

Series: Psalms

Title: Prayer of the Afflicted

Text: Ps 102: 1-18

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The Psalms are not in chronological order. But it is by God's sovereign hand that they are placed in the order they are in. Often the placement is instructive. In Psalm 101, we saw David's resolve when he entered his office as king. It was a good resolve—but he wrote, "I will, I will, I will." So the Lord taught David that the words were given to him by the Spirit of God and they were the words of Christ our King. David was taught it is Christ's covenant word that is ordered and sure in all things. Christ says, "I will and thou shalt." As if to show us salvation is not by our will, after Psalm 101, the Lord put this Psalm next. We hear a different spirit in this Psalm.

**Psalm 102 «A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.» 1: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2: Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.**

This is the spirit of a broken and contrite heart—"*Hear my prayer, O LORD, LET my cry come unto thee.*" The Lord sends the day of trouble to create this spirit in his child, and to keep us humbled and depending upon the Lord.

It is to keep us remembering that our flesh is grass.

**Psalm 102: 3: For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4: My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5: By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. 6: I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7: I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. 8: Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9: For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, 10: Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11: My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.**

But it is also to keep us remembering that "thy God reigneth." God is our Salvation.

**Psalm 102: 12: But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13: Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come...16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17: He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18: This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.**

This is why the Lord's people love the Psalms. The Psalmist expresses our suffering and our prayer to the LORD when we are afflicted and overwhelmed. And we get the most comfort from hearing these as the words of Christ, suffering on our behalf.

**Proposition:** Beholding how Christ cried to the Father and how the Father heard him, we are assured of the faithfulness of our God toward us. Christ promises *verses 13: Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come...17: He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*

Are there any destitute? Any afflicted and overwhelmed? Christ will regard the prayer of the destitute. He shall arise and have mercy upon his Zion, his church, his elect. He has set the time to favor her. When the set-time is come then our Lord shall arise and have mercy.

**Psalm 102: 1: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2: Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.**

God's face is the Light that gives his child light. Scripture calls it "*the glory of his countenance.*" His face is the Light, the Glory, that gives us light and knowledge. In regeneration, God shines into our hearts to "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." (2 Cor 4) God making his face to shine upon us is how God gives his child peace and gladness in the new heart.

Numbers 6:26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Psalm 4: 6: 6: *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 7: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

God's face, his countenance, is his help, his power, his favor to his people.

Psalm 42:5: Why art thou cast down, O my soul?...hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.

Psalm 44:3: [The children of Israel] got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

So when the psalmist begs God, "*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble*" it is because it is God's face, his countenance, his Light and Glory, that gives us light and life and peace. His face is his power to save.

When the Son of God took flesh and made himself a servant as the Son of God and the Son of man, he made himself dependent upon the Father, like unto his brethren. God gave him the Spirit without measure. David wrote of Solomon but he was speaking of Christ Jesus, the Son of David. The Lord Jesus said to the Father, "thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance" (Ps 21: 6).

But in this Psalm, Christ cries out, *verse 2: Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.* On the cross the Father did indeed hid his face from our Substitute because the sinless GodMan bore the sin of God's elect in his own body on the tree. God hiding his face from our Redeemer was justice poured out on Christ.

But because Christ satisfied the law's demands for his people, God our Father shall never take his countenance from his child. This is sure mercy for Christ's sake. Since the Father hid his face from our Substitute on the cross, he shall never take away the light of his countenance from those he saves.

Isaiah 54: 7: For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8: In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9: For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10: For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

But God sometimes makes it seem to us like he hides his face from us. It appears the Lord does not hear our prayer because he does not answer speedily. This is true affliction that chastens a child of God.

Someone asked me this week concerning themselves, "Why is the Lord not answering my prayer? Why is he waiting?" Let's see a few reasons.

## THE LORD SHOWS US OUR WEAKNESS

**Psalm 102: 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4: My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.**

The Lord makes us think God has hidden his face from us to keep us knowing the weakness of our sinful flesh. The Lord Jesus endured the things written in this Psalm when he suffered on the cross. He endure it like none of God's children shall ever suffer. But when the Lord appears to hide his face and not answer speedily then he is truly answering our prayer speedily. He does so by making us know the weakness of our flesh.

The Lord Jesus declared "the flesh is weak." He knows it. He experienced it. He suffered this but he is teaching us what our flesh is. Without the light of God's face, without Christ our Strength, our flesh is weakness. That is what he is teaching us. That is why he waits.

He brings us to cry, "*my days are consumed like smoke*" to keep us knowing our life is a vapor, like smoke evaporating into the air. We feel no strength, "*my bones are burned as an hearth*"--the bones are where our strength is but he says "my bones are like wood burned to ashes on the hearth. "*My heart is smitten, and withered like grass*"--he dries up our fleshly strength and it withers like the grass it is. "*So that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin*"—this is a true fast when sorrow is so strong you forget to eat bread until you become like a skeleton groaning.

