

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 ▫ Read Psalm 102:1–11

Questions from the Scripture text: What sort of prayer is this (superscript)? What is he experiencing? How is he responding? What is the first request of the prayer (v1–2)? What does v2c specifically request? Why (v3)? What is an indication of the intensity of his distress (v4)? What effect is his own anguished, mournful groaning having upon him (v5)? To what does he compare this sound and its desolation (v6–7)? Who are enjoying this (v8)? What especially are they enjoying (v9)? But why has this come upon him (v10)? How does he describe being at the point of death (v11)?

What can believers do when they're overwhelmed by affliction? Psalm 102:1–11 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **in all affliction, even chastening from the Lord, believers can cry to the Lord Who cares for them.**

Overwhelmed by affliction. Just the superscript of the Psalm is instructive. Believers find themselves in difficult situations in this world. Our Lord Jesus was a man of sorrows, and He has informed us that in this world we will have trouble. Much of this trouble, we bring upon ourselves with our remaining sin, because the Lord chastens every true son whom He loves and receives (cf. Heb 12:5–8). That was the source of affliction in this Psalm (cf. v10). Even for such a situation, the Holy Spirit has given us a prayer and song for when we are overwhelmed by affliction. So, let us not be surprised when overwhelming affliction comes. But let us see the love of the Spirit, and take His good counsel by praying and singing such psalms at those times.

Crying out for attention, v1–2. When we come to the Lord in agony, we don't need to jump right into requests about the situation. Look at what the Psalmist does. "Hear my prayer" (v1a). "Let my cry come to You" (v1b). "Do not hide Your face" (v2a). "Incline Your ear" (v2b). "Answer me" (v2c). We know that we have the Lord's attention, but the Spirit gives us a model of repeated pleading for it. How often a believer needs this, when we have come to God in prayer, but we just can't get a sense of drawing near to Him and being heard by Him. For this common experience in prayer, Ps 102:1–2 teaches us what to do.

Pointing out our agony, v3–7. The Psalmist tells the Lord that he feels his agony even physically (v3), and that his emotional distress is so great that he's lost the will to think or feel (v4a) and even forgets to eat (v4b). He tells the Lord about groaning so mournfully that even the sound of his own groaning troubles him (v5). He tells the Lord about being like a lone bird, all by itself... small, insignificant, abandoned, entirely out of place (v6–7). All of this implies two wonderful things: not only does the Lord care about our agony, but He also cares to hear us tell Him about our agony. The great identity of God with believers ("I will be Your God, and You will be My people") already implied to Old Testament saints that God is invested in their pain. How much more for you, dear Christian, when you know that your suffering is shared by the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 8:17)! Let us learn, in prayer, to tell the Lord of our agony. He cares about it, and He cares to hear about it.

Calling out our adversaries, v8–11. Another thing the Lord cares very much about is silencing the mouths of those who raise themselves up against His people. He takes such attacks personally (cf. Mt 25:40; Ac 9:4). vv9, 11 are similar in tone and content to vv3–7. What differentiates them is the dynamic between what the Lord is doing in the psalmist's life (v10) and how his enemies are responding to it (v8). God's justice and covenant faithfulness will ultimately answer all taunting and attacking of His people in the last day. But His justice and covenant faithfulness break into time as well. His Word teaches us to plead against those who mock or conspire against us.

When have you been overwhelmed by affliction? What other believers do you know who have been? What can you expect during this life? How are you accustomed to praying when you are in distress? What are some things you can take away from this psalm to improve on that?

Sample prayer: O Lord, as we come to worship You, we all long for You to attend to hear us, to turn Your face to us, to incline Your ear to us. Especially, O Lord, for those among us who are in distress, make us to know that You are near. Let not our enemies scoff or mock; but show Yourself great and glorious among Your people. Our lives are so short; grant unto us to spend them in Your service and praise. And so give us the ministry of Your Spirit to help us in worship we ask, through Christ, Amen!

Suggested songs: ARP102A "To This My Prayer" or TPH102A "LORD, Hear My Prayer for Aid"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 102 verse 1 through 11. These are god's words. A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed. And pours out his complaint to before y'all went Hear my prayer. Oh y'all thing and let my cry come to you. 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.

