

Psalm 140-142

These next few psalms are more Psalms of David, David wrote the vast majority of the psalms and as you may well know the scriptures refer to him as the “Sweet Psalmist of Israel”. One of the things that I really love about David is that he was about as real as you could get, Dave was legit; he didn’t mince words, if it was on his heart he shared it in his psalms. He covers the full gamut of human emotion throughout his psalms. Gladness, madness, sadness, frustration, anticipation, expectation, fear, confidence, feelings of weakness, of strength, of knowing God was with him, of wondering where God was, times of great joy, times of incredible grief/depression...if there’s an emotion attached to it, David expressed it. But with David we also learn a valuable lesson, because it seems as though it didn’t really matter what was going on in his life if he could just bring himself to focus *on* the Lord, to cry out *to* the Lord, that through prayer his perspective would be changed. The common pattern that presents itself in David’s psalms is one of concern (or complaint), prayer, then confident hope and/or praise.

His life is a constant OT picture of the NT principle, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*” Philippians 4:6 Now that’s not to say that David never experienced anxiety, or was never anxious because he certainly *did* and at times he *was*. But he also learned the life lesson of experiencing that peace of God that would guard his heart as he would through prayer commit his life, his situation and circumstance over to God. He would readily echo the apostle Peter’s exhortation, “*...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*” 1 Peter 5:7

Psalm 140 is no real exception to the standard pattern presented in David’s psalms, we can break it down safely into 4 parts. Vs 1-5 are his “Prayer for Protection”. Vs 6-8 basically serve to as encouragement along these lines, “God’s Past Faithfulness Gives Me Present Confidence.” Vs 9-11 we might call, “A Request For Retribution” or “A Prayer For Poetic Justice”. Finally in Vs 12-13 we see, “Renewed Rationale” which invokes him unto praising the Lord.

Vs 1-5

“A Prayer For Protection”, that he would be spared from the plots and the plans of those people around him who would seek to destroy him. In this case it doesn’t seem so much that people were seeking to destroy him physically (though certainly it could be) but rather what we’re seeing here is slander, character assassination.

As a child of God you and me, we can face the same kind of thing today. Satan is a liar; the bible declares him to be a murderer, a slanderer and an accuser. He tries to spread lies about you, cause there to be gossip, hearsay and slander that revolves around you, it’s character assassination.

Now listen to me believers, there is little that you can do to someone that is worse than engage in slander, gossip, hearsay and character assassination. The bible is replete with warnings not to engage in gossip, not to give ear to hearsay, you take a man’s name you’ve effectively dismantled that man and rendered his ministry completely sterile.

Effective ministry is built on such things as character, honesty, and integrity. You start engaging in activity that seeks to strip one or more of those things from a man and you're treading on dangerous ground. The bible associates things like slander and gossip with the unregenerate and evil of this world. The proverbs tell us, "*A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.*" Proverbs 16:28 You will find warnings and exhortations against backbiting, slandering, malicious words and things of that nature scattered throughout the NT in the book of Rom, 2nd Cor, 1st 2nd Tim, and Titus to name a few.

In contrast you'll find that scriptures pertaining to words of grace, speech seasoned with salt, speaking that which is necessary for the edification, building up and encouragement of the body of Christ are as equally numerous if not more so. To the negative we're *not* to tear down, to the positive we *are* to build one another up.

Now as it pertains to *this* psalm David wasn't being slandered by people who would otherwise seem to be his friends, or fellow believers, he calls them (Vs 1) "evil men" who (Vs 2) plan "evil things" in their hearts. As a matter of fact we see here in Vs 1 that they're evil men, Vs 2 they plan evil things, Vs 3 they speak evil things and Vs 4-5 they take part in evil practices. Jesus was real clear that a bad tree cannot bear good fruit, a bad tree bears bad fruit (Matt 7:16-20).

