

Sunday 9AM & 11:15AM Notes

11/10/2019 – Jeff Lyle

“Light in the Cave” 1 Samuel 22:1-2 & Psalm 142 | 9AM

One of the most undesirable aspects of the Christian life is facing the reality that God's intentional kindness towards His children sometimes manifests itself through His disciplining of us. Yes, God is not unilaterally committed to our continual comfort and personal pleasure. To the degree that He intends to grow us and use us, He must break us. Frequently, the Father takes us through seasons wherein we are stretched, tested and proven. In these seasons, life can feel somewhat like a dark cave to us. For David, this season involved a literal cave that became his temporary home for longer than he would have liked. In the midst of losing all of the comforts in his life, God took David through a prolonged season of decrease wherein he was being trained to look to God alone for comfort, hope and security. It was during his cave-season that David received the bright light of learning to trust deeply in the faithfulness of God when the rest of his life seemed to oppose him.

I. David Was Longing (1-3)

A. Longing for answers (1) - “With my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord.”

David had lost: his marriage, his job, his access to his parents, his spiritual mentor, his best friend, and his dignity. His reality became that of a fugitive on the run from an insane king who had made it his aim to murder David. Forced to flee, David takes up refuge in the cave of Adullam. Having nothing to lean upon, David did what all believers must do during our cave-seasons: he desperately cried out to God for help.

B. Longing for compassion (2) - “I pour out my complaint before Him; I tell my trouble before Him.”

It is liberating to learn from David's example here. The future king of Israel did not pretend that things were better than they actually were. David got in the presence of his God and poured out a review of everything that he was dealing with. David did not hold back - his complaint poured out from his deepest parts. We can only imagine the emotion behind this prayer. David had operated in full integrity with King Saul. David had honored Saul. David brought victory to Israel with an upright heart before God and man. His reward? The king wanted to kill him, and David was forced to flee everything that defined his life in order to save his skin. David was not operating in faithless when he rehearsed before

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the Lord all the trouble he was facing in life. Where else could he go but to the Lord? By his example, we are reminded that we do not need to pretty-up how we feel in order to pray to the Father. David let it pour out of him in raw fashion. He knew his God could handle it.

C. Longing for strength (3a) - **“When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!”**

So heavy were David's external problems that he described the weight of it as reaching all the way down into his spirit. Sometimes, our challenges on the outside of us become so intense that they make their way inside of us. David was being reduced during this cave season. He sensed no strength. He was completely out of resources to rescue himself. He was unable to change the heart of the man who wanted him dead. Misunderstood and mistreated, David felt weakness deep inside of himself. His only hope was that God understood him. He knew that God had a pathway mapped out for David. Whereas David's spirit could keep him going during previous times of trouble, he now sensed that even his spirit was susceptible to the difficulties he was being forced to endure. David's son, Solomon, captured this type of reality when he wrote many years later in **Proverbs 18:14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?"** David was longing for strength to find him again. God was going to have to do something.

D. Longing for direction (3b) - **“In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me.”**

It was a good thing that David remained aware that God had a way of escape for David. David's own wisdom would only lead to paths where Saul and his loyal soldiers were lying in wait. This reality reminds us all that there will be cave-seasons wherein we completely run out of options. Moses had his Red Sea impossibility. Abraham had to lay down Isaac on an altar of sacrifice to God. Esther risked her life by going into the presence of the king without being invited. Hannah longed for a son but had a barren womb. There are so many examples in the bible of men and women who completely ran out of options. It is during these times that God takes us to new depths of recognizing our own limitations. When we recognize that hard set of facts, we then become candidates to experience what only he can do. He provides direction and eventually makes a way of escape for us.

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II. David Was Lonely (4)

"Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul."

David's search - *"Look to the right and see..."* David felt utterly alone. In the beginning of his cave-season, he was. Nobody, literally, was by his side. Though this would eventually change, it is a sobering thing for us to find ourselves in a place where no human being can connect to us or help us.

David's solitude - *"...there is none who takes notice of me..."* This mighty warrior who has been so greatly used by God is now stuck in a cave and longing for one of the simplest elements of life: a friend who would look on him with understanding and compassion. Sometimes, the strongest among us find themselves in deep need of a sympathetic brother or sister who will just notice their need and listen to them.

