

The Lord Enthroned Forever

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 9th of February 2003.

The preacher is Peter Young. His sermon is entitled The Lord Enthroned Forever and is based on Psalm 102.

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, as we come before you and look into your word this morning, we pray that you would give us ears to hear what you have to say to us.

You give us minds to understand it and comprehend it well. And that you would give us hearts who are willing to obey and do what you are saying to us.

We pray this in your Son's name. Amen. Terrible things seem to be happening all the time, don't they?

[1 : 0 0] We get a bit numb to them sometimes. I guess we see so many tragedies, so many things that just keep coming at us every night. You turn on the news, you see something new that's happened that's awful.

And sometimes we just can't feel the impact of that. But one of the things that we've noticed since we've been back in Australia is that somehow we seem to have become a little bit more sensitised.

We seem more sensitive to the reality of suffering. And I guess in part that's due to the events of September 11th, 2001, and then brought home more closer to us in the events of Bali last year.

And we know now that when we see these things, it's not just an effect of, I mean, a result of special effects wizardry on the TV.

It's real people. And real lives. And they shed real blood and they cry real tears. And when these things happen, it affects people.

[2 : 1 8] And we're starting to remember that again, maybe. In Nigeria, too, we've had it brought home to us in a very graphic and tragic way when we've seen our friends lose their lives and property and seen them suffer through the loss of loved ones and seen the effect of the torture and suffering of their loved ones in the name of anti-Christian and tribal hatreds.

And it's a terrible thing. And we have this question, well, are Christian people any more prepared to cope with these things than anyone else?

Is there any answer or at least hope in Christianity for these things? Well, this psalm that we've had read to us, Psalm 102, which you may care to have open, it's page 481 in your pew Bibles, this psalm deals with that issue or attempts to struggle with that question.

As we look at the psalm, we see that it's in three parts. The first part, the psalmist describes his problem and his pain. In the second, he contrasts that with what God's like and what God's doing.

And he reminds us of the big picture. And in the third section, he gets personal again and reflects on what difference God makes to the situation.

[4 : 01] So we'll look at those and you'll be thankful to hear we aren't going to look at them all in huge detail because it's a fairly long psalm. But before we look at those three sections, I want you to just note the introduction where the psalmist makes his appeal to God.

And although things are desperate, it is God to whom he can appeal. And he's appealing to a God that he has known before.

In verses 1 and 2, he says, This psalmist is not like the person who just appeals to God only when there are times of trouble.

I heard on the radio when the bushfires were on that there was going to be a prayer meeting in one of the towns as the bushfire approached.

And the comment of the person who was being interviewed on the radio was that we're desperate, we'll try anything. As though God was just somebody who you turn to as a last resort when you were in terrible trouble.

[5 : 21] And it's not like that. God is interested in us at all times. You see, some people treat God as though he was a life-saving ring on a boat.

And when you're cruising along, you don't need the life-saving ring. Sure, it's there, but you don't need it. It's only when there's terrible trouble that you need the life-saving ring. God's not like that.

And if I can stretch the nautical analogy a little bit, God not only wants to be a fellow passenger or crew member, he wants to be the captain. He wants to, as Paul said in a sermon a few weeks ago, he wants to be the boss.

And he offers us the opportunity of him being the boss or the Lord of our lives. In Jesus, we can have that abundant life, the best life that we can possibly have when we come to him through Jesus.

And he is Lord. If God is in our life, it means, and there's no, it's not just an appeal in times of trouble, it means a whole lot of different things when that trouble does come.

[6 : 51] And the first one is that we don't have to start making deals with God at that time. You know how it goes. God, if you get me out of this, I'll never smoke again. Or, you know, there's all sorts of little bargains that we can make.

There's no need for that if we already have a relationship with him. We already have a basis for approaching God, and that's God's own terms through his son, Jesus Christ.

And having a basis of faith also means that we, like the psalmist, can be totally honest with God and say exactly what's happening.

There's no need to pretend. We don't gain any special brownie points for pretending. So, we look at what the psalmist says about his situation.

And we aren't given an exact description of what's going on. Some say that the problem is just a physical one. And certainly there are physical things described here, but I think that the physical may be a way of expressing an inner anguish that is much more and goes beyond just physical suffering.

