



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Ian Hamilton

Psalm 44: 1-26

Jan 2026

"Bewildered with God"

TRANSCRIPT

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 44; it's a congregational lament.

Forty percent of the Psalter is laments. The Lord Jesus Christ would be singing laments, (congregational laments, personal laments), every Sabbath day; and we need to know 'The Song Book' of our Savior.

Psalm 44 is headed;

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

**44** O God, we have heard with our ears,  
our fathers have told us,  
what deeds you performed in their days,  
in the days of old:  
<sup>2</sup> you with your own hand drove out the nations,  
but them you planted;  
you afflicted the peoples,  
but them you set free;  
<sup>3</sup> for not by their own sword did they win the land,  
nor did their own arm save them,  
but your right hand and your arm,  
and the light of your face,  
for you delighted in them.  
<sup>4</sup> You are my King, O God;  
ordain salvation for Jacob!

<sup>5</sup> Through you we push down our foes;  
through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.

<sup>6</sup> For not in my bow do I trust,  
nor can my sword save me.

<sup>7</sup> But you have saved us from our foes  
and have put to shame those who hate us.

<sup>8</sup> In God we have boasted continually,  
and we will give thanks to your name forever. *Selah*

<sup>9</sup> But you have rejected us and disgraced us  
and have not gone out with our armies.

<sup>10</sup> You have made us turn back from the foe,  
and those who hate us have gotten spoil.

<sup>11</sup> You have made us like sheep for slaughter  
and have scattered us among the nations.

<sup>12</sup> You have sold your people for a trifle,  
demanding no high price for them.

<sup>13</sup> You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,  
the derision and scorn of those around us.

<sup>14</sup> You have made us a byword among the nations,  
a laughingstock among the peoples.

<sup>15</sup> All day long my disgrace is before me,  
and shame has covered my face

<sup>16</sup> at the sound of the taunter and reviler,  
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>17</sup> All this has come upon us,  
though we have not forgotten you,  
and we have not been false to your covenant.

<sup>18</sup> Our heart has not turned back,  
nor have our steps departed from your way;

<sup>19</sup> yet you have broken us in the place of jackals  
and covered us with the shadow of death.

<sup>20</sup> If we had forgotten the name of our God  
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,

<sup>21</sup> would not God discover this?  
For he knows the secrets of the heart.

<sup>22</sup> Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

- <sup>23</sup> Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?  
Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!
- <sup>24</sup> Why do you hide your face?  
Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
- <sup>25</sup> For our soul is bowed down to the dust;  
our belly clings to the ground.
- <sup>26</sup> Rise up; come to our help!  
Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

Psalm 44: 1-26 (ESV)

Let us pray;

Father, we thank You that You have given us, 'Your word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.' (*Psa 119:105*). You have given us,  
'Your Word to make us wise,  
for salvation,  
through faith in Jesus Christ.' (*2Ti 3:14*).

You have given us Your Word, LORD, that we might know You, and love You, and serve You. We come, LORD, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, that You would enlighten the eyes of our understanding and You would help us to know the hope to which You have called us, 'the riches of Your glorious inheritance in the saints and the exceeding greatness of Your power toward us who believe.' (*Eph 1:18-19*).

Every heart is open before You: You know us; You know everything about us.

Our Heavenly Father, our gracious, merciful, long-suffering Heavenly Father;  
Meet with us in our need today,  
Lay bare our hearts before You,  
Cause 'the word of Christ to dwell richly within us', (*Col 3:16*)  
Shape and fashion our lives into His likeness,  
That we might be people to Your praise.

Look upon us in tender mercy, we pray...Help us Holy Spirit.

And we ask it all in our Savior Jesus Christ's name.

Amen.

*(Message)* You'll find it helpful to turn with me in your Bibles to the 44th Psalm. I mentioned in the introduction to the Bible reading that 40 percent of the Book of Psalms is laments—and the vast majority, congregational laments.

