

THE PRAYER OF A SOUL IN DISTRESS

V 1. I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

V 2. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.

V 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knoweth my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

V 4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

V 5. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

V 6. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I

V 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalm is the third in a series of four laments. This psalm is the lament of one at the end of his resources.

Vs. 7 “Out of prison”.

The reference is to the cave where David hid.

In later use, the prison could be any situation that holds a person captive, including a literal prison.

Psalm 142 the third of four consecutive individual laments, is a prayer for God’s mercy in the midst of a trial. Although it is similar to Psalm 140 & 141, it more closely resembles Psalm 143 because David does not pray for retributive justice against his enemies (vv. 1-2).

He prays that the LORD would notice his vulnerability (vv.3-4) and rescue him from his enemies (vv.5-7).

Set in the context of a cave, which can be a place of safety (Josh. 10:16-27; Judges 6:2; 1 Sam.13:6; 1 Kg. 18:4), the issue of refuge is at the forefront of the psalm. David confesses that he has no refuge in creation (v.4); the Lord alone is his refuge (v.5).

David at the cave of Adullam

A maskil of David When he was in the cave. A prayer

The word maskil in the Bible has an uncertain official definition, but scholars have linked it to the idea of wisdom and/or teaching. The Hebrew root of the word is sakal, which means “to have insight, to teach,”. Maskil literally means “enlightened” or “intellectual” in New Hebrew.

Some current versions of the Bible leave the word untranslated, while others translate it as “instruction” or the like.

Maskil is also found in Amos 5:13, translated as “prudent” (ESV) or having “insight” (CSB). Some commentators have speculated that a maskil is meant to be meditative and or to impart wisdom.

A biblical character I believe these characteristics could appropriately be applied to, would be the Apostle Paul.

“I cried unto the LORD.”

This psalm comes from one who is deeply troubled and overwhelmed by a desperate situation. Although the psalmist is experiencing loneliness without any supporting human companionship or sympathy, the Lord remains his refuge, friend, and helper.

When believers are afflicted and oppressed, rather than remaining silent, they should cry out to God, who has pledged Himself to be our comforter and helper in time of need.

(Jn.14:16-26; 2Cor.1:4-5).

What does a cave symbolize in the Bible?

- Biblical caves are significant and symbolic places. Frequently, the cave is associated with concealment, providing a hiding place for people and taboo practices and things. The cave is also a place of resistance.

Foundational information regarding “CAVE”:

- A cave is a natural underground chamber open to the surface, a cavern or hollow place on the side of a hill or cliff.
- Hebrew meaning (me’arah (Strong’s #4631), means a cavern (as dark)” and is translated in KJV as cave, den, or hole
- Root means, to be bare, to be made naked.

- Greek meaning “spelaion” (Strong’s #4693), which means a grotto; a cavern; by implication, a hiding place or resort.”

Some important caves:

- Machpelah, the burial place of Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebekah, Jacob & Leah
- Makkedah, where 5 Amorite kings hid from Joshua; and Adullam, where David hid from King Saul.
- The cave of Shanidar is hugely iconic in the history of Neanderthal studies.



The Cave of Adullam:

- Originally it was a stronghold referred to in the Old Testament, near the town of Adullam, where future King David sought refuge from King Saul
- It was there in the cave of Adullam that David wrote three of his most moving Psalms: Psalms 34, 57, & 142

(vv. 1-3a) An initial cry

V.1 (NIV) *I cry aloud* to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.

A confession of loyalty to the LORD. (Who you gonna call?) A friend, parent, child, neighbor, pastor???
David called on the LORD in all four of the lament psalms;

140:1 NIV “Rescue me LORD, from the evildoers; protect me from the violent,”

141:1 “I call to you, LORD, come quickly to me; hear me when I call you.”

142:1 “I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.”

V. 2 NIV- **Complaint:** “I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble

Denotes deep vexation and anxiety; describes Hanna’s plight (1 Sam.1:16 (AMPC); [**anguish**]) “Regard not your handmaid as a wicked woman; for out of my great complaint and bitter provocation I have been speaking.

V.3 NIV ‘When my spirit grows faint within me’,

- Faint - Completely spent without any more resources from which to draw.
- Jonah 2:7 (AMPC) When my soul fainted upon me [crushing me], I earnestly and seriously remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to You, into your holy temple.
- At every stage of Jonah’s journey away from God, Jonah goes **downward**, as he descends closer and closer to death. He pictures himself being imprisoned in the realm of the dead.
- It was through Jonah’s faint prayer that God reversed Jonah’s descent.

(vv. 3b-4) Negative circumstances

V.3b NIV “It is you who watch over my way. In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me”.

- Watch over my way - The Lord meets David in his weakness and leads him when he has reached the end of his strength

(Ps. 121 NIV) I lift up my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from? 2.) My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth. (and the sea, i.e., Jonah)

- He is the LORD of all the earth, the one who has made all things.
- Hidden snare - (Psalm 140:5) The arrogant have hidden a trap for me; they have spread out the cords of their nets and have set traps for me along my paths.
- The Lord watches over the path upon which enemies are setting a trap.

V.4 Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me.

I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.

David has cried to the Lord and has concluded that in his negative circumstances, **NOBODY CARES!**

Negative circumstances abound in David's life.

- There is nobody to “befriend” him
- Nobody “cares about” him
- He stands “alone”



(vv.5-7) Positive prospects

V.5 I cry to you, LORD; I say, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.

- “You are my refuge”: is a confession of faith and trust, and {proper positioning}.
- “My portion”: God is David's blessing

V.6 Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me,

- David cries out to the Lord because his situation is desperate!
- Charles Wesley: “Other refuge have I none, Hangs my helpless soul on Thee, is virtually his trusting cry in his extremity.
- V.6 (AMPC) “Attend to my loud cry, for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I.
- David pleads his weakness and implicitly confesses God’s sovereign power .

V.7 Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

- David calls out to the Lord because his situation is desperate.
- His **deliverance** will lead to praise, first by David himself and then by the community.
- The king’s deliverance will lead to the praise of the people.
By faith David revels in the prospect of celebrating God’s bounty in *renewed fellowship* **with His people**.

Mark 9:22-24 AMP

[22] The demon has often thrown him both into fire and into water, intending to kill him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” [23] Jesus said to him, “[You say to Me,] ‘If You can?’ All things are possible for the one who believes and trusts [in Me]!” [24] Immediately the father of the boy cried out [with a desperate, piercing cry], saying, “I do believe; help [me overcome] my unbelief.”

The word possible is the Greek word “dunata”, and it expresses the idea of ability and power; one who is able, capable, or one who is competent.

An old Irish blessing expresses this:
May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains falls soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.



(John 10:28d) No one can snatch [my followers] out of my hand.

“Wherever Faith Is Present, the Impossible Is Doable



References: NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE
The Bible says what - YouTube

TFLSB,
New International Bible Commentary
NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE

The Bible says what - YouTube