

When No One Cares

1Samuel 22:1-5

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6-19-2011

Introduction – Everyone experiences times when it seems like “no one cares” (Ps. 142:4)

One of the Psalms that David wrote in the cave of Adullam is Psalm 142. And in that Psalm you can sense the overwhelming discouragement that he was feeling. In one verse he said, “**Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul.**” I’ve titled today’s sermon, “When No One Cares.”

I think a lot of you have had at least one time in your life when it sure felt like no one cared. I want to begin with a story that most of you have heard or read at least once. It’s the story of Squanto. In 1605 Squanto was taken captive by Captain George Weymouth, was taught English, and spent the next nine years in England, where he met Captain John Smith. Smith promised to take him back to his people in Cape Cod, but through the treachery of Captain Thomas Hunt, Squanto and nineteen other Patuxets were kidnapped and sold in Spain. A few of these Indians were rescued by local monks, including Squanto. After being converted, Squanto moved to England where he worked in the stables of a man named John Slaney. Well, Slaney had pity on Squanto and promised to help him return to America. When he finally got there, he faced yet another heartbreak. Some disease had wiped out his entire Patuxet tribe.¹ He was the last surviving Patuxet. Here was a man who was utterly alone, crying out to God and wondering why no one cared. You probably could not feel more alone than he felt on that day.

But God really did care for Squanto just like He cared for David. God cared for him by rescuing him from his tribe’s epidemic. If it had not been for the kidnapping, he probably would have died. God cared for Squanto by having the Spanish monk buy him, rather than one of the tyrannical slave owners. God cared for Squanto by converting him and preparing his soul for eternity. That would never have happened prior to the epidemic if he had not been kidnapped. God cared for Squanto in a series of providences that gave

¹ During the presentation of this sermon, Pastor Kayser misspoke and said that Squanto was part of the Wampanoag tribe. Though Squanto later was taken into the Wampanoag tribe, his original tribe was the aggressive Patuxet tribe.

him skills and that eventually led him to John Slaney. God cared for Squanto by providing the finances to get back to what would become Plymouth. But God also cared for the Pilgrims who may very well have starved if it had not been for Squanto. Squanto became a friend of those Pilgrims and stuck with them to his dying day. William Bradford records Squanto's deathbed testimony of total faith in Jesus Christ.

Now from hindsight we can examine a story like that and see so many amazing providences that we stand in awe at the way that God's hand rested upon Squanto. He was with Squanto every step of the way. Yet I'm sure that there were times when the crushing loneliness made him *feel* that nobody cared. He probably thought, "Where is God in all of this?"

I. Discovering the value of being alone with God (v. 1a with Psalm 34; 142)

I think that's the way it was with David. David faced the same kind of crushing loneliness when he was in the cave of Adullam. Let's start at verse 1. Verse 1 says, "**David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.**" The cave was dark and silent and as you read through Psalm 142 you realize that there were times when his soul felt dark, damp, and silent just like that cave. It was one of the loneliest periods of his life. And many of you have had your own caves of Adullam where you have felt that no one cares. How did David survive that? And not only survive, but how did He thrive?

The first thing I want you to notice is that the text says that David *did* escape. And in Psalm 34 David does not forget that fact. He thanks God for this mercy in the midst of the blackness. And last week we talked about the importance of expressing our faith in thanksgiving even when we are still in the cave of Adullam. Psalm 34 is a wonderful Psalm that helps depressed people see light in the darkness. It's not denying that depth of the darkness that you might be experiencing, but it is a Psalm designed to help you see light in the midst of darkness. It gives you the words of faith to survive.

Psalm 142 on the other hand is an honest expression of the crushing feelings of loneliness. And that is a help as well because it shows that God identifies with us in our pain. It's a Psalm that convinces us that He cares. In effect that Psalm is saying, "Lord, I praise you, and thank you, and worship you, but I want to be honest that I am constantly on the verge of tears. It feels like it is more than I can bear. Please help me through this darkness." You can see some of that side of the equation in Psalm 34, but you especially see it in Psalm 142. And even though we are going to be singing

the Psalm after the service, I want to read the whole Psalm right now with just a few brief comments. And I will begin reading with the title:

Psalms 142:0 A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.

Psalms 142:1 I cry out to the LORD with my voice;

With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.

