

Lent 4 / March 15, 2026

Psalm 142:1

*“With my voice I cry out to the Lord.”*

### I Cry Out to the Lord

Psalm 142 is a cry for help from one who is imprisoned, either physically as was David when he wrote the psalm, or spiritually as when a person struggles with depression, anxiety, guilt or some other inner turmoil. The inscription of the psalm refers to David being in a cave, hiding when King Saul sought his life to eliminate him as a rival to his throne. The prophet Samuel told Saul that the Lord had rejected him from being king of Israel and would give the kingship to one of his companions. It didn't take long for Saul to perceive that David was the one the Lord had chosen to replace him. He did everything in his power to eliminate David. Even as the chief priests sought to eliminate Jesus because He was a threat to their position. Two times Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear and kill him. Later, he sent soldiers to take him from his bed and kill him. David finally escaped and found refuge in a cave at Adullam, where he gathered a group of warriors to support him. He prayed the Lord to protect him from his enemy who sought his life. He prayed the Lord to relieve him from the stress of the constant threat of death. *“I cry out to the Lord.”* When we are in distress we also cry out to the Lord.

That was the physical situation that inspired David to sing this psalm, but it's important to remember that the psalms speak to a greater spiritual reality that affects us and all people. The psalm speaks to all the situations in our lives when we are threatened physically and suffer spiritually and emotionally. In all the trials and afflictions of our lives we have a refuge. The Lord is our refuge. Even if it seems no one notices or cares for us, the Lord watches over us. The Lord is our helper. He delivers us from our greatest enemies; sin, death and the devil. Its important for us to see beyond David and to see Jesus in the psalms and at work in our lives. Ultimately the psalms, especially of David refer to Jesus. He is the great descendant of David. He is greater in terms of His divinity from eternity. He is greater in terms of His kingship and kingdom, which endures forever. He is greater in terms of the things He suffered, which were for our salvation. It is for the sake of Jesus, whose blood opened the way to the Father, that God hears our prayers. It is for the sake of Jesus that we have the assurance that God answers our prayers with help in time and life in eternity. I cry out to the Lord and He answers me with help and salvation for the sake of Jesus.

One of the greatest needs we have is to be noticed and heard. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He began by calling God their Father. He assured them the Father cared for them, wanted to hear their prayers and worked to answer, even before their prayers were spoken. When we pray, we are not informing God as to our needs. He knows our needs before and better than we do. When we pray, we are acknowledging our needs before God, testifying that He is control and witnessing that He provides for all our needs of body and soul, in time and for eternity. Jesus said, *“When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard for their many words, Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”* The basis of prayer among the Gentiles who did not know the Lord, the God of Israel, was that they first needed to get the gods to notice them and then needed to offer them something to induce them to answer their prayers. The basis of prayer for believers is that God knows what we need and His ears are attentive to our voice when we plead for mercy. The Lord hears our prayers because He loves us!

The gods of the Gentiles didn't answer out of the bounty of their loving hearts. Their worshippers didn't see them as having loving hearts. The gods needed to be stimulated, induced to notice and be given a reason for answering prayer. The king of the northern kingdom Israel and his queen, Jezebel, sought to replace the worship of the Lord with their fertility god Baal. Baal would make crops grow and provide grasslands for the cattle. In order to call Israel back to the Lord, the prophet Elijah gathered the priests of Baal for a contest at Mount Carmel. Whichever deity answered with fire from heaven to ignite their altar, would be acknowledged and worshiped as God. All day the prophets of Baal danced, shouted and cried to their god, but there was no answer. They cut themselves, thinking the smell of blood would get the attention of their deity. No matter how hard they knocked at heaven's door the door remained shut. Elijah prayed, *“Answer me, O Lord, answer me that this people may know that you are God.”* Immediately fire fell from the heavens, consumed the offering, the wood, the dust and the water that surrounded the altar. We cry to the Lord in the spirit of Elijah, knowing that He watches over us, listens to us and cares for our needs of body and spirit. We cry to the Lord in the power of Jesus, knowing He hears our prayers and answers, because He loves us!

Will God always hear our prayers? Yes. In Psalm 102 the psalmist sang, *“He regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.”* Will God

always answer our prayers? Yes. In Matthew chapter seven Jesus says, *“Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”* Will God always give us what we ask? No. Sometimes He will say yes, sometimes He will say later and sometimes He will say no. He will answer according to His good and gracious will in our lives for both time and eternity. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane He struggled with the cross and the weight of sin He would bear. He prayed, *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.”*

The Father heard Jesus’ prayer, but the Father’s will was that Jesus would drink the cup of suffering, bear the sins of the world and open the way of salvation for all believers. Why did Jesus pray? Jesus prayed to show us that in our prayers God draws us to close to Himself, so that we are empowered to bear whatever burdens may come to us in life. God draws close to us in prayer to remind us that the burdens we must bear are light and momentary in comparison to the glory that will be revealed in us and to us in eternity. The Lord hears our prayers and answers for our eternal good. We cry out to the Lord knowing He will answer us with help and salvation for the sake of Jesus.

When we pray our hearts draw close to God and God draws close to our hearts. Prayer is not mostly about asking for things from God. Prayer is speaking to God, communicating with God, pouring our hearts out to Him knowing He loves us. Prayer is knowing He loves us. Prayer is knowing He loves us, because He has given Jesus to live with us, die for us and rise for us, so that one day we will be with God forever. Prayer is talking to our dearest and truest friend. Prayer is seeking comfort in our troubles with the reassurance that God is with and for us in Christ Jesus. In Psalm 22, which Jesus called out from the cross, King David cries out, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”* Sometimes that’s how it seems and that’s how it feels. But the interesting thing about Psalm 22 is that despite feeling that God is far from him and has forsaken him, David still prays to Him. With his voice he cries to the Lord, because despite his feelings of abandonment and the desperateness of his situation he knows the Lord loves him and will not leave him. We have the same assurance in our lives for the sake of Christ Jesus.

At heart David knows the Lord has not forgotten, forsaken or failed him. The psalm finds resolution with David’s affirmation that *“He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and He has not hidden His face from him, but has heard him when he cried to Him.”* The Lord has promised to hear us when

we call. He has promised to help us in all our trials, tragedies and sufferings. He has promised to deliver us out of every sin and sorrow. He promises for the sake of Jesus who experienced the suffering of the cross for our sake. We cry out to the Lord and He answers us with help and salvation for the sake of Jesus, His blood and righteousness.

We cry out to the Lord in the name of Jesus. In Jesus we have the promise and assurance of eternal life, where God will wipe every tear from our eyes. We cry out to the Lord in the name of Jesus. For His sake God promises to hear us. We pour our complaint before Him for the sake of Jesus. He promises to work all things in life to our eternal good. We tell Him our troubles, knowing He cares for us. We know He cares and answers for our good in time and for eternity, because He gave Jesus to be our Saviour. He gives Jesus to be with us always. God bless us always with faith to cry out to the Lord and with faith to believe He hears and answers for the sake of Jesus. In His Name. Amen