Forty percent of 'The Song Book' of our Savior was filled with laments, and the reason for that is surely not hard to understand. The life of faith in a fallen world, opposed by the world of flesh and the devil, is an embattled life. Satan is relentless in his endeavors to harm, to hinder, to hurt the church of God and the people of God. The life of faith isn't even; it is not mechanical...it's more horticultural than mechanical—it has great heights to rise to, and then great depths to fall to.

There are times when life is just overwhelming...and God appears to have left us. The prophet Isaiah chapter 45, verse 15, says, "Truly, you are a God who hides Himself." ...There are times when it appears that God has abandoned the scene.

Martin Luther translates those words, "Truly, you are a God who hides Himself," *Deus Absconditus*, "God has absconded" ...He has left us.

I wonder if you have ever known what it is to come to the LORD and say, 'You bewilder me. Your ways are not my ways. Your thoughts are not my thoughts. I cannot fathom Your dealings with me.'

Maybe you're thinking, 'Well, I've never known that.'

Well, if you've never known that I wonder if actually you are in Christ Jesus this morning. Our Savior experienced that, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (*Mat 27:41*)...'Why have You abandoned me?'

*[Now of course, He is unique, He is God the Son...but He is the 'prototypical man of faith.' His whole life was lived in faithful, trustful dependence on the goodness of His*

*Heavenly Father. He had come from Heaven to do the will of the Heavenly Father; He had come to die, "the just for the unjust", (1Pe 3:18), to bring us...to God. He knew His destiny, and there were moments when the Heavenly Father split the heavens and declared, 'This is My Son, in Him I am well pleased.' (Luk 3:22). He knew great heights on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was metamorphosed before these three disciples, and the shining effulgence of the Glory of God burst through the ordinary veil of His humanity. (Mat 17:2).]*

But now, at the most critical moment in His life, God is nowhere to be seen.

This is why there are so many Psalms that reflect the experiences of the child of God as they journey their way as pilgrims through this barren land. When I was a young Christian I was given a book with the title, *The Normal Christian Life*, and I was told that this is a book that will help me, 'Live above the trials and the strains and the stresses, and give me victory after victory!'

I read the book—but at the same time I was reading the Bible and I thought, "That is not what I find in the Bible. I find the people of God at times overwhelmed by bewilderments, and trials, and troubles." Remember Paul, in 2 Corinthians 1, there was a time when he says, "We despaired even of life." (vs8).

We're not told the context that gave birth to this Psalm, "...of the sons of Korah." We know it's a congregational lament and I want simply to reflect with you on the Psalm as a whole...almost dealing with the Psalm in 'a landscape fashion' —because I think that actually is the best way to enter into the heart, of 'the *cri de coeur*', of 'the heart cry' of the psalmist as he pours out his soul to God. And really, at the heart of the Psalm there is a conflict; there is a conflict between *theology*...and *experience*. There is a conflict between the *promises* of God and the *providences* of God...so, 'How are we to live when our theology is contradicted by our experience?' I want to notice four things with you in the Psalm.

Let me tell you what the four are.

Number one, verses 1 through 8, 'The *aggravation* caused by genuine faith'.

Verses 9 through 22, 'The deep *perplexity* provoked by genuine faith'.

Verses 23 to 26, 'The familial *boldness* inspired by genuine faith'.

And then fourthly, 'The supportive theology that *undergirds* genuine faith'.

(Verses 22 and verse 26.)

So first of all, verses 1 through 8, 'The *aggravation* caused by genuine faith'.

Now, if you were to read these verses, (*verses 1-8*), isolated from verse 9 to 26, you would completely misunderstand the point and purpose of these verses. These verses are not so much a confession of faith, (though they appear to be that); they are a confession of **bewilderment**:

"O God, we have heard with our ears,  
our fathers have told us,  
what deeds You performed in their days,  
in the days of old." (vs1)

Now, let me read that as I think it *should be read*:

"O God, we have heard with our ears,  
our fathers have told us,  
what deeds You performed in their days,  
in the days of old." (vs1).