David's sadness - *"...no one cares for my soul."* This is the expression of David's despair. God must bring each of us to this place. What place exactly is this? The moment when we feel utterly lost and alone in a place where we are convinced that nothing and nobody other than God can help us. It may seem cruel for God to allow us to hit these rock-bottom moments, but David had a stunning destiny ahead of him and could not be entrusted with it apart from his deepest confidence resting in God alone. Perhaps more than anything, God wants us convinced that He will never share His glory with anyone else. How can we become convinced in the deepest parts of our hearts that God alone is our confidence? God must place each of us in cave-seasons where He alone is our light, our strength, our security, our hope and our rescue. We too must come to that heart-wrenching moment wherein we find ourselves all alone with nobody able to understand, intervene or comfort. This is where God truly and practically becomes **Lord of all** to each of us. Apart from moments like this, our faith will remain too shallow for His glory to be reflected in our lives.

III. David Was Loosed (5-7)

A. The choice to cry out to God (5) - I cry to you, O Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

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David was thoroughly broken but still intensely believing in God. Notice that his words reveal his enduring trust in God even though everything else in his life was falling apart. David kept crying out to God. He refused to go silent during his cave-season. While no human could offer the help that he needed, David boldly declares that God Himself was David's portion. God was enough for David in his trouble. Though David would be confined to a cave for a while, he viewed God as his truest refuge. He lived in a cave, but he hid himself in the protective custody of God.

B. The reason to cry out to God (6) - "Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me!"

I love the fact that David told on his enemies. David did not pretend like he had no human opposition. While David refused to lift up his hand against Saul, he had no hesitation about lifting up his prayers against him. Many places in the Psalms reveal this outlet for David when it came to his human opposition. If you find that you have human foes, get raw and real about them in prayer to God. Vengeance is His. Pray hard and trust Him with your enemies. Our calling is to keep our hearts free from hate and bitterness toward them. We are commanded to act in love towards our enemies. This does not mean that we pretend not to have enemies. We are allowed to be open and honest with our Father as we ask for His protection from our enemies, asking Him to grant us victory over all their strategies. David had plenty of reason to continue to cry out to God about Saul. He needed God to deliver him. On his own, David was outmatched against Saul and his army. With God's aid, David already knew that he would triumph.

C. The result of crying out to God (7) - "Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to Your name! The righteous will surround me, for You will deal bountifully with me."

A new start for David - "Bring me out of prison..." We see a flicker of hope in David's words. He went from believing more in his isolation and danger to believing in God's ability to turn things in his favor. This is a beautiful moment in the cave-season; light begins to break in and we begin to see things from God's perspective. Very soon, David would experience a new start into a new season that God had awaiting him on the other side of the cave of Adullam.

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A new song for David - “...that I may give thanks to Your name...” Praise began to return to David's spirit. The weight of his impossible circumstances had forced every lesser trust out of David's heart. His circumstances had not yet been reversed, but his praise came forth anyway. He was now believing God for favor and he began to praise Him ahead of time. Ever the songwriter and worshiper, David began to release the fragrance of gratitude and praise to God for His faithful care of David.

A new support for David - “...the righteous will surround me...” Prophetically, David declares that he envisioned God beginning to send people to him again. David declared in the midst of his isolation that it would not be that way forever. David was right. God was already moving loyal people to come to David in his cave-season. Though he could not see it with his natural eyes, David could spiritually discern that the tide would shift again in his favor. His family and other loyal friends would find him. God was enough and, once David realized that essential truth for believers, he could be entrusted with other people who would come alongside of him in his troubles.

A new security for David - “...for You will deal bountifully with me.” Please remember that there was nothing outwardly bountiful that David could see when he declared these words. This was a declaration of faith by the one who was alone in his cave. Light had fully broken through to him, and now David had absolute confidence that his God would not leave him where he presently was. This may be one of the most difficult aspects of a cave-season. When all we know is opposition, lack, loneliness and pain, it is a breakthrough moment when we come to full confidence that God is still working on our behalf and will not leave us in the cave. David declares through all the opposing pressures that his God's commitment and strength is greater than everything facing him. David had come to a new trust, a deeper security in the character of his God.

IV. David Was Learning (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

Having gotten a peek into David's faith and emotions from Psalm 142, we now go back to the narrative in 1 Samuel 22 where the writer lays down the details of what occurred in David's life at this juncture.

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A. God gives David a place (1a) - “David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.”

All of Psalm 142 occurred after this simple summary statement. We should seek to remember here that there is always far more going on in someone's heart during their cave-season than we might see with our natural abilities. The writer gives one sentence to his version of what was happening to David at this time. If it were not for David's own words in psalm 142, we might breeze past this whole scene in 1 Samuel 22 without ever knowing that it was one of the most difficult seasons in his young life up to this point. Father, help us grow in sensitivity concerning what is happening deep in the hearts of those around us.

