

Immutable

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[0 : 00] Psalm 102. I'm reading the whole psalm. The book of Psalms, Psalm 102.

Hear my prayer, O Lord. Let my cry for help come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me when I call.

Answer me quickly. For my days vanish like smoke. My bones burn like glowing embers. My heart is blighted and withered like grass.

I forget to eat my food. Because of my loud groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones. I'm like a desert owl. Like an owl among the ruins, I lie awake.

I've become like a bird alone on a roof. All day long my enemies taunt me. Those who reel against me use my name as a curse. For I eat ashes as my food.

[1 : 01] And mingle my drink with tears. Because of your great wrath. For you have taken me up and thrown me aside. My days are like the evening shadow. I wither away like grass.

But you, O Lord, sit in throne forever. Your renown endures through all generations. You will arise and have compassion on Zion.

For it is time to show favor to her. The appointed time has come. For her stones are dear to your servants. Her very dust moves them to pity.

The nations will fear the name of the Lord. All the kings of the earth will revere your glory. For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory.

He will respond to the prayer of the destitute. He will not despise their plea. Let this be written for a future generation. That a people not yet created may praise the Lord.

[1 : 58] The Lord looked down from the sanctuary on high. From heaven he viewed the earth. To hear the groans of the prisoners. And to release those condemned to death.

So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion. And his praise in Jerusalem. When the peoples and the kingdoms assembled to worship the Lord.

In the course of my life he broke my strength. He cut short my days. So I said, do not take me away. O God, in the midst of my days.

Your years go on through all generations. In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth.

And the heavens have a work of your hands. They will perish. But you remain.

They will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them. And they will be discarded. But you remain the same. And your years will never end.

[2 : 56] The children of your servants will live in your presence. Their descendants will be established before you. Amen. So really tonight we're looking at the whole of Psalm 102.

And we'll be flicking back and forwards to Hebrews chapter 1. It is one of the biggest reasons given for relationships falling apart.

For friendships growing cold. And it's a phrase we're all so used to hearing. It's what causes feelings of homesickness when we're far from home.

It's what leaves us feeling confused often when we travel somewhere new. And it's something we all deal with every day. It's something that's part of who we are.

Part of the world we live in. That simple thing is change. Change. We are constantly changing beings.

[4 : 07] In a constantly changing world. We all know that to be true of course. It's not a surprise to any of us here this evening. When we come to read in Psalm 102 this evening.

We are faced quite clearly. Quite openly. Quite vividly. In many places he's quite raw about it. The painful reality of change in this man's life.

The painful effects it has on the writer. And we read and we hear as he tells of his pain. As he tells of his misery.

And then of course he leads us slowly. Slowly leads us to the wonderful glimpses of light we have. Where we see how God relates.

To that change. Of course we're following on our evening series. Looking at how God is different to us. And why that's a good thing. So this week we're looking at the fact that God does not change.

[5 : 15] The term that's often used to describe that attribute of God. Is that God is immutable.

Again, a word that's good to know I guess.

But it means quite simply, he does not change. God does not change. Of course there's so much we can say about that. So we're just scratching the surface this evening.

And even this psalm, we're just scratching the surface of this psalm itself. Let's begin by looking at the man and his own changing condition. And then later on compare and contrast that to God.

More than half of the psalm, quite a bit actually, over half the psalm is given over to the man and his complaints. The man and his distress.

The man and his situation. As we said, in vivid terms, he makes quite clear the reality of what it is to live in a universe that is constantly changing.

[6 : 17] To live in a changing world where nothing remains the same for any real amount of time.

Maybe we can't all here sympathize to a total extent of what this man is talking about.

What this man is feeling of the depths of pain this man is quite clearly enduring. Maybe some here can. But all of us here in some way can understand this man's cries.

We can't understand this man's plea, this man's confusion, this man's distress at living in a changing world and being a changing person.

Roughly talks about four different areas of life where we see so much changeability and so much fragility. Three or four roughly.

And they do overlap in some areas. Firstly, we can see how fragile life itself actually is. He makes clear pictures of just how fragile his own life really is.