(And now verses 2-3 as it, "should be read.")

'Our fathers have passed on to us a rich theology of truth and triumph.

Our fathers have told us that, with Your own hand You drove out the nations...

You planted Your people!' (vs2-3 *modified*)

"You are my King, O God;  
ordain salvation for Jacob!" (vs4)

They, (*Your people*), are saying, 'In God, we have boasted continually and we will give thanks to Your name forever.'

And you could almost be lulled into thinking, 'Well, here is a man of faith, extolling the greatness of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God, the covenantal faithfulness of God to His people.'

Doesn't he say, (*in verse 8*),

'In God we have boasted continually,

And we will give thanks to Your name forever. *Selah.*"

But these verses need to be read in the light of what follows...and what follows casts a shadow over the first eight verses, because the first eight verses are not so much 'a confession of faith', as 'an *aggravation* of faith'.

What the psalmist is really saying is this: 'LORD, we've heard all about You from our fathers. They have passed on to us, rightly, the triumphs and the victories that You accomplished on their behalf. We know our history; we know about the exodus, the wilderness, and the occupation of the land. We know about the triumphs under Joshua, and we know the great victories that You accomplished, and You did so because we are Your people.'

"But", (the first word of verse 9, there is a "*But*")...

[Sometimes, I'll ask my students, 'Give me text in the Scriptures that speak powerfully of the purity and holiness of God.' Almost inevitably, a student will say, 'You are of purer eyes than to behold inequity.' (Habakkuk 1:13), and I will say to them, "Bad answer." ... "Bad answer!" —And they look at me, because it's true, isn't it?... 'God is of purer eyes than to behold inequity'.]

...But in the context, Habakkuk is saying, 'Really!? You are of purer eyes than to behold inequity? That's the theology but You're raising up the Babylonians to smash Your covenant people!?! How am I to reconcile the *theology* God with the *actions* of God?'

And this is what the psalmist is doing here. He is *aggravated* by this conflict, (as he sees it), between what he knows to be true about God, (what his father has told him), and the present providences of God. So, there is an *aggravation* to faith.

The Book of Psalms are unsettlingly honest; they don't allow us to retreat into an evangelical 'bubble', where everything is all sweetness and light. Brothers and sisters, the life of genuine faith is often an aggravated life...a bewildered life—a life that cannot make sense of God.

But then, in verses 9 through 22, (which are really, more the focus), we notice not only the aggravation caused by genuine faith, but the deep *perplexity* provoked by genuine faith.

Now, this is a man of faith who is lifting up his heart to God on behalf of the congregation of God's people. His circumstances have not driven him to despair ...they have driven him to prayer. But he has come to God in prayer with an unsettling honesty, (as we'll see dramatically towards the end of the sermon).

"In God...", (verse 8), "...we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to Your name forever."

"But You have rejected us and disgraced us...". (vs9a).

"You have made us turn back from the foe...". (vs10a).

Verse 11, "You have made us like sheep for slaughter...".

Verse 12, "You have sold your people for a trifle...'

Verses 13, "You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,  
the derision and scorn of those around us."

"You have made us a byword among the nations,  
a laughingstock among the peoples." (vs14).

(He could almost be describing the life of the church of the Living God today...  
'The world looks on with disdain and with derision.' )

The world looks at the church...and it appears so enfeebled, so divided, so lacking in authority—the world mocks. And we want to say, ‘Well, where is the God of Elijah? Where is the God of the Great Awakening? Where is the God of Martin Luther, and John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones!?’

And the psalmist is *bewildered* with God:

Verse 15, “All day long my disgrace is before me...”.

He cannot make sense of God's ways with His people. He knows what God did in the past, but he doesn't live in the past.

I love reading a Christian biography. I teach church history, amongst other things, and I love reading about the mighty acts of God, (above all, in Holy Scripture), but then also throughout history...about Athanasius, about Augustine, about the great missionary endeavors into the heartland of pagan Europe in the middle centuries. I love to read about that...and it's inspiring.

