

Psalm 102
The Fainthearted Afflicted One

Introduction: This is from book 4 of the Psalms. It focuses on interceding for the fulfillment of God's covenant with David. It reaffirms the solid foundations on which believers can trust. Probably written (or at least edited) during or shortly after the Babylonian Exile of Israel (cf. 102:14)

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Ps. 102:25-27 in reference to the eternal deity of Jesus. Is the whole psalm therefore Messianic?

Superscription: *A Prayer of the (anonymous) afflicted when he is faint (feeling overwhelmed) and pours out his complaint before Yahweh.*

1) His urgent prayer—102:1-11 (five requests)

a) **The five requests—102:1-2**

- Note the synonyms for prayer: prayer, cry for help, call
 - All of these have been expressed in earlier psalms. In other words, he is not the only one who has been in similar circumstances or has ever prayed this way.
 - Doing this, he rejects the lie that his particular pain distinguishes him from other humans, sets him apart from them and out of reach of God's grace, as though his particular experience puts him in a category beyond the help of the Bible. (James Hamilton)
- i) Two positives: ¹ *O Yahweh, hear my prayer! And let my cry for help come to You.*
- ii) One negative: ² *Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;*
- iii) Two positives: *Incline Your ear to me; In the day when I call answer me quickly.*

(1) Charles Spurgeon: Bow Your greatness to my weakness.

b) **The basis of his prayer is his Godward misery—102:3-11**

i) **Physically—102:3-7**

(1) **Bone-deep weariness:** ³ *For my days have vanished in smoke, And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.*

(2) **Loss of appetite/fasting:**

(a) Described: ⁴ *My heart has been stricken like grass and it has dried up, Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.* ⁵ *Because of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my flesh.*

(b) Illustrated: ⁶ *I resemble a pelican (qa'at, an unknown bird) of the wilderness; I have become like an owl of the waste places.*

(3) **Sleeplessness from a sense of loneliness:** ⁷ *I lie awake, I have become like a lonely bird on a roof.*

ii) **Socially: mocking contempt—102:8**

(1) ⁸ *My enemies have reproached me all day long; Those who ridicule me swear against me.*

(2) Perhaps similar to the way people curse/swear with the name “Jesus Christ”.

iii) **Emotionally: despair**—102:9-11

(1) Mournful agony: ⁹ *For I have eaten ashes like bread And mixed my drinks with weeping* ¹⁰ *Because of Your indignation and Your wrath, For You have lifted me up and cast me away.*

(2) My life is almost over: ¹¹ *My days are like an outstretched shadow, And as for me, I dry up like grass.*

2) **His view of God gives him hope of answered prayer**—102:12-17

a) **God is eternal**—102:12 ¹² **But You** (emphatic), **O Yahweh**, abide (“sit enthroned”?) forever, *And the remembrance of Your name from generation to generation.*

i) In spite of the fleeting nature of human existence.

b) **God is merciful, gracious, and sovereign**—102:13 ¹³ **You** (emphatic) *will arise and have compassion [racham] on Zion—*

i) *For it is time to be gracious [chanan] to it,*

ii) *For the appointed time (for the restoration of Jerusalem) has come.*

(1) Jer. 29:10 states the exile will last 70 years.

c) **God is to be held in awe**—102:14-16 ¹⁴ *For Your slaves find pleasure in its stones And show grace to its dust—*

i) Why?

(1) ¹⁵ *So the nations will fear (be in awe of) the name of Yahweh*

(2) *And all the kings of the earth (will be in awe of) Your glory.*

(a) Ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom.

ii) Why will the nations and kings be in awe of Yahweh? ¹⁶ *For ...*

(1) *Yahweh has built up Zion;*

(2) *He has appeared in His glory.*

d) **God is concerned**—102:17 (cf. 102:1-2)

i) Positively: ¹⁷ *He has turned toward the prayer of the destitute (without their own resources)*

ii) Negatively: *And has not despised their prayer.*

3) **God will act faithfully to His covenant**—102:18-22

a) **God is to be praised**—102:18

i) ¹⁸ *This (vv. 13, 16-17) will be written for the generation to come,*

ii) *And a people yet to be created will praise Yah.*

b) **God is omniscient, and paying attention**—102:19-22

i) **The reality, in contrast to our feelings:**

(1) ¹⁹ *For He looked down from His holy height;*

(2) *From heaven Yahweh gazed upon the earth,*

ii) **The purposes:** (three infinitives)

(1) ²⁰ *To hear the groaning of the prisoner,*

(2) *To set free those who were doomed to death,*

- (3) ²¹ *To recount the name of Yahweh in Zion And His praise in Jerusalem,*
(a) ²² *When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to*
serve Yahweh. (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 56:7; Micah 4:1-3)

4) His praise—102:23-28

a) **Rooted in reality, God DOES (at times) limit us—102:23**

- i) ²³ *He has afflicted my strength in the way;*
ii) *He has shortened my days.*

b) **Rooted in a right understanding of God—102:24-28**

- i) **Comparison with humanity:** ²⁴ *I say, “O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, Your years are from generation to all generations.*
ii) **Eternally unchanging:** ²⁵ *“Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. ²⁶ “Even they will perish, but You will remain; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. ²⁷ “**But You** (emphatic) are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.*
iii) **Faithful to His promises:** ²⁸ *“The children of Your slaves will dwell securely, And their seed will be established before You.”*

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) No matter how impaired God’s work may become, the immutability of God guarantees that his work will move forward in God’s perfect time. Thus, there is an always unshakable hope in the future. (Steven Lawson)
b) The intense anxiety felt by the author of Ps 102 was like a fog that burned away under the blazing sun of the certainty of God’s everlasting reign and unstoppable promises. (James Hamilton)