

My Lonely Cry

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Bible Verse: Psalm 142
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I invite you to turn in your Bible with me to Psalm 142 which is our Scripture for this evening. Psalm 142 which we'll find gives us a little deeper understanding perhaps of the nature of trusting God than even the hymns that we just sang and enjoyed did. It's important for us to realize that there is a battle of faith, sometimes our faith is challenged and it's not always so simple as the hymns sometimes make it out to be. I certainly know that by experience, and I think by the time we get through Psalm 142 this evening, you will agree that there is an aspect of trusting God that goes beyond always finding perfect rest and peace. I say that not to diminish the hymn, but to encourage you and to do our best to be as true to Scripture as we possibly can be.

Psalm 142. The inscription is important here this evening, so we want to read it, "A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer." And then verse 1 in our English text.

1 I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. 2 I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him. 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path. In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me. 4 Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for 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 "Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me. 7 "Bring my soul out of prison, So that I may give thanks to Your name; The righteous will surround me, For You will deal bountifully with me."

And if you're taking notes tonight, you like to write a title on the top of your page, I've titled tonight's message "My Lonely Cry." My lonely cry out of Psalm 142.

David, as you see as he writes this Psalm, is in a low point, but the low point of his soul does not mean that he's not trusting God. He is trusting God, that's why he's praying to him and asking God for help, it's because he has confidence that God is going to help him, and so his prayer is an expression of the trust, even though his heart is lonely and buffeted by trials as he writes this Psalm.

And as I said at the start, the inscription is important for us. Look at it again there, it says that he was in the cave when he wrote this, and this is a Psalm that David was probably writing this during the time when Saul wanted to put him to death. If you'll go back to 1 Samuel 20 and I'll just remind you of some context here, some historical context; one of the important aspects of biblical interpretation is to know when it can be ascertained, the historical context in which a writing was given. And in 1 Samuel 20:30 and 33 will set a context that will lead us into finding David in a cave. 1 Samuel 20:30, we read that, "Saul's anger burned against Jonathan," his son who was a friend of David, :and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.' But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death." So Saul threw a spear at his own son, Jonathan, because he wasn't going along with his temper tantrum.

So David knew that he had to flee, and he did in chapter 22, verse 1. Jonathan earlier had warned David that he needed to flee, and so he flees to the city of Gath in chapter 21. and when he was threatened again, he fled again. And so in chapter 22, verse 1, you read this, "So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him." Now notice, you pass over it rather quickly, but there is a pivot point here in this text that gives us the idea and the sense of when David would have written Psalm 142, and also Psalm 157, as an aside. David had escaped to the cave and so he's there and he's alone in the cave and yet soon after that, his brother's and his father's household heard of it, and they went down there to him.

So he's in the cave, people find out about it, and people rally around him in order to support him, and so in Psalm 142 we're reading this before the help arrived, as we'll see, because he makes a reference to the fact, he says in verse 4 of Psalm 142, he says, "Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul." And so at the moment that he's writing this Psalm he was alone, but in answer to the cry of Psalm 142, God sent help from his father's household, from others, and he wasn't alone for long. But when he writes here in Psalm 142 he was, and the weight of the opposition to his soul was almost too much for him to bear.

And so we're going to break this Psalm into two sections here this evening. First of all, we're going to see his troubled cry in the first four verses, and then we'll see his trusting cry in the final remainder of the Psalm, the final three verses of it. And what I hope that you'll be encouraged by as you read this, is to see that God's word addresses our soul and meets our souls in the context of reality, you know, and we're not always living in the lofty spirit and sentiments of the hymns that we sometimes sing, like we sang this

evening, sometimes we're discouraged and sometimes the weight of life and the difficulty of relationships and circumstances weigh us down terribly and, you know, and we're left with, and, you know, I remember this from my own sad personal experience, that sometimes hymns – I'm really picking on the hymns that we sang tonight. It's nothing personal against our musicians at all and I approve all of the hymns that we sing, so, you know, the buck stops with me on this – but sometimes well-intentioned hymns can taunt you almost by expressing sentiments that are not what your present experience would be. And it's important for us to remember and to distinguish that the hymns that we sing are human writings, they are not inspired text in the same way that Scripture is, not at all in the way that Scripture is, but in Scripture we can come and find the language of real life being expressed, especially in the Psalms, and the Psalms show us that there is a time and a place for us to cry out to God in the midst of our troubles and that's what David is doing here as we begin with his troubled cry in the first two verses.

