

Psalms 102

SLIDE 1

This evening - we're continuing our overview of the Old Testament book titled Psalms.

With this as our focus - let's open our Bibles to Psalms chapter 102 - and as we make our way to the 102nd Psalm...

...I should take a moment to point out that - the author of this Psalm remained anonymous.

And while there are many who believe that King David was the author of this psalm...

...others insist that this sorrowful Psalm was written during the days of the Babylonian captivity...

...or - possibly even after the exiles returned to Judah.

Well - regardless of the Who - and the When - what we can say for sure is that...

...this Psalm was written by a man who was overwhelmed by his afflictions.

And it was in his time of trouble - when the Psalmist cried out to the Lord for help.

And as he presented his prayer to the Lord - the psalmist found strength in the goodness of God.

The chances are - there are many here tonight - who are overwhelmed by the afflictions that consume our strength.

And it's possible that you feel like the Lord has cast you aside - and left you in a prison of pain.

If this sounds like your situation - then - it's my prayer that this Psalm will help you to remember that....

...the Lord is a gracious God - Who will respond to the prayer of the destitute.

And not only that - but - He is a merciful Savior - Who will save those who trust in Him.

With this as our focus - let's turn our attention to the lyrics that we find here in the 102nd Psalm.

SLIDE 2-3

Look with me - beginning there at verse 1 - where we read...

Psa 102:1 A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.

Psa 102:2 Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me speedily.

Here in the beginning of this psalm - we learn that this is a pray of the afflicted.

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That word - afflicted - which is found in the superscription section - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which was used of those who are oppressed by the trials and troubles of this wicked world

The same word was used of those who suffer in a state of misery from various causes.

And it's here in this Psalm where we learn that the author was overwhelmed with afflictions.

That word - overwhelmed - found there in verse 1 - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which was used of those who are feeble - and faint - after being enveloped by a shroud of afflictions.

And it's for this reason that the Psalmist cried out to the Lord with all of his complaints.

We should also notice how he pleaded with the Lord - in the hopes that his prayers would be answered - ASAP.

SLIDE 5

Notice again - there in verse 2 - where he cried out...

Psa 102:2 Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me speedily.

Now - I have no doubt that we've all presented a similar pray to the Lord...

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...in the hopes that He might answer our prayer - like an Amazon delivery driver.

And I'm also certain that we've all been disappointed - when the Lord fails to provide same day delivery.

Christian - listen - the Lord has a perfect plan to perfect us - through the afflictions that he allows.

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Proof of my point is found in James chapter 1 - it's beginning at verse 2 - where James declared...

Jas 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
Jas 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
Jas 1:4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Christian - listen - the Lord allows us to fall into various trials...

...because he knows that our faith must be put to the test - so that we might be perfected on the path of patience.

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What this also means is that - the Lord would stunt our spiritual growth...

...if He spared us from every trouble - and trial.

That being the case - we should learn to rejoice in the afflictions that the Lord allows.

With this in mind - let's consider the complaints that the psalmist presented - here in the 102nd Psalm.

SLIDE 9-10

Look with me - beginning there at verse 3 - where he declared...

Psa 102:3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.

Psa 102:4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass,
So that I forget to eat my bread.

Psa 102:5 Because of the sound of my groaning
My bones cling to my skin.

Psa 102:6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.

Psa 102:7 I lie awake,
And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.

Here in these verses - we find the psalmist - complaining about the way that his health was affected by the afflictions that he was suffering.

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His days were disappearing like a vapor of smoke - - and his bones were on fire from fever.

He also described the way that his appetite was gone - - because his heart was filled with shame...

...and it's for this reason that he was groaning from physical distress.

We should also notice how he compared himself to three different birds who were out of place.

In verse 6 - he compared himself to a pelican of the wilderness.

And while pelicans are unclean birds that live near the ocean...

...the psalmist compared himself to a pelican in the wilderness - who is completely out of place.

