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Psalm 44: To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

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Psalm 44

To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

(RSV)

- ¹ We have heard with our ears, O God,
our fathers have told us,
what deeds thou didst perform in their days,
in the days of old:
- ² thou with thy own hand didst drive out the nations,
but them thou didst plant;
thou didst afflict the peoples,
but them thou didst set free;
- ³ for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm give them victory;
but thy right hand, and thy arm,
and the light of thy countenance;
for thou didst delight in them.
- ⁴ Thou art my King and my God,
who ordainest^(a) victories for Jacob.
- ⁵ Through thee we push down our foes;
through thy name we tread down our assailants.
- ⁶ For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
- ⁷ But thou hast saved us from our foes,
and hast put to confusion those who hate us.
- ⁸ In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to thy name for ever.
- ⁹ Yet thou hast cast us off and abased us,
and hast not gone out with our armies.
- ¹⁰ Thou hast made us turn back from the foe;
and our enemies have gotten spoil.
- ¹¹ Thou hast made us like sheep for slaughter,
and hast scattered us among the nations.
- ¹² Thou hast sold thy people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.
- ¹³ Thou hast made us the taunt of our neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those about us.
- ¹⁴ Thou hast made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock^(b) among the peoples.
- ¹⁵ All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face,
- ¹⁶ at the words of the taunters and revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

Selah

**17 All this has come upon us,
 though we have not forgotten thee,
 or been false to thy covenant.**
**18 Our heart has not turned back,
 nor have our steps departed from thy way,
 19 that thou shouldst have broken us in the place of jackals,
 and covered us with deep darkness.**

**20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,
 or spread forth our hands to a strange god,
 21 would not God discover this?
 For he knows the secrets of the heart.**
**22 Nay, for thy sake we are slain all the day long,
 and accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

**23 Rouse thyself! Why sleepest thou, O Lord?
 Awake! Do not cast us off for ever!**
**24 Why dost thou hide thy face?
 Why dost thou forget our affliction and oppression?**
**25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
 our body cleaves to the ground.**
**26 Rise up, come to our help!
 Deliver us for the sake of thy steadfast love!**

Footnotes:

- a. (v.4) Gk Syr: Heb *Thou art my King, O God; ordain*
- b. (v.14) Heb *a shaking of the head*

Psalm 44 looks back to the Tradition from the past, when God gave victories over our enemies. It teaches that we are not to rely upon our own strength (verse 6), but upon God who gives us the victory (verses 7-8). -- Yet now we are experiencing the defeat of our armies (verse 9), and we have become a laughing-stock among the nations (verses 13-14). And what makes this so hard to bear is that we have not been disobedient or faithless to God (verse 17); our heart has been with God (verse 18), and we have been true to his covenant (verse 17). No, it was because of our fidelity to the LORD that we have been slain (verse 22)! Hence the sharp word, almost a rebuke, to God, “Rouse thyself! Why sleepest thou, O Lord?”

Jesus was crucified for his faithfulness to the Father. St. Paul quotes verse 22 of the Psalm in Romans 8:36. And in our day we must again think of fellow Christians around the world who must suffer, not because they have been faithless, but because they are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we also must pray the Psalm to its final verse, “Rise, up, come to our help! Deliver us for the sake of thy steadfast love.”

Prayer to accompany Psalm 44:

Lord, rise up and come to our aid. You are the king who knows the secrets of our hearts; fill us with the light of truth and with your strong arm lead us to freedom, as you mightily delivered our ancestors; for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Linger longer over verses 23, 26b:

**Rouse thyself! Why sleepest thou, O Lord!
Awake! Do not cast us off forever!
Deliver us for the sake of thy steadfast love.**