Look at it there with me as David verbally expresses his plight to the Lord. Verse 1, he says,

1 I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. 2 I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him.

And here in this opening two verses, he uses four different verbs to describe the nature of his urgent prayer. He says there in verse 1, look at it with me, "I cry aloud with my voice." Second part of the verse, "I make supplication with my voice." In verse 2, "I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him." Now look, he's trusting God and that's why he is praying to God in this way and in this time. It's a very transparent open prayer where he's simply pouring out his heart before the Lord, but understand that when he's writing this, he is not experiencing perfect peace and rest and what I just want you to see, and I'll make this point later, I know, is that the sense of being troubled can coexist side-by-side with genuine faith as we are walking with the Lord and walking through the trials that he sends our way. And so for David, his heart in this Psalm is so full of trouble that the words just tumble out. It's like the time I was sitting at the table just a few days ago and I knocked the glass over and sent a river of water over toward my dear wife as she was sitting there with me at dinner, in the same way David tips over the glass of his heart and everything pours out as he starts to unfold his heart before the Lord. Have you ever been in that situation where your heart is just a large complicated knot of emotion and conflicting thoughts and uncertainty about what the future is going to hold? You know, and I wouldn't be surprised for some of you to say, "Yeah, there are times where I've been like that. I got on my knees and all that what happened was I just burst into tears as I responded to the Lord and as I was taking my trouble to the Lord. There weren't words for it. My tears had to be my prayer because my heart couldn't express it in words." Well, that's kind of the spirit in which David is praying here. Verse 2 he says, "I pour out my complaint before the Lord." It's the sense of spilling something and it just all comes out all at once is what David is describing here. His heart is full to overflowing with difficult thoughts and difficult emotions, and when

he starts to lay them out verbally before the Lord, it just all comes out as a torn, as if a thunderstorm had broken loose and all of the rain was pouring down out of his heart.

And so that's the spirit of it. He's praying for help in trouble. And what I love about the Psalms, and we're almost done with the Psalms, we're going to finish the Psalms probably next month or early August, and so it's going to be very sad when it comes time to leave them behind and move on to other things. But what I love about the Psalms is their realism. And if you've walked through deep valleys in life and you know what it's like to have your heart truly, deeply broken, as I know many of you have, one of the welcome aspects of the Psalms is that the Psalms do not set up an unrealistically positive view of what faith looks like, and what trusting God looks like, the Psalms set it forth in the realism that we can identify with if we're simply honest with ourselves and with what is in our hearts. And for those of you maybe newer Christian who say, "Oh, I've never experienced anything like that." Well, just reserve judgment until you've had a few more years of life and maybe you'll, you know, maybe you'll find that the Psalms are written this way for a reason. Very important for us to understand and to sympathize with the psalmist and with each other as we walk through times like this.

So in verse 2 there, Psalm 142:2, David says, "I pour out my complaint before Him," and it's not that he's grumbling against God and grumbling against his providence, we've already said that he's trusting God and this is a positive Psalm of trust in what he is expressing here, rather, when he mentions his complaint, what he's doing is he's unpacking his troubled thoughts to God. He's laying it out. He's declaring what the trouble of his heart is, and it's the difficulty that is in his heart, it's not accusations or rebellion against God when he talks about his complaint, because he makes clear, look at it there, he says it twice in verse 2, "I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him," in his presence. David's mindful of the holiness in the presence of God as he's praying in this way. So this is not a complaint of rebellion, this is a complaint of difficulty that he is using, that he's taking and describing to God as he prays.

So what he's done here in this opening verse, twice he said, "I cry aloud with my voice, with my voice." He's actually verbalizing what his thoughts to God, he's verbalizing them actually and speaking out loud as he does, and he's doing it as in the presence of God, doing it before him. And so what David does, and even in this it's very instructive for us, because you and I have the tendency to, you know, when trouble starts to hit us, you know, we're tempted to agitate it over in our minds like the washing machine agitation and you're just repeating and hurriedly reproducing the same action, the same thoughts in your mind as you do this rather than, and doing it internally introspectively rather than looking up and outward to God to voice your thoughts. That's what David is doing here.