Notice that David's discouragement does not make him want to escape, or to commit suicide, or to give up the faith. No. He runs to the Lord. He's not running away. He cries out to the Lord because he knows that God alone has the answer. When you are in the cave of Adullam, don't curl up in a ball and ignore God. No. Cry out to Him. Verse 2:

Psalms 142:2 I pour out my complaint before Him;

I declare before Him my trouble.

It's OK to bring complaints before the Lord so long as you are not complaining against God, and so long as you are wanting to glorify God in your pain. David doesn't understand what is going on. Yet in verse 3 he reminds himself that God does.

Psalms 142:3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,

Then You knew my path.

That is a supreme encouragement – that God knows; that He is never blindsided. He continues:

In the way in which I walk

They have secretly set a snare for me.

Psalms 142:4 Look on *my* right hand and see,

For *there is* no one who acknowledges me;

Refuge has failed me;

No one cares for my soul.

Psalms 142:5 I cried out to You, O LORD:

I said, “You *are* my refuge,

My portion in the land of the living.

Lord, they have taken everything else away, but at least I have you. Lord, let me run to you. Comfort me. Be my refuge. Be my portion. He keeps his faith and hope in God. And he says in verses 6-7,

Psalms 142:6 Attend to my cry,

For I am brought very low;

Deliver me from my persecutors,

For they are stronger than I.

Psalms 142:7 Bring my soul out of prison,

That I may praise Your name;

The righteous shall surround me,

For You shall deal bountifully with me.”

That last verse especially was David reminding himself of God's promises to make him a king. And by faith he declared God's Word to be true even though it didn't feel like it was true. His soul felt imprisoned to doubt and despair, but he refused to stay in that prison. He was wrestling with his feelings and constantly coming back to God.

And when you are in the cave of Adullam, there are no instant fixes for those horrible feelings, but if you don't wrestle against them, they will get worse. And you wrestle against those feelings by affirming your faith in God, singing the Psalms of God, offering up your needs to Him, thanking Him that He is sufficient for these needs, and committing yourself to obedience no matter what. And five minutes later you might have to cast aside self-pity again and wrestle against those feelings once again. But if you can make these Psalms part of your soul, they will help to get you out of the darkness. Another Psalm that you can add to your list as having been probably written during this time is Psalm 27. That Psalm too expresses what it is like to be abandoned by everyone.

And yet all of those Psalms show that this time of isolation drove David much, much closer to the Lord. Psalm 27 says, "**He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me.**" Have you learned to experience God in the secret place of His tabernacle? I have learned that secret place through trials. When everything is going well it is so easy to take God for granted, but in this cave David learned to lean on the Lord and experience the reality of God's presence far more profoundly than if everything had been going well. In fact, he told the Lord in Psalm 34, "**The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart.**" Now we would prefer not to have the broken heart, but there is good that comes from these times.

And before God allowed David to taste the sweetness of human companionship once again, David had to learn the joy of intimacy with Him. And in that cave David definitely learned that lesson. He said, "**O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**" There is no substitute for intimacy with God.

II. Discovering the value of a less-than-perfect family (v. 1a)

Having learned that lesson, David is then privileged to have the Lord opening up the sweetness of fellowship with others. The first gift that God gave was the gift of a restored family. And I say "restored" because one of the painful things that David sings in Psalm 27 is that his father and mother had abandoned him in some way.

So back to verse one. The second part says, **“So when his brothers and all his father’s house heard it, they went down there to him.”** The last time we heard anything about David’s family, David wasn’t being treated too well. His father kind of ignored him, his older brother Eliab spoke harshly against him, and the family basically showed that they are sinners like we are. And God was heating things up for the family to cause them to appreciate David and David was definitely in a position to appreciate his family.

Most commentators assume that what was happening was that David’s family was on the run from Saul. Saul probably has confiscated their property by this time and made them outlaws.

But it is wonderful when families come together and bless each other before things get desperate. It’s so easy to take your relations for granted rather than working at those relationships. Brothers and sisters, if there is one thing that would make the elders of this church thrilled, it would be to see strong multi-generational families coming out of this church; people who love their families and value this most fundamental unit of society. Later we come to realize that the family relatives that came to David included brothers, sisters, grandsons, nephews, and cousins. It’s extended family. And the more the church in America embraces the covenant, the more extended family will become valuable. In America it is rare for deep relationships to develop between cousins, nephews, and uncles. But that should be a goal for us. Our extended relatives our getting together up in Minnesota at the end of this week and we get together every year because we value family.

