

## 7.2.21 pm

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening, those who are watching online and those who are listening in on the telephone. Again, it's good for us to be able to come together and to worship God in this way. And we're going to begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise in the psalm that we'll be studying this evening at Psalm 142.

And Cammy will sing the whole of this psalm. It's a fairly short psalm. I with my voice cried to the Lord, with it made my request, poured out to him my plaint to him, with my trouble I expressed. And so on we'll sing, or Cammy will sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

I with my voice cried to the Lord, with it made my request, poured out to him my plaint to him, my trouble I expressed. When in me was overwhelmed my spirit, then well thou knewst my way. Where I did walk a snare for me, they privily did lay.

I looked on my right hand and viewed, but none to know me where.

[ 2 : 07 ] All refuge failed me, no man did for my soul take care.

I cried to thee, I said, thou art my refuge, Lord, alone.

And in the land of those that live, thou art my portion.

Because I am brought very low, attend unto my cry, me from my persecutors save, who stronger are than I.

From prison bring my soul that I, thy name may glorify.

[ 3 : 31 ] The just shall compass me, when thou with me dealt bounteously.

There's a psalm there that was composed in a cave.

When David was trapped in a cave, we'll see more about that as the service goes on. And Spurgeon makes this comment, which I thought was a good comment to think about as we come to prayer.

He says, there is no place to which you can be banished where God is not near. And there is no time of day or night where his throne is inaccessible.

So we can be thankful for the fact that we are able to draw near to God, to approach his throne in prayer. I thought it might be helpful as well to share one or two prayer points.

[ 4 : 42 ] Andrew Coggle, the minister in Scalpe, had shared prayer points with the presbytery, which we are invited to use to guide us in praying through this time.

I'll just share these few points with you as we come to pray. Andrew writes, at a time when we may feel like we are back to square one with renewed lockdown, it is good to remember that God is sovereign.

He is in sovereign control over all these events. Pray for those who have lost their jobs over the past year and are facing financial hardship as well as too much time on their hands.

And pray for those still in work who feel their workload has increased since COVID, perhaps beyond their ability to cope with. Remember the NHS staff in Stornoway, Vara and Ben Begula as they seek to cope with the heightened number of infections at a time when more staff have to isolate and be off work.

And pray finally for the leaders of our nation and our governments in Westminster and Holyrood who as yet show no sign whatsoever of acknowledging God's hand or of seeking God's help in these times of difficulty.

[ 5 : 57 ] So these are a few prayer points we can take with us into the week. And these are prayer points that can be in our mind as we come to pray just now. So let's draw near to God and let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this evening. We thank you at the end of your day. We are able, we have opportunity, we have the desire to come into the place of worship, whether that be in

this building or whether that be in our own homes, whether it be as we travel from one place to another, whatever it is that we seek to open your word, we thank you that you are the God who is with us.

We thank you for the encouragement. Even as we reflect on Spurgeon's words from so long ago, we thank you that there's no place that we can be banished where God is not near.

There is no time of day or night where God's throne is inaccessible. And Lord God, we would seek to come into your presence.

We would seek to draw near to the throne of grace, not in our own name and not on the basis of who we are or who we hope to be. But we come in Jesus' name and we come with our full confidence in his finished work.

[ 7 : 23 ] We thank you that as Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sin and as he died, as he cried out, it is finished. The curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom, showing that the way into the holiest of holies, the way to the throne of grace was now open, it was now clear.

So Lord God, as we come in Jesus' name, we pray that you would receive us. And as we come once more to the foot of the cross, we pray that you would accept us.

We pray that you would cleanse us once more from sin. The things that we do, the things that we say, the things that we allow to pass through our minds and dwell upon, which are grieving to you. We pray that you would cleanse us for our sin. And the things that we leave undone, the things which you prompt us to give our time and our effort to, that perhaps we turn away from.

The sins of omission, we pray that you would cleanse us. And the sins which we do not see, the sin that we are unaware of, the sin that we are not conscious of in our own lives, but remains grievous to you, Lord God, we pray, that you would forgive us.

[ 8 : 54 ] We are sinners by nature. As we follow the track that Adam set out on, and we are sinners by practice. And we pray that you would cleanse us in the blood of Christ.

We pray that you would receive us in Jesus. We pray that you would make us righteous as we put our faith in him. And we acknowledge that even the faith that we exercise in coming to Jesus is a gift from God.