He's voicing his thoughts before the Lord, and he's very honest with it, as he says in verse 3, look at it with me. He says,

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path.

He was overwhelmed, he was weak, he was fainting, he was trusting God in the midst of that and yet he did not know perfect peace and rest in the moment. In the moment, he did not know perfect peace and rest, but his trust was real. And so he's lost his spiritual strength. He's been ground into the dust, you might say, by what is happening and by the threat of Saul and hiding in a cave alone, you know, this was the man who was one day going to be the King of Israel, and this was the man that Scripture says was a man after God's own heart, but at this point in his life, he's isolated, he's threatened, he's troubled and this Psalm is what comes out of that situation for our benefit and for our instruction.

And what David says here is, "When I was overwhelmed, there was an independent reality, there was something else that was true even if I had lost sight of it in the moment when I was overwhelmed." David says, "You knew my path." David speaks to God and he says, "When I was overwhelmed, You knew my path. I did not know the way forward. I did not know the way from point A to point B. It was dark and foggy to me. I couldn't see my way forward." But even when we are in the midst of these things, beloved, we always need to remember that God knows our paths. God is not bound by time and God is not bound by our perception of events. He is transcendent. He sees the end from the beginning. He is working out his eternal purpose in everything that happens to us. He's never caught by surprise. He's moving his people in the direction that he wants them to go.

That's what it means that God knew his path and so, beloved, I just encourage you to remember this, that your hope in difficult times is not found in the fact that you can see a way forward, that you know how this is going to work out, because more often than not, you won't, you don't. You don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. And so our hope is never based in what we see, what we think, and what our understanding is, our hope is in the fact that God knows our paths. And let me remind you of a very familiar verse that we've taught on here from this pulpit, turn over to Proverbs 3. Proverbs 3. And in some ways, tonight, I'm telling you things that I wish I would have heard some 35-38 years ago when I was walking through my own dark times. Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." You see, God knows the path, God will make the path straight, but you don't have to know in advance what that means. And part of what the Lord is doing in your life in those times is he is weaning you away from your desire to walk by sight instead of by faith. He's leaning you away from trusting in your circumstances and trusting in your own wisdom when these overwhelming trials come to you, when there is no seeming way forward in your own mind and understanding. God does this deliberately. He does this intentionally in order to teach us to trust him and to trust him on a deeper level and to trust him more fully and to walk more by faith and less by sight and, beloved, the only way that we're going to learn that is to be in situations where we can't see the path forward. And when we can't see the path forward, we're going to be like David and say, "My spirit is overwhelmed within me." Well, understand that in those times, beloved, the Lord is in perfect sovereign control. The Lord has never lost his direction, his purpose. He's never lost sight of you. Scripture says that he holds us in the palm of his hand, that he holds our tears and he captures our tears in a bottle, speaking metaphorically, meaning that our sorrows are not lost on him.

He is not indifferent to our trouble, but for a time he may allow us to walk in what seems to be darkness so that we will learn to trust him even when we do not have the light to see our next step forward, when we don't have answers. And in times like that, or if you're in times like that, you need to come to Psalm 142 and remember that David was in a deep, dark, dank cave when he wrote this with no one around him to support him, and that that isolation was used by God and eventually relieved by God as David prayed to him.

You can see the isolation as you look in verse 4. Well, let's look at the end of verse 3 here at the top of my page in my Bible. He says in in verse 3, having said that, "You knew my path," David says, "In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me," referring to the fact that Saul is looking to kill him and Saul is looking to trap him so that he can kill him like a haunted animal. So David is in great danger here. He is in a perilous position. And David goes on to say there in verse 4 as he's praying to God, he says,

4 Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul.

And David asked God to look to the right, and the right hand in those days was the place where help would be found. We speak about that today, don't we? We use the phrase that he is my right hand man. He's the guy that's at my right hand that's always there to help me, and I can depend upon him and I can trust him to help me through the difficulties that I'm facing. He's my right hand man. Well, David, you know, if we think about that common use of the phrase in our day, understand that what David is saying is, "God, look at my right hand. There's no one there. I have no right hand man. I have no one beside me to help me. I am all alone here, O God." And so David looks to his right and he sees that there is no one there to help him, and this is a place of of isolation, desperation, and now supplication, as he calls out to the Lord to help him. "God, I have no one else to turn to here. There is no human help for me." And so he asks God to intervene on his behalf.

