

## Care for the Weary Soul

The biblical teaching of God's sovereignty, his providence in our lives, as well as our responsibility for our obedience to him are truths that are crucial to our overall spiritual, mental, emotional, and yes, sometimes even our physical (e.g., Psalm 31:10; 32:3) well-being.

In this article, we begin a new short series, this time from Psalm 142. This Psalm tells us the situation in David's life that's connected to its writing. The superscription reads: "A Maskil of David when he was in the Cave. A Prayer." This Psalm has a direct connection to Psalm 57 which also speaks of "the cave" and yet, Psalm 57 gives us more information, including the fact that David is hiding in the cave because he's fleeing from Saul. The account of this is, almost certainly, found in 1 Samuel 22:1-2 (although some have suggested 1 Samuel 24:3ff). I want to look at this Psalm in three main sections, beginning with:

### —Desperation: A Plea for Mercy

David begins Psalm 142 with an urgent plea to God for a desperate need that he has.

"With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD." These words express the desperation that David feels and his need to receive mercy from God. The word translated "LORD" shows us that David is in covenant with God and therefore he knows that he can go to God with his prayers. Notice now verse 2: "I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him."

It's important for us to understand that the Hebrew word translated "complaint" shouldn't give us the impression that David is "complaining" as we generally understand that word in English. This simply speaks of David telling "his trouble" to God.

The phrase translated "before him" is given twice in verse two which is one way in Hebrew poetry in which a writer can express emphasis. Again, the fact that David can go "before him" in prayer shows us David's covenant relationship with God. There's intimacy with and access to God shown in what David is saying. This takes us to our next section:

### —Desertion: No One Cares for My Soul

Notice now verses 3-4: "When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me, no one cares for my soul." The fact that David feels deserted is immediately obvious although the desertion that David expresses doesn't necessarily seem to be directed at God. For example, notice that David says to God, "...you know my way," likely meaning, "You know the way that will

lead me out of this trouble.” But clearly, as David sits alone in the cave he expresses his belief that he’s been deserted by family, friends and allies.

As already noted, this Psalm is written connected to a time when David is fleeing from King Saul who is trying to kill him. 1 Samuel gives us a detailed accounting of Saul’s jealousy of David as well as Saul’s many attempts on David’s life.

In chapter 21 of 1 Samuel, we learn that David escapes to the wilderness in a place called Adullam, an area about halfway between Gath and Bethlehem, and goes into hiding in a cave. David clearly fears for his life. The cave is most likely very dark which would only serve to darken his spirits.

It’s in the darkness—whether real or imagined—when our fears can come on us very forcefully. We can’t see what’s in front of us and we no longer feel like we’re in control. At times like these—when there’s so much uncertainty and we can’t really know what the outcome of our immediate crisis will be—we truly come face to face with who or what we really trust. When fears and uncertainty come, what will this reveal about us?

Twentieth century pastor and author Martyn Lloyd-Jones once wrote: “When we go through a crisis, it shows exactly....what kind of person we really are.....It’s so easy to live an artificial and superficial life and to persuade ourselves that we really are what we would like to be. But in a time of trial and crisis, the natural, the real, and the true come into view. A time of crisis and of difficulty....demonstrates very clearly what we really believe, and the nature of our religious faith.” Uncertainty in life has a way of helping us to see our desperate need for God. God truly cares for the weary souls of his children.

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