

Battling Depression– Ps 142

Ps 142; Having finished our study of Isaiah, I've had the idea and framework for this message sitting in my folder for almost a year
I thought it would be a great way to wrap up our theme, and provide some much needed help and instruction on a huge felt need

What I didn't anticipate, is that *I* would need it; That *I'd* be battling depression
Which I didn't realize until I started *preparing* for the message; I know how I *feel*, but I didn't connect the dots
The dots that a persistent state of sadness, gloom, discouragement, hopelessness, lack of motivation, and difficulty in sleeping – equals depression
Not that it's as bad as it could be, but it's there
And if *you've* been there, you know it's no fun; And if you *are* there, I hope to convey some principles from God's Word that are helping me
Principles found right here in Ps 142 (Intro)

➤ *A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer.*
Before we go on, I want you to know that that's part of Scripture
The heading isn't, "you are my refuge", but the preface is
With a *Maskil* probably being some sort of indicator or label that determined how this Psalm should be used in corporate worship
While the setting is that time in King David's life when he fled from Saul

Saul had been rejected by God as king of Israel; David was anointed king; And Saul waged an all-out war to kill him
So David fled, and eventually holed up in the cave of Adullam, about 20 miles SW of modern day Jerusalem; And while there, he wrote a few prayers
Hence – *A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer.*

[1] *With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.*
[2] *I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.*
[3] *When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. [4] Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul.*
[5] *I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."*
[6] *Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! [7] Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.*

Here's the deal – this isn't just a prayer, but a pattern; An example for us, of what to do when *we're* down; When *our* spirit faints within us; The first part of which, is to . . .

Cry out to God, and say it like it is (v1-2)

When you're down and out, cry out to God and say it like it is
Which might seem perfectly normal if you've never *been* down and out
But if you have, you well know it's not; It's not normal
You don't want to verbalize *anything* in the depths of despair
You don't want to talk to *anyone*; You just want to curl up in a little ball and waste away in the corner; Or act rebelliously; Or binge watch Friday Night Lights

Or binge eat; Or wait for something to change – without caring if it does; *That's* normal

But according to David's example, that's the exact *opposite* of what we should do
We should cry out with our *voice*; [1] *With my voice I cry out . . . with my voice I plead for mercy*; Why the voice? B/c there's something about verbalizing things
Something about saying it out loud
Maybe b/c it brings the issue out of the shadows and into the light
Or maybe b/c it forces us to *clarify* the issue, instead of just dwelling on it vaguely, letting it take a life of its own
Sometimes I do that in my car, sometimes in my office; Whatever the case, cry out

And do so, to God – that's *David's* pattern; *With my voice I cry out to the LORD* he says;
And *with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD*
Your friends, mentors, and counselors might be the greatest listeners in the world; But God should hear it first; Cry out to *him* when you're down and out

➤ And when you do, say it like it is
I pour out my complaint before him [David says in v2]; *I tell my trouble before him.*
When you're depressed, one of the best things you can do is *pour out your heart before* the Lord (Ps 62:8), and say it like it is; Just like you feel it
That doesn't mean disrespectfully; Your depression isn't a free pass to speak to Almighty God any way you *want* – but it does mean straightforward
You don't have to spiritualize it; You don't have to diminish it; And you don't have to act like you're still in control
Just cry out to God and say it like it is; That's the first way to battle depression

The 2nd is this . . .