And you know, it's easy for us to kind of take this in a comfortable way. We're in a climate controlled environment here where, you know, many of you sitting with people that you care about and all of that, and so it's easy to be a little bit remote from it and to interpret this and to think about it in the context of our comfortable environment as we gather here together tonight. But David, as he's writing this, David is alone in a cave, in a in a harsh cave without anyone extending any kindness to him, and as he wrote this, there is no sign of any help coming. As far as he knew the next footsteps he would hear coming through the entrance of the cave would be Saul and his troops coming to execute him.

And so there in the depth of the cave, David calls out in the darkness, and you can almost hear the echoes. You know, you go into a cave or you're under, you know, a big arch and you call out and the sound echoes off of it, right? It echoes off of those rock walls, "Help! Help! Help!" That's the literal condition that David was in as he was crying out with his voice, "O God, help me." And you know, and he makes it clear that he was speaking verbally, and so in the midst of the darkness of this cave, David is praying out verbally to God and the sound of his own voice is ricocheting back and forth as he does.

Now from the text that we read earlier, it seems that God quickly sent his brothers and other family soon after this prayer. What that means is that this prayer of Psalm 142 was a turning point in his life. God had brought him to a point of complete isolation and desperation, David prays in terms of Psalm 142, then God sends the help and this Psalm then turns out to be a turning point in his life as God sends his help and protects him from Saul's desire to kill him. That's the first section: David's troubled cry. But if we only had that, we might think that it was an entirely dark prayer that he had prayed, but it's not. We come to our second point here tonight, and we see that there is a trusting cry that David makes in this as well. A trusting cry, and David's, ah, this is just so important to me. I go back to this theme a lot in ministry. David's candid feelings that he expressed in his troubled cry were not inconsistent with his faith. They were not inconsistent with true faith. They did not negate his central fundamental trust in the Lord. And you see this in verse 5. Side-by-side with the troubled cry is this trusting cry that he makes in verse 5. He says, "I cried out to You, O LORD, " that great name Yahweh, my covenant-keeping God, my promise-keeping God. "I cried out to You. You who are the help and the refuge of Your people. I cried out to You and I said, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

Now "refuge" is a common metaphor in the Psalms. It indicates that God protects his people, he cares for them, he guides them, he provides for them. You know, different metaphors are used to express this loving care that God provides for his people. You know, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. The Lord is my refuge. He's my rock, my fortress." All of these things indicating that God is a person to whom we can go and find help in our time of need.

Now just to give you a little bit of Old Testament perspective, turn back to Exodus 19. The word "refuge" is not used in these two passages that I want to show you, but I want you to see the concept in them. You remember that God led Israel out of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, the waters closed on Pharaoh's army and they perished. God is about to remind Moses to remind the people of what he had done when he delivered them. He says in verse 4, Exodus 19:4, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself." I save you like a mother bird saved its young. I brought you to myself, and he's reminding them of the great deliverance that he gave to them and explaining that he did that out of his loving care for them. He protected them in their danger. He was a refuge to them in their danger. He says, "Remember that as you walk forward with Me because this is what will sustain you."

Look over at Deuteronomy 32. Deuteronomy 32. We read in verse 9, Deuteronomy 32:9, "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land," he's referring to the wilderness wanderings described in the book of Numbers, you know, and they were in the wilderness there. "And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth,

And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock." And on it goes. God caring for his people in their isolation, caring for them in their time of need.

This is what God does. This is who God is toward his people. He is the helper of his people. He actually, let's back up and put it this way. Our God is a living God even though we do not see him with our physical eyes. He is alive and he is powerful and he is able to help. And not only is he able to help, he does help his people because he loves them. He cares for them. And now on this side of the cross, we see that supremely in the Lord Jesus Christ. How much does the Lord love us? How much does the Lord care? How much does the Lord help us? We see it in the fullness of manifestation at the cross of Jesus Christ when he laid down his life to deliver us from sin, judgment and the domination of Satan over our lives. Christ redeemed us and Scripture makes it abundantly clear that he did this out of his love for his people.

