

Sacred Songs, Life Lessons

In the Cave

Psalm 142

June 30, 2024

HDBC

Depression is one of the most demoralizing and debilitating conditions known to people. It is a weapon that is often used by the enemy to **steal, kill and destroy**. It is felt by almost everyone to one degree or another at one time or another. But for some, it stays for seasons at a time, sucking the joy and energy out of life. Sometimes the cause is clear and unmistakable. At other times it attacks for no apparent reasons.

The impact of depression is never limited to the person depressed. The ripples are spread to family, friends, co-workers and others. And they are more like violent waves crashing onto a shore than like gentle ripples radiating out from a small splash.

Depression has been described as a black hole, an abysmal cave. Depression conceals the light, pushes hope into a dark closet, and shrouds the future in uncertainty. It is not felt as a direct, single attack, but as an ominous, invisible enemy that hovers, covers and suffocates.

King David experienced some of the greatest highs imaginable. The killing of Goliath and his coronation as king of Israel. But he also experienced the depth of serious depression. He knew what it was like to be in the cave, literally, and emotionally. He often wrote about those **cave experiences**. Song 142 in the Bible's songbook is an example. **READ IT.**

The Introduction. Note 4 things found in the superscription.

First, this is a **Maskil**. This is one of thirteen songs in this songbook with this designation. It means *to be prudent, wise, to have insight, to be instructed*. So, this is a song designed to give instruction, to teach, to offer practical application to a real-life problem.

Second, this was written by David. He did not write all the songs, but he wrote more than another other individual.

Third, he was in a cave. This same phrase appears in only one other song, Ps 57. Unfortunately, David does not tell us which cave he was in or what else was happening to cause him to be in this cave. My takeaway from that absence of information is that we don't need to know. The application and benefit of this song are not dependent on those details. However, it is interesting to remember two times when David was in a cave.

Could have been the cave of Engedi (1 Sam. 24).

Could have been the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22).

Most scholars lean toward the second. If so, this would be the last of 8 songs written about David's flight from Saul. Interesting situation.

David was running from Saul. Found a hiding place in this cave. Verse 2 – *Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred.*

Wow! He's found a place of refuge, safety and peace. Then he was suddenly surrounded by 400 people who all had issues, and they looked to him for leadership. No wonder he was depressed!

Fourth, it was a prayer. The focus of the song is prayer. Spurgeon said, ***Caves make good closets for prayer.*** Truth! Prayers in the Bible are not meant to be dissected and analyzed, but to be examples for us. They are ***reflections of the mysterious interactions*** that happen between humanity and divinity, between he created and the Creator. ***So, what do we find in this song written in a cave?*** Three things.

1. Despair (1-2)

These verses point to a man in deep despair. Look at words/phrases.

I cry aloud, pour out my complaint, declare my trouble.

I cry out – Literally means *I shriek!* It means *to sound as thunder, to bellow*. From inside this cave thundered with heart-wrenching groans expressing a despair that was covering him.

Trouble – *to be bound up, tied tightly, restricted, cramped, backed into a corner*. David verbally expressed this despair to God.

These two verses not only express the deep despair that was engulfing David, they make it clear that David was not shy about declaring his condition to God. **He spoke, he yelled, he complained**. He was unhappy with his situation and he told God about it. This is ok. But the goal is not to stay in that condition. **The expression of despair is critical**. It is important to verbalize your thoughts and feelings. It's certainly ok to tell God how you feel. **But remember that it is a means to an end**.

It is a step toward the light and toward the Lord, not away from Him. This is really important. The goal is not to slink back further into the darkness, but to move toward the light. Even as you share your pain with God, determined to move toward Him and not away from Him. **Verbalize your despair to God, but don't run away from Him**.

2. Frustration (3-4)

When I read verses 3-4 the word that comes to mind is *frustration*. It seems to me that David is expressing two sources of frustration.

With God (3)

Notice the phrase *You knew my path*. David was declaring the omniscience of God. God knew all that David was going through. But when you put it into context, keep in mind that David is crying out to a God who knows, but at least at the moment has not delivered him. Read it again from that perspective.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew where I would walk, that they have hidden a trap for me. You knew, yet have seemingly done nothing.

