

Psalm 142: A Cry from the Cave

A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.

1 I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.

2 I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk They have secretly set a snare for me.

4 Look on my right hand and see, For there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul.

5 I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, “You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.

6 Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me.”

In-Depth Reflection and Application

David wrote this psalm in a dark and desperate moment—most likely while hiding in the cave of Adullam (cf. 1 Samuel 22:1). He was physically isolated and emotionally crushed. What we read here is not formal prayer, but raw, unfiltered anguish poured out in faith.

Verses 1–2: Honest Prayer

“I cry out to the LORD with my voice...”

David didn’t just silently think about his problems—he *spoke* them to the Lord. His prayer was vocal, vulnerable, and earnest. He brought his complaints and trouble to God, not because God didn’t already know, but because relationship with God invites real, unguarded conversation.

Personal Application:

You don’t need to hide your struggles from God. He already knows. Prayer is not for informing God; it’s for unburdening your heart to Him in trust. When you feel overwhelmed, speak openly to the Lord. He is not distant—He invites you to cast your cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:7).

Verse 3: When You Feel Overwhelmed

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path...”

David admits that his soul was collapsing under pressure—but even then, God knew his path. Even in confusion, even in fear, the Lord was not absent or unaware.

Personal Application:

When you don’t know where life is going, remember this: God does. You may not understand the road you’re walking, but He does. Don’t wait until you’re strong to turn to Him—call out to Him *because you’re weak*.

Verse 4: Lonely and Forgotten

“No one cared for my soul...”

David looked around and saw no one to lean on. Friends were gone. Support had vanished. He felt utterly alone—but that’s when he lifted his eyes to the Lord.

Personal Application:

You may go through seasons where it feels like no one understands or supports you. That loneliness can cut deep. But take heart: God is not a last resort—He is your true refuge. People may forget you, but He never will (Isaiah 49:15–16).

Verse 5: God is Our Refuge and Portion

“You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”

David shifted his focus. Though surrounded by enemies and betrayal, he made a declaration of faith: “You are my portion.” He didn’t have position, possessions, or protection—but he had the Lord.

Personal Application:

What is your portion in life? What do you rely on most? When earthly securities fail, you will discover whether God is truly your refuge. If He is your portion, then even when all else is stripped away, you still have everything you need.

Verse 6: A Cry for Deliverance

“Deliver me... for they are stronger than I.”

David admits he’s outmatched by his enemies. But rather than despair, he calls on the One who is stronger still.

Personal Application:

We often reach the end of ourselves before we turn to the strength of God. Let this psalm remind you that it’s not weakness to admit need—it’s wisdom. God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Verse 7: Hope Breaks Through

“Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name...”

David ends with hope. His outward circumstances haven’t changed yet, but his heart is being lifted. He sees a future where praise will once again flow freely from his lips, and he will be surrounded by the righteous.

Personal Application:

Even when you feel trapped—emotionally, spiritually, or circumstantially—God can bring your soul out of that “prison.” Your story doesn’t end in despair. Like David, keep praying through the darkness. Hope is not based on what you see; it’s anchored in who God is.

Closing Thought

Psalm 142 teaches us that even in our most desperate moments, we can be real with God. He welcomes our honest cries. He doesn't need polished words—He desires a humble heart. Like David, we can move from sorrow to confidence, from loneliness to assurance, and from confinement to freedom—not because we control outcomes, but because we trust the One who does.

“The righteous shall surround me, for You shall deal bountifully with me.”— Psalm 142:7