[7 : 23] That life itself is passing him by. He refers in verse three. If you have your Bible open in front of you, we'll be going through the psalm in verse by verse and jumping around a bit.

So please have your Bibles open. In verse three, we see how his life is passing away, vanishing like smoke. Verse four, his heart is blighted and it's withering away like grass.

And again in verse 11. My day is like an evening shadow. I wither away like grass. If you ever sit and watch the sun set and watch the shadows, when the sun gets just above the horizon, it seems to go quicker and quicker and quicker and the shadows go longer, longer, longer and are gone.

His life is quickly, quickly passing him by. His circumstances, really, we don't really know what has caused him such grief.

We'll see later on some idea what has, but in reality we're left to wonder what has afflicted him so much. But they've caused him to remember or to realize maybe for the first time that he is not going to be here forever.

[8 : 48] His life is fleeting. His life is short. And his life is passing him by. That's something, of course, that we all need to be reminded of.

We will not be here forever. I was thinking about the first time I realized this. I was back home. And I was at, I was probably about six or seven.

And I was at the graveside of a family member, a distant relative I'd never met, but passed away again, buried back home in my village. And as we stood around the open grave, the minister who was there quite simply and quite openly said, My friends, I have laid many people in this graveyard. One day someone will lay you here. One day someone will lay me here. One day someone will stand over my grave and say the same things.

When he asked, are you ready? Simple words. Simple truth we all know, but so profound. The psalmist here has painfully come face to face with his own mortality.

[10 : 04] He has realized and been reminded that his life will end. His life is passing him by so quickly. Do we know this experience?

Do we know what it is to feel our lives passing us by? The fact that one day we will be gone. Within 50 to 100 years, those who remember us will also be gone.

All that we've worked so hard to achieve and to hold on to, we leave it all behind. It's a sobering thought, but it's important to hold on to that thought as we carry on throughout the psalm.

So life is fragile. Then we also see how his soul and his mind, how they are fragile and how they are so changeable.

In verse 2, we see he's in great distress. He cries out for help. Down to verse 4, he's downcast. He's so downcast he can't even eat his food anymore.

[11:07] He forgets to eat his food. And verse 6 to 7, he can't sleep anymore. In verse 9, he's in constant tears.

His tears are mingling with his food and his drink. Here we have a picture of a man who is totally, totally broken.

A man that's hurting, that has faced such great changes in his situation and his emotions. He's got all the signs of someone going through deep distress.

Not able to eat, not able to sleep. And we know that God's word is so clear. It hides nothing from us about the reality of our fragile lives.

I'm sure that many here this evening can sympathize with this man. In ways only yourselves will know. You can sympathize with this man's sadness, this man's misery, his distress, his loneliness.

[12:18] And how quickly do we find our emotions changing? We can wake up feeling great. We can have breakfast or leave the door. We're feeling miserable. Our situation and our emotions and our mind can change in a second.

It takes one phone call for our whole lives to be turned upside down. The times we feel we were so sure about something, and then that was so wrong.

The things we hold so dear are being brought into question. We lose sight of our hope when all is darkness.

When, like the psalmist, we are mingling our tears with our drink. We are changing so quickly in our soul and our mind. Thirdly, he talks about the changing nature and changing circumstance of the world around him and of his own life.

How his own life changes so quickly and how the world around him changes so quickly. In terms of personal circumstances changing, we can see the whole psalm is concerning that for him.

[13:33] But we can look at examples like in verse 6. Verse 6, I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. This vivid picture.

There is some debate, actually, what this animal being referred to actually is. But either way, the picture is clear. He's in the desert. He's alone. In the night.

Screeching away. An owl among the ruins. All around him is destroyed. And he is there on his own in the darkness. Then in verse 8, he makes reference, of course, to his enemies all day long.

My enemies taunt me. And they rule against him. And they curse him. Using his name. Those wanting to see his destruction. Those wanting to see his downfall.

In verses 15 to verse 22, we get a glimpse into at least part of the reason of his misery. We see that he's talking about the destruction and the long rebuilding of Zion.

[14:38] Of course, there's much we can say about that. But for the sake of time tonight, we can't delve into that. But safe to say, he has seen the destruction. Of the place he holds dear.

