

# From Despair to Delight

## *Psalm 142:1-7*

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March 23, 2022 p.m.

Introduction: The superscription of this Psalm reads: “Maschil of David; A prayer when he was in the cave.” The word “Maschil” is found in the heading of 13 psalms. It comes from the verb “*sakal*” which means “to be intelligent” – therefore, this suggests a didactic or psalm for instruction or contemplation. David’s prayer is made when in “the cave.” There were 2 instances in which David is recorded as being in a cave: (1) the cave of Adullam in I Samuel 22 & (2) the cave of Engedi in I Samuel 24. There is no positive identification of which cave it was, but that does not affect the interpretation of the Psalm. I see 2 sections to the psalm, verses 1-4 & 5-7. We see David’s condition (or position) & then his confidence (or petitions). He is in trouble in verses 1-4, but yet is trusting in verses 5-7. He speaks of desertion (or dejection), but then of deliverance (or delight). His voice of complaint is followed by words of consolation. I choose to summarize the psalm, David’s prayer leads from his despair to his delight. How about you & me? How do we pray when in trying & difficult circumstances?

### I. David’s cry (:1-4)

#### A. The intensity of his cry:

##### 1. “*Cried*” >

- a. The word expresses the cry of need, anxiety, & distress.
- b. The word suggests a “shriek” – one of anguish or danger.

##### 2. “*Supplication*” >

- a. This word is parallel to “*cried*,” both spoken audibly. “Articulation of thoughts is a great help in prayer, for it makes it definite, & is a relief” (Scroggie).
- b. This word suggest humble & fervent petition.

#### B. The insights from his cry:

##### 1. The words “*complaint*” & “*trouble*” are also parallel to each other >

- a. “*Complaint*” is not so much as our sense of “complaining” as it is to David giving expression to what his heart was both thinking & feeling. It implies that which deeply occupied his mind.
- b. “*Trouble*” suggests to be “in a tight place, in narrow straits” (cf. Psalm 120:1; 138:7; & 143:11). We might say, “Between a rock & a hard place.”

##### 2. His spirit was “*overwhelmed*” & his steps were subject to a “*snare*”>

- a. “*Overwhelmed*” suggests his soul was “wrapped in gloom” to the point of fainting.
- b. “*A snare*” or trap was laid for him by his enemies.

##### 3. He looked for help to his right, where he would expect an advocate, protector, or friend >

- a. “*But there was no man that would know me*” – The word “*know*” (“*nakar*”) here means to recognize, regard, or acknowledge one who is known. [Note: The word “*knowest*” in verse three is “*yada*” which means to know & understand. “It implies perfect acquaintance of David’s course of conduct & of suffering, & approval of his behavior” (Plumer).]
- b. “*No man cared for my soul*” – David felt alone & abandoned, though there were men around him (yet consider those around him – I Samuel 22:2, “*every one that was in distress, & every one that was in debt, & every one that was discontented...*” Scroggie suggests, “What a crew! The 3 *d*’s have formed many an assembly since then, but such are ill to get on with, & a man like David would feel lonely among such”). Churches today?

Summary: “It is better to be opposed by foes than to be forsaken by friends... True friends are a wonderful asylum in the day of adversity” (Scroggie).

Application: But was David truly alone & without care? Compare Elijah in I Kings 19:10, 14, 18. “If one wears blue spectacles (glasses) he will see everything blue. Depression is something not to be yielded to, even in the darkest day” (Scroggie).

## II. David’s **confidence** (:5-7)

### A. In the Lord as his “portion” (:5):

1. *“I cried”* – perfect tense > in the past & continuing into the present. “It expresses great earnestness, as in a herald calling men together” (Plumer).
2. *“Refuge”* – a place of hope (different than word in verse 4, a place to flee to).
3. *“Portion”* – an allotment or inheritance (cf. Psalm 16:5 & 17:14).

### B. In the Lord as his protector (:6):

1. *“Attend unto my cry”* – “Men of God look upon prayer as a reality, & they are not content without having an audience with God” (Spurgeon).
2. *“I am brought very low”* – if not rescued, David would be ruined.
3. *“Deliver me from my persecutors”* – Saul & his men.

### C. In the Lord as his praise (:7):

1. *“Out of prison”* – “Escaped prisoners are sure to speak well of those who give them liberty. Soul-emancipation is the noblest form of liberation, & calls for the loudest praise; he who is delivered from the dungeons of despair is sure to magnify the name of the Lord” (Spurgeon). Note: “Alas that ever our prison promises & purposes were forgotten as soon as we were freed!” (Scroggie). Compare the butler in Genesis 40:14, 20-23.
2. *“The righteous shall compass me about”* – David’s expectation (hope) to be the next king.
3. *“Thou shalt deal bountifully with me”* – “The overwhelmed spirit has a bountiful God” (Scroggie). The Psalm which began with crying ends with singing! “The voice of prayer awakens the voice of praise” (Spurgeon).

**Conclusion:** What lessons can we learn from David as he went from despair to delight, from prayer to praise? “There can be no situation so distressing, perilous, or disgraceful, in which faith will not derive comfort from God by fervent prayer” (Scott). For the believer, it would seem impossible to pass either safely or comfortably through this life without prayer & supplication. We have no way to know all the plots that are or will be formed against us, “but the Lord sees every snare & pitfall. To Him therefore should we betake ourselves every day & in all circumstances” (Plumer). As Scroggie said earlier, true friends offer wonderful asylum in the day of our adversity, but Plumer reminds us, “The world is full of ‘swallow-friends,’ who migrate in cold weather.” What kind of friend are you? A secondary application of verse 4 could challenge us to the needs of those around us, that we might be mindful of their souls. Wiersbe concludes, “Life goes on & there is work to do, so we must not allow tough situations to paralyze us but to energize us in trusting the Lord. Life’s trials are not excuses for doing nothing; they are opportunities for claiming God’s promises & experiencing His miraculous power.” He goes on to say, “David would learn that those narrow places usually led to wider places & greater opportunities (see Psalm 18:17-19).”

Is this your response to trying & difficult circumstances? David’s prayer of despair results in the praise of delight. How about you?