

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship
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Psalm 142 — Hated, Hunted, Hiding, and Hurting

1.0 Introducing Psalm 142

- Unlike Psalms 140 and 141, this psalm was not written during the time of Absalom's rebellion.
- Psalm 142 possesses the closest association with Psalm 57 because of its mention of David fleeing from Saul into a cave.
 - ✓ The identity of the cave appears to be the one at Adullam in 1 Samuel 22:1–5, where David was alone until his family joined him there. A second cave was the one at Engedi (1 Sam 24:1–22).
- Psalm 142's words and phrases echo words and phrases in other psalms.

2.0 Reading Psalm 142 (NAU)

- 142:1** Maskil of David, when he was in the cave.
A Prayer.
- I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.
- 142:2** I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him.
- 142:3** When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
You knew my path.
In the way where I walk
They have hidden a trap for me.
- 142:4** Look to the right and see;
For there is no one who regards me;
There is no escape for me;
No one cares for my soul.

- 142:5** I cried out to You, O LORD;
I said, “You are my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
- 142:6** “Give heed to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are too strong for me.
- 142:7** “Bring my soul out of prison,
So that I may give thanks to Your name;
The righteous will surround me,
For You will deal bountifully with me.”

3.0 Understanding Psalm 142

3.1 Outline

- I.** David’s Supplication (vv. 1–4)
 - A.** His Dire Complaint (vv. 1–3)
 - B.** His Deserted Condition (v. 4)
- II.** David’s Salvation (vv. 5–7)
 - A.** His Dependable Companion (v. 5)
 - B.** His Delightful Crown (vv. 6–7)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Maskil”
 - This term appears in the headings of 13 psalms (Pss **32**; 42; 44; 45; **52**; **53**; **54**; **55**; 74; 78; 88; 89; **142**). Six of these psalms are David’s (in bold).
 - “Maskil” means an artistically molded song exhibiting the principles of wisdom. See the use of *maskil* in Psalm 47:7 and in 2 Chronicles 30:22 (ESV: “who showed good skill”).
- **v. 1** “when he was in the cave”
 - Psalm 142 is the last of 8 psalms that indicate by their titles the time of Saul persecuting and pursuing David (Pss 7; 18; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59).
- **v. 1** “A prayer”
 - Five psalms are designated “A prayer” (Pss 17 [David’s]; 86 [David’s]; 90 [Moses’]; 102 [the Afflicted’s]; 142 [David’s]).
 - Compare Habakkuk 3:1.
- **v. 1** “I cry aloud with my voice”
 - David’s prayer is not silent. The psalm focuses on the out loud nature of his prayer.
 - As Spurgeon notes, David made the cave’s “gloomy vaults echo with his appeals to heaven.” — C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3vols. (reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 3/2:323.

■ *Where have you prayed aloud?*

- v. 2 “I pour out my complaint before Him”
 - “Pour out” involves the idea of spilling something. The psalmist is so full of thoughts, fears, and feelings about his troubles that they overflow from his heart through his mouth.
 - ✓ Compare Psalms 42:4; 62:8; 102:1
 - “Complaint” does not mean griping and grumbling. Instead, it refers to revealing one’s troubled thoughts. In Psalm 104:34 the same word is translated “meditation.”
 - ✓ Compare Psalms 55:2; 64:1; 102:1.
 - “Before Him” is the key—we should lay all our troubled thoughts before the Lord, not before people.
- v. 3 “my spirit was overwhelmed”
 - The word “overwhelmed” carries with it the concept of feeling weak or faint.
 - ✓ See Psalm 143:4.
 - David has no strength left to flee or to fight—he is wrung out and powerless.
- v. 3 “You knew my path”
 - “You” is emphatic in the Hebrew. God alone knows all about David.
 - This becomes the first hopeful note in the psalm.
 - God even knows about the traps that David’s enemies have set to capture him.
 - ✓ See Psalms 140:5 and 141:9.
- v. 4 “no escape”
 - Literally, “a place of refuge is lost from me” = “without shelter.”
 - Compare 2 Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 59:16.
- v. 4 “No one cares for my soul”
 - A helper would normally be available as one’s right hand man. No one stood with David—he was alone and seemingly uncared for. No one extends him any kindness.
 - Compare Philippians 2:20.
 - *Do you care for other believers like Timothy did for the Philippians?*
 - *How can you show your care for a person in David’s situation?*
- v. 5 “You are my refuge, . . . My portion”
 - God is not only David’s place of security and protection, He is all that David could desire or need.
 - Compare Psalms 16:1, 5; 73:26, 28; 91:9.
 - In regard to “portion,” see Numbers 18:20.
 - Note that God is David’s “portion in the land of the living”—while he lives on earth (see Ps 27:13; 52:5; 116:9).
 - *In what ways is God your “portion” in this life?*