B. God gives David a people (1b) - "And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him."

The last time we knew anything specific about David's brothers, they were either ignoring him or resisting him. Now, God had so favored David that his big brothers were the first to abandon loyalty to Saul and pledge their allegiance to young David. What reassurance and joy must have found David's heart as he saw his relatives approaching the cave with understanding and assistance in their hearts and hands. This was no mere sentimental family reunion. David knew that these men had crossed the point of no return and had, by their support of David, made themselves the enemies of Saul. David was beginning to see his kingdom come to him. It would take years and began rather unimpressively, but this was clear evidence of God blessing David in his cave-season which would eventually become a kingdom-season.

C. God gives David a purpose (2) - “And everyone who was in distress {pressure} and everyone who was in debt {poverty}, and everyone who was bitter in soul {problems} gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.”

Sometimes, when God's favor begins to come to us, it trickles in little by little. David did not demand from God an immediate ascent to the throne promised to him. His cave-season had reduced him from anything other than gratitude and dependence upon God. David felt no entitlement to anything. Cave-seasons will purge us of all pride and presumption. Along with David's family, other men began to arrive, pledging their loyalty to David. It was not exactly the best of Israel's men who were coming! Those whose lives were pressured under Saul had nothing to lose, so

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they came to David. Some had been so heavily taxed that they were drowning in debt. Also having nothing to lose, they devoted themselves to David the refugee. For others who were coming, they were in their own cave season as bitterness of soul from life's problems had broken them. So there we have it: David's following was comprised of about 400 men who were at the end of their ropes. David did not panic. He was grateful to God for the help, however unimpressive it was. These ragamuffin loyalists would soon become David's "mighty men", and later they would form his royal cabinet after he became king.

David's cave was now beginning to be flooded with light from God. Yours will also if you will wait upon the Lord. Be of good courage, He will strengthen your heart.

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“What It Looks Like To Press In” Hebrews 4:1-16 | 11:15AM

The closer we get to the end of the age, the more we should expect to hear Heaven-sent messages which spotlight the great need for Christians to persevere in the faith. God the Spirit will be leading messengers to call the Church to press in closer to the King as the culture moves farther away from Him at a rapidly increasing rate. The writer of Hebrews sent a message to people in the first century who were being tempted to turn back from their current levels of belief in Jesus as Messiah. Some of these people were truly born again. Some of these people believed with their minds but had never fully surrendered to Him in their hearts. The writer recognized that the external pressures from the culture and the internal uncertainties in their individual hearts posed a real threat to their souls. Today's Christian must recognize that a verifying mark of authentic faith is that we will endure unto the end with a committed faith in Jesus. God's grace makes that endurance our reality, but it never happens without our ongoing cooperation. We must continually press in or it is certain that we will be drawn back into something other than the lordship of Jesus Christ. This message reveals four calls to us from God that reveal to us what it looks like to press in unto the end.

I. Our Call to Awareness (we are not finished yet) - Hebrews 4:1

"Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, **let us fear** lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it." - Hebrews 4:1

Beginning well is not a guarantee of finishing well. We are finishing our faith-race every day. Each of us were brought into our commitment to Jesus through some level of intellectual understanding, an emotional sense of our need and a move within our spirit. There was a moment of surrender from us toward Jesus Christ. Convicted of our personal guilt, we cried out for a personal rescue. In that moment, we began our faith-race, saying goodbye to our self-governing ways and denying the world system to own us any further. Yet, again, our beginning well does not guarantee that we will finish well. There is an absolute rest that God offers us in Jesus that we press into. The fulness of our rest is only entered when our lives are over. While the salvation God grants the repenting believer is eternal, there is no legitimate claim to salvation for those who do not endure unto the end. Yes, we certainly fail God during our journeys, and we sin far more than we would

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ever think. Yet, we press in. We press onward. We confess and forsake those sins, trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ to continually cleanse us from guilt and shame. We do not quit. We do not forsake the Lord. We, through humility and dependence, take the hand of Jesus by faith and begin to walk again. Our relationship with Jesus will cost us. The world hated Him, and it will hate His followers also. We will experience more persecution as the end of the age approaches, much like the first century Hebrew believers experienced. Some of them were turning back because they found the cost more than they wished to pay. The writer of Hebrews warns them that they must press on, soberly recognizing that there is the possibility that the race they began well would never end in victory. We live with a call to remain aware that none of us has finished yet. No matter how well we have run to this point, we must complete our race in the same trust in Jesus with which we began. There should be a holy fear in us of coming up short, thereby proving we never had genuine saving faith. We are not saved by our faithful endurance, but we are not saved apart from it either. The race goes on, and we must remain soberly aware of the possibility of our permanently settling or prematurely celebrating.

