



OVERVIEW

Author: Unknown

The subtitle is part of the Psalm, and identifies the author and circumstance: "A Prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord."

Outline:

A great complaint in time of sorrow and affliction (v. 1–11)
Comfort found in God's eternal trustworthiness. He has promised to build His church, and He will do it (v. 12–28)

St. Augustine on Psalm 102:

The penitent, like Lazarus, is raised up from death to life: "when thou hearest a man is sorry for his sins, he hath already come again to life; when thou hearest him by confessing lay bare his conscience, he is already drawn forth from the tomb," (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII:500).

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Around the Word BIBLE STUDY

Lententide, 2015

The Penitential Psalms Psalm 102

PSALM 102

A Prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord.

¹Hear my prayer, | O LORD;*
let my cry | come to you!

²**Do not hide your face from me
in the day of | my distress!***
**Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day | when I call!**

³For my days pass a- | way like smoke,*
and my bones burn like a | furnace.

⁴**My heart is struck down like grass and has |
withered;***
I forget to | eat my bread.

⁵Because of my loud | groaning*
my bones cling | to my flesh.

⁶**I am like a desert owl of the | wilderness,*
like an owl of the waste | places;**

⁷I | lie awake;*
I am like a lonely sparrow on the | housetop.

⁸**All the day my enemies | taunt me;***
**those who deride me use my name | for a
curse.**

⁹For I eat ashes | like bread*
and mingle tears | with my drink,

¹⁰**because of your indignation and | anger;***
**for you have taken me up and | thrown me
down.**

¹¹My days are like an evening | shadow,*
I wither a- | way like grass.

¹²**But you, O LORD, are enthroned for- | ever;***
**you are remembered throughout all gener-
| ations.**

¹³You will arise and have pity on | Zion;*
it is the time to favor her;
the appointed | time has come.

¹⁴**For your servants hold her | stones dear*
and have pity | on her dust.**

¹⁵Nations will fear the name | of the LORD,*
and all the kings of the earth will fear your |
glory.

¹⁶**For the LORD builds up | Zion;***
he appears in his | glory;

¹⁷he regards the prayer of the | destitute*
and does not de- | spise their prayer.

¹⁸**Let this be recorded for a genera- | tion to
come,***

**so that a people yet to be created may |
praise the LORD:**

¹⁹that he looked down from his | holy height;*
from heaven the LORD looked | at the earth,

²⁰**to hear the groans of the | prisoners,*
to set free those who were | doomed to die,**

²¹that they may declare in Zion the name | of the
LORD,*

and in Jerusa- | lem his praise,

²²**when peoples gather to- | gether,*
and kingdoms, to wor- | ship the LORD.**

²³He has broken my strength in | midcourse;*
he has shortened | my days.

²⁴**"O my God," I say, "take me not away
in the midst | of my days—*
you whose years endure
throughout all gener- | ations!"**

²⁵Of old you laid the foundation | of the earth,*
and the heavens are the work | of your hands.

²⁶**They will perish, but you | will remain;***
they will all wear out like a | garment.

You will change them like a robe, and they will |
pass away,*

²⁷but you are the same, and your years | have
no end.

²⁸**The children of your servants shall | dwell
secure;***
**their offspring shall be established be- |
fore you.**

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit.**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Introduction

This fifth of the Penitential Psalms contrasts the temporal troubles of the contrite sinner with the eternal trustworthiness of the Lord. It divided naturally into two parts. Verses 1-11 consist of the complaint, and verses 12-28 consist of faith being comforted with the attributes and promises of God.

As you read and pray this Psalm, remember to give attention to who is talking to whom. For example, verse 14 is a prayer to the Lord, while verse 15 is a sermon to the people.

v. 1-2: "Hear!"

These introductory verses beg for the Lord's attention. What five things do we ask of the Lord in these verses?

v. 3-7: "My heart is stricken"

How is contrition (sorrow over sin) described in this section?

Why is grass an appropriate picture of our sinful humanity (consider Isaiah 40:6-8 and 1 Peter 1:24-25)?

There are three things that the contrite conscience is like in verses 6 & 7. What are they? How are these animals a picture of being troubled?

v. 8-11: "Your indignation"

Can you imagine the condition of the Psalmist? What is it like? Consider v. 10.

What is the source of the Psalmist's trouble in these verses? How does this match with Psalm 51:4?

v. 12-17: "But You..."

This section begins with "but," which indicates a contrast. What is being described in these verses? How does that contrast with what came before?

How do these verses describe God? What adjectives and descriptive phrases are used?

What promises can we find in these verses? What verses teach us to abide in hope?

v. 18-22: The Lord looks down from heaven

The Lord is in heaven, but this does not mean that He is distant or far away. In fact, the opposite is true. What five things do these verse tell us that the Lord does from heaven? What is the result (see v. 22)?

v. 23-28: "You laid the foundation of the earth"

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Psalm 102:25-27. Read Hebrews 1:10-12, then read Hebrews 1:8. The author of Hebrews tells us that these verses in the Psalm are spoken by God the Father



to God the Son! In these verses we are hearing a conversation in the Trinity.

Read Psalm 102:24-28 again, considering that these are the words of the Father to the Son. How does this change your understanding of these verses?

What does Hebrews teach about the theology of these verses (see Hebrews 1:1-4)?

We know that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus, suffered more than any other human because on the cross, all human suffering was placed on Him. Consider the prayer of suffering in this Psalm to be the pray of Jesus in the Garden of Gesthe-

mane and on the cross. How does this bring you peace and comfort?

Closing Hymn: From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee

1. From depths of woe I cry to Thee,
Lord, hear me, I implore Thee.
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
My prayer let come before Thee.
If Thou rememberest each misdeed,
If each should have its rightful meed,
Who may abide Thy presence?

5. Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.
Our shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow.

(Martin Luther, 1524. TLH 329:1,5)

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