Of course, I deliberately began with the story of Squanto because some of you have been pretty much isolated by your relatives once you became saved. You have tried to reach out to them, but they won’t have anything much to do with you. Squanto had no flesh and blood relatives, but he did have brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. Discovering the value of being with other hurting believers (v. 2)

And those brothers and sisters in Christ began to come around David in verse 2. It says, **“And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him.”** That makes for kind of interesting church in the wilderness. It was made up of stressed out people, debtors, and the discontented. It sounds like a lot of counseling work for David. Yet they became not only a wonderfully loyal

church, they became an incredibly valiant militia. God delights in taking messed up lives and using them powerfully.

The second part of verse 2 says, **“So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.”** Some people question whether David should have formed a militia of friends, but as we will see in future chapters, this is just as fundamental a right as weapon ownership is. What good does it do to own weapons if the neighbors can’t band together to protect their property from threats? And we will have much to say about this growing militia that David raised up in future chapters.

But for today I just want to comment on the importance of valuing the body of Christ even when they are made up of strange and wonderful people. 1 Chronicles 12 lists a group of Gadites **“whose faces were like the faces of lions”** (v. 8). That’s not a complement. These men were scary to look at. Some of the other men acted crazy. For example on one snowy day Benaiah was marching along with everyone else and came to a pit. And when he looked into the pit he noticed that a lion had fallen down into it. Most people would just keep walking. Not Benaiah. He loved challenges and without even thinking he jumped into the pit, grabbed the lion and killed it. These are the kind of crazy people that David had on his side. Brave yes, but also a little bit crazy. On another day the text says, **“he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and killed him with his own spear.”** It would be too easy to shoot this guy. No, Benaiah wants a challenge, so he goes against him armed only with a stick. And as you read through some of the descriptions of the others you realize that these guys weren’t normal. They were quite a motley crew – distressed people, people running from the tax collector, people running from the banks who have seized their properties, people who want adventure, and people who were just plain sick and tired with the way things were in Israel. The text says discontented, but there is a holy discontentment that makes people say, “Enough is enough.” And there are a lot of people in America who are about to that place. But what a wonderful picture of the church! And what a wonderful picture these guys were of what it means to be loyal to a cause, or to make sacrifice for a cause, or to have courage and boldness to advance Christ’s kingdom! They were sold out to God. And what an encouragement these men were to David! And of course David was an encouragement to these men. They were a band of brothers. And I think that is a picture of what the church should be like.

IV. Discovering the value of providentially placed unbelievers (v. 3)

So in this cave David discovered the value of intimacy with God, renewed intimacy with his family, fellowship with other hurting sinners. But there is a fourth thing that he learned to value at this time. David discovered the value of providentially placed unbelievers. Verse 3 says, **“Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, ‘Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know what God will do for me.’”** He doesn’t leave God out of the discussion as too many Christian politicians have done, but he does discover that God has a place for working with unbelievers. Not covenanting with them, but working with them. It is very easy for Christians to take an absolutely purist view of our relations with unbelievers and have nothing to do with them. But David knew that even unbelievers have certain levels of decency and human kindness by God’s common grace. In fact, I have known some unbelievers who are much nicer to be around than some Christians I have met. And that was certainly the case with David. The professing believer Saul had become so nasty that David found it easier to work with the king of Moab than he did with the king of Israel. And it is sad but true that many businessmen have discovered the same thing today. How many times have I heard a Christian businessman tell me that he would rather do business with a pagan than a Christian because he has been ripped off by Christians too many times. That ought never to be. But it sometimes is.

And I think it is worth noting that Jesus received better hospitality from tax collectors and sinners than he did from the Pharisees. It took a Roman soldier to offer a drink for Jesus on the cross. And who was it that fed and clothed Paul at Malta after the shipwreck? It was a group of total idol-worshipping pagans. Acts 28:2 says, **“And the natives showed us unusual kindness [And the word for kindness is philanthropia or love of mankind. The text goes on to say]; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.”** Verse 7 says, **“In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days.”** Verse 10 says, **“They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.”** It is not only Christians who can be decent and kind. God’s common grace extends way beyond the pale of the church.