As a man or woman of God you can anticipate the opposition of the enemy who will try to defame you, slander you and try to take from you your integrity and your effectiveness in ministry. Let's learn this lesson from David. When we experience opposition we must immediately take it to the Lord in prayer. "Oh what joy we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." In this world you're going to experience tribulation, but be of good cheer, Christ has overcome the world. John speaks of those things/people who are "antichrist" in this world and he says, "*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" 1 John 4:4

So though slander and speculation will be cast upon you, God hasn't left us as helpless victims. We are overcomers in Christ, He is our shield, our strong tower, we're to call upon Him and trust in Him. The 1st and most critical element of effective spiritual warfare is prayer.

Now I want to point something out about Vs 3 and that is this. Though this is given in the context of evil men (sharpening their tongues, venom under their lips), Paul picks up on this in Romans Ch 3 to illustrate the position of unregenerate man in general. This is simply the disposition of man apart from Christ; unruly and evil.

The tongue is a real problem for people (I include myself), our tongues are filled with poison and we can destroy people with our words...Leave the book of Psalms and travel into the NT to James Ch 3:1-10

Even as a little rudder can change the entire direction of a giant ship, a few words from this little member we call our tongue can change our whole course of life (or someone else's for that matter) our tongues get us in so much trouble. How many times we wish we'd have just stayed quite instead of spouting off from our mouths... What's impossible with man, is possible with God; if you struggle in this area (which I suspect we all do to a greater or lesser degree), then let's ask the Lord to cleanse us from the poison of our tongue, the venom of our lips...

In Vs 4 he recognizes that if God be for us, than who can be against us? If God keeps us, if God preserves us than nothing will befall us but that it doesn't pass through Him 1st. We won't fall into the snares or be caught in the net that is set for our entrapment.

Vs 6-8

Reflecting on God's past faithfulness he's encouraged to have present confidence. "You have covered my head in the day of battle", it's interesting to think that David's enemies unknowingly contributed to his victory in that the more they came against him the harder he leaned *on* and drew strength *from* the Lord. May that be the case with you and me as well as we experience hardship from the enemy may it draw us all the closer in dependency upon the Lord.

You should also know that God has covered your head in the day of battle as well. As you read the book of Eph when you get to Ch 6 Paul tells us to take up and be equipped with the whole armor of God. One piece of which is what? "The helmet of salvation" He girds your mind with the fact that you were chosen in Him from before the foundations of the world. Ultimately that certainty will serve to deflect those darts of doubt that the enemy shoots our way.

Vs 9-11

Here it is, a request for retribution, a prayer for poetic justice. It sounds like a fairly harsh way to pray yet at the same time David isn't taking matters into his own hands but rather he's commending the care of his enemies into the hands of God which is exactly what the scriptures command us to do.

He's asking that his head would be covered by God but that their heads would be covered by the evil of their own lips. In other words, may they be caught in their own snares, may they reap what they sow. He's saying, "God You take care of it." That's a great position to take because then you're free (I'm free) to show kindness and the love of God to that person and we'll let God deal with the sin and rebellion or wickedness in their life. It's as Paul said when he wrote, "*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'*" ¹

In his book, "None of these diseases", Dr. S. I. McMillen in a chapter entitled "The High Cost of Getting Even," illustrates how physical maladies including ulcers, high blood pressure, and strokes are connected to harboring resentment and hatred toward others.

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ro 12:19-21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, “It might be written on many thousands of death certificates that the victim died of ‘grudgitis.’” Listen to what he says about being enslaved by hatred: “The moment I start hating a man I become his slave. I cannot enjoy my work anymore because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body; I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The man I hate may be miles from my bedroom, but more cruel than any slave driver he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my inner-spring mattress becomes a rack of torture. I really must acknowledge that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour out my wrath.”

How much better to simply turn it over to the Lord and be free from revenge, or vengeance, or hatred, bitterness, whatever... “God You know what’s going on, You take care of it.”

Vs 12-13

So you see this renewed Rationale invokes praise, His confidence is in the Lord.