The place he loves is no longer the same. The people he once knew are no longer there.

Destruction is all around him.

So here we do encounter a man who is miserable. A man who is truly in distress. A man who's lamenting his changing circumstances.

A man who's not able to control what is happening to him or happening around him. A man who's not able to control what is happening to him or anything. A man that many of us, of course, can perhaps sympathize with or even identify with.

In amongst this torrent of sadness, we then thankfully have two distinct sections of wonderful light. Where we see amongst this quickly changing and spiraling misery.

[15:46] We see hope. Please look with me to verse 12. This man is in misery. You might say, I am in misery.

My life is falling apart. Who I am has changed. My mind and my feelings and my soul are in constant change. My situation has changed. Darkness is all around me.

My whole world has changed. But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever. Your renown endures through all generations.

What a change in tone. What a change in the pace and the tone of this psalm. It's almost as if he stops. He stops in his tracks and he catches himself.

He gathers himself together what he can. And he realizes, but you, but you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever.

[16 : 52] He declares the reality of the unchanging reality of the unchanging God he worships. The kingdoms of this world, they will topple.

They will fall. If God preserves us long enough, this place will be in ruins one day. Our nation will be forgotten one day. Covered with a layer of earth.

His kingdom will never stop. It will never stop. It will never be toppled. His kingdom will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

His kingdom will never be attacked so much as it falls to pieces. It will endure forever because God as king endures forever.

And it gets even more incredible. The unchanging God of the universe.

[17 : 56] The unchanging God who sits enthroned forever. What does it say about him in verses 12 down to verse 20?

In verses 12 down to verse 20, we see that our unchanging God cares for us changing beings. He is not far away, not far removed. Because he's unchanging, it doesn't mean he cannot and does not interact with us. He is unchanging.

He sits enthroned forever. But yet, he has compassion on us. He cares deeply.

He cares in a real active sense about changeable people. The perfect God who reigns for all eternity.

[19 : 01] Unchangingly reigns for all eternity. He cares for us changing creatures. Let's read together verses 19 to verse 20.

A verse that we can apply to all of God's salvation, to all God's people. A verse which summarizes God's gospel plan. The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high.

From heaven he viewed the earth. To hear the groans of the prisoners. And release those condemned to death. So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion.

His praise in Jerusalem. When the peoples and kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord. God who saw me and saw you in our sin.

Who saw us in our lostness. Who saw us in our constant changing, ever spiraling downward darkness. He didn't remain far away.

[20 : 03] He didn't remain detached. He saw us and he intervened in history. And he intervened in our lives. A wonderful reason to praise our unchanging God.

This is where it's so important for us to see our God as unchanging. Because God doesn't change. He will not one day grow tired or grow weary of saving and helping changeable sinners.

Because God is unchanging. He is unchanging in all that he is. Unchanging in his love. Unchanging in his mercy. Unchanging in his forgiveness and in his salvation.

Unchanging in his salvation. Of course there's a thousand things to say about that. And again we're restricted by time and by very much by my ability. We're restricted in so many ways.

But please do read this psalm again for yourselves. And other. I was saying to James a few days ago. It's a great irony in that I changed topic sermon text for this sermon about ten times.

[21 : 12] Look at God's unchangeability. And how scripture itself gives so many evidences again and again of how God does not change. And why that is a great thing for us.

So we've seen our unchanging God in terms of his kingdom. In terms of his never changing kingdom. Now look with me at verses 24 down to verse 28.

In verses 24 to verse 28. He is again crying out to God. And he's requesting to God. Don't take me away. Don't cut my days short.

God. Your years go on through all generations. It's here we are being let in to see just a small glimpse.

A small glimpse of a glory that belongs to our immutable God. We're of course limited so much by human language and by understanding.

[22 : 16] But what can be expressed. What is expressed in these verses is just incredible. In verse 24 we see the psalmist reminding us again of our mortal limitations.

Compared to the endless days of God. Your years go on through all generations. In a day we change so much.

In a day our plans change. Our attitude change. Our emotions change. God goes on forever.

