

PRAYING IN DARK PLACES

Psalm 142

The inscription of Psalm 142 reads, “A maskil of David when he was in the cave. A prayer.” It speaks of a song David wrote as a prayer while hiding in a cave. He intones this song while in despair. It shows us that caves make good places for worship. David is overwhelmed and alone. He is in danger, depressed, and deserted by others. He is fleeing Israel’s envious monarch named Saul. It takes place in **I Samuel 22**. King Saul seeks David’s life after witnessing his bravery against a giant named Goliath, whom David kills while the entire nation of Israel fears him for his size and power. Saul’s jealousy grows when the people sing David’s praises for being more militarily accomplished than the rebellious king. It shows that doing the right thing can lead to us occupying dark places. David knew little about Saul’s plan but much about God’s promises, so he prayed. Darkness, depression, and despair didn’t stop him from praying.

Psalm 142 records the prayer of a man in distress. It teaches us how to pray when it assigns us to live in the dark. These words of David teach us to reach for God when blinded by the perils of life. He communicates the expectations of God’s deliverance amidst the malice of enemies. The lessons that stem from this psalm are necessary in the school of spiritual education. We can survive the seasons of life lived beneath the clouds.

The sermon’s point is **God delivers in the dark**. I rejoice that no situation is too dark for God to deliver me. And you can celebrate God’s power to help you when life’s pain turns off the lights. The sermon’s tension is: can God provide when all is broken around us? Absolutely! **God is light, and in Him, there is no darkness.**

SERMON AFFIRMATION: I TRUST GOD IN THE DARK DAYS OF MY LIFE!

Psalm 142 details *three meditations of David* that verify **God delivers in the dark**. The *first meditation* is **David’s cry**. It is recorded in **Psalm 142:1, 2**. **We must learn from David’s cry**. The *following meditation* is **David’s crisis** in **Psalm 142:3, 4**. **We must learn from David’s crisis**. The *third and final meditation* is **David’s**

confidence in **Psalm 142:5-7**. **We must learn from David's confidence.** These *three meditations* show that there is hope even when **praying in dark places.**

I. DAVID'S CRY (vv. 1, 2)

The *first meditation* is **David's cry**. It is recorded in **Psalm 142:1, 2**. **We must learn from David's cry.** Two movements make up David's plea.

David Calls Out to God (1)

The first movement is in **Psalm 142:1**, when *David calls out to God*. It reads, **“With my voice, I cry out to the loud; with my voice, I plead for mercy to the Lord.”** The psalm opens with the psalmist's cry to God for help. Prayer can be silent or out loud. Some pains always induce loud prayers. Charles Surgeon is right when he declares, “True prayers may differ in their diction, but not in their direction.” This prayer of David is loud in **Psalm 142**. It is not loud for the sake of being loud. It represents the desires of his heart.

David's Confession to God (2)

The second and final movement is in **Psalm 142:2**. It is *David's confession to God*. This psalm portion reads, **“I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.”** God is David's confide. He tells God all about his frustrations. Prayer is where he voices his trouble. The word **“trouble”** means in a tight place. David was in a tight place. Have you ever been there?

We can complain to God, but not about God. David complained to the One who could do something about his trouble. We do not tell God our trouble to inform God, but so we can see God better.

II. DAVID'S CRISIS (vv. 3, 4)

The *following meditation* is **David's crisis** in **Psalm 142:3, 4**. **We must learn from David's crisis.** Two realities in these verses demand highlighting.

His Foes' Attack (3)

The first reality is in **Psalm 142:3**. It is *his foes' attack*. It reads, “**When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk, they have hidden for me.**” David first expresses assurance that God knows his way even when his spiritual vitality is ebbing away. David was a great warrior, but he is currently feeling faint within. Wiersbe states, “**What life does to us depends on what life finds in us.**” In times of trouble is their faith in your spiritual safe deposit box to help you overcome the pains of life.

In all this, David affirms that God knows his way. Let me stress to you, God knows. *When your health is faint, God knows. When your friends are few, God knows. When your heart is broken, God knows. When your body is sick, God knows. When your money is low, God knows. When your mind is confused, God knows. When your family is fragmented, God knows. When your hope is lost, God knows.* This same David declares in **Psalm 139:1-4**, “**O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know, when I sit down, and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path, and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.**” Celebrate that God knows what you don't even know.

