

Psalms 142:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

Analysis

I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

The Hebrew verb shaphak (שָׁפַךְ), translated "poured out," conveys unrestrained emotional expression—literally to pour out like water. David holds nothing back before God, modeling honest prayer that doesn't hide distress behind pious platitudes. The parallel structure—"poured out my complaint" (siach, שֵׁיחָ) and "shewed...my trouble" (tsarah, תְּסַרָּה)—emphasizes complete transparency.

This verse assumes a foundational truth: God welcomes raw honesty. The Psalms consistently demonstrate that authentic lament is not unbelief but deep faith—trusting God enough to bring our worst moments before Him. Siach (complaint) doesn't mean sinful grumbling but rather a meditation or concern poured out in prayer. Tsarah (trouble) denotes distress, anguish, or adversity that overwhelms.

The repetition "before him...before him" underscores that prayer's audience matters supremely. David doesn't merely vent his emotions into the void or rehearse grievances to others; he brings everything directly to God. This anticipates Hebrews 4:16's invitation to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" and Philippians 4:6's command to make requests known to God through prayer with thanksgiving.

Historical Context

Psalm 142 is a Maschil (instructional psalm) of David, superscripted "when he was in the cave"—likely either the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1) when fleeing Saul, or the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi (1 Samuel 24:1-3). Both contexts involved isolation, mortal danger, and dependence on God alone. Archaeological discoveries show these caves were substantial hideouts where David and his men could shelter while hunted. In this desperate context, David's prayer becomes a model for believers facing isolation and persecution.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What prevents you from 'pouring out' your deepest troubles before God with the same transparency David demonstrates?
2. How does the distinction between complaining to God versus complaining about God shape your prayer life?
3. In what ways can honest lament deepen faith rather than undermine it?

Interlinear Text

אָגִיד: לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בְּתִי שִׁיחַ אֲלֵיכָהּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בְּתִי
I poured out before my complaint him my trouble before him I shewed
H8210 H6440 H7879 H6869 H6440 H5046

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:26 (Parallel theme): Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Isaiah 26:16 (Parallel theme): LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.

Hebrews 5:7 (Parallel theme): Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Psalms 62:8 (Parallel theme): Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

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