We are saved by grace. And there is nothing that we can boast of. We thank you, Lord, once more, for your great love for us and your great grace towards us.

We pray for any who may be listening tonight, any who may be watching, who have not yet received that grace, who have not yet bowed before the Savior.

We thank you that a prayer, a simple prayer such as is heard from the publican in the story that Jesus told, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, is a prayer that is received, and a prayer that, when sincere, makes one righteous as we look to Jesus.

[ 10 : 08 ] So accept us in Christ, we pray. We ask that you would steady us through this difficult time, when we are restricted once more from coming together in worship, when we are aware of increased cases of this virus, which has brought so much change to our lives in the last year.

It would be easy for us to go into a state of alarm. But we thank you for the reminder this evening, even as we've read the prayer points given to us by Andrew. We thank you for the reminder of the fact that you're the God who is sovereign, and you have permitted this to be part of our experience at this time.

And we thank you, Lord, that you've assured us that you are working always. There is no season, no circumstance, that causes you to be stalled in terms of the work which goes on.

We pray that you would work mightily through this season. We are reminded that apart from you, we can do nothing. And at this time, when we are able to do very little, in terms of activities and reaching out, we pray that we would see your hand at work.

We pray that you would be moving in our hearts and in the hearts of those in our community, in the hearts of those across the islands and across the nation and across all nations.

[ 11 : 42 ] Often, when we are least able to be active, we see that you are doing many things. And Lord, we pray that you would work in such a way as to seek and save sinners.

And we will be quick to say that the glory is all yours. We ask, Lord, that you would meet with us at the point of our need.

We are conscious always of the fact that we are needy. We pray for those who struggle at this time, some who may be struggling because they are out of work and under financial pressure.

And we ask that you would help them, Lord. We think of the words of Jesus when he said, we're not to worry about what we'll eat or drink or wear. We find that difficult not to worry, but we know that we can trust you.

And so we pray that we would seek first your kingdom. And Lord, that you would care for us in the details of our lives, that you would be the God who provides even the things that may worry us in the very mundane sense.

[ 12 : 55 ] We pray for those who are in work at this time and who are struggling, especially those in the NHS, those who are in the emergency services and who are under great pressure at this time.

We ask, Lord, that you would sustain them. We pray that you would give them the strength that they need for this particular season. And we ask that they would know that you are God and that you are with them.

And for our country, as we can see so clearly that in spite of everything, we still have not acknowledged God in any public, official way.

Still, there is silence when it comes to seeking the help of God. We pray for those in authority over us as you have called us to pray for them.

We ask, Lord, that you would move in their hearts. We pray that you would humble them as we pray that you would humble us as a nation. And we ask that we would turn from seeking to be independent in ourselves, in our own schemes, and enable us, we ask, to look to Jesus for the help that you are willing to give.

[ 14 : 13 ] Help us in this hour, we pray. May we be in the spirit on the Lord's day. Open your word to us as we study it. And again, we pray for the young folks, for the YF, as they meet this evening.

And as your word goes forth there, we pray that there may be a real sense of your presence and we pray that many of these young people would trust in the Savior in the days of their youth.

We ask that you would draw near also to those who feel isolated. We read a psalm where David feels very much isolated and very alone and we know that there are those who feel that way at this time, who don't have the visits that they used to have, who may feel the days long, who may be struggling.

We pray that you would draw near to them. And that in this hour in particular, that they and we may know a special sense of your presence, the God who is Emmanuel, God with us.

So hear our prayers, cleanse us from our sin, lead us and guide us in the power of your Spirit and accept our worship, we pray. For we ask these things in Jesus' name and for his sake.

[ 15 : 27 ] Amen. If you could turn, please, to the psalm that we sang and I will read that psalm. Psalm 142.

Psalm 142, the title, A Maskell of David when he was in the cave, a prayer. I cry aloud to the Lord. I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him. Before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know the way, my way.

In the path where I walk, men have hidden a snare for me. Look to my right and see, no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge, no one cares for my life.

I cry to you, O Lord, I say you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need.

[ 16 : 34 ] Rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.

Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

And just a short prayer from another psalm, Psalm 19, as we come back to study this word. That prayer in verse 14, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight.