But I don't live then, I live today and I look around and I say, ‘Where is the God of Elijah? Where is the God of Charles Haddon Spurgeon with thousands flocking into the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London?’

He, (*the psalmist*), cannot make sense of God. **His theology appears to be contradicted by his experience—and what do you do when theology appears to be absolutely contradicted by providence?**

‘God loves me, (so the Bible tells me), but my life is overwhelmed with trials, and troubles, and tribulations, and tragedies, and disasters!’ He is deeply perplexed with God...but it is a perplexity provoked by genuine faith. This isn't an unbeliever, this isn't even a disaffected believer, this isn't a backslider. This is a man who genuinely says, "In God...", verse 8, “...we have boasted continually...”; but who says, "LORD", (*vs23*), with searing honesty. There is no pretense here...that's why we should always be in the Psalms.

Let me encourage you, read a Psalm a day, and just keep working through the Psalms. Read a Psalm a day...*for* the honesty, the readiness of the Holy Spirit to inspire such laments in the people of God.

That is why we need hymnology today. (And I love many wonderful modern hymns, but none of them that I know...none of them are laments.) What does a miserable Christian have to sing when they come to church on the LORD's day?

Yes, of course, we want to be summoned to sing a joyful song to the LORD, but when your heart is breaking within you, (when you've lost a child in the womb, when your wife is dying, when the world is mocking you), what do we have to sing? We have to go back to the Psalms! (Or perhaps 17th century German hymns, they're wonderful.)

So there is a deep *perplexity* provoked by genuine faith.

But *thirdly*, notice the *familial boldness* inspired by genuine faith. Now in verses 23 through to 26, [Our English versions are somewhat helpful here...but the Hebrew is far more dramatic.], there are four imperative verbs/commands. The psalmist **commands** God four times.

Have you ever commanded God to do anything? The psalmist does; and you get that throughout the Psalms; 'Is it not time for you to act, O God!?' (*Psa 119:126a*). There is a boldness, there is a *familial* boldness. God, *our Father*, allows His children to take liberties with Him, so let me read to you the way I think the Hebrew should be read, verse 23; "Awake! Why are you sleeping!?"

It's as if God is one of the pagan gods. And you can't but think of that, (and kind of not think of that), in relation to the disciples crossing the lake with the Lord Jesus. The storm is raging, the disciples are overwhelmed with fear. They say, 'Lord, why are You sleeping? You don't care that we perish?' (*Mar 4:38*)

[That must be the most ridiculous statement ever to come from the lips of any man, "Do you not care that we perish?!!" 'I came from Heaven's glory that you might not

perish! I have come to lay down My life, a ransom for many...What do you mean,  
'Do I not care if you perish!?' ']

The palmist is saying, 'LORD, You are sleeping on the job! Awake!!'.

And he does it again, "Rouse Yourself!" (vs23).

[Now in Hebrew, and maybe some of you know, (now, I'm not a linguist), but when there is a command issued in Hebrew, often to intensify the command they have two little Hebrew letters at the end...(if you're interested, it's called 'the paragogic he'...in one ear and out the other, that's fine). It's a 'suffixal intensifier' and it is a way to intensify the passion of the verb, the strength of the verb.]

"Rouse yourself!!" (vs23b). And he does the same thing in the last verse, "Rise up!". (It is, again, this strong Hebrew suffixal intensifier),

"Rise up!...Redeem us for the sake of Your steadfast love!" (vs26).

Now, the point I simply want to make is this: 'Here is a man of God, inspired by the Spirit of God, to write the Word of God—one of the sons of Korah and he feels able to pour out his anguished soul to God without pretense.'

It is just the overflow of his soul...and God, our God, allows us to be that real with Him, to be that honest with Him.

