

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD.

PSALM 102: 1 Hear my prayer, LORD! Let my cry come to you.

The complaint and miserable state of the poor captives, Psa 102:1-11; the expectation of deliverance, Psa 102:12-14; the conversion of the heathen, Psa 102:15-18; the termination of the captivity, Psa 102:19-22; the great frailty of man, Psa 102:23, Psa 102:24; the unchangeableness of God, Psa 102:25-27; the permanence of the Church, Psa 102:28.

The Hebrew, and nearly all the Versions, give the following title to this Psalm: A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his sighing before the Lord. There seems to be little doubt that this is the prayer of the captives in Babylon, when, towards the end of the captivity, they were almost worn out with oppression, cruelty, and distress. The Psalm has been attributed to Daniel, to Jeremiah, to Nehemiah, or to some of the other prophets who flourished during the time of the captivity. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has applied the twenty-fifth, twenty sixth, and twenty seventh verses to our Lord, and the perpetuity of his kingdom.

Verse 1

Hear my prayer - The chief parts of the Psalm answer well to the title: it is the language of the deepest distress, and well directed to Him from whom alone help can come.

PSALM 102: 2 Don't hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Turn your ear to me. Answer me quickly in the day when I call.

PSALM 102: 3 For my days consume away like smoke. My bones are burned as a torch.

Verse 3

My days are consumed like smoke - He represents himself (for the psalmist speaks in the name of the people) under the notion of a pile of combustible matter, placed upon a fire, which soon consumes it; part flying away in smoke, and the residue lying on the hearth in the form of charred coal and ashes. The Chaldeans were the fire, and the captive Jews the fuel, thus converted into smoke and ashes.

PSALM 102: 4 My heart is blighted like grass, and withered, for I forget to eat my bread.

Verse 4

My heart is smitten, and withered like grass - The metaphor here is taken from grass cut down in the meadow. It is first smitten with the scythe, and then withered by the sun. Thus the Jews were smitten with the judgments of God; and they are now withered under the fire of the Chaldeans.

PSALM 102: 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones stick to my skin.

PSALM 102: 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness. I have become as an owl of the waste places.

Verse 6

I am like a pelican of the wilderness - It may be the pelican or the bittern. The original, תאק kaath, is mentioned Lev 11:18 (note), and is there described. See the note.

Owl of the desert - כוש cos, some species of owl; probably the night raven. See the notes referred to above.

PSALM 102: 7 I watch, and have become like a sparrow that is alone on the housetop.

Verse 7

As a sparrow alone - צפור tsippor, seems to be often used for any small bird, such as the swallow, sparrow, or the like. Bochart supposes the screech owl is intended.

PSALM 102: 8 My enemies reproach me all day. Those who are mad at me use my name as a curse.

Verse 8

They that are mad against me are sworn against me - The Chaldeans are determined to destroy us; and they have bound themselves by oath to do it. See a similar case related Act 23:12-14, where a number of Jews had bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had slain Paul.

PSALM 102: 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mixed my drink with tears,

Verse 9

I have eaten ashes like bread - Fearful of what they might do, we all humbled ourselves before thee, and sought thy protection; well knowing that, unless we were supernaturally assisted, we must all have perished; our enemies having sworn our destruction.

PSALM 102: 10 Because of your indignation and your wrath, for you have taken me up, and thrown me away.

Verse 10

For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down - Thou hast lifted me on high, that thou mightest dash me down with the greater force.

We were exalted in thy favor beyond any people, and now thou hast made us the lowest and most abject of the children of men.

PSALM 102: 11 My days are like a long shadow. I have withered like grass.

Verse 11

My days are like a shadow that declineth - Or rather, My days decline like the shadow. I have passed my meridian, and the sun of my prosperity is about to set for ever. There may be here an allusion to the declination of the sun towards the south, which, by shortening their days, would greatly lengthen their nights. Similar to the exclamation of a contemporary prophet, Jer 8:20 : "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." There is now scarcely any human hope of our deliverance.

PSALM 102: 12 But you, LORD, will remain forever; your renown endures to all generations.

Verse 12

But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever - Our life is a shadow; we can scarcely be called beings when compared with thee, for thou art eternal. Have mercy upon us, creatures of a day, and thy kindness shall be a memorial in all our generations.

PSALM 102: 13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for it is time to have pity on her. Yes, the set time has come.

Verse 13

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion - While he is humbled at the footstool of mercy, and earnestly praying for mercy, an answer of peace is given; he is assured, not only that they shall be delivered, but that the time of deliverance is at hand. The set time - the seventy years predicted by Jeremiah, was ended; and God gave him to see that he was ever mindful of his promises.

PSALM 102: 14 For your servants take pleasure in her stones, and have pity on her dust.

Verse 14

Thy servants take pleasure in her stones - Though Jerusalem was at this time in a heap of ruins, yet even her rubbish was sacred in the eyes of the pious; for this had been the city of the great King.

PSALM 102: 15 So the nations will fear the LORD's name; all the kings of the earth your glory.