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Lord, may that be our hearts, may that be our experience as we open your word. We pray for your help and we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Keith Green is a name that will perhaps be familiar to some who are watching or some who are listening in.

[ 17 : 45 ] He was a Christian songwriter who wrote many songs in the 1970s, the late 1970s. He was a contemporary of many musicians, a friend of David Bowie apparently, and very accomplished within the musical scene.

He died tragically in 1982 in a plane crash, but whilst he lived, Keith Green, his life, his Christian life, was marked by an intense sincerity and transparency, as he wrote and as he sang and as he preached as well, there were no pretenses, there was very little in the way of filtering.

He wrote what he felt. And in one confessional song that we'll hear at the end of the sermon, he wrote this, he wrote, my eyes are dry, my faith is old, my heart is hard, my prayers are cold, and I know how I ought to be alive to you and dead to me.

But what can be done for an old heart like mine? It was a song, it was a prayer of confession, and it was a question that he asked, a sincere question, dry eyes, old faith, a heart that felt hard, prayers that felt cold, and so he asks the question of God, what can be done for an old heart like mine?

And that's not a question that would be limited simply to his life and experience, that's a question that I expect as often in our own minds, and in our own lives.

[ 19 : 44 ] we know what it's like to have spiritually dry eyes, we know what it's like to have old faith sometimes rather than fresh living faith, we know what it's like sometimes to have hearts that feel hard, and prayers that don't heat up, but remain cold.

And so we ask the question that Keith Green asked in that song, what can be done for an old heart like mine? How can my cold, hard, old, dry prayers be transformed into the prayers that are fervent and hot?

And the answer, at least in part, as we look at this Psalm 142 this evening, the answer to a question like that in part is that perhaps we need some trouble in our lives.

David in this Psalm is not praying tepid, lifeless prayers. His prayer is hot and living and sincere and desperate because he's in trouble and he's acutely aware of how much he needs the Lord's help.

And that's what's driving this Psalm, this prayer. And the first point, we have four points, I'll spend much more time on the first two. The first point is we see David and he is faint from trouble.

[ 21 : 28 ] He's faint from trouble and we see that in verses 1 through to verse 3. he says, I cry aloud to the Lord, I lift my voice to the Lord for mercy.

I pour out my complaint, I pour out before him my complaint, before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way.

In the path where I walk, people have hidden a snare for me. David never seems to be far from trouble. But in this particular case, he is almost overwhelmed, he's faint, he's exhausted from the trouble that he's facing.

So what trouble was he facing? With many of the Psalms we don't know. We can speculate, but we don't know for sure what his situation was. But in this case, we do know because we have it in the title.

It was written, this Psalm, when he was in the cave. So we ask the question, why was he in the cave? And the reason he was in the cave was because he was on the run.

[ 22 : 42 ] And why was he on the run? Well, he was on the run because King Saul wanted to take his life. And we remember how it went in David's experience. He's on the battlefield.

His brothers are in this battle. Goliath is ranting and raving at God's people. He's mocking their God. And everyone is too scared to step forward.

And then David, the shepherd boy, comes. He hears this. He is outraged. He steps forward in God's strength. And he overcomes Goliath, which brought huge fame to David.

So much so that Saul became jealous. And Saul sought to take David's life. And that meant that David had to escape Saul's court.

He had to go into hiding. He goes on the run. And we find David now. He's on the run. He's hiding in this cave. He's hiding for his life.

[ 23 : 50 ] Montgomery Boyce, the commentator, says, David has no provisions, no followers, and no place to turn. That's how we find him here.

So what does he do when he's in that dire straits? Whom does he turn to when he is so isolated? Well, he turns to God. This is a psalm which, as the title makes clear, is a prayer.

It's a desperate prayer. I mean, look at the words that are used. They have such a sense of desperation. I cry aloud to the Lord, verse 1.

I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy. There's urgency here. There is passion, there's volume, there's persistence in this prayer that David offers.

We have echoes of it in Bartimaeus, blind Bartimaeus. Remember that story in Mark 10? We see him, and he's at the roadside, and he's aware that the Lord is near.

[ 24 : 55 ] And so he starts to cry. He starts to cry aloud. He lifts up his voice repeatedly because he knows that the Lord Jesus can hear and help, and so he will not be silenced until the Lord hears and answers him.

And there's something of that in this prayer. The commentator Lane says, the urgency of this prayer is seen in the balance and repetition of verse one.