Know that God cares, even if others don't (v3-4)

[3] *When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!*
I don't know about you, but when I'm depressed, I tend to doubt this
But it's statements like this that bring me back; He knows my plight, my heart, my path, my situation, my thoughts, my way – everything; He knows it all
Just like he did with the Israelites in Ex 2:25; When they were in the depths of their slavery and futility and groaning . . .
It says that *God saw the people of Israel – and God knew*

And Job says the same thing in the depths of *his* despair (**Job 23:8-10**)
[8] *"Behold, I go forward, but he [God] is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; [9] on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.* [IOW no matter where I look or what I do, I don't see God, Job says]
[10] *But he knows the way that I take* [he sees *me* Job says]; [and] *when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.*

But the last part of that verse is of little comfort without the first – that he knows my way;
That he cares about me *now*
The light at the end of the tunnel is of little consolation when it feels like a tomb*****
I need to know that he cares right *now*
And thankfully, the Apostle Peter is explicit about it – cast *all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you* – 1 Pet 5:7

At the depth of your pain, he cares; At the height of your sorrow, he cares
In the midst of your anxiety, he cares; At the end of your rope, he cares

- Even if others don't; Like they didn't in David's life
V3b – *In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. [4] Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul.* It's one of the saddest statements in all the Bible
Depressing in and of itself; B/c no one took notice of him; No one cared
In fact, they laid a trap for him – they *hated* him

Ever been there? Ever thought it, even if it wasn't true? I have
And if it weren't for the assurance that God knows and cares, I would despair
He cares; Even if others don't

3rd, if you're battling depression . . .

Focus on God, and affirm what is true (v5)

It's the same thing he said in v1 – *With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.*

And then reiterates it in v5 – *I cry to you, O LORD*

He focused on God, Yahweh, the one with whom he had a personal relationship
The one who's a very present help in time of trouble

Which you and I both know is easier said than done; Especially when there's strife in
your life; Or pain; Or offense
It's hard to think about God at *all* in those times, let alone *focus* on him
And more often than not, we look to everyone and everything *but* God

You know what helps *me* in this respect? Writing my thoughts down; Getting them out of
my head and on to paper; I'm not a journal-er . . .

But when the stones are being thrown, or the fiery darts are raining down – it helps
And I wonder if the same was true for David, in writing this Psalm; It helps

- And so does affirming what's *true*; Like David did in v5b – *I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."*
In the midst of his depression and despair, David affirmed what is true – that God is his
refuge, his protection, his sanctuary . . .
And, his *portion* – all that he needs this side of heaven; He affirmed what's true

And so should we, b/c it helps us believe what we don't necessarily *feel*
Saying and affirming what's true, when we don't particularly feel it, helps us believe it
Like the fact that God is good; And his promises true; And his love everlasting
Openly affirming those things helps us believe them, even when we don't *feel* them

And affirming more *difficult* truths, hard truths, helps manage our expectations

Like the fact that we will *suffer* in this life

2 Cor 4:11 says – *We who live [believers] are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

Truths like that explain a lot; And manage my expectations when it comes to living for
Jesus in a fallen world; It's *going* to be hard

It's one of the ways Jesus reveals himself – to us, and to a dying world*****

It's important to affirm good truths, it's important to affirm hard truths, and it's especially
important to affirm *personal* truths – attitudes of your *heart*
B/c often times, therein lies the *reason* for your depression

- Like *guilt* over something you've done; If that's causing your depression, the first step
toward recovery is acknowledging that it's true; That it's there
Or how about a *need* for something you don't have – like love, or significance, or
respect; Ever been down b/c you lack those things in your life? Admit it

Or, if you're like me, maybe the personal truth you need to acknowledge is *fear* – fear of
man and fear of abandonment; If I'm not careful, that gets me down
As does a *loss of hope*; And *frustration* – that there are things I can't do anything about

All of those heart issues can cause depression; And it's important to acknowledge them;
To affirm that they're real and present, so you can face them head on
Otherwise you'll just listen to your rationalizations and spiral into misery
Focus on God, and affirm what's true

And then last . . .

Ask God for help, and trust his provision (v6-7)

[6] Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! [7] Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name!