Verse 25 down to verse 27. We see an incredible, incredible amount of truth being shared with us.

There's just so much taken in these verses. One day all that we know. All that God has made. It will perish.

[23 : 11] We know that when God comes back. Everything will be dissolved. 2 Peter 3 verse 10 talks about this coming day of the Lord.

It's like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar. And the heavenly bodies will be burnt up and dissolved. And the earth and the works that are done in it will be exposed. Like clothing you will change them. And they will be discarded. The power of our unchanging God. He is outwith his creation.

And one day he will come back. And he will do as he has promised here. Even creation itself of course will be made new. These verses from verse 24 down to verse 28.

They are incredible enough on their own. On their own we see such wonderful truths about our unchanging God. But these verses are made even more incredible. Of course when we look to Hebrews chapter 1.

[24 : 21] The chapter we read a few moments ago. And we trust in the principle that scripture interprets scripture. And because of that we know that the verses in Hebrews chapter 1 are true.

In Hebrews chapter 1 of course we read. It gives a defense of the supremacy of the eternal son. The supremacy of Jesus compared to the angels.

Or compared to the other heavenly hosts. It shows that Jesus is not just a supreme angel. That Jesus is unique. That Jesus is alone.

The son of God. And part of that defense to show that Jesus is God. Is to show that he is unchanging.

And they quote in Hebrews chapter 1. These verses in Psalm 102. The writer of Hebrews chapter 1. Goes back and quotes these verses. From verse 24 down to verse 27, 28.

[25 : 25] And he says these verses are talking about Jesus. That Jesus is the one being addressed in these verses. Being talked about in these verses.

Incredible. This should just transform our view of this passage. It should make praise well upon us. As we again later say in Hebrews 13 verse 9.

Where Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus but he laid the foundations of the air but he will remain forever but he is the same and this psalm is to be taken as clear evidence of our unchanging, our immutable saviour but why should that matter so much to us?

Great, we understand it. Why does it matter? Well it means that because our saviour never changes neither does his nature, his being or his promises towards us what he has said and what he has promised will never alter or be altered because he is never altered, because he never changes his promises never change they never fade away the one who promised to take all the sins of all his people to the cross the one who promised to deal with these sins the one who promised that we would be made clean in the sight of God that promise never changes the one who promised that none of his people would be lost that promise never changes the one who promised to one day come back and take his people to be with him until that happens that promise will never change this is not just dry theology the fact that our saviour our God does not change it's essential for us to know that fact because God does not change his promises his covenant his blessings towards us do not change the one who promised to be a light and a saviour for his people that promise does not and will never change in this psalm we just get a brief glimpse into the wonder of our unchanging God the God who remains the same even as we find our lives changing so quickly even as we find perhaps our lives falling to bits we have the confidence the sure hope that he has not changed the God who first saved us is the God who still walks with us the God who created all things is the God who will one day take us home to be with himself

God has not changed from any here and only you know this really we all know each other here to an extent but in reality only the individual knows only I know only you know where you stand before God my humble personal question to you is where does your security lie where does your hope lie the Christian and the non-Christian we all face pretty much the same trials issues with family issues with health issues with money issues with jobs and so on what separates the Christian from the non-Christian what separates us is the fact that when the Christian sees the earth give way under our feet when the Christian sees their life falling to bits when the Christian recognizes that everything is changing about them they have the sure hope and confidence of what's painful of what's miserable of what's over situation is sad and at times distressing they know that their God does not change that their God is secure and because their God does not change his love for them has not and will not change his promises to them has not and will never change my honest simple plea to you it's so

[30 : 05] I know we always say this it's so easy to get so comfortable in church in our pews on a Sunday evening Sunday morning I'm up here you're down there we get so comfortable with this process so comfortable with all this stuff we forget how real this is this is real this is real life and death this is a word of God talking to you right now put your hope and your trust in the unchanging God who made you and who knows you the unchanging God who we will all one day meet face to face since then and person I assumption nothing the un[REDACTED] is everything that came up to me according to you I'm up there so Barkha it's people that came and I reached the scene that came and you that came and I could you value this he and other you know