And so my admonition is that you not be so overly righteous (as Ecclesiastes words it) that we won’t shop at a pagan store, or be decent to a

pagan police officer, or invite pagan neighbors over for beer and pizza, or seek help from a pagan politician on a critical issue. This is not the last unbeliever that David either associated with or was kind to either.

Let's apply this to politics. While there can be a place for third parties, and most of you know that I have been a member of a third party in the past, I have always thought that we should be careful not to be so purist that we look with suspicion on Christians who are willing to work with mainstream political parties. That doesn't mean that we need to like the parties or even hope they will last forever. In 2 Samuel David will be obliged to fight against Moab. But I am just saying that an appreciation for common grace can help us to realize that God's sovereignty stretches way outside the church and God can use even unbelievers to benefit His kingdom.

Proverbs 13:22 says that the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. But it isn't just their wealth that is stored up. Their technology (such as Macs and Windows), their produce (even from a K-Mart), and even their politics can be of benefit to us. The only thing Scripture condemns in this arena is first, entering into a covenant with unbelievers (whether that covenant is in marriage, business, or covenants between nations), second, agreeing with the worldview of unbelievers, third, endorsing their goals, fourthly walking in their counseling (Psalm 2), or in any way abandoning your commitment to Scripture. Those are all off limits.

When it comes to politics, think of it this way: you might be opposed to a given mayor and strongly support his opponent in the race. In fact, you might think that the candidate is not even biblically qualified. But once that person gets elected as mayor, there is no inconsistency in asking that mayor to do his job of protecting citizens, including protecting babies from abortion. Well, I see this as being analogous. We don't live in a perfect world, but even an imperfect world can be used by God to advance His purposes. As another illustration, if you are out in the wilderness with a car run out of gas, you would be grateful if an unbeliever gave you enough gas to get to the next gas stop. God's common grace produces human decency in even unbelievers. Value His common grace.

V. Discovering the value of non-perfect parents (v. 4)

Fifth, I don't want to miss out on the very important lesson that we should care for our aged parents. Let me read verse 3 again together with verse 4:

1 Samuel 22:3 Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, “Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know what God will do for me.”

1 Samuel 22:4 So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

David stands as a wonderful model to us on the issue of caring for elderly parents. For the next few years David would be running from place to place, sometimes fighting his way through difficulties, and his parents were way too fragile in body to endure such hardships. So what is David to do? He can't bring them with him. And yet the Bible mandates that children have a responsibility to their parents. This is about as close as you can get to what some loving children have done when they have placed their parents in a good care facility – not abandoning them, but caring for them remotely.

And there are sometimes circumstances such as David's where Christians do not have the option of having the parents move in. Obviously our family believes that the ideal is for parents to move in with children when they become very aged. We have our mother living with us and Kathy's parents may need care in the future too. But what we are modeling is not the only option that is available. If a parent was impossible to live with, you wouldn't want to destroy your family by taking in a rebel who is constantly undermining your leadership. If a parent was so afflicted with Alzheimer's that there was a danger of his burning the house down or endangering the children, a nursing home is not the abandonment of the faith that some people make it out to be. You could visit your parents daily even in a nursing home. What is the abandonment of the faith is given to us in 1 Timothy 5:8 – **“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”** Now in context this responsibility to provide for the aged falls to immediate family first, then to grand children, and only when there are no relatives does this care fall squarely on the shoulders of the church. So David's extended family here no doubt was brainstorming on how to care for his parents. It was a problem. If the parents stayed in Israel, Saul might kill them, or hold them ransom, or do something else terrible to them. So they could no longer stay at home. In fact some people think that their properties had probably been confiscated by Saul's government. They can't send the parents to any other relatives, because all the relatives are here in the cave. It's kind of an odd situation.

And some people believe that things were actually a little bit worse. They believe Psalm 27:10 might be a factor here. David said, **“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.”**

The claim is that the father and mother wanted nothing to do with David (perhaps because of fear of Saul). The Hebrew word is very strong. His parents had abandoned him and forsaken him. We don't know if this Psalm was written in the early part of this cave or slightly before this cave experience. But it is clear that David had felt hurt by his parents. Maybe they were scared to be associated with him and they told him to leave. We don't know for sure in what way David was forsaken. But it clearly hurt. Here's the point – despite that hurt, David did not abandon his responsibilities to his parents. It may or may not have factored into how he took care of them, but I doubt it. I think this was probably the only option open to David at this juncture. Once David got to Ziklag, David would have other options.