The LORD hates pretense. There is a *familial boldness* to genuine faith. He is our Father in Heaven. He is high and holy—but He's our Father. That is our fundamental default as Christian believers. Yes, the LORD is thrice holy: He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite glory, impassable, (*He is unchangeable*)—and all of this...but He is Father...He is Father, because in Christ we have been brought by the adoption of God's love and grace into the family—and in God's family there is honesty...and so the psalmist feels able, (*to be bold*).

It is remarkable, actually. It's unsettling because you're confronted here, and throughout the Psalter actually, with true religion at its purest. Now, we're always sinful, (I'm not saying the psalmist is free of sin here), but the Holy Spirit has enshrined these inerrant words to encourage us to be real with God.

But then, *fourthly*, notice the *supportive theology* that undergirds true faith...genuine faith. There is *aggravation* caused by genuine faith, there is deep *perplexity* provoked by genuine faith; there is familial *boldness* inspired by genuine faith. But there is *rich theology* that *undergirds* genuine faith...and this comes out in two ways in the Psalm.

Look at verse 22. So the psalmist is pouring out his heart to God and he says,  
"Yet for Your sake we are killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Now, you will know perhaps, hopefully, that Paul quotes these words in Romans 8:36. What the psalmist didn't know, but what the Apostle Paul knew, was that these sufferings were not the result of God's judgments on them; they were the battle scars of the people of God in the warfare of the Kingdom. They were 'Battle Scars' ...not *judgment scars!*

You see, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you're brought into the Kingdom of God, into the family of the people of God, into the church of God, (the *Qahal Yahweh*, the *Ekklesia tou Theou*)...you're brought into the people of God—and what are you brought into?...Into a kingdom and a people that is in elemental, cosmic conflict with the devil.

You know the great verse in Genesis 3:15, the first, great, Gospel promise—God says to Satan, (in the guise of the serpent), 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. You will strike at his heel; he will crush your head.'

The whole of the Bible is an unfolding, escalating exposition of kingdom against kingdom, light against darkness. Our warfare is not with 'principalities and powers', our warfare is with Satan, who is the prince of darkness. Our warfare is not with 'flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers with the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.' (Eph 6:12)

What the psalmist didn't realize, when he says,

"Yet for Your sake we are being killed all the day long;..." (vs22a), the sufferings they were experiencing were *the battle scars* of the people of God as they engage in warfare against *the kingdom of darkness*.

Maybe that's an encouragement for some here this morning. Maybe your life is embattled, and you look around, and like the psalmist, you say, "LORD! All this has come upon us...", (verse 17), "...though we have not forgotten You..." He is not saying they're sinless...but he is saying,

LORD, "we haven't forgotten You,  
we have not been false to Your covenant,  
our heart has not turned back,  
none of our steps departed from Your way." (vs17-18).

He is trying to make sense of everything, and he doesn't realize in that little phrase, "For Your sake", (vs22a), that all that he and God's people are going through was actually because of their *faithfulness*—not because of their unfaithfulness.

[Now, of course, we do suffer for unfaithfulness, 'Whatever we sow, that we shall reap.' God is gracious, He is merciful—but we will, in God's good purpose, receive the fruits of our unfaithfulness. But here, we need to realize that faithfulness will often bring suffering.]

It did for our Savior. No one more faithful than He, and yet He was, "A man of sorrows", (Isa 53:3), familiar with suffering. "You have been with Me", (Jhn 15:27), He says to His disciples... 'all through My trials and tribulations, from wound to tomb.'

He was the object of Satan's relentless hostility. And He suffered for that; He endured hardship and He learned obedience...through what? Through the things He suffered.

You see, one of the dangers is that life is so comfortable for us—here in Dallas, Joan and I back in Inverness—so comfortable that we almost are lulled into thinking that, 'Well, comfort is the norm.' Brothers and sisters, hostility is the norm...**hostility!**

"I will build my church...", said Jesus, "...and the gates of Hell...", (the parliament of Hell, the concerted antagonisms of Hell), "...will not prevail against it." (*Mat 16:18*) Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that until He would come again, His people would experience what He experienced...because of our union with Him.