In similar fashion - he compared himself to an owl of the desert.

The Hebrew word rendered Owls - was used in reference to another unclean bird...

...which was believed to be a harbinger of doom - or a symbol of bad fortune.

And that's exactly how the Psalmist felt about himself.

Finally - it's there in verse 7 - where he compared himself to a sparrow alone on the housetop.

It's interesting to note that house sparrows are relationally monogamous - and mate for life.

And so - when the Psalmist compared himself to a sparrow alone on the housetop...

...this seems to suggest that his wife had passed away.

And if my speculation is correct - then this was another affliction that he was struggling with.

And listen - if all of this wasn't bad enough - the Psalmist was also being persecuted by his enemies.

SLIDE 12-13

Let's consider how he described it - here in the 102nd psalm - look with me beginning there at verse 8 - where he declared...

Psa 102:8 My enemies reproach me all day long;
Those who deride me swear an oath against me.

Psa 102:9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
Psa 102:10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath;
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.
Psa 102:11 My days are like a shadow that lengthens,
And I wither away like grass.

Here in these verses - we find the sorrowful psalmist - describing the way in which his enemies were taunting him - all day every day.

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And they were not only taunting him with reproachful accusations...

...but - they were also ridiculing him - by using his name as a curse.

It was during this period of time - when those who mourned would cover their head with ash.

And it's there in verse 9 where we learn that the Psalmist had covered himself with so much ash - that he ate it like bread.

Not only that - but his cup was filled with the tears that he shed.

And the reason why was because - he felt like the Lord had cast him away.

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Let's consider how the scholars who created the New Living Translation rendered verses 10 and 11 - they put it like this...

Psa 102:10 ...because of your anger and wrath.
For you have picked me up and thrown me out.
Psa 102:11 My life passes as swiftly as the evening shadows.
I am withering away like grass.

As the psalmist consider the multitude of afflictions that covered him with sorrow...

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...he could help but to conclude that the Lord was the One
Who had cast him aside.

And while I have no doubt that we've all struggled with the same complaints...

...it's important for us to remember that the chastisement of the Lord is based on His love.

SLIDE 17-20

Let's consider how Paul put it - in Hebrews chapter 12 - it's beginning at verse 5 - where he declared...

Heb 12:5 ...you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

Heb 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."

Heb 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Heb 12:8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

Heb 12:10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Heb 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

According to Paul - - the chastening of the Lord isn't based on His wrathful indignation.

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No - instead - the chastisement of the Lord is the evidence of His love for us.

And much like the loving father - who disciplines his children...

...God the Father chastens the children - who have been adopted - by faith in Jesus.

Christian - listen - if the Lord is allowing you to endure affliction - then - it would be wrong to think that He has cast you away.

Instead - it would be more reasonable to conclude that the Lord is chastening you...

...so that you might learn to yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

With this as the goal - let's consider how the Psalmist turned his attention - from his affliction - to the adoration of the LORD.

SLIDE 22-24

Let's pick up our study of the 102nd Psalm - beginning there at verse 12 - where he declared...

Psa 102:12 But You, O LORD, shall endure forever,
And the remembrance of Your name to all generations.

Psa 102:13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion;
For the time to favor her,
Yes, the set time, has come.

Psa 102:14 For Your servants take pleasure in her stones,
And show favor to her dust.

Psa 102:15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.

Psa 102:16 For the LORD shall build up Zion;
He shall appear in His glory.

Psa 102:17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute,
And shall not despise their prayer.

Here in these verses - we find the Psalmist - singing the praises of the LORD.

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And as we consider the content of the lyrics - it seems to me that the Psalmist was writing this song...

...at the time when the Jewish exiles had returned from their Babylonian captivity.

For example - it's there in verse 13 - where the Psalmist rejoiced in knowing that - the time of the Lord's favor on Zion had come.

But then - in verse 14 - the Psalmist referred to the those who took pleasure in the stones of Zion - and who show favor to her dust.