[8 : 17] Certainly the psalmist says that his heart is smitten in verse 4. He says that he is lonely in verse 7 and that enemies are persecuting him and attacking him.

And the picture that is built up through verses 3 down to verse 11 is one of total dejection and almost unbearable suffering.

He says, my days are fleeting like smoke or like a shadow on the grass in verses 3 and then again in verse 11.

My bones are burning while my heart withers. It's a very graphic picture. My appetite is gone and all I can do is groan.

Things are terrible. I'm as lonely as an owl that sits on the housetop. An owl is a very solitary animal and that's how I am.

[9 : 33] Sitting there in the night, nothing, no one around. Everyone is against me and I'm humiliated. Verses 8 and 9 talk of that.

And even God seems to be against me. And verse 10 seems to be the height of his anguish. When we read verse 10, because of your indignation and my anger for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.

What a terrible thing. In Nigeria, names mean a lot and nobody is named without any thought of what the name means.

And one day I was in a break between classes and my students, as is their want, went outside and started joking and having fun as opposed to being in lectures.

And they were particularly this day teasing one of the students. A guy by the name of Manasseh Chanwat. Now, Chanwat is a name in Mwagavul.

[10 : 42] It's a language I don't know very much about and I didn't quite know what they were teasing him about. So I started to ask them what it was all about. And like most jokes, once you start translating them and explaining them, they lose their funniness.

But apparently, Chanwat is a compound word. Chan means to take something out, to specially select something that is very nice, to pick it out.

And wat means to throw away and reject, forcibly reject. So, it was to pick something up that's precious and throw it away.

That's what his name meant. Chan Wat. It's a very good word. I probably don't pronounce it properly. I'm not Mwagavul. But that's what the psalmist is describing here.

He's saying, I am like Chanwat. God held me as precious and has flung me aside. And that's what it feels like.

[11 : 55] What is happening? My life's falling apart. And his particular emphasis, it seems, in this passage is that his days are just slipping away.

There's nothing, they're disappearing. Well, we don't need to be great analysts to understand what this is talking about.

Just a few words or phrases can bring to mind all sorts of horrors. If I say September 11, Bali, waterfall, Columbia shuttle, bushfires, rise, we know what that means.

We can picture it. And it seems like we're on the verge of unleashing yet more suffering on our world in the form of war. In Nigeria, Christians under persecution are saying, we don't know how long we can take this.

We feel like Chang what? I was interested on the news just after the Canberra fires.

[13 : 13] There's a very powerful image. A lady with tears streaming down her face turned to the camera and said, God was cruel to us last night. That's what we feel like.

God has picked us up, yes, but then flung us aside. Now, is there any solution to that? Is there anything to be done?

Is there any way out of that sort of feeling? Well, the psalmist didn't stop there. He went on. And the next section from verse 12 down to verse 22, he starts to think about God and the emphasis of that last passage about his days slipping away, that things were out of control and his day, he was just fading into oblivion, is contrasted by what he sees in God because he says, but you, O Lord, are enthroned forever.

Your name endures to all generations. this is the temporary contrasted to the eternal.

I'm out of, my life's out of control and I'm fading away, contrasted to God who is not only eternal but enthroned and in charge forever.

[14 : 44] and as this passage moves into a prophecy talking about the things that God will do, he is sure about it, he can be confident and he even starts to talk about these things in past tense, they're so sure that they're as good as done.

In verse 19 we see that, he looked down from his holy height and did all these different things. So this is a God who not only is eternal but is in charge and gets things done.

And as we look at this passage, it's interesting, this section, it's interesting to notice how he addresses God, how he refers to God. Because he doesn't just use the word God, he uses the name that in our English translations is translated and written as Lord, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D.

And it signifies that special name of God that was given to his covenant people. It's the covenant name of God.

My special people know me by this name. God and it is sometimes we write it as Yahweh or Jehovah as it's sometimes been looked at but what's important is that we recognise that this is talking about a covenant relationship, a special agreement that you will be my people.

[16 : 35] This is the God that he is referring to. And it's only here in this whole psalm apart from the very introduction that he uses that name.

And it's important because it signals that what God is going to do is within his covenant purposes, within his purposes for his people, that's what he is doing, that is what he's going to do.