Now look, that means that in our times of sorrow, our times of darkness, our times of difficulty, we can go to God directly and pour out our complaint before him. We can declare our trouble before him. We can make it known to him. And beloved, this is so vitally important and it's why I'm picking on the hymns tonight because I know from my own experience that that can sometimes create bad perceptions of what it means to trust God. You go to God directly, you go to him with your trouble, you go to him in the midst of your uncertain troubled thoughts, and you pour out your heart to him there. You don't try to work up perfect peace and rest in your heart and then go to him, as if you had to somehow make yourself presentable spiritually. The whole point of being a helper is that he comes to us and helps us in our time of need. Jesus said in Luke 5, "It's not those who are healthy who need a physician but those who are sick." He says, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

And so the call of God, the invitation of God is for us to come to him in the midst of our difficulties and trust him by laying out our hearts before him with a confidence that he'll help us, even if we don't see how that would work out in the time. In the same way, our Lord said in Matthew 11:28-30, "'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'" Come as you are heavy-laden. Come when you are weary. Don't try to work it out on your own and then come to him. Go to him now and go to him because he loves you. Go to him because he is your help, because he is your refuge. That's who your God is to you and that's why you can come to him. He is that kind of gracious God to his people. He's that kind of gracious God to sinners who repent and come to him asking for mercy and forgiveness of their great guilt against him. And so we trust God by coming to him in our affliction, coming to him in our confusion and praying to him in the midst of it.

And so that's what David is doing. What David is saying here, keep verses 4 and 5 side-by-side in your mind, they kind of hinge together, you might say. He says in verse 4, "Look to the right and see there's no one who regards me. There is no human help here, Lord." But in verse 5, "I cried out to You, O LORD," by contrast, "I cried out to You and You were there. You did help me. You were able to assist me. You did care for me. You

were with me." And the idea here, beloved, and this is, you know, this is just so vital for the beleaguered soul to understand, God helps us even when man does not. God helps us even when man cannot. God helps us even when man will not. Whether it's isolation or opposition from human sources even by family members, even by supposedly fellow believers even, whatever the complexity of the situation is, you as a Christian can go to God and know with certainty that his desire is to help you, and that he will help you as you call upon his name.

That's a wonderful thing to know. It's a wonderful thing for a young couple to know in the midst of the difficult early years of marriage. It's a wonderful thing for someone on a sickbed to know that they can cry out to God in their fevered weakness and know that he'll hear their disjointed prayer. It's a wonderful thing to know when family seems to be falling apart on you. It's a wonderful thing to know that as you're lying on your deathbed, and the day will come one way or another, where we're face-to-face with death and to know that in that moment of utter human weakness where absolutely no one can help and intervene to stop the dying process, to know that in your heart, I don't know how the unconscious mind works at that time when people are in a coma, or as you're just aware of life ebbing away from you, to know that, with David, you can say in verse 5, "God, You're my refuge here. I call out to You and I'm confident that You're going to help me. You're my help. Lead me through this time. Lead me through the Jordan safe to the other side. I rest in You."

It reminds me there was a guy that I knew in seminary. His name was Buddy. Interesting guy, one of those young guys in seminary that finished his schooling, went off to ministry, had a friend that came and, you know, they were ministering together at a place in Pennsylvania and the future was bright for their church ministry. They were excited about what was happening and they were together talking about ministry, their families were together, but he had a few young children and they went out for donuts, took one of his kids with him in the back seat with his friend, I think his friend Don was in the car with him, pulled out, got hit, T-boned. I think it may have been a drunk driver. I don't remember. It's been many, many decades now. But anyway, the point of it is, is that his friend fell dying into Buddy's arms, Buddy was driving, and his son is in the back seat, and Buddy knew that he was dying as shown by what he said to his son. The paramedics had arrived and they reported to the family later what Buddy said. His dying words to his son was, he said, "Son, you go with the fireman. I'm going to go see Jesus." Knowing in that moment of crisis that he could hand his son off to one who would care for him and expressing the trust of his soul in that moment that Christ was going to be his refuge, that Christ in that moment, Christ in that dire time as he's saying goodbye to his own flesh and blood, unexpectedly and quickly, Christ was there as his refuge. Christ was there giving strength to his faith. Christ was there giving strength to his mind, telling his son, "You're going to be okay. You go with him and I'm going to be okay too. We're just partying now in the plan of God."

