

MY HOPE IN THE ETERNAL GOD (Psa 102)

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A great deal of our comfort now is our hope for the future. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast” (Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, I). Hope itself is our “blessing now.” “The soul, uneasy and [kept] from home, Rests and [speaks about] a life to come” (ibid.). Still, the biblical hope is not wishful thinking but confident expectation based on God’s promise—ultimately, the gospel (2 Cor 1.20). We hope in His Word, which is to say, in Him.

Psa 102 is a personal lament (1-11) finding solace in anticipation of God’s creating a new society in this age (12-22) to endure for all eternity (23-28). In substance, this is resurrection, eternal life for innumerable multitudes. This is the salvation of all God’s elect through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Though miserable now, I hope in the eternal God and His saving work.

Psa title. Touching, descriptive: prayer his therapy, overwhelming affliction his lot as a true saint, “complaint” (expression of grief) his procedure.

I. My Hope in My Present Misery (1-11)

- Lord, hear my cry for help (1, 2). Expressions typical in the psalms. As if God were a man who might not hear or see (fig.). Emotional.
- Lord, see my misery and have mercy on me (3-11). Historically, maybe Babylonian exile. The experience common to all. Very poetic for human unhappiness, deep distress. My life passes swiftly without significance (metaphor of consumed by fire, 3, like shadows at dusk, withering grass, 11), my very soul is beaten down, dried up, with loss of appetite (4), severe weight loss (5). Birds in the desert, on housetop (6, 7) refer to loneliness. Everyone is (or seems to be) against me (8). Ashes and weeping are routine for me like eating, drinking (9). My descent from former blessing and joy comes by a frowning Providence (10): YOU do all this to me → The saddest thing to one who truly loves God. Yet in this there is hope because God is love, is wise, is faithful, and so afflicts His own. He who afflicts has power to cease afflicting and to bless us instead!

Are you now or have you ever found yourself miserable? “Misery loves company” a truism. You’re not alone in this. Suffering is part of being human in this present age, even for God’s favorites—even for Christ Jesus! It doesn’t mean God doesn’t love you! Shun false health/wealth gospel. This cry for help by itself is the fruit of hope in God, but there is more:

II. My Hope for the Worldwide Kingdom of God (12-22). One remarkable feature is that he finds encouragement in the blessing of others (he counts himself one of them). He resists being “curved in upon himself” (Luther), individualistic, selfish, self-absorbed, “navel gazing.” Self-obsession is a vortex of increasing depression and despair. He looks up and around: to God, at God’s people now, and at future converts.

- Lord, You are not in need like me (12). Big contrast: “But thou.” My fleeting days are not like Your eternity. You are always there for each generation. All the benefit of our relationship with God is one way (He benefits us, not vice versa; Acts 17.24, 25). He, the Provider; we, the provided for; and He, the Savior; we, the saved.

- Lord, You will have mercy upon Your servants (13, 14). “Zion” fig. for God’s “servants” who love Him (hence, love for His holy place). Psalmist anticipates (as if imminent) God’s mercy, favor, upon Zion.
- Lord, You will have mercy upon sinners from the nations (15-22). Principle: “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Rom 2.10). Zion’s blessing leads to the blessing of the “heathen” (Heb. *goyim*, Gentiles). RH fulfillment: 1) in God’s blessing Jesus (the suffering, praying Jew, resurrected [v. 20] as “Savior of the world,” Jn 4.42), 2) then, the Christian converts, first in Jerusalem [v. 21], then Judah/Samaria/nations (Acts 1.8, to the end of the age [v. 22]).

Psalmist hoped for the worldwide kingdom of God (c. 600 BC). How much more us today (since Christ came, success of worldwide Christian missions)! Yet there is more for the believing sufferer’s comfort and encouragement:

- III. **My Hope for the Eternal Kingdom of God (23-28).** The gift of Christ to the world, His resurrection life, millions of souls saved through 2000 years, the world bettered by Christian fellowship and service—these are but the early, early dawns of the glorious things God has prepared for those who love Him. Their fullness is inconceivably great, glorious!
 - Lord, preserve us through trial to experience this hope (23, 24). Brevity of life, certainty of death, seem to make impossible our enjoyment of anything beyond. “Preserve me for the blessedness!” This is yearning for the eternal. God “has put eternity in [our] hearts” (Eccl 3.11). There must be more than threescore and ten!
 - Lord, You are eternal and shall redeem all creation (25-27). Sweeping perspective: from the beginning (creation) to the end (the Last Day), which is actually a rebirth of everything, “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa 65.17; 2 Pet 3.13; Rev 21.1). [Psa 102.25-27 are understood in Heb 1.10-12 as written of Christ.]
 - Lord, Your people will live eternally in the new creation (28). Our spiritual salvation in this life precedes our physical salvation (resurrection), fitting us for life in the new creation. See Paul’s glorious hope in Rom 8.18-25! The Eternal God (Creator, Ruler, Savior) fulfills His eternal purpose in CJ our Lord (Eph 3.11)! This is our hope, and a grand, biblical understanding of the true gospel!

APPLICATIONS

- Even as a devout Christian, expect misery in this life. None of us is exempt. Don’t be down about being down, “as if some strange thing happened to you” (1 Pet 4.12).
- Help yourself by honest, heartfelt prayer to the Lord. Learn the art of reverent complaint. He puts our tears in a bottle (Psa 56.8).
- Find comfort in knowing that the risen Christ is building His Church. Your earthly life is one tiny piece, if a dark one, in a vast mosaic that shall finally display the glory of Christ and of God.
- Enjoy your inclusion in the Church now and anticipate your celebration with it forever (2 Cor 4.17). Amen. Ω