

# PM Psalm 102 Who is your Rescuer?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Reading this evening is taken from Psalm 102. Psalm 102 and we'll read the full psalm just so that we get to see the context of the passage that we're actually going to look at this evening. So Psalm 102 and for the Church Bibles that's page 602.

Psalm 102 reading the full passage. A prayer of one afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord.

Hear my prayer O Lord let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me. Answer me speedily in the day when I call.

For my days pass away like smoke and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered. I forget to eat my bread because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh.

I am like a desert owl of the wilderness like an owl of the waste places. I lie awake I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. And all the day my enemies taunt me those who deride me use my name for a curse for I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink because of your indignation and anger for you have taken me up and thrown me down.

[ 1 : 4 1 ]     My days are like an evening shadow I wither away like grass. But you O Lord are enthroned forever. You are remembered throughout all generations.

You will arise and have pity on Zion. It is the time to favour her. The appointed time has come. For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust.

Nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory. For the Lord builds up Zion. He appears in his glory.

He records the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer. Let this be recorded for a generation to come so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord that he looked down from his holy height from heaven the Lord looked at the earth to hear the groans of the prisoners to set free those who were doomed to die that they may declare in Zion the name of the Lord and in Jerusalem his praise when peoples gather together and kingdoms to worship the Lord he has broken my strength in midcourse he has shortened my days O my God I say take me not away in the midst of my days you whose years endure throughout all generations of old you laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens of the works of your hands they will perish but you will remain they will all wear out like a garment you will change them like a robe and they will pass away but you are the same and your years have no end the children of your servants shall dwell secure their offspring shall be established before you thanks be to God for the reading of his holy word and to his name be the praise and the glory forever

Amen let's join again in prayer this evening as we start to look at Psalm 102 as we work our way through the Psalms first of all a question who is your rescuer?

[ 4 : 08 ]      who will come to your aid? well that's two questions who is your rescuer? and who will come to your aid? we read the full Psalm this evening so that we can set it in the context this does not at first seem the most uplifting of Psalms in the first hearing or reading of it there are both sentiments of lament and painful issues for the Psalmist to deal with and yet there is also reasons for praise and thanksgiving as we look at the Psalms over the next my next three visits we will examine the main sections of this Psalm which we can break into four main parts the first part is in verse 1 and 2 is the Psalmist's call to God then we have the Psalmist's condition in verses 3 to 11 and God's character in verses 12 to 22 and we close the Psalm with the Psalmist's response in verses 23 to 28 tonight we'll look at those first two sections the Psalmist's short call to God and the Psalmist's condition one of the striking things in these two sections is how personal the events of the Psalm actually are to the Psalmist we hear him write about my prayer, my cry, my days, my heart my loud groaning, my bones and my enemies so the situation is very real for him and it's personal the Psalm begins with in verse 1 and 2 with a call out to God hear my prayer O Lord let my cry come to you do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress incline your ear to me and answer me speedily in days when I call the Psalm begins with a plea from a man in trouble and the title of the Psalm even gives us that message the title a prayer of one afflicted when he's faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord the title prepares us for the notion of a man in desperate straits in prayer he cries out to the Lord that the Lord will hear him and that the Lord will respond to him the Psalmist's initial pleas are positive but in verse 2 they become negative as he pleads for the Lord not to hide his face from him in his times of distress and the wordings about not hiding or the Lord not hiding his face from him reminds us of Psalm 13 a Psalm of David when David cries out questioning the Lord in verse 1 he says how long O Lord will you forget me forever how long will you hide your face from me and in Psalm 102 the fact that the Psalmist requests that the Lord does not hide his face from him suggests that he has already done so the verse concludes though with a final positive plea to the Lord to bend his ear to the Psalmist and to answer his prayers speedily in his time of crisis but why would our Lord turn his back on the one who calls upon him

why would God turn his back on you or I we so often have a vision of a God of love and we dress it with all the sentimentality we associate with our human notions of romantic love that God is some goody two shoes who cares for little children who heals the sick and gives universal forgiveness to all men regardless of whether man declares him as his saviour or not if we go to a funeral service today we so often hear about how good the deceased was and how he is now with God and heaven watching down upon us nothing of the deceased's true nature and of his true relationship with God that vision alone of God is false and that limits his character to what we wish him to be not what he is rather our God is a wholesome

