

25. Psalm 102 and 103

6/11/2020

Psalm 102

This is a penitential psalm. In case you don't know what penitential psalm means, let me explain it to you. There are 7 of the psalms have been named the Penitential Psalms – namely, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. In each, the author acknowledges or confesses his trespass before the Lord and recognizes his need for God's favor and forgiveness. The penitential psalms make fitting prayers for the repentant sinner.

This unknown author probably wrote it long after the destruction of Jerusalem, about the time he thought Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 year captivity was about to be fulfilled. According to the title, the psalmist was afflicted and faint and burdened to present his complaint to the Lord. He was groaning in distress and weeping over the ruins of Jerusalem. His opening prayer in verses 1–2 draws from a number of other psalms, giving us an example of what it means to pray the Word of God.

As believers face and deal with the painful crises that come to us, if we are to overcome and glorify God, we must keep three assurances before us.

A. THE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE

Psalm 102:1-11 Hear my prayer, O Lord, And let my cry come to You. 2 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. 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, And my bones are burned like a hearth. 4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass, So that I forget to eat my bread. 5 Because of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my skin. 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. 7 I lie awake, And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop. 8 My enemies reproach me all day long; Those who deride me swear an oath against me. 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, And mingled my drink with weeping, 10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath; For You have lifted me up and cast me away. 11 My days are like a shadow that lengthens, And I wither away like grass.

What do you see here?

The late John F. Kennedy once said, "Everything changes but change itself." He didn't know about our unchangeable God. There are the normal changes in life, from birth to maturity to death, but there are also providential changes that God sends for our good and His glory.

Many Jewish leaders in the days of Jeremiah the prophet thought that God would never allow Judah to be captured and Jerusalem and the temple destroyed according to Jeremiah 7, but the Babylonian army did all three. They also took prisoners to Babylon and left only the poorest of the people to care for the land. Because of their rebellion against the law of God, Israel was left without a king, priesthood, temple, or sacrifice.

Whether we are suffering because of our sins, or because we stand up for the Lord, or simply because we need to be better equipped for service, these changes are not pleasant. The psalmist recorded his personal difficulties in a series of vivid pictures. He even felt like the Lord chose him over everyone else to punish him.

One of the first steps toward personal peace and victory is to accept the fact that there will be changes in life, and how we respond will determine what these changes do to us and for us. The psalmist responded by turning to the Lord for help.

B. THE UNCHANGED COVENANT OF GOD

Psalm 102:12-22 But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, And the remembrance of Your name to all generations. 13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion; For the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come. 14 For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, And show favor to her dust. 15 So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, And all the kings of the earth Your glory. 16 For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. 17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, And shall not despise their prayer. 18 This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the Lord. 19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the Lord viewed the earth, 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To release those appointed to death, 21 To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem, 22 When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

What is your interpretation of this?

"But You, O Lord" marked a change in the psalmist's outlook as he turned from himself and his problems to see the Lord enthroned in heaven by faith. The throne of David was gone and would not be claimed until the Son of David came to earth, but the throne of God in heaven was secure. Judah and Jerusalem were experiencing shame, but God's everlasting name would not change.

Philippians 2:10-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If His people obeyed His law, He would bless them, but if they disobeyed and turned to idols, He would chasten them. Either way, He would show His love and faithfulness.

The writer was confident that God would arise and rescue Zion because it was time for His promises to be fulfilled. Even more, the Lord loved Zion more than the Jewish people did. Even more, the restoration of Zion means the glory of the Lord, and this involves the salvation of the Gentile nations. When the Jewish exiles were released from captivity in Babylon and allowed to return to Judah, this was a witness to the surrounding nations that Jehovah was on the throne and guiding in the destiny of His people.

And what about the future generations in Israel? The Lord made His covenant with them as well, and He will fulfill it. God's compassion, God's covenant, God's glory, and God's people are all a part of the future of Jerusalem! That's why any nation which goes against Israel is directly fighting against God Himself as we see in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Revelation 19. Of course, the result is obvious.

As the 19th century Scottish preacher Alexander Maclaren wrote, "Zion cannot die while Zion's God lives." The Lord will keep His promises and His glory will return to Zion.

C. THE CHANGELESS CHARACTER OF GOD

Psalm 102:23-28 He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. 24 I said, "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations. 25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 26 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. 27 But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. 28 The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You."

Please give me your interpretation of this portion.

