

Exposition on Psalm 143

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's righteousness and our own weakness, and seeking His mercy and face in our relationship with Him.

Scripture: Romans 10:2

Topics: "Christ Centered", "Gods Mercy"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the Psalms, revealing how they point to Jesus Christ and His prophecies. He emphasizes the importance of seeking Christ in the Psalms and recognizing Him as the fulfillment of past events. Augustine delves into the themes of humility, righteousness, and the need for God's mercy and grace in our lives, urging believers to acknowledge their sins and rely on God's righteousness. He highlights the struggles faced by Christ and His followers, emphasizing the unity between Christ as the Head and believers as His members.

Transcript

1. ...The title of the Psalm is, To David himself, when his son was pursuing him. We know from the Books of Kings 2 Samuel xv that this happened:...but we must recognise here another David, truly strong in hand, which is the explanation of David, even our Lord Jesus Christ. For all those events of past time were figures of things to come. Let us seek then in this Psalm our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, announcing Himself beforehand in His prophecy, and foretelling what should happen at this time by things which were done long ago. For He Himself foretold Himself in the Prophets: for He is the Word of God. Nor did they say ought of this kind, save when filled with the Word of God. They announced then Christ, being filled with Christ, they went before Him about to come, and He deserted not them going before...

2. Let then our Lord speak; let Christ with us, whole Christ, speak. Lord, hear my prayer, receive with Your ears my entreaty Psalm 142:1. Hear and receive with ears are the same thing. It is repetition, it is confirmation. In Your truth hear me, in Your righteousness. Take it not without emphasis when it is said, in Your righteousness. For it is a commendation of grace, that none of us think his righteousness his own. For this is the righteousness of God, which God has given you to possess. For what says the Apostle of them, who would boast of their own righteousness? Speaking of the Jews, he says, they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Romans 10:2 ...You are perverse, because you impute what you have done ill to God, what well to yourself: you will be right, when you impute what you have done ill to yourself, what well to God....Behold, in Your righteousness hear me. For when I look upon myself, nought

else do I find my own, save sin.

3. And enter not into judgment with Your servant Psalm 142:2. Who are willing to enter into judgment with Him, save they who, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, go about to establish their own? Wherefore have we fasted, and You have not seen; wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and You take no knowledge? Isaiah 58:3 As though they would say, We have done what You have commanded, why do You not render to us what You have promised? God answers you: I will give to you to receive what I have promised: I have given you that you should do that whereby you may receive. Finally, to such proud ones the Prophet speaks; Wherefore will you plead with Me? You have all transgressed against Me, says the Lord. Jeremiah 2:29 Why will you enter into judgment with Me, and recount your own righteousnesses?...For before You every one living shall not be justified. Every one living; living, that is, here, living in the flesh, living in expectation of death; born a man; deriving his life of man; sprung from Adam, a living Adam; every one thus living may perhaps be justified before himself, but not before You. How before himself? By pleasing himself, displeasing You. Enter not then into judgment with me, O Lord my God. How straight soever I seem to myself, You bring forth a standard from Your store-house, Thou fittest me to it, and I am found crooked. Well is it said, with Your servant. It is unworthy of You to enter into judgment with Your servant, or even with Your friend. Matthew 5:40 ...What of the Apostles themselves?...That ye may perceive it at once, they learned to pray what we pray: to them was given the pattern of prayer by the heavenly Counsellor. After this manner, says He, pray ye. Matthew 6:9 And having set down certain things first, He laid down this too to be said by the leaders of the sheep, the chief members of the Shepherd and Gatherer of the one flock; even they learned to say, Forgive us our debts. Matthew 6:12 They said not, Thanks be to You, who hast forgiven us our debts, as we too forgive our debtors, but, Forgive, as we forgive. But surely the faithful prayed then, surely the Apostles prayed then, for this Lord's Prayer was given rather to the faithful. If those debts only were meant which are forgiven by Baptism, it would befit catechumens rather to say, Forgive us our debts. Let the Apostles then say, yea let them say, Forgive us our debts. And when it is said to them, Wherefore say ye this? What are your debts? let them answer, for in Your sight every one living shall not be justified.

