

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God
Psalm 102: A Frail Man's Confidence in the Eternal God
Sunday, September 8, 2019

Introduction

Because we live in world that is cursed by sin, suffering and pain are realities that we all face. While some endure greater depths of suffering than others, none of us are exempt.

One of the great gifts of God to His people is that the Scriptures don't ignore the reality of suffering. In fact, the pain and difficulties of life are a central theme throughout the Bible. And thankfully the Bible doesn't only acknowledge the presence of suffering, but it provides hope for those who suffer.

The heading of Psalm 102 identifies it as *a prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord*. While this heading provides some helpful context, it falls short in describing the psalm as a whole. While the psalmist is indeed afflicted and faint, and while he does pour out his heart to God, we also see that he is full of confidence in God and in His promises to His people.

The Priority of Prayer: An Urgent Expression of Dependence on God (102:1-2)

- As the psalm begins it is evident that the psalmist is in need. The repetitive nature of verses 1 and 2 make it clear that the psalmist understands his need for God and that he that he is utterly dependent on Him for help.
- The entirety of Psalm 102 is a prayer and it serves as a good example of what it looks like to cry out to God in our time of need. It can be seen throughout the psalm, but especially in verses 1 and 2 that the psalmist knows that God's intervention and God's salvation are his only hope.
- **James Boice** – *This is no passive or half-hearted petition, no mere formal 'saying of prayers.' Quite the contrary. It is an impassioned prayer because the situation out of which it grows is desperate. Desperate conditions make for strong petitions.*

The Reality of Suffering: An Honest Assessment of the Depth of Suffering (102:3-11)

- While the psalmist never fully identifies the nature of his suffering, it is evident is that he is in a dire and desperate situation. He uses vivid language to describe his weakness and his feelings of frailty. He expresses that his life seems short and fleeting and that outside of God's intervention he will soon pass away.
- The imagery that the psalmist uses suggests that he is suffering physically, but it's also obvious that he is burdened spiritually and emotionally.
- In this section of the psalm we are reminded of the reality and intensity of suffering and we are also given an example of what it looks like to cry out to God in the midst of a time of pain.

The Source of Hope: The Psalmist's Confidence in God (102:12-28)

- While the psalmist is very clear about the depth of his pain, he is equally clear about his hope. In verse 12 there is a distinct transition in the prayer as the psalmist begins to express his confidence in God and His promises.
- **He Remembers and is Confident in the Promises of God (vv. 13-22)** – While some have argued that the psalmist's shift to talking about God's promises to Israel makes the prayer seem disjointed, this is not the case. What we see is a man who believes in the promises of God and that God will be faithful to His people. It is this God – the faithful, promise-keeping God – who the psalmist turns to in His time of great need. He knows that He can trust God and that God will save His people.
- **He Remembers and is Confident in the Nature of God (vv. 23-28)** – The psalmist repeatedly expresses his own weakness and frailty. In contrast God is strong and everlasting. The psalmist praises God for who He is and allows this acknowledgement of God's nature to provide hope. He is shaken but he recognizes that He can cry out to the One who is unshakable