

The Desert Place

Psalm 143

Psalm 143 is David's heart cry to God from a spiritual desert place. The theme of the psalm can be summed up in verse 6: "I lift my hands to You in prayer. I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain." The picture is one of desperation! Without water, life cannot exist; and David feels the absence of Living Water so acutely that it seems as though his spirit is at the point of extinction. It is from this place of weakness and hopelessness that David asks—dare we even say demands?—six things of God; but each of these six things also implies a corresponding responsibility on the part of David.

1. **Request:** "Come quickly, Lord, and answer me, for my depression deepens" (v. 7).

Responsibility: Talk to God. In order for someone to answer you, there must be a conversation taking place. Rather than continuing to descend into hopelessness and despair, David enters into conversation with God and tells Him all about it, ugliness included.

2. **Request—**"Show me where to walk, for I give myself to You" (v. 8).

Responsibility: Wait for God. Out of options, David gives up trying to figure it out himself and instead gives himself completely to God. In asking God to show him the next step to take, David is acknowledging that all he can do now is to wait for God.

3. **Request—**"Rescue me from my enemies, Lord; I run to you to hide me" (v. 9).

Responsibility: Run to God. Picture a soldier crouching behind a rock, pinned down by enemy gunfire. He has nowhere to run, no route of escape open to him. Suddenly a helicopter appears, touching down near the rock. Those on board are holding off the enemy fire, and the soldier has only seconds to decide whether to risk leaving the "security" of the rock to run to the helicopter. It takes faith and courage to run to God in the midst of an enemy attack, but He is our only hope of rescue.

4. **Request—**"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God" (v. 10).

Responsibility: Listen to God. As any teacher or parent knows, it's very difficult (if not impossible!) to convey wisdom and instruction to someone who is not listening. Tied closely to the discipline of waiting, listening involves keeping a quiet but alert heart that is watching for God to speak through His Word, through His people, or through circumstances. In asking God to teach us, we are asking Him to give us a discerning heart as we wait and listen.

5. **Request—**"May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on firm footing" (v. 10).

Responsibility: Follow God. As David well knew, the only firm footing is found in following closely behind God. After listening for His direction, the next step is to follow His leading through obedience.

6. **Request—**"Because of your faithfulness, bring me out of this distress" (v. 11).

Responsibility: Rest in Him. There often comes a place where, after having followed God in obedience, the pathway becomes too rough for our feeble feet to navigate, and God stoops to pick us up and carry us over the seemingly impossible terrain. David pleads with God to "bring him out". The NASB translates it as "Revive me". The picture is one of complete helplessness and dependence, resting in God's arms and receiving strength from His embrace while trusting in His faithfulness to carry us the rest of the way.

David ends by re-affirming God's unfailing love as well as his commitment to live as a servant of God. This song that poured from his heart centuries ago also re-affirms for us that, just like David, we can experience the quenching of our thirst through the process of crying out to the Living Water, and reminding ourselves how to daily live in relationship with Him.