- v. 6 “I am brought very low”
 - Compare Psalms 79:8 and 116:6.
- v. 6 “my persecutors”
 - Literally, “those who are pursuing me.”
 - Compare 1 Samuel 23:25, 28; 24:14; and Psalms 7:1; 31:15; 143:3.
- v. 6 “they are too strong for me”
 - Compare Numbers 13:31; 2 Samuel 22:18; Psalm 35:10.
- v. 7 “prison”
 - This word occurs very seldom in the Old Testament (see Isa 24:22 and 42:7). However, the same root was employed in 1 Samuel 23:7, 11, 12, 20; and 24:18.
 - David probably uses the term metaphorically, referring to his hiding place in the cave and to his loss of freedom due to Saul’s pursuit.
- v. 7 “The righteous will surround me”
 - “Surround” is related to the word for “crown” (cp. Prov 14:18).
 - As David emerges from the depths of his troubles, he envisions himself surrounded by the righteous who gather around him.
 - *What joy or comfort do you find in the gathering of fellow believers?*
- v. 7 “You will deal bountifully with me”
 - Compare Psalms 13:6; 116:7; 119:17.

4.0 Singing Psalm 142

“To God My Earnest Voice I Raise”

(Tune: “The Solid Rock”)



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|--|--|
| 1 To God my earnest voice I raise,
To God my voice imploring prays;
Before His face my grief I show
And tell my trouble and my woe. | 2 When gloom and sorrow compass me,
The path I take is known to Thee,
And all the toils that foes do lay
To snare Thy servant in his way. |
| 3 All unprotected, lo, I stand,
No friendly guardian at my hand,
No place of flight or refuge near,
And none to whom my soul is dear. | 4 O Lord, my Savior, now to Thee,
Without a hope besides, I flee,
To Thee, my shelter from the strife,
My portion in the land of life. |
| 5 Be Thou my help when troubles throng,
For I am weak and foes are strong;
My captive soul from prison bring,
And thankful praises I will sing. | 6 The righteous then shall gather round
To share the blessing I have found,
Their hearts made glad because they see
How richly God has dealt with me. |

— Words: *The Psalter*, 1912

5.0 Praying Psalm 142

- Lord, I bring my troubles to You and plead for Your grace. [vv. 1–2]
- How I praise You, Father, for knowing the gloomy present I face. [v. 3]
- Thank You, Lord, for truly caring about me. [v. 4]
- O God, You are all I need and all I desire. [v. 5]

6.0 Applying Psalm 142



- Praying aloud to God is better than whispering complaints to man.
- God knows the thoughts hidden within me just as He can see me hidden in the darkest cave.
- Being surrounded by the righteous is the best crown we can possess in this life.

Verse 7b ends the psalm on a new summit (*cf.* 3a, 5), where faith, joined now by hope, looks into the future. Those who disallow David's authorship of the psalm, seeing it as a set piece for any individual worshipper to use in times of trouble, take 7b to be looking forward to the day when such a sufferer, his prayer now answered, will make his thank-offering in the presence of the congregation (*cf., e.g.,* Ps. 116:12–19). This is a useful reminder that the Psalms were (and are) for all to use and make their own. But in the first instance it is David who dares to visualize the day when he is no longer shunned or hunted, but thronged, or even crowned.

Perhaps he looked forward simply to bringing a thank-offering, at a time of public worship, when he was a free man again. Yet he already knew himself to be the future king. Even in this dark hour, was his first vision renewed as he prayed?

— Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 474