II. Our Call to Intensify (live proactively toward God) - Hebrews 4:11

"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."

Verses 2-10 in Hebrews 4 detail the historical account of Israel's failure to enter the Promised Land after they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. God refused to allow that generation to enter into the full rest that was available to them. Why would God do such a thing? Because those people had no faith to follow Him. They made it out of Egypt but never experienced the land of rest that He had reserved for them. Here is some of what the writer of Hebrews reminded his readers:

"2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with

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those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as He has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’”...6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again He appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Israel was not allowed into the Promised Land because they had no continuing faith in God and consequently disobeyed His instructions to press in to the fulness of what He had provided them. Their doubts, fears and discouragement resulted in them disobeying God. Here is how it played out for them:

- Initial unbelief at the negative report of the ten spies (**Numbers 13:25-14:4**)
- Unrealistic framing up of their memories in Egyptian slavery (**Numbers 11:4-6**)
- Complaining over difficulties; discontent with God's provision (**Exodus 16**)
- Idolatry - longing to have physical, visible gods like the Egyptians had; Golden Calf (**Exodus 32:1-25**)
- Rebellion against and distrust of God's leadership through Moses (**Numbers 14**)

Israel had experienced true deliverance from Egypt, but that generation never learned to fully trust God. They died in the wilderness due to their unbelief. They began amazingly but finished tragically. From their examples we learn that **we must intentionally engage in a lifestyle of always pressing into the Lord who is our rest.** If we are neutral, passive or casual in our relationship with Jesus, we will (at best) slowly slide back from Him. The world and our flesh daily work against our spiritual victory. Only those who labor to enter into that rest will actually enter it. This is not a works-based, performance-oriented view of salvation. This is nothing less than the necessary response of believers who are engaged in warfare. God provides the grace and strengthens our faith as we trust and obey His leadership. If we ever place our spiritual journey in park or remain in neutral, the severe tilting of the world away from God will result in us sliding away from Him. **Genuine saving faith carries embedded within it the component of endurance.** God actually secures and empowers our

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remaining faithful unto the end, but the evidence of this will be measured through our active participation in actively intensifying our commitment and answering the lifelong calling to strive toward entering into our final rest. Mark it down, we are to be proactively engaged in intensifying the level of our pressing in. Christianity is never parked.

III. Our Call to Remain Resolved (endure any & all tests) - Hebrews 4:14-15

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast our confession**. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Some of the recipients of the letter of Hebrews were suffering due to their initial commitment to Jesus. They were being persecuted, as Jesus promised all of His followers would experience to some degree. Many had been rejected by their families who viewed Jesus as a heretic who was judged with death by the God whom He blasphemed. Some lost their jobs and property. In the beginning of their journey into Christ, they gladly embraced the suffering component that came with their initial commitment to Jesus (Hebrews 10:32-34). When the suffering continued for long periods of loss and pain, their willingness to endure grew weaker. In Hebrews 4:14-15, the writer is calling them to press into Jesus, their High Priest, for strength during suffering. They were being called by God to remain resolved in the face of persecution and loss. The author's foundation for calling them to remain resolute was the reality that Jesus completely understood what they were dealing with. He was touched by what they were experiencing. He felt their pain.

An illustration from the world of music can help us to grasp what the writer of Hebrews was trying to communicate to his readers. There is a process called **sympathetic resonance** that describes the activity that occurs when two pianos are in the same room, and a note is struck on one piano. That same note struck on the first piano will generate a parallel response in the other piano. Though the second piano was not touched by human hands, the same chord

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that the first piano produced will begin to vibrate on the corresponding strings in the second piano. There is a connection between the two instruments. The movement in the first produces a movement within the other. Even if the first piano is a small upright piano, that little instrument in its comparative weakness can move a grand piano's strings on the other side of the stage. This is the idea that the writer is communicating to the stricken Hebrews. Jesus resonates with what is happening to them as they are persecuted. When they are struck, Jesus feels it. He is touched by what is touching them. As our High Priest, when a note is struck upon us, Jesus feels it with sympathetic resonance. The point the writer is making is that they are not merely suffering for Jesus, they are suffering with Him or, more precisely, in Him. This truth is given so that they will remain resolved and continue to press into Him instead of turning back from the losses, the pains and the sufferings. They answer the call to remain resolute in their ongoing commitment to Christ, no matter the cause. Jesus, the most sensitive man who ever lived, understands and feels us when we are being afflicted or tempted in any way.