We really do not know how truly this happened to our Lord on the cross. He truly endured the hell his people deserved. When your affliction overwhelms you, child of God, as bad as it is, remember, the Lord says it is light affliction compared to what our Savior suffered on the cross. Use it to think on Christ and what he suffered to satisfy justice for us. Use it to behold what the Lord is teaching us, that is, our flesh is only weakness.

## **THE LORD SHOWS US OUR NEED OF HIS PRESENCE**

**Psalm 102: 6: I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7: I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.**

These birds are outside their habitat dwelling alone. The pelican is a water-bird. He is not a bird of the wilderness. The owl does not dwell in the desert. Sparrows are always with other sparrows. But here it is a "*sparrow alone.*"

Christ tread the winepress alone. There was none to help him. He accomplished the work by himself. Yet he said, "I am not alone, the Father is with me." Even while in the earth, he was in the bosom of the Father and the Father in him. So it is for the sinner when Christ takes up his dwelling in us then we dwell in him and he in us and "nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." He promises "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." When Joseph was sold into slavery and ended up in Egypt in jail alone, "yet the Lord was with him."

Notice, *verse 7: I WATCH, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.* By affliction, by making it appear God hides his face from us and by not answering speedily, our Lord makes us watch for him. He makes us long for him. He brings us to cry out for him. The Lord reminds us he alone is our habitation, our dwelling place. He makes us long to dwell in him. He reminds us that this world—this wilderness and this desert—is not our habitation. Our habitation is in him, under his gospel, with his people in his church. Christ is our habitation. So by the affliction he make us "watch." He grows our desire to be in Christ with his people under his gospel in peace in him.

## **THE LORD KEEPS US REMEMBERING CHRIST ALONE SAVES**

**Psalm 102: 8: Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9: For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, 10: Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.**

Christ's enemies were "mad against him." They were "sworn against him." Men who had nothing else in common entered covenant with each other to be against Christ. They were his sworn enemies.

But why? Why did they go around the cross, reproaching Christ more and more? God lifted Christ up on the cross to fulfill God's law. And because he bore our sin, God cast him down. The Substitute of God's

elect, indeed, bore the indignation and wrath of God which his people would have had to bear. Doing so he highly exalted God and saving his people from our sins.

But because Christ suffer the cross, his enemies justified their rejection of him, accusing him of being smitten of God and afflicted. This is amazing! The sight of beholding Christ suffer on the cross makes his child fall at his feet thanking Christ for saving us from our sins. But the same sight makes his enemies cast more reproach upon our Substitute as being a failure smitten of God and afflicted.

But verses 19-20, says, "*For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.*" God looked down from the height of his holy sanctuary. He heard the groaning of *the* prisoner, Christ on the cross. Being satisfied with Christ's one offering, God the Father loosed our Redeemer. When Christ arose, in Christ, God loosed all his people and delivered us from every enemy.

Child of God, when God has lifted you up by his grace so that you confess you are his and you follow him but then it seems God casts you down in a trial it is for this purpose. When enemies use it to reproach you, remember, God's purpose in it is to turn you to Christ. It is to keep you remembering that our risen Redeemer looks down from the height of his sanctuary and hears your groaning. In his set time, he shall set you free and save you from it. His purpose is to keep you fleeing into Christ your Refuge.

### **THE LORD GIVES US THE SAME LESSON OVER AND OVER**

What does the Lord teach us every time we are delivered through affliction? He teaches us two things.

One, all flesh is grass. Verses 11, 23, "*My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass....He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.*" He makes us see we have no strength of ourselves. Our days are like a vapor. Our life is like smoke.

Two, the Lord graciously keeps us in remembrance that "thy God reigneth." Verses 12, 13, "*But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*"

When the suffering has brought us to this end, it is the set time. This is the season of his love. God shall arise and have mercy on his child. He is keeping us in remembrance of him. Christ gave us his table to remember his body broken for his people and his blood shed for you. Likewise, God sends trials to make us keep him in remembrance. God never changes. He would not spare his Son because he is holy and immutable. Therefore he shall with him freely give us all things for the same reason. These trials keep us remembering Christ and him crucified is our salvation. He is the one possession that shall never be taken from us.

Thus God is weaning us from this world. This world is destined, by God, to perish. But our immutable God and Savior and those he has saved shall remain Verses 25-28, "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.*"

When the Lord works this in us then we are no longer as a starving man or a pelican or owl or lonely sparrow. But we are like the Psalmist in the next Psalm, In verse 5, "*[He] satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"

Are you destitute? Has he brought you to confess your only grass? Remember verse 17, "*He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*" If you are one created anew by his grace then this is written for you. Here is what you shall do, verse 18, "*This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.*"

**Amen!**