and You have scattered us among the nations.*
 - ii) ¹² *You sell Your people cheaply, and You have not profited by their sale.*
- c) We are embarrassed—44:13-14 (defeat is one thing, disgrace is another)
 - i) ¹³ *You make us a reproach to our neighbors,*
 - ii) *a mockery and ridicule to those around us.*
 - iii) ¹⁴ *You make us a proverb/byword among the nations,*
 - iv) *a shaking of the head among the peoples.*
- d) And it's personal—44:15-16
 - i) ¹⁵ *All day long my dishonor is before me, and the shame of my face covers me,*
 - ii) ¹⁶ *from the voice of the one who scorns and insults me, from the sight of the enemy and the avenger.*

3) So, for now, we are confused—44:17-22

- a) We have been faithful—44:17
 - i) ¹⁷ *All this has happened to us, though we have not forgotten You,*
 - ii) *and we have not violated Your covenant with us.*
- b) It seems like God has treated us unfairly—44:18-19
 - i) ¹⁸ *Our heart (inwardly) has not turned back nor have our steps (outwardly) departed from Your path;*
 - ii) ¹⁹ *but You have crushed us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death.*
- c) It seems like God is acting inconsistent with what He knows—44:20-22
 - i) Rhetorical question concerning God's omniscience: ²⁰ *If we had forgotten the name of our God (i.e. reject His authority) or spread out our hands (in prayer) to a foreign god, ²¹ would God not have found this out, since He knows the secrets of the heart?*
 - ii) Allegiance to God comes with a heavy price: ²² *Yet for Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.* (cf. Rom. 8:36)
(1) i.e. We are mistreated because of our loyalty to God.

4) But we will continue to pray to the Sovereign One—44:23-26

- Even though life is hard, they know to Whom they should turn.
- a) **Wake up:** ²³ *Wake up! Why are You sleeping, O Adonai/Sovereign One?*
 - i) Cf. Psalm 121:4
 - b) **Get up:** *Get up! Do not reject us forever!*

- c) **Look up:** ²⁴ *Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppression?*
 - i) ²⁵ *For our soul is bowed down to the dust;*
 - ii) *our belly clings to the ground.*
- d) **Rise up:** ²⁶ *Rise up, be our help! and redeem us because of Your loyal love.*
 - i) Pay on our behalf whatever price is needed to bring us out of our predicament. (Motyer)

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) Even in times of adversity and frustration when God seems inattentive, be reminded that God takes pleasure in His children (44:3) and deals with them in loyal-love (44:26).
- b) Sometimes it feels like faith and faithfulness go unrewarded. In a world ruled by a moral God we have an expectation that virtue will be rewarded, and an element of surprise when it is not. (Alec Motyer)
- c) Unanswered prayer is a challenge for all believers. There is tension that believers must learn to live with when it seems that God is not helping them. But faith must not be abandoned. We must continue to trust and pray, even though we don't fully understand His ways.