

“A Prayer of the Afflicted”  
Psalm 102  
(Preached at Trinity, April 8, 2012)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. When we are young and strong and our bodies full of vitality we seldom consider the reality of our mortality. But when we are smitten with sickness the reality hits us hard that we are but dust; our life is but a vapor. We must never forget that we are dependent upon God for every breath.
2. As we come to **Psalm 102** we find a man smitten with sickness. His body is slowly decaying and he is but a skeleton.  
**Psalm 102:5 KJV** - "my bones cleave to my skin."
3. There are many ways a person might react to such misery. Some turn to the medical profession and put their hope in science, often discovering that the medical profession makes a weak foundation of hope. Some give up and fall into the despondency of hopelessness. Others curse God, considering their suffering unjust and unfair. The Psalmist, however, turns to God.  
**Psalm 102:1-2 KJV** - "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.  
<sup>2</sup> 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."
4. This psalm is a bit unusual. On one hand it presents an individual crying out for God's help in the midst of his affliction.  
On the other hand attention is cast upon a nation in trouble.  
**Psalm 102:13 KJV** - "Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come."  
Perhaps it is in the midst of a great national disaster such as an exile that the psalmist is smitten with an illness.
5. In the tradition of the church it has been held that **Psalm 102** one of the seven penitential psalms, most likely because of the indignation and wrath spoken of in **Verse 10**  
**Psalm 102:10 KJV** - "Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down."
6. It has also been looked upon as Messianic, a prophecy of the earthly humiliation and suffering of Christ.  
**Psalm 102:8 KJV** - "Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me."  
They see it as a dialogue between the Father and the Son. **Verses 25-27** are used in **Hebrews 1:10-12**.
7. Charles Spurgeon saw **Psalm 102** as a patriotic psalm because although the writer is suffering with personal sickness, he looks to God not only for his personal restoration but also the restoration of Zion.
8. Above all, **Psalm 102** serves as a model for those who are afflicted, a paradigm for prayer.
  - I. **Verses 1-2** – An appeal for God to hear
  - II. **Verses 3-11** – A description of the distress

- III. **Verses 12-17** – The assurance that God will indeed hear
  - IV. **Verses 18-22** – A call for God’s great deliverance to be recorded for His enduring praise
  - V. **Verses 23-28** – A declaration of God’s sovereignty over it all
- I. **Verses 1-2** – An appeal for God to hear
- A. The Title describes the psalmist as overwhelmed
    - 1. Most translations translate it weak or faint but “overwhelmed” describes the desperation
    - 2. He pours out complaint to God – not a trickle of passion but a gushing forth of his petition before God
  - B. We find here the model of the Christian life
    - 1. We should expect affliction
      - a. We know the afflictions of living in a fallen world
      - b. We know the God’s sanctifying grace at work that sometimes brings painful chastening
      - c. We also know the hatred of men towards Christianity
      - d. Jesus declared:  
**John 16:33 KJV** - "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
      - e. We read in an earlier psalm  
**Psalms 34:19 KJV** - "Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."
    - 2. In the midst of the trials we cry out to God  
**Psalms 102:1-2 KJV** - "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. <sup>2</sup> 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."
    - 3. As we mature as Christians experience reminds us of the source of our comfort  
**Philippians 4:6-7 KJV** - "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
- II. **Verses 3-11** – A description of the distress
- A. The Psalmist lays his condition before God
    - 1. We aren’t told the specifics of his condition but it is surely horrible
    - 2. **Verse 3** describes his life as being consumed as by fire and his very bones are the fuel. The burning of his bones may also describe the intensity of his pain. It’s possible that the psalmist had access to the Book of Job:  
**Job 5:7 KJV** - "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

3. **Verse 4** describes the sense of hopeless. He is looking unto God in hope but his heart tells him death is near. His appetite is completely gone. We seldom forget to eat. It is seldom that our hunger goes unnoticed. But when a man's health fails his appetite often also fails. He has no desire for food.
  4. **Verse 5** further describes the state of his condition. Appetite gone, he is wasting away. All of his bones are now protruding with his skin merely hanging as a poor fitting garment
  5. **Verses 6-7** describe his loneliness, as a solitary bird in the desert; all of his friends have forsaken him.  
When a person is first diagnosed with an illness his room is often filled with visitors and well-wishers, but it is often sadly the case that as time passes he is often forgotten and only the most faithful friends remain.
  6. **Verse 8** – As Job discovered, he sometimes becomes the subject of reproach. And at times, the suffering is actually the fruit of wicked hands. **Psalm 102:8 KJV** - "Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me."
  7. **Verses 9-10** – Sometimes the suffering is the result of sin which adds to the intensity of the grief and suffering.  
**Verse 10** is why this psalm has often been included among the penitential psalms. It is presumed that his sin is the source of his suffering.
  8. **Verse 11** – again, the psalmist describes the frailty of his life.
- B. This serves as an example of the right way to approach God with our prayers
1. We know we are not informing God of our distress. In fact He has ordained it. But passionate pleading demands setting our case before God.
  2. It isn't for God's sake that we lay the details of our case before Him. It is for ours! As we lay our situation before Him our hearts are enflamed. As we innumerate the details of our condition we cry out in earnest.
  3. It is the fervent prayer that God hears.  
**James 5:16 KJV** - "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
  4. Spurgeon: "As for our great King, when we venture into His presence, let us have an errand there. As I said the other Sabbath, let us beware of playing at praying. I must realize that I am speaking to God himself, and that I have business to transact with the great Lord."
- III. **Verses 12-17** – The assurance that God will indeed hear
- A. The psalmist prayed with confidence - **Psalm 102:13 KJV** - "Thou shalt arise"
    1. There is a tone of confidence. God *will* arise and He *will* come with healing
    2. **Verse 12** provides the great contrast. While the Psalmist sees his flesh decaying and coming to an end he looks to the one who will never end.  
**Psalm 102:12 KJV** - "But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever"
  - B. It is here that the tone shifts from the situation of the individual to the situation of the nation of Israel.
    1. The psalmist speaks of God's favor upon Zion  
**Psalm 102:13 ESV** - "You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come."

