

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Psalm 102 is the basis for our Lenten meditation this day/evening. You may be seated.

So far, the Penitential Psalms we've considered during our Lenten journey have all been ascribed to King David. But David didn't write all the psalms. For example, Psalm 90 is ascribed to Moses, while other psalms are ascribed to Asaph or the Sons of Korah. The heading of Psalm 102, is unique - the author is anonymous. The title ascribed to Psalm 102 is "**A prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord.**" And due to the anonymous nature of this Psalm, all Christians could in one sense claim authorship of this Psalm. In other words, this is the Psalm of every penitential Christian!

The opening of this Psalm may be especially familiar to you if you've ever participated in the service of Compline. "**Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry**" (Ps 102:1). For it is these words which begin our time of prayer during that service. It's an appropriate appeal. The Psalmist continues, "**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!**" (Ps 102:2) When we pray - we want to be heard, we desire for our prayers to be answered.

There's a strong contrast between the first half and the second half of this particular psalm. You might have noticed the pronoun that is repeated again and again. "I, I, I"—I am miserable, I am sad, my heart withers away like the grass in the heat, I lie awake at night, I feel like a mournful bird, I mingle my drink with tears, my days flee like the shadows of an evening, and so on and so forth. We might think that this is a wrongly self-centered prayer, but by the very nature of this being a penitential Psalm, the pronouns should be "I". This is what it means to lament - to pour out our

emotions and feelings before God. When we've been beaten down by the hammer of God's law, we come to identify and empathize with the Psalmist's situation. It's humbling to come to the realization that we cannot do anything to change our state of sinfulness before God.

And then the Psalmist provides an emphatic expression which shifts the focus of the prayer.

Verse 12: "But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever; You are remembered throughout all generations." "You" is contrasted with "I." God is not like me. God is enthroned forever, and His name endures from generation to generation. **"You will arise and have pity on Zion" (Ps 102:13).** God will arise and deliver His people. This is confident prayer that trusts in God's grace and mercy.

The Psalmist demonstrates his faith and trust in the Lord when he says, **"He regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer" (Ps 102:17).** He very likely had in mind the words of Moses recorded in Exodus **"the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex 2:23-24).** Time and again - without fail, God hears the groaning of His people and He rescues or preserves them in the midst of distress and time of need, whether from Egypt, from Babylon, or from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This the Psalmist knows, for he writes, **"Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: that He looked down from His holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD" (Ps 102:18-22).** God's Word endures forever. These Words were recorded **"for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the**

LORD” - these words are for you! He who has ears to hear - let him keep on hearing! Praise the Lord!

And God hears the groans of His people. He hears you in the midst of your distress and in your time of need. Satan feeds us lies telling us that we are worthless, useless, unlovable. Yet God loved the world in this way - He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. God sent His Son for you. He is the one who fulfills the Scriptures. Luke records for us: **“And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Lk 4:16–21).** Jesus was not the king the people expected, but isn’t that how God works? In ways that we do not understand? It’s a mystery that God could love us sinners, but He does. He hears our groans, and He answers our prayers.

During this penitential season of Lent, we remember that it is not our days that the Lord has shortened (Ps 102:23), but Jesus’ days. His days were filled with trouble and sorrow for us. He bore our sin and God’s full indignation over our sin as He went to the cross of Calvary. And when Jesus said, **“It is finished,”** God’s just wrath over sin was appeased. Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave and then ascended on high, where He now lives and reigns to all eternity, which the Psalmist

foretells by proclaiming this wonderful truth: **“But you are the same, and your years have no end” (Ps 102:27)**. His love for you will never cease.

Because of our God’s eternal faithfulness, the Psalmist concludes his prayer in confident faith. Despite his torments, suffering, and pain, he knows that **“the children of Your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before You” (Ps 102:28)**. That’s something that we all long for - peace of mind, freedom from worries, anxiety, and stress - to dwell securely. Only Christ can provide that type of rest. Hear the comforting words of Jesus: **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (Jn 14:27)**. Through Jesus Christ, we know that although we face suffering and sorrow here in this vale of tears, we are spiritual heirs of His heavenly kingdom, which has no end. Therefore, we place our hope in the eternal Lord! Amen.

The peace which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.