

THE VOICE OF ABANDONMENT PSALM 142

A. The Story: 1 Sam 22:1-5

So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. 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 men with him. And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth. (1 Sam 22:1-5)



On the backside of this forested hill is the cave of Adullam, situated east of the Valley of Elah, where David killed Goliath, and southwest of Bethlehem.

Having found no protection in foreign alliances, David flees to the cave of Adullam where he finally finds a sanctuary from Saul. How ironic that Saul, having been rejected by the Lord, lives in a palace, while David, God's newly anointed, finds his sole refuge in a cave. Yet, God turns the cave into a holy sanctuary, and it is here that all the discontented in Israel gather unto David and a new kingdom is born. It is also here that David's earthly family (from whom he was rejected in chapters 16–17) identifies with him as "the anointed one," and where David, as a good son, makes provision for the safety of his parents.

Literary Outline

- A David **escapes** to Adullam (1a)
 - B David's **family** identify with him in Adullam (1b)
 - X A **spiritual family** is born with a new king (2)
 - B' David provides for his **family** in Moab (3-4)
- A' David **escapes** to the forest of Hereth by the word of the prophet, Gad (5)

B. The Poem: Psalm 142

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| <p>1 מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד בְּהִיזְתּוֹ בַּמְעָרָה תְּפִלָּה: 2 קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶזְעַק קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶתְחַנֵּן: 3 אֲשַׁפֵּךְ לְפָנָיו שִׁיחִי צָרָתִי לְפָנָיו אֶגִּיד: 4 בְּהִתְעַשֵּׁף עָלַי רוּחִי וְאַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ נְתִיבָתִי בְּאַרְצֵי אֲחֵלָף טָמְנוּ פֶּתַח לִי: 5 תִּבְטַח יָמִין וּדְרָאָה וְאִין־לִי מִכִּיר אֶבֶד מִנוֹס מִמְּנִי אִין דּוֹרֵשׁ לְנַפְשִׁי: 6 זְעַקְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶמְרָתִי אַתָּה מִחֹסֶי חֲלָקִי בְּאַרְצֵן הַחַיִּים: 7 הִקְשִׁיבָה אֶל־רִנָּתִי כִּי־דִלֹתִי מְאֹד הִצִּילֵנִי מִדָּבָרִי כִּי אֲמַצּוּ מִמְּנִי: 8 הִוְצִיאָה מִמִּסְגָּר וּנְפֹשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת־שִׁמְךָ בִּי יִכְתְּרוּ צַדִּיקִים כִּי תִגְמַל עָלַי:</p> | <p>A maskil of David, when he was in the cave; a prayer.</p> <p>A David's Cry 1 With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for grace to the LORD. 2 I pour out my complaint before him; I declare my trouble before him. 3 When my spirit faints within me.</p> <p>B David's Lament But you knew my path! In the way where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. 4 Look to the right and see: For there is no one who regards me; no escape remains for me; no one cares for my soul.</p> <p>A' David's Repeated Cry (now with hope) 5 I cry out to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. 6 Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.</p> <p>B' David's Petition, Vow and Confidence (a new insight!) 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.</p> |
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EXERCISE #1
ARTICULATING OUR DARKEST DOUBTS
Psalm 142:3b-4

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| <p>וְאַתָּה יְדָעָתָּ נְתִיבָתִי 4b</p> <p>בְּאַרְצֵי-נוֹ אֲחַלְדָּךְ</p> <p>שָׁמְנוּ פֶתַח לִי :</p> <p>5 הַבַּיִט יְמִין וְרָאָה</p> <p>וְאֵין-לִי מְפַיֵר</p> <p>אֲבָד מְנוּס מִמֶּנִּי</p> <p>אֵין דּוֹרֵשׁ לְנַפְשִׁי :</p> | <p>3b But you knew my path!</p> <p>In the way where I walk</p> <p>they have hidden a trap for me.</p> <p>4 Look to the right and see:</p> <p>For there is no one who regards me;</p> <p>no escape remains for me;</p> <p>no one cares for my soul.</p> | <p>A The tensions of David’s faith</p> <p>a God’s sovereignty</p> <p>b David’s way</p> <p>c the enemy’s trap</p> <p>B David’s plea</p> <p>A’ David’s emotions</p> <p>a <i>worthless</i></p> <p>b’ <i>hopeless</i></p> <p>c’ <i>abandoned</i></p> |
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I. David gives voice to the tensions of his faith