4. For the enemy has persecuted my soul: he has humbled my life on the earth Psalm 142:3. Here we speak, here our Head speaks for us. Manifestly both the devil persecuted the Soul of Christ and Judas the Soul of his Master: and now too the same devil remains to persecute the Body of Christ, and one Judas succeeds another. There lacks not then of whom the Body too may say, For the enemy has persecuted my soul. For what does each one who persecutes us endeavour save to make us abandon our heavenly hope, and savour of the earth, yield to our persecutor, and love earthly things? They have laid me in dark places, as the dead of the world. This ye hear more readily from the Head; this ye perceive more readily in the Head. For He died indeed for us, yet was He not one of the dead of the world. For who are the dead of the world? And how was not He one of the dead of the world? The dead of the world are those who have died of their own desert, receiving the reward of iniquity, deriving death from the sin transmitted to them; according as it is said, For I was conceived in iniquity.. ..In dying, says He, I do the will of My Father, but I am not deserving of death. Nought have I done wherefore I should die, yet is it My own doing that I die, that by the death of an innocent One, they may be freed who had wherefore they should die. They set me in places, as though in Hades, as though in the tomb, as though in His very Passion, as the dead of the world.

5. And My Spirit within me, says He, suffered weariness Psalm 142:4. Remember, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Matthew 26:38 Here we see one voice. Do we not see plainly the transition

from the Head to the members, from the members to the Head?...

6. But we too were there. He goes to the members. I have called to mind the days of old Psalm 142:5. Did He call to mind the days of old, by whom every day was made? No, but the body speaks, each one who has been justified by His grace, who dwells in Him in love and devout humility, speaks and says, I have meditated upon all Your works: plainly because You have made all things good, and nothing would have stood fast, which was not established by You. Your creation is made a spectacle unto me: I have sought in the work the Artificer, in all that is made the Maker. Wherefore this, to what purpose this, save that he might understand, that whatever there was of good in himself was made by Him....Look back then upon the Framer of your life, the Author of your substance, of your righteousness, and of your salvation: meditate upon the works of His hands, for the righteousness too which is in you, you will find to pertain to His hand. Hear the Apostle teaching you this, not of works, he says, lest any should boast. Have we no good works? Plainly we have: but see what follows; for we are His workmanship, Ephesians 2:9-10 says he. We are His workmanship: perhaps in thus speaking of workmanship, he meant to mention the nature whereby we are men? Evidently not: he was speaking of works. But let us not make conjectures; let the text go on, for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Think not then that you yourself doest anything, save in so far as you are evil....Work out your own salvation, says the Apostle, with fear and trembling. Philippians 2:12-13 If we do work out our own salvation, wherefore with fear, wherefore with trembling, when what we work is in our own power? Hear wherefore with fear and trembling: for it is God that works in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure. Therefore with fear and trembling, that it may delight our Maker to work in the lowly valley....

7. I stretched forth, says he, my hands to You: my soul is as a land without water to You Psalm 142:6. Rain upon me, says he, to bring forth from me good fruit. For the Lord shall give sweetness, that our land may give her fruit. I have stretched forth my hands to You; my soul is as a land without water, not to me, but to You. I can thirst for You, I cannot water myself.

8. Speedily hear me, Lord Psalm 142:7. For what need of delay to inflame my thirst, when already I thirst so eagerly? You delayed the rain, that I might drink and imbibe, not reject, Your inflowing. If then Thou for this cause delayed, now give; for my spirit has failed. Let Your Spirit fill me. This is the reason why You should speedily hear me. I am now become poor in spirit, make Thou me blessed in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3 For he in whom his own spirit lives, is proud, is puffed up with his own spirit against God....

