

## The Statesman's Source of Hope

Every governing official faces frustration over challenges in achieving goals. This is especially significant for the leader committed to doing good, which we often refer to as a Statesman. Such a leader is generally operating contrary to those surrounding in the governing process, who may be described as politicians according to one analyst:

*A politician thinks of the next election, a statesman of the next generation. A politician looks for the success of his party; a statesman for that of his country. The statesman wishes to steer, while the politician is satisfied to drift (James Freeman Clarke).*

The Statesman will frequently be thwarted by the politicians, who tend to pursue other goals. The danger is if the leader should become so discouraged as to give up on the goals of good for the people. The question becomes how to face those obstacles with hope. King David, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., provides a thought-provoking example and wise advice based on his own experience. He does this in Psalm 143 from the Bible:

*<sup>1</sup> LORD, hear my prayer. In Your faithfulness listen to my plea, and in Your righteousness answer me. <sup>2</sup> Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one alive is righteous in Your sight. <sup>3</sup> For the enemy has pursued me, crushing me to the ground, making me live in darkness like those long dead. <sup>4</sup> My spirit is weak within me; my heart is overcome with dismay. <sup>5</sup> I remember the days of old; I meditate on all You have done; I reflect on the work of Your hands. <sup>6</sup> I spread out my hands to You; I am like parched land before You. <sup>7</sup> Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails. Don't hide Your face from me, or I will be like those going down to the Pit. <sup>8</sup> Let me experience Your faithful love in the morning, for I trust in You. Reveal to me the way I should go because I long for You. <sup>9</sup> Rescue me from my enemies, LORD; I come to You for protection. <sup>10</sup> Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your gracious Spirit lead me on level ground. <sup>11</sup> Because of Your name, O LORD, let me live. In Your righteousness deliver me from trouble, <sup>12</sup> and in Your faithful love destroy my enemies. Wipe out all those who attack me, for I am Your servant.*

Here, the king expresses his frustration to the King over the nations and over him, God Himself. The first thing the king does is admit his discouragement, and sense of inadequacy:

*For the enemy has pursued me, crushing me to the ground, making me live in darkness like those long dead (v. 3).*

He does not describe his enemy, It could be any obstacle to achieving his goals. Then, he describes the impact upon his emotional well-being:

*My spirit is weak within me; my heart is overcome with dismay (v. 4).*

*I am like parched land before You... my spirit fails (vv. 6,7).*

We can feel his deep pain. In the midst of this, He pleads to God:

*LORD, hear my prayer. In Your faithfulness listen to my plea, and in Your righteousness answer me (v. 1).*

The king comes to God, recognizing Him as the only **hope**. In his request, he appeals to God for help in the issues he faces based upon two things:

1. **God's faithfulness.** The history of God's meeting every need in the past and the confidence that God can be trusted to do this again.

2. **God's righteousness.** God's goodness and the confidence that God will do good for the king as demonstrated by God's character.

The king's confidence is based upon an understanding of God's character as we learn to place our trust in Him. He expresses this:

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all You have done; I reflect on the work of Your hands (v. 5).*

The king's hope and His confidence is based on a proven record of God's goodness and His meeting challenges and obstacles in the past. As the king focuses his request:

*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your gracious Spirit lead me on level ground (v. 10).*

He focuses on two elements:

1. *Teach me to do Your will.* There is the clear expression that the king wants to be obedient to God's instructions, and that once he knows them, he will do them.
2. *Lead me on level ground.* Take away the obstacles, allowing me to move ahead without hinderance.

The king concludes with what is an essential recognition of why he is confident God will grant his request in overcoming the obstacles he faces:

*I am Your servant (v. 12).*

*I am Your servant.* The king acknowledges his heart to be God's instrument in this physical world in which the king operates on his Master's behalf. The king chose the word translated here as "servant", but which in the original language means "the lowliest of slaves". The king is placing himself in the lowest possible place before God, as a humble servant. A king does not normally act like the lowliest person in society. And yet, this is precisely the attitude that this king expressed toward Almighty God. By acknowledging who his real Master is, he is acknowledging that he is seeking only to do his Master's will and that only his Master can help him accomplish it. His **hope** is based upon his recognition of his position before God.

We gain further insight through the example of another king, Uzziah, a descendant of King David who reigned three centuries later. We are told King Uzziah:

*did what was right in the LORD's sight ... He sought God throughout the lifetime of Zechariah, the teacher of the fear of God. During the time that he sought the LORD, God gave him success (2 Ch 26:4-5).*

The key to King Uzziah's effectiveness, and his hope, is that he feared God. What does it mean to fear God? It means to have a healthy respect for, a sense of awe, and submission to God. It means to hold the same view that King David had of himself before God, as the lowliest of slaves.

**APPLICATION TO THE STATESMAN.** Can we humble ourselves before God as the lowliest person in society? It is often thought that kings cannot do such a thing. However, the Statesman must be realistic about the challenges he faces and recognize that unless he has God's help, it will not get done and he can have no hope.

*For the God who calls you is faithful, and He can be trusted to make it happen (1 Thessalonians 5:24).*