

A cave-dwelling fugitive is a desperate man. That's where David found himself (1 Sam 22) when King Saul was out to kill him for no good reason (Psa 142 title). God sometimes brings His favorites to deep trials like this (Heb 11.36-38). Even when Providence spares us the misery of literal cave-dwelling, we can feel just as desperate. A cave is a great metaphor. Psa 142 is David's cry from a cave and it's perfectly suited for us.

Loneliness is a kind of slow death for the soul. We were designed for fellowship with others. But even when we are deprived of those comforts, the Lord is enough. Remember David at Ziklag (1 Sam 30.6). He "encouraged (alt., strengthened) himself in the Lord his God."

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When everyone else abandons you, the Lord is there to save you.

David laments in prayer about his loneliness, praises the Lord's unfailing faithfulness to him, and anticipates his legacy of full salvation.

I. His Lament (1, 2), "I poured out my complaint before Him"

- "Voice" (2x) implies not just praying aloud but putting prayer into words: saints actually talk to God, an exercise of our faith.
- "Complaint" (Eng. to express pain) does not have one drop of blaming God, but is "crying on His shoulder." "Poured out" is a metaphor of holding nothing back. "I tell him all my troubles" (2b alt.). Keeping it all bottled up will kill you. "How are you?" God alone always loves you enough to hear the full answer. Here is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18.24). A hymn: "I must tell Jesus all of my trials, / I cannot bear these burdens alone; / In my distress He kindly will help me, / He ever loves and cares for His own" (E. Hoffman, 1893).

TRANS: Now he moves from saying *that* he prayed to *what* he prayed.

II. His Loneliness (3, 4), "no man cared for my soul"

- It was overwhelming (3a). "When I am ready to give up" (alt.). Scripture has no hagiography, biography that idealizes its subject. Here is the real David, warts and all. We are all like him, admit it or not.
- It was known to God (3b). A great comfort. Imagine otherwise!
- It was the result of human hatred (3cd). "Hidden a trap" (alt.). Enemies, traps, this is the stuff of fallen human society, esp. for those who openly praise and serve the Lord (2 Tim 3.12).
- It was the absence of human help (4). "Nobody cares" (title of Psa 142 in WBC). One of the saddest verses in the whole Bible. KJV captures it so well ("know," "take notice," alt.). "Refuge failed me" means "no refuge remains for me" or "no one to protect me" (alts.). Motyer: "A place to flee to has perished from me; no one seeks my soul's welfare." Sin kills love to one's fellow man. Paradise has become a desert. Martin Luther observed that sin makes us "*incurvatus in se*,"

obsessed with ourselves, neglectful of others. So even small gestures of care are relatively unusual and generally appreciated.

- Church membership and attendance does not, by itself, cure loneliness. Right here, you may be drowning. In one survey, even the majority of pastors said they are easily discouraged in ministry and feel lonely at times (Lifeway Research). "Pastor" is an office for seeking your soul's welfare—what a calling! But each member should care for one another, too (including pastors). May God make us lovingly faithful. Be transparent with your pastors and godly friends so they know.

TRANS: Sometimes we are lonely despite all we can do. Providence keeps us from companionship we desire (e.g., practical hindrances, nursing home, imprisonment, special duty to God and country, "friends" who betray and abandon us, etc.). Even then, Christians need not despair.

III. His Last Resort (5, 6), Not "last resort" as in after trying everything else. Rather, though he was man-forsaken, he was not God-forsaken (Motyer). "Thou art my refuge." "Other refuge have I none; / Hangs my helpless soul on thee; / Leave, ah! leave me not alone, / Still support and comfort me. / All my trust on thee is stayed, / All my help from thee I bring; / Cover my defenseless head / With the shadow of thy wing" (Charles Wesley, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," 1740).

- "My portion in the land of the living" (5c). A metaphorical phrase alluding to how Levites survived in the Promised Land, with the literal sense of "my ground of support in this present life." Faith in God sustains believers spiritually, psychologically, even physically against self-murder. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, how to be hungry, how to suffer need. I can do all through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4.11-13).
- Contentment does not stop praying for an improvement by His mercy (6). Confessing weakness, he casts himself upon the Lord. This is the God-glorifying thing to do (Psa 50.15). The arrogant and ungrateful will not pray like this because they feel self-sufficient and will not credit the Lord for the good things they enjoy from Him (Jas 1.17).

TRANS: The happy ending envisions God's glory and His people's happiness.

IV. His Legacy (7), "something that happens or exists as a result of things that happened at an earlier time" (dictionary). His legacy is being surrounded by the righteous praising the Lord with them.

- He anticipates full salvation. "Set me free from my distress; then in the assembly of your people I will praise you because of your goodness to me" (alt.). This deliverance is our blessed destiny (Rev 21.4).

Christian or not, lonely or not, we most likely have the pain of loneliness in our future. The Lord is the only Savior. Trust Him for your portion. Hell is the most lonely place reserved for those without Him, utterly, eternally forsaken by God. Let Him hear your cry from your own cave now. "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (Jn 6.37). Ω