

“A Prayer of Desperation”
Psalm 142
(Preached at Trinity, December 1, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 142** finds itself in the midst of a group of eight psalms (137-145) penned by David. They have the common theme, David in the midst of his enemies. Such was his life. The sword was his constant companion and he seemed to be forever surrounded by those seeking to destroy him. We read in **Verse 6**,
Psalm 142:6 KJV - "Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."
2. Derek Kidner titles this psalm, "Hemmed in."
James Montgomery Boice titled it, "Alone But for the Lord."
I title it, "A Prayer of Desperation."
David was surrounded. There was no where to turn. His situation seemed hopeless. He seemed all alone. His sense of abandonment is expressed woefully in **Verse 4**
Psalm 142:4 KJV - "no man cared for my soul."
Psalm 142:4 CSB - "no one cares about me."
Where was he to turn?
3. The superscription puts **Psalm 142** as the final psalm in the category of psalms called Maschils. There are 13 such psalms. The word refers to a Psalm of Contemplation. In other words, these psalms were given for our instruction.
When we feel hemmed in where are we to turn? When we feel all alone where do we turn? When our situation seems desperate what are we to do?
David gives us the answer as we have seen many times in his psalms
Psalm 142:5 KJV - "Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living."
4. The superscription also gives us the context for this psalm.
Psalm 142:1 KJV - "A Prayer when he was in the cave"
We are told that this psalm is a prayer lifted up to God. And that it is a prayer lifted up when he was hiding in a cave while being pursued by Saul. Eventually David would be joined by his brothers and a group of ragtag followers who would become his future army. But at this point he felt isolated and cries out in desperation.
5. In this psalm we find a wonderful lesson on prayer.
Spurgeon: "He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences. The disciples said unto the Son of David, "Lord, teach, us to pray"; and here David gives us a valuable lesson by recording his own experience as to supplication from beneath a cloud."
6. We'll look at this brief psalm under three heads
 - I. David declares his desperation before God – **Verses 1-3**
 - II. David declares his dependence upon God – **Verses 4-5**
 - III. David declares his delight in God – **Verses 6-7**

I. David declares his desperation before God – **Verses 1-3**

A. David expresses his anguish in prayer before God – **Verse 1**

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

1. David was in a desperate situation. He was alone and he knew Saul was determined to kill him. But in this dark hour David did not abandon his hope in God but lifted up his voice in prayer.
2. Prayer is God's glorious gift to His people. It is a gift of nearness. It is a gift of relationship. It is a gift whereby the infinite arm of God is displayed for His people.
3. Notice the fervency of David's prayer. One thing we find over and over as we read the prayers of God's people in the Bible is passion and fervency. David writes, "I cried unto the LORD . . ."
4. These are the prayers God hears

Exodus 2:23 KJV - "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage."

Judges 3:9 KJV - "And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother."

1 Chronicles 5:20 KJV - "And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that *were* with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him."

Psalms 107:13 KJV - "Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses."

B. David vocalized his prayers – he spoke audibly

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

1. This Hebrew word refers to an audible sound. Ten times it is translated "thunder."
2. This doesn't mean that God doesn't hear our silent prayers. Thomas Manton – "The Lord needs not the tongue to be an interpreter between him and the hearts of his children. He that hears without ears can interpret prayers though not uttered by the tongue. Our desires are cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts."
3. But God expects more than desires from our hearts. He expects words. **Hosea 14:2 NAU** - "Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity And receive *us* graciously, That we may present the fruit of our lips."
4. And fervent prayers are often audible prayers. This is one of the benefits of public prayer and corporate prayer

C. David laid his condition before God

Psalm 142:2 KJV - "I poured out my complaint before him"

1. "Complaint" is not to be understood as it is now commonly used. It refers to meditation. David is pouring out his appraisal of his situation. The Septuagint uses a word that simply means "supplication."
2. It wasn't in the pretense of informing God. God knew about Saul. He was with David in the cave.
 - a. Too often prayers are lifted up as if God doesn't know. Too often, particularly in public prayer every detail is described as if God will be impressed (or our fellow man) by our many words.
 - b. David shares what he is thinking, what is upon his heart. He was in distress. His enemies were working in secret, but God knew their ways.
 - c. Spurgeon: "We do not show our trouble before the Lord that *he* may see *it*, but that *we* may see *him*. It is for *our* relief, and not for his information that we make plain statements concerning our woes."
3. Notice again the passion of David's prayer – "I poured out . . ." Nothing was held back. He emptied his heart before God. It was a constant, passionate, determined pleading.
 - a. David was pleading his case. His situation was desperate. He said in **Verse 3** - "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me"
 - b. But even when his hour was the darkest he knew he could lift his voice up to God.
4. This is the way Job prayed. Even though God seemed distant he pressed on in determined prayer.

Job 23:2-5 KJV - "Even to day *is* my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. ³ Oh that I knew where I might find him! *that* I might come *even* to his seat! ⁴ I would order *my* cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵ I would know the words *which* he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me."
5. Is this the way you pray? With passion and determination?

