

Psalms 142:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

Analysis

I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. Psalm 142 opens with emphatic declaration of vocal prayer during crisis. The superscription identifies this as "Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave"—likely referring to David hiding from Saul in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1) or En-gedi (1 Samuel 24:3). This isn't abstract theology but desperate prayer from a literal cave.

"I cried" (צָעַקְתִּי/za'aqti) from za'aq means to cry out, call for help, summon. This is urgent, desperate crying—not calm, measured petition but anguished outcry in extreme distress. The perfect tense indicates completed action: David has already cried out, establishing the psalm's context of urgent need and vocal prayer.

"Unto the LORD" (לַיהוָה/el-Yahweh) specifies the direction of David's cry. He doesn't cry to humans for help, doesn't despair in silent hopelessness, but directs his cry toward Yahweh—the covenant God who has proven faithful. Even in desperate circumstances, David knows where to turn. This reflects lifelong pattern of bringing every circumstance to God in prayer.

"With my voice" (בְּקוֹלִי/qoli) is repeated twice for emphasis: "with my voice...with my voice." This repetition stresses the vocal, audible nature of David's prayer. He doesn't merely think prayers silently but speaks them aloud. There's something important about vocal prayer—it engages more of our being, makes prayer concrete and definite, and fights the tendency toward vague spiritual wishing

rather than specific petition.

"Did I make my supplication" (עָנָה/etchanan) from chanan means to implore favor, seek grace, make earnest petition. This is humble appeal for undeserved help, recognition that deliverance depends not on merit but on God's grace. David doesn't demand deliverance as if he deserves it but humbly supplicates for God's gracious intervention.

Historical Context

The cave context is significant. David's years fleeing from Saul required him to hide in caves—natural fortresses in Judean wilderness limestone formations. The cave of Adullam became a gathering place for "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented" (1 Samuel 22:2)—about 400 men joined David there. Later, David hid in caves at En-gedi when Saul pursued him with 3,000 chosen men (1 Samuel 24:1-3).

Caves provided physical protection but also represented isolation, darkness, confinement, and limitation. In a cave, you're surrounded by rock walls, options are limited, danger lurks outside. Yet paradoxically, the cave also became a place of encounter with God—where David cried out and experienced divine presence and deliverance. God meets people in caves—places of limitation, darkness, and desperation.

The emphasis on vocal prayer reflects biblical understanding that words matter. While God knows our thoughts before we speak (Psalm 139:2), vocal prayer engages us more fully, brings definiteness to requests, and fights vagueness. The prophets spoke God's word aloud. Jesus prayed vocally (John 17). The early church prayed together vocally (Acts 4:24-31).

Vocal prayer also enables corporate prayer. When David prayed aloud in the cave, the 400 men with him could join his petition, agree in faith, and be encouraged by hearing his trust in God expressed. Public, vocal prayer builds faith in the praying community, not just the individual.

For believers throughout history in their own "caves"—imprisonment, persecution, exile, suffering—this psalm has given words to desperate prayer. It validates bringing anguished cries to God rather than suppressing emotion or pretending calm. God welcomes honest, desperate, vocal prayer from His people in crisis.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of David's emphasis on vocal prayer ('with my voice...with my voice'), and how might silent versus vocal prayer differ in spiritual practice?
2. How does the cave context—physical confinement, darkness, limited options—parallel spiritual experiences where we feel trapped or without options?
3. What does it mean to 'cry' to God rather than merely pray, and when is urgent, anguished prayer appropriate?
4. How does David's pattern of bringing every circumstance to God in prayer provide a model for believers facing crisis?
5. In what 'caves' (difficult, dark, limiting circumstances) have you experienced God's presence most intimately through desperate prayer?

Interlinear Text

ק וְלִי י	אֶל	יְהוָה ה	אָזַע ק	ק וְלִי י	אֶל	יְהוָה ה
with my voice	H413	unto the LORD	I cried	with my voice	H413	unto the LORD
H6963		H3068	H2199	H6963		H3068

אֶתְחַנֵּן:
did I make my supplication
H2603

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 57:1 (Parallel theme): Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

Psalms 30:8 (References Lord): I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

Psalms 141:1 (References Lord): LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

1 Chronicles 4:10 (Parallel theme): And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

Psalms 32:1 (Parallel theme): Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Psalms 28:2 (Parallel theme): Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

Psalms 54:1 (Parallel theme): Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.

1 Samuel 24:3 (Parallel theme): And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

Hebrews 11:38 (Parallel theme): (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.