PSALM 142

GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY
A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

No Other Refuge

March 3, 2024

I. IMPACT

A. Lesson: This psalm encourages the believer in trials that even when it seems that no one else is with us and there's no way out, the Lord is present and powerful to bring us through our crises.

B. In Christian Tradition:

1. While Psalm 142 is not quoted or alluded to in the NT, some Christian interpreters through the centuries have imagined this song to depict Jesus in the days of his suffering.

2. It is probably incorrect to think that David intentionally foreshadowed Christ's sufferings in the description of his own in this poem, but it is true that Jesus is the truly **innocent** Sufferer of whom David is but a type.

II. GENRE: Lament of the Individual

A. Ps. 142 contains all the elements commonly found in laments including direct address to God, pleadings, laments, expressions of confidence, and a vow of thanks.

B. The pouring out of the complaint (v. 2) results in a **repetitive** style of composition. This reflects the troubled nature of the person praying in times of distress.

C. The heading calls the song a "Maskil," a term suggesting **wisdom** and skill. While this lament is not a wisdom song, this heading may suggest that the worshipper is to learn from David the art of lament and how wisely to seek God's help. Alternatively, "Maskil" might indicate that a "skillful" musician is required to play the song.

PSALM 142

PURPOSE: During a time of growing isolation and alienation from his countrymen, David prays for deliverance from his enemies. He finds refuge in Yahweh even as he feels imprisoned by his circumstances.

Type: Lament of the Individual
Date: Perhaps c. 1017 or 1015 BC
Background: Perhaps while David was running from Saul and hiding at Adullam (1 Sam 22) or at En-Gedi (1 Sam 24).
Author: David

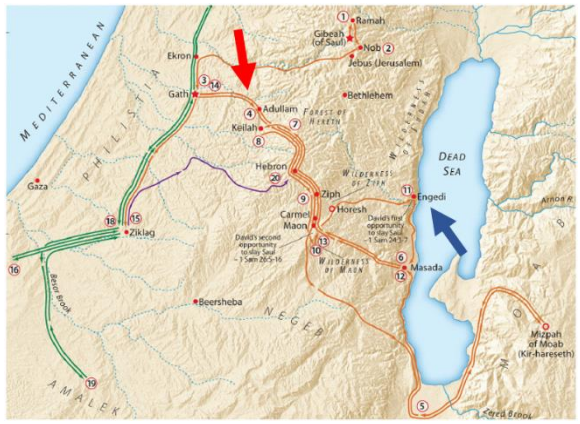
HEADINGS v. 0	INTRODUCTION TO THE CRISIS: HIS ORIENTATION TO PRAYER vv. 1-2	1ST ROUND OF PLEADINGS: CONFIDENCE AS HE OFFERS COMPLAINT vv. 3-4	2ND ROUND OF PLEADINGS: CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS vv. 5-7A	CONCLUDING VOW: CONFIDENCE IN DELIVERANCE vv. 7BCD
Psalm Type Maskil (perhaps "Instruction" or "Skillful Song")	**Notice of His Appeals to Yahweh** v. 1 With Loud Cries v. 1a With Verbal Supplication v. 1b	**Statement of Confidence: Yahweh Knows** v. 3ab Recollection of His Situation v. 3 Confession of His Trust v. 3b	**Statement of Confidence: Yahweh is a Refuge** v. 5 Recollection of His Prayer v. 5a Confession of His Trust v. 5b	**Pledge of a Thank Offering after Deliverance** v. 7b **Anticipation of a Joyful Outcome** v. 7cd
Authorship David		**Lamentation: No Deliverance in Sight** vv. 3c-4 Traps Ready to Spring on Him v. 3cd Appeal for Yahweh's Help v. 4 *Call for Attention* v. 4a *No Helper or Escape Available* v. 4bcd	**Lamentation: A Vulnerable Situation** vv. 6-7a Appeal for Yahweh's Response to His Helpless State v. 6 Request for Deliverance from Imprisonment v. 7a	
Historical Setting While Hiding in a Cave	**Presentation of His Crisis to Yahweh** v. 2 Lament Poured Out v. 2a			
Psalm Type Prayer	Troubles Recounted v. 2b			

III. SETTING

A. AUTHOR & BACKGROUND

1. The historical header (1 of only 13 in the Psalter) suggests this psalm relates to events when David hid from Saul.

2. There are two instances when David was reported to have hidden in caves from Saul: at **Adullam** around 1017 BC (1 Sam 22:1), and at **En Gedi** two years later (1 Sam 24:3).



3. David's reference to being **alone** (v. 4) seems to better fit with his early days in the cave at Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1).

1. As with Psalm 57 which also grew out of David's time in a cave, it is possible that he composed this song **after** the event as he recollected the painful prayers he uttered there.

2. This is the last of 8 psalms which grew out of this painful but spiritually productive time of David's life. See the headers in Pss 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, and 59.

B. PLACEMENT

1. Pss 138-145 are the last Davidic pss in the Psalter. The first and last (138, 145) are songs of thanks, and most of the ones in between are laments or contain laments.

2. Ps 142:3 refers to traps being set for David, sharing imagery with Pss 140:4-5 and 141:9-10.

III. COMMENTARY

A. Repetitive Introduction (vv. 1-2). In these vv. David speaks about praying. The prayers themselves do not begin until v. 3. David makes 4 references to asking for help, showing variety of expression is used as David pours out his heart to God.

B. A Spiritual Complaint (v. 2): The term "complaint" does not indicate anger with God but refers to an issue to be addressed.

C. God Sees the Traps (v. 3): David is troubled by the plots against him poised to go off like spring-traps. While he can't see all the traps, he takes comfort in knowing that God sees and knows everywhere he has been and is going.

D. No Right-Hand Man (v. 4a): David complains that he has no one at his right side to advocate for him or help him. He knew God was with him, but he longed for God's help in human form.

E. No Lasting Refuge (vv. 4b-5a): The line, "there is no escape for me" is more literally, "Refuge fails me." He fears his little cave cannot serve him forever, but he remembers his faith that Yahweh was his greatest rocky refuge (different word).

F. The Lord is Our Portion (v. 5b): David felt dispossessed during this time on the run. But he found comfort in knowing that, like the Levites and priests (Num 18:20; Deut. 10:9), the Lord was his special portion. In speaking this way, David makes spiritual application out of one of Israel's ceremonial laws.

G. Righteous Company (v. 8):

1. While David complains that he was alone in his crisis (v. 4), he is confident that God will keep His promises, deliver him, and put him back in the company of righteous people.

2. The Hebrew term "surround" could be translated a few ways: to surround, to wait for, & to **crown**. The last option fits well with David's faith in God's promises of the throne.