His Friends' Abandonment (4)

The first reality is in **Psalm 142:4**. It is *his friends' abandonment*. It reads, “**Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul.**” David is all alone socially. God's presence is sufficient. However, it still hurts the human heart to be abandoned during critical movements.

Question! Had David prayed more earnestly in the palace or the cave? Here is the tension: all those significantly used by God had to experience a season of isolation. **God separated Moses** from the hustle and bustle of Egypt and the palace life to spend 40 years in the wilderness tending sheep. During this separation, God prepared him for the monumental task of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. **Elijah was sent alone to the**

brook during a time of drought. In this place of isolation, God prepared him to confront the prophets of Baal. **John the Baptist dwelled in the wilderness**, where he preached repentance and baptized those who sought spiritual renewal, paving the way for the arrival of Jesus Christ. Following his dramatic conversion, **Paul was separated and spent time in Arabia**, where God imparted wisdom and revelation, equipping him for a powerful ministry that would significantly impact the early church. **Ruth experienced separation from her homeland and people** when she followed her mother-in-law, Naomi, with unwavering faithfulness. Through this separation, God orchestrated her marriage to Boaz. **Our Lord Christ Jesus spent 40 days in isolation in the wilderness**, where he was tempted by the devil but emerged strengthened to begin his public ministry.

Three warnings during your season of isolation:

1. **Don't become bitter**: It is easy to become resentful because of bad experiences.
2. **Don't blame God**: God does allow us to experience dark places. It is not to destroy us but to develop us.
3. **Don't compromise your integrity**: Sex, drugs, and alcohol are a few of the escapes that will tempt you in times of despair.

There is no cave so deep and dark but that out of it we may send our souls in prayer to God, with expectations of being brought out of all our perplexities.

III. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE (vv. 5-7)

The *third and final meditation* is **David's confidence** in **Psalm 142:5-7**. **We must learn from David's confidence**. Three convictions express David's confidence in God in these verses.

God Can Revive Him (5)

David's *first conviction* was that God could **revive him**. In **Psalm 142:5**, David writes, **"I cry to you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'**" God is a safe place to hide. This is even more precious because no one else is

around. The light of God's presence shines brighter when others are absent. God is our refuge and strength. God is a very present help in times of trouble.

God Rescue Can Him (6)

David's *second conviction* is **God can rescue him**. In **Psalm 142:6**, David expresses his confidence in God to rescue him from his persecutors. It reads, "**Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me!**" David is in a low place. The psalmist's vulnerability is illuminated in this verse. If God does not step in, defeat is inevitable. David's persecutors are more potent than him but not stronger than his God.

Paul testifies in **II Timothy 4:16-18**: "**At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me, the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. So, I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**"

God Can Release Him (7)

David's *third and last conviction* is in **Psalm 142:7**. It is **God can release him**. David expresses his confidence in God to release him from prison. This verse reads, "**Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.**" The plea for God to act continues. David requests for God to release him from prison. Prison is used metaphorically by the psalmist. This season of life in a cave feels like being in solitary confinement. Saul's envious plot to kill him has David closed in.

David's praise is not contingent on God delivering him. It is a means to return to the temple to praise God with others. David offers praise as his bail payment.

David does not mind being without friends but longs to be with the faithful.

Conclusion

The present pain gives us the strength to trust God in the future. David's prayer shifted his perspective before it shifted his situation. There was no hope at first in his prayer. Then, it was filled with hope. You can look back and see God was working in it all.

I've had many tears and sorrow. I've had questions for tomorrow. There've been times I didn't know right from wrong, but in every situation, God gave me blessed consolation that my trials come only to make me strong. Through it all! I've learned to trust in Jesus. I've learned to trust in God. I've learned to depend upon His word. So, I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys. And I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through. For if I'd never had a problem, I'd never know God could solve them. I'd never know what faith in His word could do.

SERMON ASK: How are you doing in the dark? Journal for there is power in journaling.