2. Yes, God had favor upon this elect nation, but this was but a shadow of the favor He has upon His elect people
  3. Ultimately, Zion represents all of God's elect people  
**Psalm 102:16 KJV** - "When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.
- C. The point is, as God's people we can pray with confidence
1. God DOES hear us. He DOES look upon us with His love and pity.
  2. He regards our prayers. He hears. He will not forsake us.  
**Psalm 102:17 KJV** - "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."
  3. We pray knowing that God will come to our aid in His appointed time.  
**Psalm 102:13 KJV** - "yea, the set time, is come."  
God is working all things for our good and He works at precisely the best time for our good.  
Stephen Charnock: "That is God's set time when the church is most believing, most humble, most affectionate to God's interest in it, and most sincere. Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy, without humility we are not fit to receive it, without affection we are not fit to value it, without sincerity we are not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of these qualifications."
- IV. **Verses 18-22** – A call for God's great deliverance to be recorded for His enduring praise
- A. We should always examine our ultimate reason for prayer
1. Why do we pray? Why do we desire to be delivered? Is it only for our own comfort and our own relief? Should it not be the glory of God? Did not Christ pray for God to work His perfect and holy will?
  2. Should we not desire God's great glory to be displayed?  
**Psalm 102:18 KJV** - "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD."  
**Psalm 102:21 KJV** - "To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;"
  3. The name it and claim it theology is completely contrary to the spirit of true prayer. We don't "claim" healing. We don't demand healing. Instead we come to God in confidence and pray, "O God, display Thy glory! Show thyself mighty."
- B. There is nothing so precious to God than His own glory  
**Isaiah 42:8 KJV** - "I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another"  
**Isaiah 43:6-7 KJV** - "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; <sup>7</sup> *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."  
**Isaiah 48:10-11 KJV** - "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. <sup>11</sup> For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."
1. God loves to display His glory

2. Our great desire should be to display God's glory.  
Rather than being preoccupied with ourselves our hearts need to turn to the glory of God.  
When we pray we should desire above all else that God's great glory be displayed both now and for future generations

V. **Verses 23-28** – A declaration of God's sovereignty over it all

- A. The psalmist once again describes his distress—but he places high focus upon the sovereign hand of God
  1. God rules over all. All of our afflictions are by His sovereign design
  2. The psalmist is careful to declare this  
**Verse 23** – "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days."
  3. The psalmist has been laying his condition before God, but God is Almighty. He is sovereign. He reigns. Nothing in this life is by accident. His illness was from the hand of God.
  4. Recognizing the sovereignty of God does not prohibit our prayers. Instead it increases our prayer life.
    - a. Knowing our life is in the hands of God does not prevent us from praying that God will extend our days..  
**Psalm 102:24 NAS** - "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days"
    - b. We are not of this world. We are not to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. But while we are not of this world, it is not sinful for us to love life.
- B. Again, the psalmist declares his recognition of God's dominion over all  
**Psalm 102:25-26 KJV** - "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands. <sup>26</sup> They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:"
  1. God created the heavens and the earth  
For God to answer our prayers is a small thing
  2. God has reigned from eternity to eternity.
  3. Everything is in a state of change and everything will come to an end.  
**Verse 26** reminds us that all of creation waxes old like an old pair of jeans. This includes our mortal flesh. Our bodies will age and die. Like everything in this world, our lives are full of continual change.
  4. But God is unchanging.  
**Psalm 102:27 KJV** - "But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end."
  5. According to Hebrews 1 these verses ultimate point to Christ. In an ever changing world He remains our Solid Rock.

Conclusion:

1. Our ultimate hope is found in the final verse. Everything is ending. Our lives are fading. We pray for relief. But God's purpose is sure.  
**Psalm 102:28 KJV** - "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

2. There will be a succession of believing people, a remnant of the faithful. God will redeem His elect. He will not lose a single one. We are only a small part of the glorious body of Christ, His glorious church. We will all arrive safely into our eternal home.
3. This helps us to keep a proper prospective regarding our earthly condition. This world is not our home. Our proper attitude both now and forever must be, “Oh God, display Thy glory.”