You see, Buddy was a student of Scripture. Christ had saved him. He was anchored in the kind of doctrinal truth that we try to proclaim here at Truth Community Church. And beloved, the doctrine tells us who God is, the doctrine explains who God is to us, what he

is like, what his attributes are like, and when you know his attributes, when you know he's a God who helps, when you know he's a God who is a refuge to his people, then when the crisis comes, you can go to him and appeal to him with a confidence, with a trusting cry that he is going to receive you well. And so that's why it's just so good and important that you're in the room tonight, hearing the word of God and feeding your mind on the word of God, because this is the only thing that will sustain you in the most dire circumstances of life. Nothing else is going to matter. Eventually, one day, soon enough, you'll find yourself, there is no one at your right hand to help you, and the strength that will get you through that time is knowing these truths from God's word that he is a refuge, a strength of fortress, a help, a Savior, a Redeemer, a keeper, a shepherd of his people.

And what you need to do, beloved, and what I'm pleading with you to do now in the comparative peace and health that most of you enjoy, is to use your time well, to use your time to soak your mind in these things, to set your life priorities around the word of God and not the foolish entertainment or activities that so easily beset even Christians and draw our minds away from our first love, to realize that in these words and in our God, that this is our life, that this is everything to us, this is our lifeblood, the things of which we speak here tonight. And you anchor your mind in those things now so that you can draw upon them when it's your life that's ebbing away, when it's you that's saying goodbye to your loved one. It's when your heart has been broken.

You know, I read a biography yesterday on John Chrysostom. Little short biography, really enjoyed it. He was a 4th century preacher, one of the greatest of the early church fathers, had a great impact on the Reformers, you know, over a thousand years later. It was interesting to me. I haven't had an opportunity yet to read this sermon that he preached and I don't even recall the title of it precisely as I sit here, but I've got it marked down in the book to come back to later in a different book. But he was preaching and in the 4th century, beloved, and for those of you that are in church leadership with me, this will be an encouragement to you as well. In the 4th century, Chrysostom was preaching to his people and admonishing them about the importance of faithful church attendance, and lamenting in his sermon the fact that there were so many professing Christians who would come and go and, you know, maybe they'd be there on Christmas and Easter, maybe a couple of other times, but otherwise, you know, they wouldn't be around when the people of God were gathered together. I thought, well, that's a great encouragement to me. This is just part of ministry even going back a millennium and a half to find that a man was preaching on that, on the same issues that sometimes trouble my heart and concern me about some in the flock of Truth Community Church. That was just immensely encouraging to me to see that nothing has changed and that a man that great whose sermons are still read 1,500 years later was addressing the same kind of issues that concern us in leadership here today, and to realize that Chrysostom turned to God and preached the word of God in the same way that we're trying to do here this evening. My point of it all is, is that when people are not consistent in being under the teaching of the word of God, they're stepping on their own air hose to their own spiritual good. They are cutting off the supply of oxygen that will feed their heart in times of trouble, and the sense is it's not that important. I don't seem to need it today. Well, beloved, that's the

wrong way to think, and so I'm just very glad that you're all here tonight to be around God's word. And you know, if you have an opportunity to give someone a loving word of encouragement to be faithful in their church attendance, you'll be doing them a world of good because we need God's word to strengthen us and to help us in this way.

Now with David having said in verse 5, getting back to the text now after that little detour. I went from my friend buddy to Chrysostom and, you know, 1,800 years in between. That was quite the detour there, David, in verse 5 has said, "God, You're my helper," in so many words he says, "You're my helper. You're my portion in the land of the living." In other words, while David is living on the earth, God is what has been given to him. God is his allotment. God is what his resource and what sustains him, you know, and sometimes your portion could be a portion of land, it could be a portion of something else that is given to sustain you. David says, "God, You're my portion. You're what sustains me." "Man does not live on by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," as Jesus quoted from the Old Testament in Matthew 4. You see, we just come back and the Spirit of God, I trust, is just bringing us back repeatedly to that understanding and that emphasis that the word is our lifeline. The Scripture is everything to us. In Scripture we find everything that is necessary for life and godliness. And so it's just so vital, beloved, for you to be in the word of God yourself because the word is your connection to this living God.