And there are several things included, we don't have time to go into them all, but it includes the establishment and restoration of the city of Zion and the people of God.

We see that in three places in verses 13 and 14, verse 16 and again down in verse 21. God's people are going to be put in God's place at God's right time.

God's God's God's God's blood. God is going to do that. There is going to be the special revelation of God's glory we see in verse 16.

[17 : 53] The vindication of the faithful people of God in verse 17 and the release of those who are imprisoned and salvation for those who are doomed in verses 19 and 20.

So they're all wonderful things that he can look forward to and be certain of about God. But so what? that's all very well but how does that match with my situation and that the psalmist in verses 23 and 24 expresses that it's all very well to think that God is in charge, God is going to act, that things are going to be established and God is going to do mighty things but what's the point of knowing all this if I'm never going to live to see it?

It's all just for as he says a generation yet unborn. What's the point if it's still yet to happen?

How does that help me? well the psalmist then goes on to a declaration of a statement of faith God has created he has been he is and he will be everything else is going to wear out it's going to perish but God is going to remain he started this universe off when it wears out he'll still be just as much in charge and just as powerful as when he started God is he he was he is and he will be and there's almost an oblique reference to the pun of the gods when God's name was revealed to Moses you know that the bush which is sometimes referred to as the burning bush but actually was the non-burning bush and in

Exodus 3 he says what is what's your name how am I going to tell how am I going to refer to you how will I know who you are and he says I am who I am or if you translate it slightly differently it is equally valid translation I am who I will be or I will be who I am now that's pretty profound for a Sunday morning but it basically means that God is the same living in the I mean he as he is in the presence he always is he always will be he is the mighty God when everything else ends God will be there and and this is where the comfort comes and his people will be secure with him the comfort comes in that last verse

[21 : 21] God that mighty enthroned one is not only in control he's not only going to last forever but his people are secure with him and will be secure with him but there's more to this the Hebrew of verses 24 to 28 is can be interpreted in a slightly different way where the words are the speech of God to someone who is referred to as Lord and Creator now that makes it rather difficult to read it's how the Greek the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament that's how they translated these verses and it's how the book of Hebrews in the New

Testament uses these verses quoting these words from verse 25 as God addressing his Messiah that is Jesus Christ so as we think about that in this psalm and think how this psalm relates and is referring to Jesus Christ we see new depths in it Jesus is the one who has suffered and through that suffering brought about those very covenant purposes of God that we saw earlier his suffering made certain the end of our own and our relationship to God forever so this psalm doesn't answer all of our problems on questions about evil and suffering in this world but it does help us to face these hard times with hope you see we can be perfectly honest with

God our relationship with God depends on our coming to him in Jesus Christ so we don't have to put up a facade we don't have to pretend with God we can be honest when we are feeling and experiencing things that are hard and when we are suffering we can remember that although we are weak and limited God is the one who is enthroned forever and that he is going to continue carrying out his purposes at the right time God is sure and secure even when we are weak and it seems like our days are like smoke and the plans that

God is going to carry out include rescue from doom we are all doomed in sin we are stuck in the problem and in Jesus he has provided the solution he has rescued us he has provided what we call salvation there is going on at this very time a wonderful ingathering of people from every different country and every different language in the world for God's own self that's going on now and there is the revelation of glory that he has provided in Jesus and which is recorded for us in the word in the Bible and there is of course that wonderful hope of a permanent glorious perfect dwelling place for us heaven's most livable city that we are being fitted out for and

God's going to do that he is the God who is with us and for us and always will be even when we feel like Chang what because Jesus in his suffering and his death on the cross has brought about us released from the imprisonment he has become he always was the chan the special the select the perfect apple of God's eye and he has become the what who has forcibly rejected for us so whatever suffering we are undergoing God knows it God has in Jesus experienced it and he has something better for us and he gives us the promise that we can be with him forever let's pray

[27 : 04] Lord God our Father we do thank you that even though there are terrible things happening in this world that you are the God who is eternal and enthroned forever that you have all power and that you are bringing about your purposes in this world we pray that we might be faithful people who turn to you at all times and look to you and see your hand at work and can trust you in all situations for we pray it in Jesus name Amen should they Thank you.

Thank you.