Remember Saul of Tarsus...the road to Damascus? The voice comes, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (*Acts 9:4*). You almost imagine Saul thinking, 'Really!? I'm not persecuting You; I'm persecuting these pesky Christians!' But they belong to Christ...they are His body, 'Touch them, you touch Me!'

So, this is part of the supportive theology to undergird the *aggravations* of faith and the *bewilderments* of faith, "...for Your sake we are killed all the day long." (*vs22a*).

But then there is a *second* part of supportive theology, and it's in the closing words of the Psalm, "Redeem us for the sake of Your steadfast love." (The ESV reads, and that's okay.) "*Hesed*", "Redeem us for the sake of Your *covenant love*." (*vs26b*).

Do you know what he, (*the psalmist*), is saying to God!? 'Live up to who You are!' You, (*believers*), are the heart of God's covenant; 'I will be your God; you will be My people'... 'I will be your God; you will be My people.' (*e.g. Jer 30:22*). And the psalmist is praying, 'Redeem us for the sake of Your covenant love...Live up to Your promise to be our God!'

That is why, perhaps, the greatest need in the Christian Church today, (and by 'the Christian church', I mean Bible-believing, Christ-honoring, Gospel-proclaiming church), our greatest need is to be reacquainted with, '**Who God is!**'

There is a wonderful book written, maybe 30 years ago by David Wells entitled, *God in the Wasteland*. I'll never forget reading these words from the book, page 30, (if I remember),

"The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is,  
'God rests too inconsequentially on His church'."

We are not humbled by the wonder of who God is. We're not brought low by the inexplicable glory of His coming. In Jesus Christ, we sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." ...When was grace amazing to you?

We sing about being, "Lost in wonder...(*lost in*) love, and (*lost in*) praise".

*(Lost In Wonder a hymn by Martyn Layzell)*

When was I last lost in wonder, love, and praise?

Maybe you're very different from me—but I guess most of us are much the same.

We need to be reacquainted with who God is—the *Great* and the *Awesome* God, as Daniel describes Him. (Dan 9:4).

And that is why the word *awesome* is not anything to do with coffee, or ice cream, or steak...Let us leave at least one word for God; God alone is **awesome**.

He is great, He is awesome, He is infinite and eternal...but,

He is the Father of mercy,

He is the God of all comfort,

He is the God who spared not His only Son but delivered Him up for us all.

He is the God who could have passed us by and left us damned, but...

"When all was sin and shame,

A second Adam to the fight

And to the rescue came."

*(A hymn; Praise to the Holiest in The Height)*

We have great supportive theology to help us as we navigate the *perplexities*, the *bewilderments* of God's ways with us... "Truly, You are a God who hides himself." (Isa 45:15).

And that's why we need to go back to basics and remember perhaps more than anything else in these times, how the LORD responded to Moses' plea, "Show me Your glory", Exodus 33, (*vs18*).

Remember how Exodus 34 begins? The LORD takes this servant and places him in the cleft of the rock, and causes all His glory, goodness, to pass before him—and then the Lord God Almighty speaks. The LORD: 'You want to know Me, Moses? Get this: "Yahweh, Yahweh, rich in mercy, slow to anger, abounding in covenant love." (*Exo 34:6*).

Yes, He will by no means clear the guilty, that's not where He begins;

"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn to Me and live." (Eze 33:11).

He begins with this, "Yahweh, Yahweh, rich in mercy, slow to anger, abounding in covenant love." (Ex 34:6).

Sink your life Moses...Ian, Dan...whoever...

'Sink your life into, WHO I AM!

Let us pray;

Oh, that we might know You better than we do,

Oh, that our hearts might love You better than they do,

Oh, that we might trust You better than we do,

By Your grace to the praise of our Savior, in whose Name we pray.

Amen.

*(End of Audio)*