The psalmist was afraid he would die in midlife and never see the restoration of Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple. The eternal God would remain forever, but we, frail humans have only a brief time on earth.

Leaders and nations come and go, civilizations, cities, and buildings appear and vanish, but the Lord is the same and never renounces His throne. God's eternity reminds only us of our own frailty and the temporary nature of our lives, but it also reminds us that His promises and purposes will be fulfilled. This psalmist closed his prayer by remembering the future generations, though he did not see his prayer answered in his day, he knew that the answer would come.

May we today be concerned about God's work on earth and the future generations who will serve Him after we are gone. May the future not weep because we have not been faithful.

I hope and pray that if the Lord tarries His rapture, He may raise the generation of the devout followers of Jesus.

Psalm 103

A. PERSONAL PRAISE TO THE LORD

Psalm 103:1-5 A Psalm of David. Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

What do you get out of this?

The next 4 psalms emphasize praise to the Lord for several reasons: His benefits to His people in 103; His care of His creation in 104; His wonderful acts on behalf of Israel in 105 and His longsuffering with His people's rebellion in 106.

There are no prayer requests in this psalm. It is only praise to the Lord. In studying this psalm, we must remember that God's blessings on Israel depended on their obedience to His covenant as a conditional covenant, and believers today must also be obedient to God's will if they would enjoy God's best. The psalm also reminds us not to forget the Lord after we have received the blessings and enjoyed them.

To "bless the Lord" means to delight in His heart by expressing love and gratitude for all He is and all He does. Parents are pleased when their children simply thank them

and love them, without asking for anything. True praise comes from a grateful heart that sincerely wants to glorify and please the Lord.

"All that is within me" means that all of our inner beings are focused on the Lord – heart, soul, mind, and strength. It also means that we are prepared to obey His will after our praise has ended.

Our lack of trust in the Lord comes from not being grateful for what our Lord has done and does and will do. We often forget how faithful our Lord has been with us in spite of all the shortcomings of ours.

B. NATIONAL PRAISE TO THE LORD

Psalm 103:6-18 The Lord executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed. 7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. 8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. 14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. 17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, 18 To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

What kind of interpretation are you getting from this paragraph?

The nation of Israel was certainly blessed of the Lord and it is only logical for they were obligated to express their praise and thanksgiving to Him. Their God was their righteous Deliverer, not only when He rescued them from Egypt, but all during their history. He gave David many great victories on the battlefield. The Lord also gave His people guidance, leading them by His glory cloud, His Word, and His prophets.

In light of what is happening in our country as well as around the world, praising the Lord as a nation is rather a distant story. But this is the time for all of us in America to acknowledge His protection, goodness, faithfulness, redemption, blessings, and all the other things He generously provides for our nation.

There are no other nations around the world that are so blessed as America, yet its people are doing everything they can to kick our God out of this country. We are rejecting Him from the government, school, court, economy, and entertainment. Hollywood is extremely good at making anti-God movies and uses them to brainwash people and it's working very well.

I love v12. Our God says, "I forgive you and I forget your sins." But do we do that? We say, "I will try to forgive you but I will never forget your sins." To forgive someone doesn't mean we have to "forget" the offense entirely. That's impossible. Forgetting has more to do with restoring an injured relationship, with letting the pain slowly fade until it doesn't ache whenever you see the other person. It's learning to trust again. It's accepting the past and leaving it behind rather than dragging it into the future.

Forgiveness is not a snap-of-the-fingers miracle. It's a journey that involves work, commitment, faith, and time to heal. But the God of forgiveness will be with you every step of the way, strengthening you on your journey to becoming more like the ultimate forgiver, His Son.

C. UNIVERSAL PRAISE TO THE LORD

Psalm 103:19-22 The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all. 20 Bless the Lord, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word. 21 Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His pleasure. 22 Bless the Lord, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

What do you see here?

When we worship the Lord God, we worship the King of the universe. The "Lord of Hosts" is sovereign over all things He has created, including the stars and planets and the angels, who are servants to the believers.

The apostle John heard the vast choir of all creation praising the Lord in the Book of Revelation, and one day, we shall join in that anthem. But the final shout of praise in the psalm comes, not from the angels, but from redeemed men and women who have more to praise the Lord for than do all the angels in heaven and all the galaxies in the universe.

Nobody in hell blesses the Lord, but every creature in heaven does nothing else but bless the Lord. We who are in this world can enjoy "heaven on earth" as we join them in expressing thanksgiving and blessing to our great God.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul!"