My days are consumed like smoke. My bones are burned, like a heart. My heart is stricken and withered like grass. So that i forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my skin. I am like, A pelican of the wilderness like, An owl of the desert.

I lie awake. And i'm like a sparrow alone. On the hostile. My enemies were approached me all day long. Those who deride me. Swear enough against me. For i have eaten ashes, like red. And mingled my drink with weeping. Because of your indignation and your wrath. For you have lifted me up and cast me away.

My days are like a shadow that lengthens. And i withered away like grass. So far the reading of god's inspired and And aren't worked.

First thing we notice about the psalm is That this is a song that prayer written for someone who has overwhelmed. With affliction. And it's in the Prayer book, the songbook for god's people. God's people are going to have among them. Those who are Overwhelmed. By affliction.

The lord Jesus told us in this world, we would have trouble. He was 12 5 through. 8 tells us that if we are legitimate children of god, we will have chastening And that is what. This particular affliction was for the psalmist. You see in verse 10. Because of your indignation and your wrath.

He does give us. Opportunity. In every affliction to. Now come before god and ask him to show us. If there is something, Unclean enough. There is an unconfessed sin. That needs to be dealt with. Some something that.

There's something that job did in his affliction as well. But one of the things that we see here, then, Well, for god's people in this world who Do still have remaining sin, there's going to be affliction. Of both kinds, even if we didn't have sin, the lord. Jesus was a man of sorrows.

And he was afflicted, and he was not a sinner.

And so we see the love of the holy spirit for us. That he not only tells us in advance so that we will not be surprised. When the fiery trial comes upon us as he says, Also, by the pen of peter. Not only does he love us so that we To not want us to be taken by surprise.

Nobody also loves us and prepares for us. That which we made. Pray, that which we may sing. In such situations. It's not just a psalm that is overwhelmed by afflictions to psalm that cries out. For attention. Notice versus one and two. He doesn't actually pray. For anything about the trouble.

Um, In fact. He begins to talk about the enemy part of this trouble, a little bit verse 8. The alumnus of his travel versus six and seven. He doesn't give when he specific details, but even before he gets to those things, Yeah, loneliness and the adversary. He just spends the first two verses asking for god's attention here my prayer.

Let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face inclined. Your ear answer me. You can hear the. Holy spirit, giving the psalmist words. For someone who is praying and Cannot get a sense. Of the presence of god and the hearing of god and his prayers. He knows that God hears that God is a hero of prayer that god knows everything that god keeps us promises, and God pays attention to his people.

We know those things theologically But, It is often been the case in my life, maybe believers life, and i suspect. And some of your own lives that as you pray to god. And especially when you're just starting. In a particular. Prayer time of praying. Um, That you do not at first, have the sense of the lord's hearing you.

And so, We might be tempted to think. Well, we just Um, you know, we should, we should just presume it on the basis of our doctrine and move on and get to the business. Of the praying. But here, the holy spirit gives us model. Of asking for the hearing, But if we don't feel her, If we don't feel like our cry is reaching to him, If we, if it feels like his face is hidden from us.

That it is appropriate to express to him, our desire that those things would be overcome. And so, This is a psalm. That cries out for attention. For the lord's attention. And we learn, Than to pray and sing. When we are overwhelmed by affliction, We learn to cry out to god for attention when we don't sense.

This presence. Uh, but not only does it cry out for attention. It points out agony. Four verse 3. My days are consumed like smoke. And my bones are burned. Like a hearth.

The. The life. Well, this is almost. Is not able to produce. Anything else on the moment because of how intense and All encompassing, his grief and pain are. Their seasons in the believers life. Where it is, it is that intense and even Uh, even physically felt as you have a little bit in verse 3, with the language of the bones and then again, In verse 5.

Because of the sound of my groaning. My bones cling to my skin. Um, Is.

It's taking all of his effort until he's Withered to nothing as it were just to groan. In a way that That expresses the intensity of what he feels.

You know, those who say that christians don't experience. Depression. One of the. You know, one of the Things that the word depression is used to. Why to is the experience when The agony and the sadness, just kind of. Crowds everything else out. And there's not really room for much else in the life.

Now. There is, you know, unbelief that can contribute to an agony like that. What we are finite and even apart from the unbelief. There is agony. That. Takes over to such extent. Or or grief or powerlessness that takes over. To such an extent. That you have the verse 3 and verse 5, physical experience in the verse 4.

