

Psalm 142

Read Psalm 142: 1-4: Many of the richest psalms come from the deepest despair. God is developing us into eternally-oriented friends and servants. To do so requires the manipulation of our temporary *comforts of life*. Suddenly David is disconnected from his friends and family. Now he is living with the kind of people he dislikes. David was a Boy Scout who was forced to live on the run with gang members. The government which he had laid his life down for was now trying to kill him. This was a very messed up situation. The desperate Israeli people he had rescued were now setting traps to capture him. Treachery is defined as the betrayal of a trusted relationship. Would David become bitter, and fight evil with evil? Would David disown his people? It reminds us of how Jesus was treated by his own people. Good works can be tested. Was this valor for God or for personal greatness?

Last week we discussed what it might have been like to be David, as he lived among dangerous fugitives, while escaping King Saul's posse. The title of this psalm is *when David lived in caves*, as a fugitive.

King Saul is looking for local village people to conspire about sharing David's whereabouts; and setting traps to lure him in. There are stories about how David rescued villages (from Philistine raiders); to only have these fortunate people tell King Saul where he was hiding. David was literally saving people; who in turn revealed his whereabouts. The bottom line is that David needed to see that his heroics were to honor God; and not be a national hero. A true hero will do what is right, regardless of how they are perceived.

We are all misunderstood. We all judge the intentions of our neighbors when they bring harm against us. Part of becoming a spiritual leader is to be able to ignore what might be motivating misguided people. God wants us to live a little more simply, and leave out the *mental gymnastics*.

Then they told David, saying, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors.” Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.” But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” Then David inquired of the LORD once again. And the LORD answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.” And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their

livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand. And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.” Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” Then David said, “O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will deliver you.” So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition. (1 Samuel 23, various verses)

Not only were his own ungrateful countrymen *ratting him out*, but his vigilante partners in crime were not opposed to taking David's life if it suited them. Fortunately, their interests were aligned.

David was literally a man without a country. Verse 3 tells us that he is overwhelmed. The word for overwhelmed is *ataph* H5848 (to become faint and grow weary and turn back as things grow dark). Our courage and trust all have a vanishing point. That line gets gradually stretched with God's deliverances. We need to be broken down before we can be built up correctly. We are all like crooked walls that we try to build higher. Heros need to amend their ways too.

Being brave is not the absence of fear. It's progress despite the fear. David is literally only connecting with God. Sometimes we need to separate our allegiance to God by experiencing a separation of loved ones and other interests. Sometimes I will unexplainably feel momentarily separated from my loved ones to focus on God. Our love for God cannot become provisional to other relationships.

Every friend and family member were separated from David now. God was grooming David. The success of any relationship was based on how God was situated in David's life.

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of

God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:31-34)

David even found more acceptance and safety among the Philistines! How is that possible? The Philistines were the worst enemy of Israel. There are times that our only solace is knowing that we are serving God. Man is very fickle.

Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’” Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” (1 Samuel 21:10-15)

Reprogramming Me

Another good reason for David to live surrounded by the opposite world view is to broaden his view of life; and not become a bigot of his own experiences. I can think of a couple good examples in my life. I had always been confident in my world views.

One summer I moved to LA for a summer college internship with Bank of America. I had an optimistic plan of finding vacancies in UCLA student housing in one day. I scanned the empty bulletin boards in Reber Hall, realizing that I made a big mistake, and was going to have to sleep in my car. An Assistant Dean noted that I was just staring at the bulletin board in the late afternoon. He asked if he could help. I told him about my predicament...and boldly asked if he had a room I could rent. He apologized for not being able to help; and walked away. He stopped, paused and inexplicably turned around, and mercifully offered let me move into an extra room for the summer. I was feeling a bit overwhelmed and found huge relief in that moment. Once I moved in, I realized that the people I was living with had the opposite world view on many things than I did. The Assistant Dean was in charge of an organization's chapter called MECHA. It was a liberal Hispanic group heavily into workplace rights, minority freedoms and appropriations, etc... I had been against labor organizers and special treatment for anybody. My background was pro-management, without federal programs to any

particular special interests. Beyond all of this, their moral world view was not Christian; and mine was. Surprisingly, they took me in and made me one of their own. They embraced me as if they were re-programing a competitor to be more sympathetic to their view. It worked.

Another example of God's re-programming happened to me in business. There was a time when I would brag to my growers about how my citrus packinghouse paid growers in 30 days; and my competition had accounts payable issues. After my shed burned down, and I had other operational problems I became the worst payer. I became the very thing I hated...but I saw how things were not always black and white.

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 26:12)

Read Psalm 142:5-7: There are good reasons for needing God-alone to rescue us. If your sword or your friends or your knowledge rescues you, then you are relieved of relying upon God. We really cannot develop our faith if we can maneuver out of the bind. That is not really a true rescue. That was Jacob's problem. He was too resourceful. He cheated and lied to get out of trouble. Capable people are the hardest to bring to a place of full vulnerability.

I have noticed that part of my Christian maturing process is learning not to squirm when I am in the clutches of a situation. The anger and foot stomping and protest and resentment is a bad look. It is also embarrassing when God invariably delivers me. It is like I ruin the witness of God's patient delivery. I have a history of pre-judging what seems to be the inevitable. God will let it play out a little longer, until I give up on a positive resolution. Then God will inexplicably create a paradigm shift, and the impossible options kick in.

I have worked in the prayer room for mid-week services. I was able to pray with people who had come forward to receive Christ or re-dedicate their lives to Christ. Without exception, the people who were making life-changing spiritual progress were at an all-time low. They felt crushed.

The scriptures seem to teach us that man cannot spiritually flourish in uninterrupted good times. Adam and Eve did not. The millennial kingdom will see a massive rebellion as well. Conversely, the tribulation may be the greatest harvest of souls ever. This is not only true in the conversion of unbelievers. It is equally true for believers.