

## *PSALMS 142 and 143*

This Maskil, Psalm 142, is written for our instruction. It teaches us how to order our prayer to Yahweh in times of distress. Such instruction is among the most needful, practical, and effectual parts of our spiritual education. He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences.

William Thompson gives a firsthand account of "the cave" thought to be David's refuge:

Leaving our horses in charge of some Arabs, and taking one for our guide, we started for the cave now known as Mughâret Khureitûn, which is believed to be the cave Adullam, having a fearful gorge below, gigantic cliffs above, and the path winding along a narrow shelf of the rock. At length, from a great rock hanging on the edge of the cliff, we entered by a long leap a low window which opened into the perpendicular face of the cliff. We were then within the traditional hold of David, and, creeping half doubled through a narrow crevice for a few rods, we stood beneath the dark vault of the first grand chamber of this mysterious and oppressive cavern. Our whole collection of lights did little more than make the damp darkness visible. After groping about as long as we had time to spare, we returned to the light of day, fully convinced that, with David and his lion-hearted followers inside, all the strength of Israel under Saul could not have forced an entrance--would not have even attempted it.

Psalm 142

**Maskil of David, when he was in the cave.**

**A Prayer.**

- 1 I cry aloud with my voice to YAHWEH; I make supplication with my voice to YAHWEH.
- 2 I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him.
- 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, 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;  
here is no escape for me; no one cares for my soul.
  
- 5 I cried out to You, O YAHWEH;  
I said, "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.
- 7 "Bring my soul out of prison, so that I may give thanks to Your name;  
the righteous will surround me, for You will deal bountifully with me."

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Psalm 143 is considered one of the seven "Penitential Psalms." Spurgeon's introduction to it addresses this issue:

Why it has been set down as one of the seven Penitential Psalms we can hardly tell; for it is rather a vindication of his [David's] own integrity, and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault. It is true the second verse proves that he never dreamed of justifying himself before the Lord; but even in it there is scarcely the brokenness of penitence. It seems to us rather martial than penitential, rather a supplication for deliverance from trouble than a weeping acknowledgment of transgression. . . . In truth, it is a mingled strain, a box of ointment composed of divers ingredients, sweet and bitter, pungent and precious. It is the outcry of an overwhelmed spirit, unable to abide in the highest state of spiritual prayer, again and again descending to bewail its deep temporal distress; yet evermore struggling to rise to the best things. The singer moans at intervals; the petitioner for mercy cannot withhold his cries for vindication. His hands are outstretched to heaven, but at his girdle hangs a sharp sword, which rattles in its scabbard as he closes his Psalm.

Psalm 143  
**A Psalm of David**

- 1 Hear my prayer, O YAHWEH, give ear to my supplications!  
Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!
- 2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,  
for in Your sight no man living is righteous.
- 3 For the enemy has persecuted my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground;  
he has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.
- 4 Therefore my spirit [a]is overwhelmed within me; my heart is appalled within me.
  
- 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings;  
I muse on the work of Your hands.
- 6 I stretch out my hands to You; my soul *longs* for You, as a parched land. Selah
  
- 7 Answer me quickly, O YAHWEH, my spirit fails; do not hide Your face from me,  
or I will become like those who go down to the pit.
- 8 Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; for I trust in You;  
teach me the way in which I should walk; for to You I lift up my soul.
- 9 Deliver me, O YAHWEH, from my enemies; I take refuge in You.
  
- 10 Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God;  
let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
- 11 For the sake of Your name, O YAHWEH, revive me.

In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.  
12 And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies  
and destroy all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant.

#### PRAYER

*Almighty and everlasting God, look upon our infirmities with mercy, and in all our dangers and needs stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us. Grant that we may purify ourselves by laying aside that sin which so easily besets us. And let the hope of glory be our constant companion in order that we may walk as your disciples, seeking to bring honor and glory to our great Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*