Emotional mental experience. My heart is stricken. And withered like grass, it doesn't have any. Vibrant life in it. It's been mashed down. Uh, like Um, so many footballs on the pass so that the grass is is mashed down into Um, Yeah, a A mass of floor. So there's lifeless it's like life.

Repeatedly beats my heart until it's smooshed. Withered down. That to the extent verse 4, so that i forget to eat my bread. And then you have the birds that are all out of place. Um, Assuming that they translated the these birds correctly. That we know what they mean. I'm like a pelican in the wilderness.

Well, oh, it's a water bird. It's not going to do well of Wilderness if it's in the wilderness, it's by itself. Like an owl of the desert. Owls. Are you know, that might be okay. But it's still in an illustration of being alone. Owls are often. Solitary type birds.

And they have a mournful sound. And like a sparrow alone on the housetop. Yeah, the sort of bird that You know, ought to belong in a flock of dozens and hundreds and it's just By itself. Very alone. And so there's social agony here. As well, not just the physical and Emotional.

Mental. What is the point? The pointing out all of these aspects of his agony. Well, the implication is that god cares. About the pain. And not just that God cares about the pain. Because, okay, god cares about the pain but he already knows it. Yes. I really whine so much to god.

There's not just that god cares about the pain and said, god cares to hear. His children about their pain. He cares to hear his people about their pain. And if that was the case, already, Yeah, a thousand years before christ. When there was this, hope that God is our god and we are his people.

And then how much more when he reveals himself to us in the Lord Jesus. And he makes us consciously aware. Of being united to christ and dwelled by his spirit. And adopted as his children. And, The lord Jesus, that our suffering is Done together in union with them. And so he cares to here.

About her. I'm gonna he cares about our agony and he cares to hear About, all right. So, there's overwhelmed. It's a psalm, overwhelmed by affliction. Surprise out for attention. Points out agony. And it calls out adversaries. Next thing he points out. To the lord prayer. My enemies were approached me all day long.

Those who deride me. Swear and oath against me. And he's pointing out his situation. And how his enemies are responding. And of course, This is because god is just

and god is an avenger And, He will not allow this to go. Unanswered. He's not asking god. Uh, Um,

To help him because he's better than his enemies. Notice he recognizes that it's my god's indignation and god's wrath that he's in this situation. Rather, he's asking god. To act according to god's own promises and god's own. Caring. Um, to avenge his people whom he has brought To himself.

The continuity in verse 8 of their attack is matched by The continuity of his misery. But when he says eating i've eaten ashes like bread. He's talking about the pudding of ashes, on the head. Mingled, my drink with weeping. Grieving, as Has been his. His continual labor. Mocking has been there.

Continual labor. And time is running out. Now, it may be as often is for god's people. That the vindication and the justice. Comes after this life. And that certainly seems like it's about to be the case for him when he says, my days are like a shadow that lengthens He said he's referring to the whole of his life all of his days.

As being comparatively, the length of one day. And he says, the sun is setting. Have you ever at? Uh, at sunset, you know, some gets lower and lower in. The sky noticed how long your shadow gets And, He's saying now that he's in, At the sunset of his life.

Or the illustration just A couple solves from now. The. The grass, the man's days being like grass. And then another place. The description is. The. Man is like grass that riot springs up in the morning and then in the evening, it is gone. And so, he's Is crying out to god.

While he can. He's pointing out calling out. His adversaries and his enemies. The lord does teach us to plead. With him. Against. Those who mark us? Take advantage, take pleasure. The harm that comes to us. So, uh, just the start of this song. What is a psalm? That is overwhelmed by a flexion.

Cries out for attention points out agony. And calls out adversaries. May the lord help us learn and remember to pray Like that. And when we are overwhelmed by affliction,

Our father in heaven, pray that you would Hear us and help us. Once we come before you. No, not so much. And the condition of being overwhelmed. But knowing that, we Have been in some cases will be lower cases. Desiring, then that your spirit. Would take this opportunity. I'm studying your word to implant it in our hearts.

So that by You're having shaped us by your word, we would? Respond rightly and biblically. When we come into, The situation. Thank you for your mercy to us and giving us psalms like this. We pray in jesus name.