And that's something that's not brought out very clearly in the NIV. But it reads literally, as Lane says here, with my voice to the Lord, I will cry.

With my voice to the Lord, I will supplicate. There's that repetition, there's that earnestness, there's that intensity in this repeated prayer, even in the first line.

And into verse two, he says, I pour out before him my complaint, before him I tell my trouble. And the word complaint in this verse, it doesn't speak about a bad temper.

[ 26 : 03 ] When we use the word complaint, we often think about a bitter, kind of wrongful complaint. That's not the sense here. David looks to the Lord for mercy, verse one.

And that shows us that David's approach is humble and reverent. He's aware of his sin, he's aware of God's holiness. And so as David makes his approach and as he brings his complaint, he's not sulking, he's not moody, but he knows God can help.

David is troubled, he's anxious, he is feeling faint in spirit. My spirit grows faint within me, verse three.

And so all that that is going on within him, all that intensity of feeling that he is wrestling with, he doesn't bottle any of it up.

Rather, he takes all the stress, he takes all the anxiety, he takes all the worry, he takes all the weight of trouble that he feels is upon him, and he pours it out before the Lord in prayer.

[ 27 : 24 ] And it strikes me in that location, we can learn from that. We can all learn from that. Sometimes when we face troubles of various kinds, we can bottle it up.

We go, silence, we become withdrawn. We internalize it. We try to carry a weight which is too heavy for us to bear.

And if that's the way that we try to cope with trouble in the longer term, very quickly we actually collapse. Or the trouble that's inside it explodes out from us when we try to bottle it up.

Other times when we're anxious and when we're struggling, when we're in trouble of different kinds, we take all the worry, we take all the stress that we feel and we pour that stuff out all over social media or all over the community.

Everything that worries us, everything that makes us anxious, we just pour it all out. We gush it out and lay it out before people who can actually do nothing to change anything.

[ 28 : 45 ] And I think the encouragement of Psalm 142 is that we are to take all that troubles us, all that makes us feel faint and pour it out in prayer before God.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't speak to each other, I'm not saying that we shouldn't talk to each other about the things that make us anxious, but sometimes we are very quick to talk to each other, we're very quick to post things online.

We can be much slower to pour these things out before God in prayer, and I think that's the corrective lesson that we're given, even as this psalm begins.

David, he pours it all out before the Lord in prayer. He knows that God is the all-knowing God. He knows that he's the God who sees and understands our situations, and David knows that God is the all-powerful God, and he's able to help.

He says in verse 3, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk, people have hidden a snare for me. David can't see it, but he knows that the Lord can see it.

[ 30 : 04 ] Calvin says David seemed completely trapped. Nevertheless, God knew exactly how he would be delivered. You know my way, says David.

It's like the picture of a maze. I remember being in a maze in a country garden in Aberdeenshire when we lived there many years ago. These mazes were much higher than your head.

You would enter into the maze and the game was you had to find your way out, which proved to be very difficult. When we're in the middle of a maze, the walls are too high, we can't see the way out. But if we're elevated over the top of the maze, it's very easy to see the way out. David comes to the God who is able to see the way out of his trouble.

And David knows, I think, that in due course the Lord will lead him out of his trouble. But meantime, the trouble that David is experiencing, the faintness of spirit, that he's wrestling with, is causing him

to look to the Lord and to lean upon the Lord and to know, in a very real sense, the Lord's presence with him and care of him.

[ 31 : 40 ] We often see trouble as an enemy, don't we? We want to avoid it at all costs. And sometimes when we're in the middle of trouble, when we face it, we wonder what have we done to deserve this?

We wonder if the Lord is angry with us. We wonder if he's punishing us through this trouble that we're having to bear. But even with this psalm open in front of us, we have a lesson here. We see that sometimes the Lord allows trouble in because he loves us. And he knows that without trouble we drift, but in trouble we draw near to him.

God will help me in my heart. Keith Green, Lord, help me in my heart.

Help me in prayer. Teach me to pray. Teach me to pray these hot, fervent, real prayers. Sometimes the answer to that prayer is not so much a Christian book on prayer being thrust into our hand.

[ 33 : 05 ] Sometimes God answers these prayers by taking us into a cave where we feel faint. Sometimes as the Lord teaches us to pray and teaches us to trust him, he takes us onto the track of trouble.