The One who fully knows us, feels what we feel, and has experienced all of what we experience now intercedes for us constantly as our High Priest, feeling what we feel in our trials and testings. Knowing this empowers us to hold fast to our confession of His supreme worth and lordship over our lives. Jesus is present with us.

IV. Our Call to Boldly Approach (He has all we need) - Hebrews 4:16

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Here is the clearest call for us to ongoingly press in. We are to constantly draw near to Jesus. So much of our lives serves to interfere with our vision of Jesus. There are obstructions to intimacy which weaken our souls. The enemy is

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working 24/7 to insert distance between us and the Lord. Life itself presents numerous forces which distract us from the magnetizing love of God for us. Hardships, testings, trials, temptations are meant by the enemy to draw us away from God, yet the Father intends to use those very same life experiences to result in our intentional drawing near to Him so that we might experience intimacy through the pressing in. We are invited (commanded even!) to confidently draw near to the throne where Jesus sits as our great High Priest. We need not wait on any further assurance that we are welcome there in His presence. He bids us to come to Him in aggressive faith, boldly believing that it is His pleasure to receive us. What does this final element of pressing in look like?

A. We endure steadfastly - "...let us hold fast our confession..."

Never give up. Never fall back. Never stop moving forward against all that opposes you. Take ownership of your thoughts and words and evict faithless doubt out from your mind and mouth. Hold tightly to your confession of Jesus as Lord. Declare it constantly. Live it faithfully. Hold fast during trials, temptations, persecutions and losses. Never, never, never, never allow anything to move you off of your confidence that the One who began the good work in you will perform it until the final day.

B. Expectantly approach - "let us then with confidence draw near..."

We do not deny our weaknesses, struggles, fears or pains. Quite the opposite, we bring them with us as we boldly press in toward the throne of Jesus. We approach Him with confidence, not fearing for a second that he is repulsed by our great need. Remember what He has done in order for you to have access to Him. He allowed the veil of His flesh to be torn so that we might press in through Him to God. Having paid such a price, how could He ever turn us away when we approach Him in our time of need? No, He delights in our approaching Him. He delights more when we come with full expectancy that we are welcomed and received by Him.

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B. Experience mercy - "...that we may receive mercy..."

This is the treasure found by all who approach Him with bold confidence. They will receive mercy from the High Priest who feels all that is striking against the chords of their lives. When His heartstrings vibrate in coordination with your heartstrings, He answers you with mercy. He is not distant and detached from you. He feels what you feel in ways we rarely fathom. He does not merely feel, HE ACTS on our behalf. Jesus pours out mercy into the gashes in our lives. He comforts. He soothes, He empowers. He strengthens. He brings the strongest measure of what is required for us to receive from Him all that He offers us when we boldly approach His throne. Always know that, for those who will press in, there is abundant mercy.

C. Encounter grace - "...and find grace to help in time of need."

Notice the time when we are called to confidently approach the throne of Jesus: it is when we need help with our time of need. It is common for us to want to be in His presence when we are strong, capable, fully resourced and filled with zeal. Yet, this invitation to press in falls to those who need mercy. It is for those who are tempted to run back. This call to press in toward the One on the throne is for those who are feeling the intense weight of their neediness. They have no solutions on their own. They cannot see how God might rescue them. They are fearful that they cannot endure any longer. When they press in toward Jesus in this place of overwhelming need, they encounter the majesty of His grace. He supplies some hard-to-define enablement that begins to sustain them as soon as they approach. He does not always remove the outward cause of their weakness. He chooses instead to overrun it with His grace in their time of need. As we build a lifestyle of pressing in through our struggles, weaknesses, losses and pains, we find ourselves continually answering the call to endure unto the end. It is not glamorous and glorious. It is usually filled with grit, grinding and groans. In the end, our obedience to press into Jesus is met with His provision of acceptance, mercy and grace. He sustains us and we continue our journey for another season. This is the life of faith. This is what winning the war consists of. This is what it looks like to press in.