



When You're in a Cave

Isolation, withdrawal, and feeling alone are not uncommon feelings to experience in a stressful situation, especially for those living with mental illness. We saw this last week in our study of Elijah.

In Week 2 of ANCHORED, Dr. Phil Ryken will lead us through Psalm 142. You may also find Dr. Ryken's book *When Trouble Comes* or [this video](#) informative, as he shares his own journey with mental illness.

The subtitle for Psalm 142 reads "A maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer." This "maskil" or "lesson" is on prayer. We could name it "Lessons on Prayer from a Cave," both literally and figuratively. King Saul is pursuing David, who is fleeing for his life. We find David hiding in an unnamed cave. Though the name of the cave is debated among scholars, most relevant for us are David's actions in the cave.

SERMON: Psalm 142

Verses 1-2

David cries out to the Lord, pleading for mercy and expressing his complaints and troubles.

- How do you usually address God, internally or aloud? Have you ever cried aloud to God in this way?
- How do you think God receives us when we pour out complaints and tell our troubles to Him?
- Does this relate to the "downward and upward" movements of prayer that Pastor Ben described in a recent sermon?
- Can you think of other biblical characters who speak to God in this manner or who have similar feelings?

Verses 3-4

David is faint, weary, and full of despair. In verse 3, he acknowledges that God watches over his way. He then shares feeling alone, vulnerable, and at risk of harm from the "snares" others have set for him. He says, "Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge, no one cares for my life."

- Have you struggled with "knowing" that God is always with you and still "feeling" alone?

Scholars suggest that "no one at my right hand" speaks to not having an advocate.

- Have you ever felt this way?

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as our Advocate (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7) and 1 John 2:1 says that Christ is our advocate with the Father.

- How does this bring hope?
- Have you ever experienced or needed the Holy Spirit's help in prayer (see Romans 8:26-27)?

Verse 5-7

There are numerous places where the psalmist claims God as his refuge. Here, David "cries out loud" that God is his refuge. The Message version reads, "You're my last chance, my only hope for life!...I've never been this low...I'm no match for them." David acknowledges that he is helpless. He is at the end of his rope. Although we or someone we know may not be literally fleeing for life and alone in a cave, it may feel like it! We may resonate with this sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

- When we feel this way, how can we turn to God as our “refuge” and “only hope for life”?

David ends with his desire to worship God in community.

- What role does worship and community with believers play in your life?
- What has been challenging for you during the coronavirus quarantine?
- Will this time change how you view corporate worship and community going forward?

RESPONSE:

If you feel like you are in a cave,

- consider using the “prayer lesson” of Psalm 142 as a template for a time of personal prayer and devotion, or an invitation to cry out loud to the Lord.
- reach out to a friend or pastor, or consider one of the resources listed on the ANCHORED sermon series page [here](#).

If you know someone who is in the midst of a cave experience, reach out to them three times this week; a phone call or even a text can mean a lot.

Listen to, sing along with, or play worship music that reminds you of God’s greatness and love for you.

RESOURCES:

Review additional resources [here](#), or reach out to the pastoral staff or a counselor or healthcare professional.

Explore the [book](#) and/or [video](#) from Dr. Ryken highlighted in the introduction above.

Read [this recent article](#) with practical advice on supporting a struggling friend.