These verses were written by a man - who saw the stones of the temple - surrounded by the dust of destruction.

And it's for this reason that I believe that the author of this Psalm...

...was one of the Jews who returned from Babylon.

There were three main waves of Israelites - who returned to Jerusalem - after the Babylonian captivity.

The first wave was led by Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest - who led the people to rebuilt the temple.

The second wave was led by the priest and scribe named Ezra.

And the third wave was led by Nehemiah - who helped them complete the wall of Jerusalem.

And while we can't say for sure - the Psalmist was probably part of the first wave of those...

...who returned to Jerusalem - and found the stones of the temple in ruins.

The Psalmist not only rejoiced in knowing that the LORD was preparing to pour out His mercy on Zion...

...but - he also rejoiced in knowing that the LORD was going to build up Zion...

...and then - once the temple was rebuilt - He would appear in His glory.

Not only that - but - the sorrowful Psalmist also looked forward to the day when the Lord would answer the prayers of those who are destitute.

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Look with me again - there at verse 17 - where the Psalmist sang about the day - when....

Psa 102:17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute,
And shall not despise their prayer.

Now - it's my guess that the psalmist was looking forward to the day when the temple of God would be rebuilt.

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And in the mind of the post-exilic Jew - this would be the time when the sacrificial system would be operational...

...and the glory of the Lord would fill the temple as He received the proper sacrifices.

With all of this in mind - I should remind you that the sacrificial system was a symbolic place-holder...

...which was actually pointing to the sacrifice of our Savior - Jesus.

And now that the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the purpose of the sacrificial system...

...we are able to approach the throne of grace - by faith in Jesus Christ.

SLIDE 28-29

Let's consider how Paul put it - in Hebrews chapter 4 - it's beginning at verse 14 - where he declared...

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

According to Paul - we are able to boldly approach the throne of grace...

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...and the reason why is because - our High Priest has provided a way for us...

...to prayerfully enter into the presence of the Lord.

And in this way - the Lord regards the prayer of the destitute - and shall not despise our prayers.

Now - I realize that there are times when it seems like He's not listening.

And there are times when we lose heart - because - it feels like the Lord is ignoring our prayers.

It's for this reason that the Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples to keep praying - without losing heart.

SLIDE 31-32

Let's consider how Christ Jesus put it - in Matthew chapter 7 - it's beginning at verse 7 - where He declared...

Mat 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Mat 7:8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Mat 7:9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Rather than losing heart over unanswered prayer - - let's continue to ask - with a heart filled with faith...

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...knowing that the Lord will eventually answer our prayer - according to His perfect will.

At the same time - it's also important for us to realize that - the Lord has the right perspective - on the prayers we present.

SLIDE 34-36

With this as our focus - let's pick up our study of the 102nd psalm - beginning there at verse 18 - where he declared...

Psa 102:18 This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

Psa 102:19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary;
From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,

Psa 102:20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To release those appointed to death,

Psa 102:21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem,

Psa 102:22 When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Here in these verses - we find the Psalmist - taking some time to put his prayer into perspective.

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And as he considered how this Psalm would be read - by the future generations who would praise the Lord...

...the Psalmist took comfort in knowing that the Lord had a proper perspective - about his prayerful supplications.

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Notice with me again - there at verse 19 - where the Psalmist declared...

Psa 102:19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary;
From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,

The Lord can see the entire Earth - from the Height of His sanctuary.

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Not only that - but - the Lord is able to see the end of time - from the beginning of creation.

And listen - He knows how our prayers could impact our lives...

...as well as the lives of future generations.

It's kind of like the butterfly effect - which is based on the idea that a butterfly flapping it's wings in Brazil could set off a Tornado in Texas.

Knowing that small changes to a complex system's initial conditions are able to produce dramatically different outcomes over time...

...there should be no doubt that - the Lord is able to see the longterm effects of our prayerful supplications.

And I have no doubt that He answers our prayers accordingly.