God with a whole character that is complete with all that is good so he is the God of love but not in a sentimental romantic way but the God of love who withheld nothing from us given even his son for the redemption of man given his son to be tortured and to die on a cross for our sins he is also the God of justice the God who requires justice for our breaking of his laws who requires payment for our rebellion against him this was not groundbreaking news for the people of the Old Testament they knew of the covenants that God had made with his people the covenant is an agreement or a contract that God first initiated with the Israelites his chosen people

God instructs them to do certain things for example to follow his ten commandments to follow his laws and in return he will take special care of them that they shall be a blessing to all nations and they shall have the opportunity to live in peace so it's great follow his laws and life will be taken care of but as a God of justice God also laid out that there would be consequences for the breaking of his laws for breaking the covenant the agreement that he had made with his people so if the people keep his covenant they would be blessed if they abandoned it there would be consequences there would be punishment in the Old Testament we often took the nature of this is often to the nature of God withdrawing his blessings and protection from the people we see it throughout the book of Judges that the people would rebel against God

God would allow them to be overrun by their neighbours the people would repent and God would bring forth a leader that would once more free them from persecution so we don't know the exact circumstances that have befallen the psalmist in this psalm but if God has turned away from the psalmist we can presume that he has sinned against God and God awaits his repentance God awaits him returning back to him verses 3 to 11 gives an insight to the feelings of the psalmist as he feels separated from God in verses 3 to 5 we see the failing state of the psalmist physical condition we read for my days pass away like smoke and my bones burn like a furnace my heart is struck down like grass and has withered

[ 12 : 35 ] I forget to eat my bread because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh in verse 3 the psalmist feels that there is no substance to his life his days are like smoke his life rises and departs in the wind his bones burn as though he's a fever as though he's been eaten up in verse 4 we see his heart the vitality of life is cut down like grass not like hay or silage where they're looking to preserve its qualities for a later date rather it starts to dry and wither giving an image of his decay like pasture in a drought that dries up and withers that crumbles in your hand when crushed he's so distressed that he forgets to eat and his physical appearance continues to deteriorate so that in verse 5 his bones cling to his flesh a sorrowful state his appearance now sounds like a weary and haggard man the next section of the psalm compares the psalmist compares himself to the birds around him

I am like a desert owl of the wilderness like an owl of the waste places I lie awake I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop so the first comparison we have is to the unclean owl and we see in Leviticus 11 17 where the owl is listed with other unclean birds of the air as we see the idea of the psalmist being unclean we see the image of the psalmist being outside of God's community an outcast and so we see his loneliness we see this idea of loneliness further emphasized in the image of the sparrow on the rooftop these small birds in Palestine gather together in large flocks but when one of them loses his mate he will sit in the housetop alone he will sit in the housetop chirping a song of lament and sadness how appropriate for his situation is the psalmist's choice for his solitary sadness as places in the desert the waste places of the wilderness and the loneliness of the the rooftops and at times we may have felt that loneliness that sense of abandonment because we have cut ourselves off from the ones we love we have cut ourselves off from God by turning our back on him our actions have caused the breakdown of the relationships now in verses 8 to 11 the psalmist moves from his physical and emotional state to what is afflicting him to what else is causing his distress his enemies and his distance from

God we read all the day my enemies taunt me those who deride me use my name for a curse for I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink because of your indignation and anger for you have taken me up and thrown me down my days are like an evening shadow I wither away like grass we learn in verse 8 that he is the subject of his enemies constant taunts they make comments in order to wound him and to injure him we used to have the nursery rhyme when I was at school that sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me we felt that taunts could be easily shrugged off but now we know that the constant verbal insults or abuse cause just as much harm and injure a person just as much over time as any sticks or stones so he has been worn down by the abuse that he is receiving from his enemies in verse 10 we have further evidence that God has turned his face from the psalmist because of your indignation and anger for you have taken me up and you have thrown me down here we get a picture that the psalmist has previously been exalted by God but now has been humiliated he has been raised up and he's been now cast out by God once again we see the image of the psalmist loneliness for the abuse he receives from his enemies in verse 11 the psalmist says his days are like an evening shadow when the sun is low in the sky our shadow is its longest so that would suggest either early evening or early morning if it was a morning we would expect talk of renewal of strength of hope and of a new dawn of a new life but rather here with the idea of being like an evening shadow and it gives a feeling of his days drawing slowly to a close he's tired the psalmist is worn out with taunts of his enemies and his exclusion from the blessings of God he is weary and his body is in a state of decay this is further emphasized by the last line in verse 11 a reflection of verse 4

