

“THE DAYS OF OLD”

Psalm 143

Intro: This past week Lucille and I were reading the Bible, as we usually do before we go to bed. We both do our reading individually during the day. We use the schedule that we distribute here at Trinity at the beginning of each year, having one reading from the OT and another from the NT to read through the Bible in a year. In addition she does additional Bible reading and so do I. I read a Psalm a day, and a chapter from Proverbs.

But almost every evening we use what is called the Golden Thoughts calendar which is published by the Trinitarian Bible Society of London, England. They take a part of a verse for each day from different parts of the Bible, and suggest that for added blessing you can read the whole chapter. And that is what we usually do.

The verse for last Thursday was Psalm 143:1, and so when Lucille was reading the whole chapter, I was struck with the words in verse 5, “I remember the days of old.” The rest of the verse says, “I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands.” We had notice that this was a Psalm of David, and so we knew that this was what King David of Israel did as a regular habit.

Since we did that reading of Psalm 143, I have read it through by myself several times, and I decided that I would speak this morning to you about Psalm 143.

One thing I asked myself was, What did David mean by “the days of old”?, which he used in verse 5. The rest of the verse, I believe, answers that question. He went on to say, as you can see in your Bible, “I will meditate on all Thy works: I muse on the work of Thy hands.”

He was speaking of “the days of old” where he learned about the Lord’s works, the works of His hands. And I asked myself if I were going to think about the works of the Lord, where would I go to find out about them? Of course, the answer to that question is, I would go to the Bible. That is one reason, one big reason, for reading the Bible.

Now I don’t know how much of the Bible King David had, but it was not nearly as much as we have today. He had the first five books of the Bible,

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for sure. So he knew about Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, just to name a few. He probably knew about the judges of Israel. But what is most important David knew what the writings which spoke of those men also told him about the place which God had in their lives. He had spent lots of time learning about “the days of old.” David not only learned about those people, women included, but he learned what they did, the mistakes that they made, and the right things that they did, and he had learned a great deal from them, especially what they did when they had people to deal with, or when they were confronted with the trials that everybody faces in life. He spent a lot of time just thinking about those people who lived before him, and the part that God had in their lives. He knew that times had changed from those olden days, but he also learned that God had not changed. And so he learned that just as God had helped those people in “the days of old,” God would help him as he faced the trials and difficulties of his life.

Now a lot of days of old have been added from David’s day to our day. We have a completed Bible. We know now about how the Lord Jesus handled His trials when He was here on earth. And then add to that all of the days that have been added since the Bible was completed. Dr. A. W. Tozer once wrote, “Next to the Holy Scriptures the greatest aid to the life of faith may be Christian biographies.” If we don’t know how the people of God lived in the past, we will probably make more mistakes than they did.

Psalm 143 is not just ancient Hebrew poetry which was sung by the people of Israel, but it is history, a small glimpse into the history of a very godly man, a king of Israel, who tells us what he did when, as he said in verse 4, his spirit was overwhelmed within him, and his heart was desolate. If you came to church this morning feeling like that, then this Psalm is for you. Somewhere as we move through life in this world, it will minister to all of us, not just once, but probably over and over again. Our troubles may be different from David’s, but the solution for us is the same that it was for David. So let David minister to our hearts this morning from this page out of “the days of old.”

Now let’s look at Psalm 143.

In the first four verses King David describes for us what it means to be down. We used to have the expression that pictures how David was when he wrote this Psalm: *he had to look up to see bottom.*

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It seems to me that in the first three verses David was looking in three directions, and at this point none of them helped him.

In verse 1 he was looking at the Lord, and it seems that he had been looking to the Lord in prayer for quite a long time, but he had no assurance that the Lord was listening to him.

In verse 2 he was looking at himself. He knew that he stood condemned before the Law. He claimed to be only the Lord's servant, but he could not find a single reason why he deserved the Lord's help. Nobody does. His words were expressive of his only hope, and that was in the grace of God.

In verse 3 he was looking at his enemy. It looked to him like his enemy had done everything to him but to kill him, and that seemed imminent to David. Talk about a hopeless situation; here it is.

In verse 4 we see David at this point in the Psalm – “overwhelmed” and “desolate.” They mean “clothed in darkness” and “wholly devastated.” But isn't it amazing that even though David may have felt hopeless, yet he could not let the Lord go.