But the reason I bring this all up is that too frequently people assume that if they aren't doing just like the Kayser family, that we are going to look down on them somehow or judge them. No. People who have been around a lot longer know that I want you following Scripture and Scripture alone. And the Scriptures give a lot of flexibility on this point. What we cannot be flexible on is abandoning our parents. Even when you have been abandoned you cannot totally abandon your parents. The command to honor your father and your mother lasts until the day they die. The family must stick together. And what David models for us is love for his parents, respect for his parents, making sure that his parents are financially taken care of, protecting his parents from the attacks of Saul, and in any way providentially possible providing for his parents. Are there exceptions to this rule? I'm sure there are, but let's err in the direction of honoring too much, not too little.

VI. Discovering the value of ministers of the Word (v. 5)

The last thing that David learned to value was the presence of a minister of the Word. And we have hints of that in the three Psalms that we looked at too – especially Psalm 27. But take a look at verse 5 of our passage: **“Now the prophet Gad said to David, ‘Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go to the land of Judah.’ So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.”** This direct revelation from God was a wonderful protection for David. Later God would warn David to flee from areas in Judah as well. But my focus here is not on the content of the prophetic message, but that there was a man of God who could bring God's Word into David's life. David was not a loner. He hated home church in that cave. He was so delighted when the church came to him.

One of the things that David mourned over in these Psalms was absence from the temple. But the temple was not the only place that God's

people congregated. They congregated in synagogues all over the land of Israel, where both scribes and prophets could bring God's Word. The prophets brought new revelation, and the scribes gave instruction in the Scriptures. But it should be rare when you are not under the authority and ministry of elders who preach God's Word. You are depriving yourself of care.

And military people know it. If you have ever been on military tour, you know how hungry you can become for this. That's why David established chaplains in his army. In the US military a good chaplain is sometimes available, but more often than not, these military people get spiritually starved. They learn to value ministers of the Word, even when those ministers bring messages that pinch, and rub wrong, and pierce. But those who are the elect of God want God's message no matter how uncomfortable that message might be. Don't make God put you into a cave of Adullam before you value ministers of the Word.

Conclusion

So in this passage David learned that God cared for Him even when it seemed like God was absent. Then God brought the family together and showed how they loved and cared for each other more than David may have realized. And he learned to value his family perhaps more than he had ever valued them before. Then God brought a church into his life, and a band of brothers who had gone through similar hurts to him, and an unbeliever who cared, and parents, and finally a minister of the Word. Each of those groups cared in different ways, but they did care. This church has people who need your love and your care for them. On the other hand, if you are a needy person, make sure you are not a joy sucker who only seeks care from others and never gives care in return. Make sure that like David, you care right back.

You probably all remember the story of Frank Reed, the guy that was held hostage in a cell in Lebanon for four years – from 1986-1990. It was a miserable four years. For months at a time he was blindfolded, living in complete darkness or chained to a wall in absolute silence. On one occasion he was moved to another room. And he could sense that there were others in the room, but he didn't dare peek for fear of being beaten. It took three weeks before he dared to peek out to discover that he was chained next to Terry Anderson and Tom Sutherland. Although he was beaten, tormented, and made ill, Reed said that what was the most tormenting was the lack of anyone caring about him. In an interview with Time Magazine he said,

“Nothing I did mattered to anyone. I began to realize how withering it is to exist with not a single expression of caring around [me].... I learned one overriding fact: caring is a powerful force. If no one cares, you are truly alone.”

Brothers and sisters, there are hurting people in this congregation. Care for one another. And if you feel like no one cares for you, use Psalms 27, 34 and 142 – all of which show us that we have a God who loves us dearly and cares for us moment by moment. Learn to press into God and into His care in your cave of Adullam. Amen.

When No One Cares 1Samuel 22:1-5

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6-19-2011

Introduction – Everyone experiences times when it seems like “no one cares” (Ps. 142:4)

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