Now David in verse 5, having recognized God as his helper, what does he do in verse 6? Well, because God is his helper, watch this, because God is his helper and God has made himself the helper of his people, then it is appropriate and right and trusting to ask him for help. To ask him for help. "God, help me." That's what David is saying here in verse 6. He says,

6 Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me.

The sum of this is, "God, help me. Listen to me. Give heed. Send help soon because I have the king of Israel breathing down my neck, who has a sworn commitment in his heart to kill me. And I'm alone in a cave, God, so help me. He's too strong for me. I can't resist him." And so he recalls his sad plight and asks God to pay attention and help him. "God, come to me. God, protect me. God, care for me." And the isolation of the fear and the threat is hard on his soul and so David brings his heart before the Lord and asks him to help. And having asked for his help, he closes in verse 7 with this, his trusting cry ends on this note, he says, "Bring my soul out of prison." David is trapped in a cave. It's like he's in a literal prison.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, So that I may give thanks to Your name;
The righteous will surround me, For You will deal bountifully with me."

David did not have freedom of movement and therefore it was like he was in prison, and so what he's done here is he asks God to deliver him from this seemingly hopeless situation, set him among other believers so that they can rejoice together and give

testimony to God, give testimony to the goodness of God, that they can gather together and praise God corporately for the deliverance that he gave to David individually. And David, note this and you see his trust in this, he says there at the end of verse 7, "You will deal bountifully with me. You'll deal bountifully with me." David, and again you see his trust here, you see his faith here, he expects an abundant answer to his prayer even though there is no outward sign of fulfillment as he closes it. He says, "You will deal abundantly with me. Amen," so to speak. And the moment after he says "Amen," in the moment that he's saying "Amen," he's in this cave alone. But he ends on this confident note of hope and that's why we say that this Psalm, Psalm 142, shows us how loneliness and trouble and faith can exist side-by-side at the exact same time. David says in verse 3, look at it here again as we kind of review the Psalm as we close. He says in verse 3, "You knew my path." He says in verse 5, "You are my refuge." He says in verse 7, "You will deal bountifully with me." The golden cord of faith is wrapped around and binds all of this Psalm together and yet David is troubled as he's going through his prayer.

And so beloved, I'd say this to encourage you: you do not have to have a perfect peace in order to have a triumphant faith. The strength of God to deliver you is not based on the perfection of your faith, but it is based on the perfection of his faithfulness and the perfection of his attributes. And in like manner, a weak faith in Christ can save someone from sin, even if it's not a perfect faith. Which one of us came to Christ with a perfect faith when we first cried out to him for salvation? Which one of us had a fully developed theology and soteriology when we cried out? You know, which one of us has a perfect faith now? It's all, it's filled with an admixture of still developing ideas, of times where we need to repent, times where we doubt. None of our faiths are perfect. It's not about the perfection of our faith, it's about the perfection of our Christ that gives us the hope of our deliverance.

David in Psalm 142 started out discouraged and lonely, but his faith was real and Psalm 142 is just another way of what Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Beloved, if you feel the weight of your sin, you have a perfect license to go to Christ because he came to save sinners. If you feel your weakness, if you're weary and heavy-laden, it's precisely you that Jesus says, "Come to Me so that I can give you rest." This is wonderfully encouraging to realize and that God often leaves us in our weakness to teach us our need for him.

And so have you found your refuge from your enemies in Christ? Have you found your refuge from sin in Christ? Have you found your refuge from sorrow in Christ? Beloved, there is always a path forward. He knows your path. He knows the way that you take. You can trust him. Job said it this way as we close in chapter 23, verse 10, he says, "But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Let's pray together.

Yes, Father, indeed when You have tried us through all of the life that You give to us here on earth, the sorrows, the adversities, the difficulties, the tears, the sickness and even death itself, when You've tried us as we walk through this sinful world, O Lord, we'll

come forth as gold, yea, we will walk the streets of gold with Christ, we will be safe in heaven and we will find that indeed You have been our refuge and we will find in that great final day when we are in the presence of Christ gathered around the throne, casting our crowns at His feet and crying, "Glory, glory, glory, holy, holy, holy to the Lamb," then in the fullness of that day, when we have seen His face and we have been made like Him, then we will know the fulfillment in the uttermost of this, of the closing words of this wonderful Psalm, O Lord, and we will say that You have indeed dealt bountifully with me. We thank You for Your faithfulness and we rely on it as we close. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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