Next we come to the bright spot in the Psalm in verses 5 and 6. What a lot is expressed in those words, “I remember.” The Lord has a wonderful way of jogging our memory. While the Lord was here on earth, do you remember what He said about a special ministry of the Spirit? You will find what He said in John 14:26:

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This is one reason it is so important for us to be reading the Bible every day, and as often as we can throughout the day. And what an argument this is for memorizing the Word.

When things look so black that you never expect to see the light of day again, suddenly the Holy Spirit says, “Remember.” And then we say, as King David did, “I remember the days of old.” Suddenly the Holy Spirit reminded David of truth that had been written in his heart. He remembered because he had not only heard of how God helped His people in the days of old, but he had read a lot of it for himself. And he had not only heard about it, or read about it, but he had stopped and meditated on it; he

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had mused on it. He had pondered it. He had talked to himself about it. We are missing many blessings because we think about the Word, and fail to go back to read it again and again. A good test for us is to ask ourselves what it was that we read this morning. I hope none of you came to church without spending some time with the Lord letting Him speak to you through His Word.

And what about verse 6? David lived in a thirsty land, and that is where we live. But he had a thirsty soul, not just for help, but for the Lord. You see, this is one reason trials come our way. The Lord wants us to want Him!

I have the feeling in studying this Psalm that David was going through a time in his life which can happen to any of us, and often does, when his trials had unknown to him, caused his heart to grow cold toward the Lord. But we are seeing, as we move from verse 6 to the last verses of this Psalm that David's heart of love for the Lord was burning with new passion, and the psalm closes as we listen to King David pouring out his heart anew, and he was praying with new confidence that the Lord was going to help him.

The other night, last Thursday, when Lucille and I read Psalm 143, we also read out of the book, "Then Sings My Soul," a hymn which I felt expressed where David was during this time of trial. Let me read it to you and you see if it doesn't express the way David must have felt.

(Read "O for a closer walk with God.")

The Psalm closes with a series of special requests which poured out of the heart of David, and we find them in verses 7 through 12.

I want you to notice as we go through these verses that David seemed to bring the Lord into his requests in a way that was different from the way he prayed in the first four verses. He seemed to be more concerned about the Lord in these later requests, while in the beginning it was centered more upon David himself.

Note this in verse 7. He still wants the Lord to hear him, but the new note is "hide not Thy face from me, lest . . ."

In verse 8 David was concerned not only that the Lord would hear him,

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but that he would hear the Lord. And it was not just what He wanted the Lord to do for him, but so he would know how the Lord wanted him to walk, to live in fellowship with the Lord. He saw that the main need was his, to lift his soul up to the Lord.

In verse 9 we see the same. He still wanted to be delivered from his enemies, but now he was fleeing to the Lord to hide him. I hope you see the difference in his prayer after what he had said he had done in verses 5 and 6.

Verse 10 is all about the Lord. He realized that one of the purposes of the trouble he was having was so he would learn to do the Lord's will, and not just that he was the Lord's servant (he revealed in that), but that God was his God, and that God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) "is good" – not "was," nor "will be," but "is." Changes always need to be made when we face the trials of life, but the changes are always in us, not in the Lord. And we need to keep this in mind the first thing in the morning (as we see in verse 8.)

David's request in verse 11 was not for his sake, but for the Lord's name's sake, for the Lord's glory. And David was concerned that he would be quickened so that others who watched him under trial would know that he was more concerned that others would always think well of the Lord. The Lord, David knew, was righteous in all of His ways

The final request had to do with his enemies. He needed deliverance, and sought deliverance, but he wanted it to be a testimony to the mercy of God.

There is actually a note of humility that runs through this prayer, and must have been one of the outstanding characteristics of King David. There is no indication, even in the first part of his prayer in verses 1 through 4 that David expected special treatment because he was the King. He called himself the Lord's servant in verse 2, and that is the way he closed the Psalm.

Concl: "The days of old." Are you familiar with them? Are you learning from them? I hope that we can all see at least some of what David learned from the trials that he was experiencing when he wrote Psalm 143, as well as his other Psalms. When the Apostle Paul was concluding his letter to the church at Rome, he said this which is recorded

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for us in Romans 15:4. Here are his words:

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

So, just because we live in NT times, don't neglect the OT. If you do, you will be missing a lot of wonderful lessons that God has taught His people in the "the days of old." As we read the Word, whether in the OT or in the NT, always pray that you will be learning those precious lessons that God has taught His people from the beginning of time.