

## Psalm 142 – Hope for the Hopeless

David is on the run from Saul, and hiding in a cave (cf. 1 Samuel 22:1). Eventually he would be joined by a group of about 400 people (cf. 1 Samuel 22:2). But he felt isolated and cries out in desperation. And those who came to him were also distressed and depressed people, so they weren't really helping him to cope with matters. David was hiding out in a cave and 400 fellow fugitives were looking to him for leadership. He looks around, and sees that his situation looked hopeless. How was he going to stay encouraged? He looked up to God, and cried out for mercy.

In this Psalm you will see a lot of negative emotions. But this Psalm, and many other Psalms, and really, the whole Bible, teaches you that having struggles with negative emotions is not necessarily sinful. The sin in such situations is staying down in the hole without looking up to God. David was hidden but his emotions and struggles are not. And they provide much wisdom. Most people will have to deal with situations and circumstances where there are people all around, yet no one to help you. And in God's uncomfortable grace, some people have to stay in those situations for a long time. You can be among many people but still feel locked up and alone. You may feel like you have to hide, but don't hide your heart from God. David didn't, and he teaches you some lessons about prayer and praise that you need to learn.

Vs.1 – David cries out loud to God and pleads for mercy. David was in a desperate situation. He knew Saul was determined to kill him. But he didn't abandon his hope in God. Instead he lifted up his voice in prayer. Notice how he was praying out loud, and fervently, demonstrating the passion in his heart. With my voice I cry out, with my voice I plead. He wasn't going through the motions; he was feeling this down deep in his soul. He was praying like he had no other choice. The only way he would get out of that prison he was in is if God showed him mercy.

Vs.2 – David begins to process his thoughts before the Lord, and the agonies of his misery come pouring out, and he tells God about all the trouble he is in. He isn't "complaining" like we might think about it today. He is letting it all out, emptying his heart, and not holding anything back, giving his sense of the situation and how grieved he was. He knew that God already knew what was going on, but he also knew the right place to go when he needed to unload his cares. God is the ultimate shoulder to cry on. No one can understand what you are going through like him. That's the point of vs.1-2: **GOD HEARS YOU**. So cry out to him. He is the one who will listen when no one else will, he is the one who can see what no one else can see, and he is the one who can help when no one else can. Bring your lament before the Lord. It's the godly thing to do.

Vs.3 – David was supposed to be a hero, but he was feeling depressed. Still, he knew that God was watching his path. He says I know that you know what is going on, even before I do, and even the things I don't. He says you know how weak I am getting, and that wherever I go people are after me. He knew that even when his enemies were working in secret, God knew what they were up to. Many godly people have been depressed. There is at the same time joy and sadness, laughter and tears, pleasure and pain, prosperity and problems. In all of this, what the godly do is to keep God in the center of their lives. That's how David could be depressed and yet devoted.

Vs.4 – David says that all the places and things he could be confident in and encouraged by have left him. He has looked all around, and can't find any comfort. He says *there is none who takes*

*notice of me.* My friends and family can't or won't help me. I feel deserted. I can't find anyone who understands. No one realizes my struggle. He says *no refuge remains to me.* I've got nowhere to run. No one can or will lend me the help I need. He says *no one cares for my soul.* No one really cares about me, what happens to me is of no real consequence, I don't really matter to anyone. This is about as depressed as you can get. It is awful when all you see is that no one can really see you. But that's the point of vs.3-4: **GOD SEES YOU.** He sees what's happening and what's going to happen before it does. He sees what people are trying to do to you, or what they won't do for you. He sees when you are mistreated, misunderstood, and you feel deserted. He sees when you are abandoned. He sees when all the people you have a connection with seem disconnected from you. He sees your depression. He sees your loneliness. He sees your heart. And when no one else seems to care, he cares. At the end of your rope, when God is your only hope, he hears you, and he sees you. And he will act for you.

Vs.5 – David is driven to God in the midst of his misery, reminding himself that God is all the hope and help he needs. After pouring out his heart, and baring his soul, David begins to become more optimistic. This is how the godly process the problems of life in their prayers. When you lose your health, or when you have marriage problems, family issues, financial, relational, or social stresses, or you are haunted by terrible memories of tragic events, or when you just aren't happy, you honestly and passionately come to God. And when nothing seems to be working, God is working, and the one place you can find rest, hope, and joy is in him. That's the point of vs.5-7: **GOD ACTS FOR YOU.** David says as long as I live, and no matter what is going on in my life, I will cry out to you, because you are my true shelter and security. I may be hiding in a cave right now, but you are my true hiding place. Your heart may be hurting and hopeless, but God will shelter and secure your heart. And God is more than just your portion in this life. Psalm 73:26 says, "*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*" If you are a Christian, even if and even when you leave the land of the living, you have eternal life. But the greatest living in the land of the living is living for the living God. And David wanted to live for God. He didn't want to die just yet. He wanted to see God act.

Vs.6 – David asks God to meet him where he is, in a lonely low place. Hear me God, I'm way down here. Condescend to me in my low estate. I am humbled. David knows that he is in serious trouble, and he asks God to rescue him from those who are chasing after him, because they are too much for him to handle. God hears you and God sees you in the depths of despair. He knows when you're way down low. And no matter how deep down you are God is deeper still. He knows when things are just too much for you. He knows that it is either rescue or ruin for you. And he will meet you where you are.

Vs.7 – David knew that the cave was just the setting. The prison was the place of despair that had been fashioned for him by those who wanted to take his life. Why did David want to live? So that he could praise and honor God among the people of God. David wanted to glorify God, offer him thanksgiving, and celebrate his great deliverance. He wanted to encourage the depressed saints about the God who hears, sees, and acts for his people. David says when people see me set free, they will praise God, too. What a blessing when the cry of prayer gives way to the call of praise. Are you in a cave? Then cry out to God. He will be your hiding place. He will meet you where you are. He will give you a reason to praise his name. God hears you. God sees you. God acts for you. You should pray, you should praise, and you should glorify God.