Boyce says, in easy times our prayers are easy too, but they take on a new urgency when trouble comes. In times of trouble our prayers become fervent and we find ourselves running to God and throwing ourselves on God as our only adequate helper.

So that's the first point as we look at this psalm and we'll spend most of our time on this point.

David, he is faint from trouble. That's where we begin. And the second thing we see here is that David is feeling down.

He's feeling down. Now, nine out of ten times when we ask someone how they are and when somebody asks us how we are, we say we're fine even when we're not.

God. However, with David here in this psalm, when we interview him and when we ask him how he is and how he's bearing up in this cave experience, he's honest enough through this psalm not to say that he feels fine.

[ 34 : 42 ] He tells us that he's feeling down. Verse 4, he says, look to my right and see no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge.

No one cares for my life. Now, we know that in this cave David is alone and he feels alone but David here, I think, is describing more than just feeling alone.

David is feeling down. depression. This sounds a lot like depression. And that's not just my observation.

The commentators line up to make that point. David seems to be in the depths here. David is wrestling with some degree of depression. Warren Weerspe, for example, says, it is obvious that David was in danger, depressed and feeling abandoned.

And that's what we hear as we listen to what he says in verse 4. Now, the reality is, the truth is, that there were people who were concerned for David. And people did care for his life.

[ 35 : 57 ] But at this point, as we catch David in the gloom of this cave, he's lost sight of that. And he's in a cloud of depression.

He's feeling down. And it happens. I think we need to state that, that this kind of things happen. It happens to the Lord's people.

Christians are not people who need to walk around with a constant grin on their faces. Sometimes Christians feeling down.

Think of Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 19. We find him sitting in a tree. He is totally depressed. And he says, I have had enough, Lord.

Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors. Or think about the apostle Paul. Take a read afterwards of 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

[ 37 : 01 ] Paul is in a low state. At that point in his experience. Think about Martin Luther, the great reformer.

If you read any biographies of his life, you learn that he is somebody who struggled with depression. At one point he writes, for more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. I was shaken by depression. Or think about Spurgeon. We think of Spurgeon as somebody who was full of wit and personality and humor.

And he was. But he said at one point, I know perhaps as well as anyone what depression means and what it is to feel myself sinking lower and lower.

Yet at the worst, when I reach the lowest depths, I have an inward peace which no pain or depression can in the least disturb.

[ 38 : 01 ] Trusting in Jesus Christ my Savior, there is still a blessed quietness in the deep caverns of my soul. And I think there's encouragement for us in knowing that God's people sometimes go through seasons when they feel down.

Because the tendency is for people when they feel down, they think it's only me. no one else feels this way. And I shouldn't feel this way.

But the reality is we see in Scripture, we see throughout Christian history, there are those who feel down. So if there's anyone who's watching, anyone who's listening, who's feeling down just now, be assured you're not alone in terms of your experience.

I think an important thing for us to know when we find ourselves in a place like that is where can we go? Where can we go when we feel the way that David felt?

Well, for one, we can go to Psalms like this one. The temptation sometimes is to close the Bible when we feel down, to stop praying because we don't know what to say.

[ 39 : 27 ] But we have Psalms like this one. for the times that we're feeling down and they give expression to what we feel. They guide us in set prayers that we can pick up at the times that we cannot find our own words.

Where do we go when we feel down? Well, we go to the Bible and we go to the Savior because he knows how we feel. Others may not.

But he knows how we feel. No matter how far down you go, we have the assurance that the Savior knows what that is like.

There is no depth of experience that he has not plumbed. There is no cave of isolation that he has not visited.

David in this cave of depression he feels like there is no one to his right.

[ 40 : 35 ] Verse 4. That was a loaded term to the right. In biblical times the right was where your support was.

If you were in a legal wrangle, your advocate was the one who stood to your right and who stood with you and who stood for you in court. And David is saying, I'm standing alone.

And the right hand was where the sword was held. It was where your protection was given. And David is saying, I'm defenseless against my enemies. And the right was the place where your friends would come to sit and bring you encouragement and fellowship.

And David is saying at this point, I have no one. And we may sometimes feel that way.

But we're reminded in these Psalms that we have Jesus. We may look to our right and not see anyone and not feel like we can pick up anything that will give us a defense.