Whether we're talking about the prisoner - who is praying for freedom...

...or we're talking about the impoverished person who is praying for gainful employment...

...the Lord answers our prayers - from the perspective of His omniscience.

Whether we're talking about the sick Christian - who is asking for healing...

...or we're talking about the single who is praying for a spouse...

...the Lord answers our prayers - according to His infinite wisdom.

With that being the case - we can rejoice in knowing that - the Lord will always answer our prayers - at the perfect time.

And He will answers our prayers in such a way - that future generations will praise Him.

It's for this reason that the Psalmist declared the name of the LORD in Zion - And His praise in Jerusalem.

And we too should follow his example - as we gather together - to serve our omniscient Savior.

With this as our goal - let's consider the supplications that the psalmist presented - here in the 102nd Psalm.

SLIDE 40-42

Look with me - beginning there at verse 23 - where he declared...

Psa 102:23 He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.

Psa 102:24 I said, "O my God,
Do not take me away in the midst of my days;
Your years are throughout all generations.

Psa 102:25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

Psa 102:26 They will perish, but You will endure;
Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.

Psa 102:27 But You are the same,
And Your years will have no end.

Psa 102:28 The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You."

Here in the final verses of this Psalm - we find the Psalmist - coming to terms with the fact that...

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...his sorrowful situation was not - in any way - an indictment against the goodness of God.

And while it's true that the Lord was allowing the Psalmist to struggle with physical weakness...

...it's also true that the Lord is the immutable One - Who is always good.

We also find the Psalmist - coming to grips with the fact that - the Lord had shortened his days.

And while it's true that the Lord referred to the days of man as being no longer than 80 years...

...it's also true that Moses encouraged us to number our days - so that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

And as we number our days - it's important for us to remember that...

...this life is like a vapor - which appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

In order to put this into perspective - I should remind that the Lord Jesus was 33 years old - when He died on the cross for our sins.

Think about that for a moment - the Lord Jesus was able to accomplish His - in 33 years.

And now that He has risen from the grave - He now intercedes for those who trust in Him - from the throne of grace.

Now - as we consider how the humanity of Jesus was only here on this Earth for 33 years...

...we should take a moment to ask - - how many years do we deserve - here in this world - - more than Jesus?

And listen - if we don't deserve more years than Jesus - then...

...why would we think that He shortened the days of those who die young.

My mother was 33 when she died of cancer - - and I truly believe that she graduated on that day...

...because - she accomplished the mission that the Lord gave her.

Please trust me when I tell you that the infinite Lord Who exists outside of time and space...

...is the same God Who has already fashioned the days that He has ordained for us.

That being the case - there is no reason for us to think that the Lord will shorten our days.

The Lord Who laid the foundation of the earth - and created the heavens with a word...

...is the same God Who will provide an everlasting inheritance - to those who trust in Him.

And knowing that our everlasting inheritance is waiting for us in heaven...

...the apostle Peter encouraged every Christian - to look forward in faith...

...as we wait for the day when we will receive our inheritance.

SLIDE 44-47

Let's consider how Peter put it - in 1st Peter chapter 1 - it's beginning at verse 3 - where he declared...

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pe 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1Pe 1:5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1Pe 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

1Pe 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

1Pe 1:8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see
Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
1Pe 1:9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

Knowing how easy it is for us to focus on the trials and troubles of this world...

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...the apostle Peter encouraged his audience to look forward in faith...

...to the day when we will finally receive the inheritance that God has for us in heaven.

Now - this won't free us from the sorrowful struggles that we're suffering here in the world today.

But - this shift in our focus will help us to have a heart that is filled with hope...

...as we look forward to the day - when we will finally and forever be with the Lord Jesus.

And so - if you feel overwhelmed with afflictions - and your prayers are filled with complaints...

...then - I encourage you to fix your focus on Jesus...

...as we look forward to the day when we will be established - and exalted...

...and all of the glory of God.

COMMUNION