9. Turn not Thou away Your Face from me. You turned it away from me when proud. For once I was full, and in my fullness I was puffed up. Once in my fullness I said, I shall never be moved. I said in my fullness, I shall not be moved, knowing not Your Righteousness, and establishing my own; but You, Lord, in Your Will hast afforded strength to my beauty. I said in my fullness, I shall not be moved, but from You came whatever fullness I had. And to prove to me that it was from You, You turned away Your Face from me, and I was troubled. After this trouble, where into I was cast, because You turned away Your Face, after the weariness of my spirit, after my heart was troubled within me, because You turned away Your Face, then became I like a land without water to You: turn not Thou away Your Face. You turned it away from me when proud; give it back to me now I am humble. Because, if Thou turn it away, I shall be like to them that go down into the pit. What is, that go down into the pit? When the sinner has come into the depth of sins, he will show contempt. They go down into the pit, who lose even confession; against which is said, Let not the pit close her mouth over me. This depth Scripture calls mostly a pit, into which depth when a sinner has come, he shows contempt. What is, he shows contempt? He no longer believes in

Providence, or if he do believe, he thinks that he has no longer anything to do with it....

10. Make me to hear in the morning Your mercy, for in You have I hoped Psalm 142:8. Behold, I am in the night, yet in You have I hoped, until the iniquity of the night pass away. For we have, as Peter says, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts. Morning then he calls the time after the end of the world, when we shall see what in this world we believe. But what here, until the morning come? For it is not enough to hope for the morning; we must do somewhat. Why do somewhat? God is to be sought with the hands in the night. What is, with the hands? By good works. Since then we must thus hope for the morning, and bear this night, and persevere in this patience until the day dawn, what meanwhile must we do here? Lest perchance thou think that you will do anything of yourself, whereby you may earn to be brought to the morning. Make known to me, O Lord, the way wherein I must walk. Therefore did He kindle the lamp of prophecy, therefore did He send the Lord in the vessel, as it were, of the flesh, who should even say, My strength is dried up like a potsherd. Walk by prophecy, walk by the lamp of future things predicted, walk by the word of God....

11. Deliver me from mine enemies, O Lord, for unto You have I fled for refuge Psalm 142:9. I who once fled from You, now flee to You. For Adam fled from the Face of God, and hid himself among the trees of Paradise, so that of him was said in the Book of Job, As a servant that flees from his Lord, and finds a shadow. He fled from the Face of his Lord, and found a shadow. Woe to him, if he continue in the shade, lest it be said afterward, All things are passed away like a shadow. Wisdom 5:9 The rulers of this world, of this darkness, the rulers of the wicked; against these ye wrestle. Great is your conflict, not to see your enemies, and yet to conquer. Against the rulers of this world, of this darkness, the devil, that is, and his angels; not the rulers of that world, whereof is said, the world was made by Him, but that world whereof is said, the world knew Him not. John 1:10 For unto You have I fled for refuge....Whither should I flee? Whither shall I go from Your Spirit?

12. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God Psalm 142:10. Glorious confession! glorious rule! For Thou, says he, art my God. To another will I hasten to be re-made, if by another I was made. You are my all, for You are my God. Shall I seek a father to get an inheritance? You are my God, not only the Giver of mine inheritance, but mine Inheritance itself. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Shall I seek a patron, to obtain redemption? You are my God. Lastly, having been created, do I desire to be re-created? You are my God, my Creator, who hast created me by Your Word, and re-created me by Your Word. Teach Thou me: for it cannot be that You are my God, and yet I am to be my own master. See how grace is commended to us. This hold fast, this drink in, this let none drive out of your hearts, lest you have a zeal, of God, but not according to knowledge. Romans 10:2 Say then this: Your good Spirit, not my bad one, Your good Spirit shall lead me into the right land. For my bad spirit has led me into a crooked land. And what have I deserved? What can be reckoned as my good works without Your aid, through which I might obtain and be worthy to be led by Your Spirit into the right land?

13. Listen, then, with all your power, to the commendation of Grace, whereby you are saved without price. For Your Name's sake, O Lord, You shall quicken me in Your righteousness Psalm 142:11; not in my own: not because I have deserved, but because You have mercy. For were I to show my own desert, nought should I deserve of You, save punishment. You have pruned off from me my own merits; You have grafted in Your own gifts. You shall bring forth my soul out of tribulation. And in your mercy shall bring mine enemies to destruction: and you shall destroy all them that afflict my soul; for I am Your servant Psalm 142:12.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-143/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net