[ 41 : 49 ] but we have Jesus. He has said, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am with you always to the very end of time.

There's no cave that you can visit that I will not be with you in. He is our advocate. He is the one who pleads our cause. He is our shield and our defender.

He is our refuge and our strength when we are conscious of the attack of the enemy. He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is the one who is with us when we feel alone and when we feel down.

When Gomery Boyce says, do you feel alone? Jesus was alone. Do you feel deserted by those who have been closest to you? So was Jesus.

remember that Jesus has not deserted you. Moreover, he knows and understands what you are going through and will help you.

[ 42 : 58 ] Now, just as a follow-up for those whose minds are running on a little and who are wondering what happened after Psalm 142, the answer to David's prayer was answered.

This was the low point for David, but this was also the turning point. Kidner says, God answered abundantly, soon sending David's brothers and all his father's house to join him in the cave, and then by degrees a company that would become the nucleus of his kingdom.

this low ebb and his fortunes proved in fact to be a turning point. David's prayer, his earnest, intense prayer, it was answered.

And perhaps we should also note by contrast here that Jesus' prayer, when he was going through the trouble and forsaken of the cross, that trouble that our sin caused, he cried out.

But his prayer was not answered. He had to suffer. He had to descend into hellish, cavernous depths so that we could be saved.

[ 44 : 39 ] And we should always be thankful for that. So David, he is faint from trouble.

He is feeling down. He's in a state of depression. The third thing is David then begins to take hold of faith, or he is given faith, or we hear and we see faith.

Verse 5, I cry to you, Lord. I say, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. And in verse 5, we see a change.

it's as if David, as he prays, is lifted from the depths. And we see the light of faith breaking through the darkness of depression.

And David, in verse 5, he professes that his faith is in the Lord. There's a two-fold profession within this verse. He professes that God is his refuge.

[ 45 : 48 ] I say, verse 5, you are my refuge. And the refuge that God is, is a refuge, not from the trouble, but in the trouble.

Because as David says this, he's still in the cave. He still has enemies in pursuit. His life is still in danger. But he knows that God is hearing his prayer.

He knows and he professes that God is his refuge. And I wonder, can we make that profession?

Can we sing, as we will do at the end of this service, rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself.

And David could sing that. He, from a position of faith, he professes that God is his refuge.

And he professes secondly here that God is his portion. I say you are my portion in the land of the living. What does that mean? Well, it simply means that God is all he needs.

[ 46 : 58 ] He doesn't have friends with him in the cave. We know that. He's not in a palace. He's in a dark place. He doesn't have comforts. But in that cave, he has the Lord and he's come to realize that in the opening part of verse 5 and he's able to say that the Lord is enough.

You are my portion, he says, in the land of the living. As long as I have life, as long as I have breath, as long as I'm in the land of the living, you are my portion. And again, we ask the question, can we say that?

It's possible to have a big portion of this world's riches and have great reputation and great popularity and great respect and great material things.

We can have a big fat portion of that, but on death we lose it all. But if the Lord is our portion, we can never lose him.

And we can never lose the riches that are ours in Christ. Remember what Jim Elliot said, the young missionary who lost his life on the mission field.

[ 48 : 17 ] People thought he was crazy for going to the mission field when he was a man of such great potential for this world. But his response was, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

In other words, he's saying God is my portion. faith speaking. And in verse 5 we hear faith speaking from David's lips.

But then in verse 6 there's a desperation that breaks back in again. Listen to my cry, he says, for I am in desperate need. Rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.

And you might say, are we still on the point of faith here? Have we changed points? Are we still on number three? And we are still on number three. We're still talking about faith here. And you might say, well that doesn't sound much like faith to me.

And I would say, well I think it does. It sounds a lot like real faith. Because faith is not some stoic, ever steady mode.

[ 49 : 30 ] Faith can be wobbly. Faith can be a wrestle with doubts. As we thought about this morning with Peter.

There was a wrestle going on. And yet he took a step forward in faith. We hear a prayer of faith in Mark 9 24 from a desperate father whom Jesus challenges.

And he prays, he says to Jesus, I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief. That's a prayer of faith. faith. And that's the kind of wrestle that was ongoing in this cave.

David composes more than one psalm from his cave experience. Some think that eight of the psalms were written from the cave experience.