II. David declares his dependence upon God – **Verses 4-6**

A. Every possible place of confidence was removed from David

1. David was alone. He had no one to come to his aid.

Psalm 142:4 KJV - "I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me"
2. All David observed was the silent darkness of the cave and the knowledge that at any moment Saul's army could burst forth to take his life.

Psalm 142:4 KJV - "refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

3. Job also knew this terrible sense of absolute abandonment
Job 19:13-19 NAU - "He has removed my brothers far from me, And my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. ¹⁴ "My relatives have failed, And my intimate friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵ "Those who live in my house and my maids consider me a stranger. I am a foreigner in their sight. ¹⁶ "I call to my servant, but he does not answer; I have to implore him with my mouth. ¹⁷ "My breath is offensive to my wife, And I am loathsome to my own brothers. ¹⁸ "Even young children despise me; I rise up and they speak against me. ¹⁹ "All my associates abhor me, And those I love have turned against me."
4. God often brings His people to the end of any earthly hope
- It may be the loss of health. Cancer can be a terrible enemy with terrible fangs that drive deep into our flesh.
 - It may be financial catastrophe where debts seem to explode.
 - It might be a terrible traumatic experience that continues to haunt the soul. There is a psychological term given to it: PTSD
Soldiers cannot erase the terrible images of fallen comrades.
Or a terrible traffic accident. Or surviving a terrible violent crime.
The thoughts continue to drive deep daggers into the heart.
 - It might be a far lesser trial – a dead-end unfulfilling job, an unceasing sense of sorrow, a longing for days gone by.
Our hope and our joy must always be in Christ.

- B. In spite of his terrible desperate hour David found hope in God
Psalm 142:5 KJV - "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living."
- David was saying, "As long as I have life and breath I will cry out to You O God and find rest in You."
 - This was David's constant confidence—that he could find refuge in God
Psalm 57:1 KJV - "for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast."
Psalm 62:7 KJV - "In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God."
Psalm 91:2 KJV - "I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."
Psalm 94:22 KJV - "But the LORD is my defence; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge."
 - This must always be the mind of the Christian. I will find my rest in Thee.
Philippians 4:6-7 KJV - "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

III. David declares his delight in God – Verse 7

- A. David had already declared his great comfort in prayer
1. When his heart was overwhelmed he knew God was there – and that God was fully aware of David's predicament
Psalm 142:3 KJV - "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path."
 2. David found infinite comfort in this and cried out to God. As he cried out He found a resting place.
Psalm 142:5 KJV - "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion"
 3. This resulted in David's great desire to live. **Why?**
- B. This question should be continually on our heart. Why do you want to live?
1. All of humanity is seeking to live. It is unnatural to seek death. Paul stated this in **Ephesians 5**
Ephesians 5:29 NAU - "for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church"
 2. For most, however, the motivation for life is a desire to fulfill the desires of the flesh. People fear death because it is the end of all pleasure. And they love pleasure above all else.
2 Timothy 3:1-4 KJV - "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"
Philippians 3:19 KJV - "Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"
 3. For most people life's value is only found in the moment. They live their life unaware that it is a life of death
1 Timothy 5:6 NAU - "But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives."
- C. David expressed his reason for living
Psalm 142:7 KJV - "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name"
1. Our ultimate motive for deliverance from every trial is the honor of God
 2. You are diagnosed with terminal cancer. Why do you desire to be healed?
You are in a hostage situation where death seems eminent. Why do you desire to be rescued?
You are on the battlefield surrounded by the enemy with little hope for survival. Why do you desire life?
 3. You take care of your body—eat well, take vitamins, workout. Why do you desire to extend your life?

4. David makes his motive clear. "Save my life so I may praise your name." David's heart was, "I want to live so that I can praise God."
Psalm 88:10-11 KJV - "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah. ¹¹ Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?"
5. This is the heart of God's people
 - a. Paul –
Philippians 1:21 KJV - "For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain."
 - b. Isaiah –
Isaiah 38:18-19 KJV - "For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. ¹⁹ The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day"

Conclusion:

1. David was in desperation. He was alone and surround by a great host. His chances of survival were slim.
 Yet this he knew. God was with him. God knew his situation. And he knew that God would hear his prayers—so he cried out with all of his being.
2. This brought him peace and rest.
3. What will you do when you find yourself in a desperate hour? Will you pray? Will you pray with passion? Will you pray with confidence? Is God your refuge?
4. And is the great desire of your life to praise the great name of God?
5. One more point in closing.
 In **Verses 4-5** David declared God to be his great refuge
Psalm 142:4-5 KJV - "but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. ⁵ I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion"
 - A. David is referring to God's deliverance from his enemies.
Psalm 142:6 KJV - "deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."
 - B. But we also need deliverance from God Himself. His wrath is kindled against us and no power can deliver us. The only refuge from God is God Himself.
 He alone is our Rock and Fortress. Augustus Toplady wrote:

 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in Thee;
 Let the water and the blood,
 From Thy wounded side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Save from wrath and make me pure.
6. Have you found God to be your sure refuge through the Lord Jesus Christ?
 Nothing else in this life is greater than this.