He asked for help; Help to withstand people, and help to withstand situations; *Deliver me from my persecutors . . . [and] bring me out of prison*
Which could refer to anything from the futile situation in which he felt trapped, to the
gloom of his soul in which he felt hopeless; Either way, he asked for help

And notice the *reason* he does so, v7b; *That I may give thanks to your name!*

He doesn't ask for help just to get relief; Or vengeance; Or rescue; But to magnify *God*
– to glorify him

The point being, he asked for help for the right *reasons*

- But more often than not when people are depressed, they don't ask for anything but
medicine; Not that anti-depressants are wrong – they're not
They're just not the be all end all
They might have a *place* in helping you get out of your pit; Or you might be one of the
few who need them constantly . . .
But they might also mask the *root* of your depression, and make you dependent when
you don't need to be; Ask *God* for help; Start there

- And when you do, *trust his provision*; Once again, just like David, who said in v7b . . .
The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.
Which was anything *but* true in that moment; He had nobody; And no thing
But he trusted that God would provide; And be generous when he did

Which for you and I, might be trusting his provision of **biblical truth**

Something you'll *read* in the midst of your depression; Or be reminded of from your
memory; I can't tell you how many times a verse has jumped off the page at me . . .
In the midst of my difficulty, as if I had never seen it before; It's part of his provision

As is his provision of **godly people**; The *righteous* as David says it
People who speak the truth; Like a close friend, or a leader, or a spouse
And we need to trust them

I love the story of Martin Luther in that respect; He struggled badly with depression; And
used to get so down that he would spend entire days in bed
And one time, his wife Katharine dressed herself in all black, and put on a veil
And when he asked her whose funeral she was attending, she said – “God’s, b/c the way
you’re acting, he must be dead”
That’s the provision of a godly woman, who spoke the truth

➤ Or maybe *you* need to trust the provision of a **community of believers** – to *encourage*
you, and love you, and bless you
What a blessing it was for me this week to get a call from the Executive Director of our
Fellowship, Kent Shaw
He’s one of the most encouraging, Spirit-filled, Scripture-saturated men I know
And when I talk with him, I always feel encouraged
He was a godsend this week; Part of God’s provision

And if you’re on the *giving* end of that, if you’re part of that community for someone
who’s down, like Kent was for me – here are 3 pointers to guide you:

1. *Don’t shame them* – depressed people are down already, and carry a massive burden as
it is; Don’t make it worse; Lighten their load, don’t shame them
2. *Don’t be simplistic* – help them simplify and *clarify* things, yes; But don’t be simplistic
about the problem; B/c depression is a lot like a bruise that shows up one day . . .
Without knowing how you got it

So be careful of saying things like – “You just need to repent; Or pray; Or read the Word”
Or “go to the doctor”; Or “get some counseling”; Or all the above
Those things *might* be part of their recovery process, but they might not be
They may *already* be reading the Word; Or there may not *be* any sin they need to
confess
They might just need your presence/encouragement while the bruise of their soul *heals*
The point being, don’t be simplistic with your advice unless you’re sure of the cause

3. *Don’t smother them* – depressed people need the space to be alone sometimes, but
the security of knowing that you’re not going anywhere

3 pointers; And if you’re on the *receiving* end, don’t fault people for getting it wrong
Trust God’s provision in whatever form it comes; Whether it’s biblical truth, godly
people, the community of believers, or **good company**

➤ I’m convinced that just knowing you’re not alone in your depression, is part of God’s
provision to battle it; Knowing that you’re in good company
With people like Martin Luther, and Abraham Lincoln; Charles Spurgeon, King David,
Elijah (1 Kings 19), Jonah, and Jesus
They struggled too; But made it; Fulfilling their calling, and living fruitful lives to the
glory of God (**Summary**)

And we can too; If we ask God for help, and trust what he gives (**Summary**)
If we *focus* on him, and affirm what is true; If we’re convinced that he *cares*, when
others don’t; And cry *out* to him, saying it like it is
The battle can be won (pray)

Father, would you help us in these things? Would you imprint these truths on our heart
Would you convince us even now of your goodness, and love, and presence, and care?
And would you hear the heart-cry of those who are depressed? We come to your table
with expectant hearts