Psalm 57 certainly was written from the cave. Kidner says this is a companion piece to Psalm 57 and together the two psalms give us some idea of the fluctuating state of David's emotion in the ordeal.

[ 50 : 38 ] Psalm 57 is bold and animated almost enjoying the situation for the certainty of its triumphant outcome. In this present psalm though the strain of being hated and hunted is almost too much and faith is at full stretch.

Now we can see that and we can hear that from David's prayers. Faith is at full stretch but it's not broken.

Faith is holding. And it's not because of the strength of David's faith. Faith is holding rather because of the God in whom his faith is in.

David may not feel much but we know that it's God who's holding him and keeping him faithful in the cave.

So we hear faith in this psalm and finally we see David as he looks at the future. Fourth point is future.

[ 51 : 59 ] Send me free from my prison so that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me. So we ask the question of David here why do you want out of this cave?

What's your future ambitions? if you get some more years in the land of the living? How will you spend them David? And he answers my ambition is to praise the name of the Lord and to gather people around me who will join me in praising the Lord.

That was his future ambition. As he looked at the future his focus was on God and God's glory, God's praise.

And I wonder as we finish is that where our focus is? Is that where our future ambition is? We keep talking about getting back to normal.

We keep talking about getting out of this COVID cave even that we've been trapped in. We look ahead hoping that soon we'll have some degree of freedom.

[ 53 : 24 ] And the question to consider is why do we want that? And if we get that freedom, as I believe we will, what will we do with it?

As we look at our future, however long or short that may be in the land of the living, what are our ambitions? I think David teaches us, as this psalm finishes, what they should be.

And it's not about health and wealth and happiness. It's about God's glory. It's about praising his name because of his great goodness us.

David, in just a little while, we'll be able to look back on this cave with thankfulness because God had saved him from it.

We're not looking so much back on a cave. We're looking back on a cross where Jesus went and suffered and died so that we can be forgiven, so that we can be saved from sin, Satan, death, and hell.

[ 54 : 52 ] So if David was thankful on release from the cave, how much more should we be thankful and committed to living a life that will praise and glorify God when we look back on that wondrous cross?

And we'll pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for these psalms. We thank you for the places that they take us. We thank you for the expression that we're sometimes given, for the feelings that we feel.

We thank you for the way that we are pointed so constantly to Christ. We thank you for the cross that he went to to make it possible for us to be saved.

We pray that as we reflect day by day on that cross, that our hearts would be filled with thankfulness. And we pray that when we wrestle with trouble in this world, when we feel faint, we pray that we would not be embittered.

We pray that we would not be those who seek to quarrel with you. But enable us to be those who lean upon you and who from that place of difficulty pray prayers which are fervent, which are sincere, which are hot.

[ 56 : 22 ] touch our hearts, we pray, and enable us to keep on looking to Christ. For we pray these things in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. We're going to listen now to the song that I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, that Keith Green song.

Anna's recorded it for us. So we'll listen to that worship song and then Josh will sing Rock of Ages cleft for me and we'll bring the service to a close that way.

So. My eyes are dry My face is old My heart is hard My prayers are cold And I know how I ought to be alive to you And I know I ought to be alive to you But what can be done For an old heart like mine

Soften it up With oil and wine The oil is you And your spirit of love Please wash me in you With the wine of love My eyes are dry My face is old My heart is hard My prayers are cold And I know how I ought to be Alive to you And death to me What can be done For an old heart like mine Soften it up [ 59 : 03 ] With oil and wine The oil is you Your spirit of love Please wash me in you With the wine of your blood But what can be done For an old heart like mine Soften it up With oil and wine The oil is you Your spirit of love Please wash me in you With the wine of your blood Rock of ages Cleft for me Let me hide myself in thee

Let the water and the blood From thy riven side which flowed Be of sin the double cure Cleanse me from its guilt and power Cleanse me from its guilt and power But the labour of my hands Can fulfill thy law's demand Could my zeal nor respite know Could my tears forever flow All for sin could not atone Thou must say, and thou alone

Nothing in my hand I bring Simply to thy cross I claim Naked come to thee for dress Helpless look to thee for grace Fall I to the fountain fly Wash me, Savior, or I die While I draw this fleeting breath When mine eyelids close in death When I saw to worlds unknown See thee on thy judgment throne A clock of ages, clap for me Let me hide myself in thee To ascend to death You glorify your love numa See thee on their sai