

Psalm 142

“Thou art my refuge”

A Maschil of David; A prayer, when he was in the cave

Psalm 142:

As the superscription indicates, David’s distress this time is the dogged pursuit by his enemies.

“When he was in the cave” could refer to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-2), or En-gedi (1 Samuel 24:1-7).

After presenting his lament (verses 1-4), David lifts up his petition (verses 5-6), and promises his thanksgiving when God answers (verse 7).

Verses 1-7:

Under the same circumstances as (Psalm 57; according to the superscription), David recounted his desperate days hiding in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1), while Saul sought him to take his life (1 Sam. chapters 18 to 24).

It appears that David’s situation, for the moment at least, seems hopeless without God’s intervention.

Psalm 91 provides the truths that bring the solution.

- I. Cry of David (142:1-2);
- II. Circumstances of David (142:3-4);
- III. Confidence of David (142:5-7).

Verses 1-2:

David’s description of loneliness could be anyone’s: he is disoriented, deserted, depressed, and even defeated.

His first step toward healing was “I cried unto the LORD”, to the God of heaven, his Maker.

Too many times, the devout come to God with their pious platitudes while, deep down, they are desperately hurting.

Yet it is never too late to share the cries of the heart with the One who knows us best.

Psalm 142:1 " I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication."

With the voice of his soul, in the language of his mind, mentally, as Moses and Hannah cried unto the LORD when no voice was heard.

Or articulate sounds expressed, since this prayer was put up to the LORD in the cave where Saul was at.

Though it might have been delivered before he came into it, while he and his men were at the mouth of it, which threw David into this distress.

Besides the cave was so large as to hold David and his six hundred men without being seen by Saul or anyone else.

And who could discourse together, as David and his men did, without being heard by Saul while he was in it.

And so, this psalm or prayer might be spoken vocally, though he was there.

"With my voice unto the LORD did I make, my supplication":

The same thing in other words.

Crying" is explained by making "supplication".

Which is praying to the LORD in a humble manner for grace and mercy, and not pleading merit and worthiness.

It seems that this was a time in David's life, when the only help that he could depend on was the LORD God.

Notice the word "voice" is spoken twice.

This prayer was not a whisper, nor even a silent prayer.

This was a loud cry to the LORD.

Psalm 142:2 "I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble."

Not a complaint of the LORD and of his providences, but of himself.

Of his sins, and particularly his unbelief.

And also of them that persecuted and afflicted him.

Which he "poured" out from the abundance of his heart, and in the bitterness of his soul.

Denoting the fullness of his prayer, his freedom in it, the power and fervency of it, and which he left before the LORD, and submitted to his will (see Psalm 102:1).

"I showed before him my trouble":

The present trouble he was in, being pursued and surrounded by Saul and his army.

Not as if the LORD was ignorant of it, and did not see and observe it, but to affect his own soul with it.

To exercise grace under it, and ease his burdened and distressed mind.

The best of men have their troubles both within and without, and the way to be rid of them is to carry them to the LORD.

David is not speaking this complaint against God, but against the condition of his circumstances.

Look with me at a Scripture where Jesus was telling the disciples that God already knew what their needs were, even before they asked.

Matthew 6:8 "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

The LORD was already aware of the problem, before David spoke, but sometimes it is good to pray and relate the problem to Him, so that we can know for sure He is aware.

Psalm 142:3 "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me."

"My spirit was overwhelmed":

Means that David's spirit was "muffled", his spirit so wrapped up in gloom that he had lost his way, his powers of judgment gone.

While David felt overwhelmed, he took comfort that God understood.

All believers can say the same to God: "Thou knewest".

Sometimes the problems overwhelm us, and we get down in our spirit.

The LORD knew just exactly where he was.

Even though the enemy had set a trap, the LORD would keep him from being caught in that trap.

Psalm 142:4 "I looked on [my] right hand, and beheld, but [there was] no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

“No man”:

It appears to David that he has been totally abandoned.

David’s lonely words express his feeling of total abandonment, rejection and isolation.

Hunted by Saul, abandoned by some of his friends, surrounded by the outlaws of the world, David felt alone.

This is true.

When you are down and about out, no man does care for your soul.

God is the only one who cares many times, when things are so bad.

Even those we call our friends, are sometimes fair-weather friends.

In time of trouble, they are nowhere to be found.

The right hand, here, being the favored side, would be speaking of a friend.

No one wanted to take the chance of getting in trouble himself by hiding David.

Psalm 142:5 "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou [art] my refuge [and] my portion in the land of the living."

“Thou art my refuge”:

A frequent claim in the psalms (compare Psalms 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 18:2; 25:20; 31:1; 46:1; 57:1; 61:3; 62:7; 91:2; 94:22; 141:8; 143:9; 144:2).

When God’s people set their problems aside so that He may move to the center, they discover him as their “portion and refuge”.

Problems begin to fade when He has prominence.

When there is no help around, then it is time to call on God.

When David cried out to God, he immediately said, Thou art my refuge.

He suddenly realized that God would take care of him, even in this terrible situation.

To me in the last part of the statement above, he is saying, if You want me to live O God, no one can take my life.

My life is in You.

If God was his refuge, he did not need others to take his part.

He was a majority with God on his side.

Psalm 142:6 "Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."

Give ear to me when I cry to thee.

Do not turn away and refuse to hear me.

"For I am brought very low":

I am reduced greatly.

I am made very poor.

The language would be applicable to one who had been in better circumstances, and who had been brought down to a condition of danger, of poverty, of want.

It is language which is commonly applied to poverty.

"Deliver me from my persecutors":

Saul and his followers.

"For they are stronger than I":

More in number; better armed; better suited for battle.

Send me the Deliverer.

We read how God heard the cry of Jacob's children in Egypt, and sent Moses to deliver them.

This is the very same type of plea here.

He is saying, I am so low, I cannot help myself. I must depend entirely upon You.

They were out to kill David.

David was aware the only One who could deliver him was God.

When we get to the point that we cannot help ourselves, it is time to call upon God.

This is when He comes to our rescue.

Psalm 142:7 "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

“Prison”:

The cave in which David was hidden.

Too often people want to go straight to this verse without going through the preceding six verses.

David moved from crying to God in despair to confidence in God’s ability to make everything right: God would deal “bountifully” with him.

David was in hiding, but it was a prison to him, because he could not openly praise the LORD the way he wanted to.

He was down in his soul, because of the circumstances surrounding him.

When a person receives deliverance for their soul, they do shout praises to their Deliverer.

When someone is delivered from the depths of despair, true believers gather around and rejoice with them.

David knows that God had blessed him in the past, and he knows that this will be no different at this time.

The last statement is a vote of confidence in God.

Psalm 142 Questions

1. Chapter 142 verse 1 says, David was where?
2. What did David pour out before the LORD?
3. What had happened to David in verse 3?
4. Who is the one on the right hand in verse 4?
5. What did David call God in verse 5?
6. Who did David say, was stronger than he was?
7. Bring my soul out of _____.