I think David is expressing his frustration that God knew and still had not acted. I'm guessing that all of us have been there. We believe in God's ability to know all things. That means He knows what is happening in our lives. So, we automatically expect Him to act, on our behalf in our timeframe. When He does not, we get frustrated with Him.

With others (4)

David was also frustrated with others. No one was with David who could rescue him. He had 400 other people with him, but they were not there to help him, they were there for him to help them. He felt that no one really cared. What a lonely, difficult place to be. To think that no one is standing with you and no one cares is painful.

It's ok to be frustrated when it seems that others don't care. Maybe they don't. But remember, they may be going through equally difficult times. You want them to know what you are going through.

Frustration is part of living in this broken world. Things will often go wrong, plans will go off the rails, people will let us down, and God will seem to be uncaring. Let me tell you something about frustration. You cannot overcome on your own by simply working harder. You have to give it to the Lord, yield your frustrations to Him.

When I think of frustration I think of Wile E. Coyote chasing that road runner. Bryan Wilkerson related the following:

Years ago, when our kids were young, we were out at a themed restaurant with TV's all over walls, playing cartoons with no sound. Our youngest son, who was about four at the time, had his eyes glued to the TV screen. He was watching a continuous loop of Road Runner cartoons, watching as Wile E. Coyote strapped on rocket-propelled roller skates, or shot himself out of a cannon, or launched himself from a giant slingshot in pursuit of the elusive Road Runner. After watching intently for a long time, he had an epiphany. Without taking his eyes off

the screen, he quietly announced to our family, ***No matter what he does, he's never going to get the chicken.***

No matter how hard you try to avoid frustrations or to overcome frustrations in your own strength, you will fail. You must give them to the Lord and draw close to Him. David learned that, as well.

David expressed his despair and his frustrations. He also declared his –

3. Hope (5-7)

David continues his prayer for deliverance, for rescue, for help. But there is a different tone. In the previous verses the tone was of despair and frustration. Here, there are strong hints of hope.

*You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.
Bring my soul out of prison so that I may give thanks to Your name.
You will deal bountifully with me.*

He is continuing to pray and to press his cause, but he is doing so with an increasing confidence in what God will do. In a word, there is **hope!** There is a growing confidence that God is hearing and will act. David expresses his confidence that God will indeed deal bountifully with him.

Humans seek after hope like moths seek after light. It's intrinsic to who we are. Neuroscientists Tali Sharot argues hope is so essential to our survival that it is hardwired into our brains, arguing it can be the difference between living a healthier life versus one trapped by despair. Studies: hopeful college kids get higher GPA's, more likely to graduate.

Hopeful athletes perform better on the field, cope better with injuries, and have greater mental adjustment when situations change.

In one study of the elderly, those who said they felt hopeless were more than twice as likely to die during the study follow-up period than those who were more hopeful.

It's clear: hope is powerfully catalytic, and why Dr. Shane Lopez, the psychologist who was regarded as the world's leading researcher on hope, claimed that hope isn't just an emotion but an essential life tool.

Hope is essential to life. But the source of hope is the critical factor.

In an in-depth interview with the New York Times in 2015, Larry King revealed a lot about his life and career. But what really stood out was his understanding of his death, or rather lack thereof. He plans to avoid death by opting for the "Ted Williams treatment." As the story says, "He has arranged to his body frozen and then thawed out when researchers discover a cure for whatever killed him." King goes on to tell the NYT writer, "the people behind cryonics are 'all nuts,' but at least if he knows he will be frozen he will die with a shred of hope." This gives King hope because "Other people have no hope."

David's hope was in the unchanging, all-powerful source of real hope. God. If your hope is in the wrong thing, it will be useless. But hope in God will bring confidence, assurance and energy to move forward.

Takeaways:

I believe depression is real.

I believe the enemy wants to use it to steal, kill and destroy.

I believe it comes in many varieties and causes.

I believe the best response is a multifaceted one.

Work on your **spiritual health**. Prayer. Bible. Worship.

Determine if **professional counseling** would be helpful.

Talk often with **trusted friends**. Verbalize your feelings. Don't keep it in.

Find out if **medication** is needed and would be helpful.

Above all, put your faith and hope in God. He can deliver.