Psalm 141

Vs 1-2

“Lord I’m drawing near to You, would you please turn your ear toward and tune it to me? Draw near to me.” Here David likens his prayer and his praise to what happens in the tabernacle and in the temple.

The burning of incense and the offering of sacrifice; the imagery is right on the money because God gave the design of the tabernacle to Moses as an earthly model of the heavenly reality. He says, “Let my prayer be set before You as incense.”

When in the book of Rev we get a sneak peak into the heavenly realm we read where John wrote, “*Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*”² A Few Ch’s later we read, “*Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*”³ The prayers of the saints are as incense before the throne of God.

Vs 3-4

If these Vs aren’t underlined in your bible, you do well to make it so. He’s asking God to keep both his attitude and his actions in check. Note, we’re right back to talking the things that come out of our mouths. The bible declares, “*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*” Proverbs 10:19 May God set a guard on my mouth and keep watch over the door of my lips...

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Re 5:8) Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Re 8:3) Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He goes on to say that he doesn't want to be influenced by evil, or engage in the activities of the wicked. It's a "lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil" kind of request here.

Vs 5

Again excellent Vs to somehow highlight or draw attention to, that we would *all* embrace this particular perspective. Rather than straying with the wicked he warmly requests the rebuke of the righteous. "Let the righteous strike me and it shall be a kindness", he says that if the righteous rebuke him it'll be soothing, like medicine. Now we all know that as a general rule medicine doesn't taste good, but it yields a desirable result. Even so the rebuke may not sit well at 1st but afterward it will yield that peaceable result.

God help us that we not have such prideful dispositions that we forfeit a teachable spirit. Proverbs Ch 12 and Vs 1 says, "*Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.*" Also let me encourage you that you not be one of those people that as soon as someone tries to point something out to you for your benefit (though it comes in the form of a criticism) that you respond with a knee jerk criticism of their lives so as to justify your own position. That's so disheartening, all you're trying to do is help someone grow through something and all they can do is point the finger back at you.

Of course the one administering rebuke needs to offer it in love and with the same tact they'd desire to be approached themselves. The book of Galatians says, "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*" Galatians 6:1 This was David's desire; that if he was in error that the righteous would expose him rather than the wicked. with the righteous there's grace, forgiveness, compassion, with the wicked there's just a stain on God's name. But nonetheless we need to have a teachable spirit, ears open to the rebuke of the righteous.

Vs 6-7

I wish I had some real profound truth for you to realize from the piecing together of those 2 Vs but I don't. ...there's different speculations as to what all is being referenced there but in the end your guess is as good as mine. □

Vs 8-10

Again he invokes the law of sowing and reaping. The bible says, "*Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.*" Proverbs 26:27 So, "Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape safely."

Psalm 142

As for which cave Dave was in when he wrote this psalm we don't know. Either Adullum or Engedi; both were caves that David fled *to* and hid *in* when Saul was trying to kill him.

Vs 1-7

So again we see his complaint, his prayer and his confident hope. David knew that anytime his life was "caving in" around him or upon him he could cry out to the Lord and God would hearken to his cry.

There where it says (in Vs 2) that he will pour out his “complaint”, the word complaint means “communication” or even “meditation”, he’s saying that he will make his heart known to God.

Note also the parallelism, “I cry out, I pour out, I declare” he makes known his supplication (requests), his complaint, his trouble. If it’s on your heart, if you’re overwhelmed, with hold none of that from the Lord, He already knows it, pour it out. He’s Your refuge, Your portion in the land of the living, He will attend to your cry and you will praise His name for He shall deal bountifully with you...Amen...Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we praise You tonight, no matter what is happening, no matter what is going on in our lives You are always there for us, You never leave nor forsake us. Set a guard over our mouths, keep watch over the door of our lips and may we build one another up, not tear one another down, give You praise not insult or speak evil of one another. We thank You for the abundance of Your grace, make us more like Jesus.