I wither away like grass and he makes us question does he feel his days are coming to an end that a death of loneliness and separation from God awaits him what graphic detail the psalmist has used to describe his plight and the slow decay of his body but hope is not lost take a look back to verse 9 and to the language used in verses 1 and 2 verse 9 reads for I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink now we might ask where is the hope in that verse I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink it seems to present us with even more sorrow and grief does eating tears or does eating ashes or tears mingling with our drink give reassurance initially I would suggest not but actually it does in the psalm to date we know not how the psalmist has sinned against God or seen any act of apology but here we have the image of one who is penitent someone who is showing sorrow and regret for his wrongdoing sackcloth and ashes were used as a public sign of repentance and humility before God when we think of the book of Jonah we think about how Jonah declared to the people of

Nineveh that God was going to destroy them for their wickedness everyone from the king on down responded with repentance fasting and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes and chapter 3 we learn that even they put sackcloth in their animals their reasoning in verse 9 was simply who knows God may yet relent with compassion and turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish and that's an interesting thought for the people of Nineveh because Jonah's message had never included any mention of God's mercy but mercy is what they received it's clear that the Ninevites donning of their sackcloth and ashes was not a meaningless show God saw genuine change within them a humble change of their heart represented by their outward appearance of sackcloth and ashes and it caused him to relent and not bring about his plan to destroy the city in Jonah 3.10 we read when God saw what they did how they turned from their evil way

[ 21 : 52 ] God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them and he did not do it so there are signs that the psalmist is repenting of his sin that he is turning to God's way looking for forgiveness and to once more be in right standing with God we are in a similar state to the psalmist we have sinned against God we cannot come into his presence by our own actions or the actions of our fellow man by a priest offering sacrifices or by someone interceding for us we have all sinned we are all far from God and from the standard that he requires of us but God has given us another root rather than sitting in sackcloths and attempting to earn our own salvation he has offered his one and only son as our root to repentance and to be able once more to stand before him in righteousness to be once more in a right relationship with

God while we were still entangled in a life of sin and self fulfilment God gave his son as a sacrifice at Calvary that Jesus Christ died in our place for the penalty of our sins the penalty of sin was death but God in his love and grace paid that penalty with his son as Romans 6 23 reads for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord and that's an offer that is open to each of us who wish to rekindle a true purpose and bring fulfilment to our lives you can be like the psalmist in his distress far from the presence of the Lord and his health and well-being will ebb away from him as his guilt eats at him or you can be like the psalmist in verse 9 who repents of his rebellion against

God and receives God's free gift of eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ as your saviour the personal relationship we can share once more with God is seen in how the psalmist speaks of his Lord in verses 1 and 2 if you go back to verses 1 and 2 and look a little more closely at the language that's used in verse 1 hear my prayer then let my cry come to you gives a clear image of a direct relationship with his God no need for any human intervention in verse 2 we hear the plea don't hide your face from me and incline your ear to me we see the image of a compassionate God who is in close attention to his people we can imagine God our heavenly father bending to hear our cries our heartfelt pleas like a good father would lower himself close to hear the words of his child as he settles our cries out to him the Lord our God offers us that same closeness of relationship that same security but we can only claim it through faith in

Christ as our saviour he awakes will you reach out and ask him to come into your life so that once more you can have a true and personal relationship with your heavenly father he awakes that it's our decision whether we choose a life of repentance and freedom or a life of suffering and death like the psalmist let's pray father we thank you that you are our rescuer we thank you that you come to us in times of need and for those who have yet to know you on a personal level we ask lord that your spirit will move within them that they may declare

Christ as their saviour repent of their wrong doings and come to a life eternally new these things we ask through Christ our lord our saviour amen