- A. God is sovereign and knows David’s path; *yet* every path seems a dead end with **no escape** (lit. “escape has perished from me”).
- B. God has a legal obligation to protect his “chosen” king. David is supposed to have a “right hand” man of protection (like Jonathan), *yet* David finds himself in the cave of Adullam completely **alone**. Is God blind (“look to the right and see!”)?
- C. The king is supposed to be the center of Israel’s worship, where all come to him for justice and offer prayers that God bless him and further his dominion among the nations. *Yet*, for David, **no one** even **regards** him.

II. Articulating your tension (142:3b)

- A. Consider a time in your life when you experienced a similar tension and reality did not seem to correspond to God’s promises –
 1. perhaps when you felt God had led you to a dead end;
 2. or when you felt called by God to a task or a relationship and it seemed to fail;
 3. or when you felt abandoned by God and rejected by others.
- B. Articulate that experience concisely with concrete nouns and simple verbs (avoid adjectives) in three or four lines like David did (v. 3b).

III. Articulating Doubt (142:4a)

- A. If David's situation continued unchanged, it would call into question God's *sovereignty* ("you knew my path"), his *faithfulness* ("look to the right and see") and his *compassion* ("no one cares"). Rather than living with these doubts and blindly going on, David voices this dilemma to God, leaving the responsibility with God to resolve the tension. This is a critical step in growing in our faith.

Note: David has the responsibility to "cry out" and God has the responsibility to "save" his king.

- B. Discovering your doubts ("look to the right and see!")
1. What attribute of God's character does your situation call into question?
 2. What language would you use to tell God to resolve the situation?
 3. Give voice to your petition with a minimum of words (one or two lines).

IV. Articulating Emotions (142:4bcd)

- A. As David articulates how life honestly "seems" to him, three emotions emerge – he feels *worthless* ("no one regards me"), *abandoned* ("no one cares for me") and *hopeless* ("no escape for me").
- B. Articulate how life honestly "seems" to you and the feelings that emerge (no more than three lines).

V. Editing your lament

- A. Read what you have written and edit it to make your language...
1. more *precise* (avoid generalizations)
 2. more *concrete* (no abstractions – instead of the adjective "sad," use nouns to create a figure of speech – "tears on the cheek; instead of "I felt alone" consider "the door was shut")
 3. more *concise* – stay focused on one main thought
- B. As you re-read what you have written do you discover any new emotions?

VI. Validation

- A. Briefly share the context of your lament.
- B. Read your lament slowly, taking a breath in between the lines. This gives God's Spirit space to enter in and empathize with you. And perhaps like David, he will grant you an insight ("But God...").
- C. How did it feel to have a voice?
- D. How did it feel to listen to others acquire voice?

That Strange Gate

Why is it now, my soul is moved
to taste of your gracious love,
when all before it seemed cold and dead,
though my eye could see so much,
of your glorious grace.
Yes, now my soul drinks deeply,
the river is lively and flowing.
it tastes sweet.
but the gateway is the ache,
 of rejection,
 of appearing foolish,
 of knowing one can't convince,
My lips wax not eloquent, but slippery,
my heart knows little of boldness,
it caves in to timidity,
my lips are silent,
but my eyes see you, your hand by mine.
O that you would keep me in such sweet place,
under your wings
to know my broken ways,
this is true joy.
Don't let me go,
pursue me deeper still.
then I shall tell of your gracious love to the saints,
especially those who hold you dear,
those simple ones, whom I love.
O to be swallowed up in Thee!

Brian Morgan
First poem, April 1989

Articulating My Doubts