Verse 15

So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord - It is granted that after the edict of Cyrus to restore and rebuild Jerusalem which was about four hundred and ninety years before Christ, the name of the true God was more generally known among the heathen; and the translating the Sacred Writings into Greek, by the command of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about two hundred and eighty-five years before the Christian era, spread a measure of the light of God in the Gentile world which they had not before seen. Add to this the dispersion of the Jews into different parts of the Roman empire, after Judea became a Roman province, which took place about sixty years before the advent of our Lord; and we may consider these as so many preparatory steps to the conversion of the heathen by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to this last general illumination of the Gentile world the psalmist must allude here, when he speaks of "the heathen fearing God's name, and all the kings of the earth his glory."

PSALM 102: 16 For the LORD has built up Zion. He has appeared in his glory.

Verse 16

When the Lord shall build up Zion - It is such a difficult thing, so wholly improbable, so far out of the reach of human power, that when God does it, he must manifest his power and glory in a most extraordinary manner.

PSALM 102: 17 He has responded to the prayer of the destitute, and has not despised their prayer.

Verse 17

The prayer of the destitute - הערער haerar of him who is laid in utter ruin, who is entirely wasted.

PSALM 102: 18 This will be written for the generation to come. A people which will be created will praise the LORD.

Verse 18

The people which shall be created - "The Gentiles, who shall be brought to the knowledge of salvation by Christ," as the Syriac states in its inscription to this Psalm: how often the conversion of the soul to God is represented as a new creation, no reader of the New Testament need be told. See Eph 2:10; Eph 4:24; 2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15. Even the publication of the Gospel, and its influence among

men, is represented under the notion of "creating a new heaven and a new earth," Isa 65:17, Isa 65:18.

PSALM 102: 19 For he has looked down from the height of his sanctuary. From heaven, the LORD saw the earth;

Verse 19

For he hath looked down - This, with the three following verses, seems to me to contain a glorious prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, and the gathering in of the Jews and the Gentiles to him. The Lord looks down from heaven, and sees the whole earth groaning and travailing in pain; his eye affects his heart, and he purposes their salvation.

PSALM 102: 20 to hear the groans of the prisoner; to free those who are condemned to death;

Verse 20

To hear the groaning - By sin, all the inhabitants of the earth are miserable. They have broken the Divine laws, are under the arrest of judgment, and all cast into prison, They have been tried, found guilty, and appointed to die; they groan under their chains, are alarmed at the prospect of death, and implore mercy.

PSALM 102: 21 that men may declare the LORD's name in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

Verse 21

To declare the name of the Lord - To publish that Messenger of the Covenant in whom the name of the Lord is, that Messiah in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt; and to commence at Jerusalem, that the first offers of mercy might be made to the Jews, from whom the word of reconciliation was to go out to all the ends of the earth.

PSALM 102: 22 when the peoples are gathered together, the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Verse 22

When the people are gathered together - When all the Gentiles are enlightened, and the kings of the earth brought to pay homage to the King of kings.

PSALM 102: 23 He weakened my strength along the course. He shortened my days.

 Verse 23

He weakened my strength in the way - We are brought so low in our captivity by oppression, by every species of hard usage, and by death, that there is now no hope of our restoration by any efforts of our own.

PSALM 102: 24 I said, "My God, don't take me away in the midst of my days. Your years are throughout all generations.

Verse 24

I said, O my God - This and the following verses seem to be the form of prayer which the captives used previously to their deliverance.

Thy years are throughout all generations - This was a frequent argument used to induce God to hear prayer. We are frail and perishing; thou art everlasting: deliver us, and we will glorify thee.

PSALM 102: 25 Of old, you laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the work of your hands.

Verse 25

Of old hast thou laid the foundation - None taught of God ever imagined the world to have been eternal. Of old, לפנים lephanim, before there were any faces or appearances, thou didst lay the foundations of the earth. It was created by thee; it did not grow by accretion or aggregation from a pre-existent nucleus. There was nothing; and thou didst produce being - substance or matter. Out of that created matter thou didst make the earth and the heavens.

PSALM 102: 26 They will perish, but you will endure. Yes, all of them will wear out like a garment. You will change them like a cloak, and they will be changed.

Verse 26

They shall perish - Nothing can be eternal a parte ante, or a parte post, but thyself. Even that which thou hast created, because not necessarily eternal, must be perishable; necessary duration belongs to God only; and it is by his will and energy alone that universal nature is preserved in existence, and preserved from running into speedy disorder, decay, and ruin.

Yea, all of them shall wax old - Every thing must deteriorate, unless preserved by thy renewing and invigorating energy. Even the heavens and the earth are subject to this law; for that which is not, from the infinite perfection of its own nature, Eternal, must be perishable; therefore the heavens and the earth must necessarily come to an end. They contain the seeds of their own dissolution. It is true that in sublunary things, the vicissitudes of seasons is a sort of check to the principle of

dissolution; but it only partially corrects this tendency. Even the productions of the earth wear out or deteriorate. Plant the same seed or grain for several years consecutively, and it degenerates so as at last not to be worth the labor of tillage, however expensively the soil may be manured in which it is planted. I may instance in wheat and in the potatoe, the two grand supporters of life in European countries. All other seeds and plants, as far as they have fallen under my observation, are subject to the same law.

PSALM 102: 27 But you are the same. Your years will have no end.

Verse 27

But thou art the same - הוא ואתה הוא veattah Hu, but thou art He, that is, The Eternal; and, consequently, he who only has immortality.

Thy years shall have no end - לא יתמו lo yittammu, "they shall not be completed." Every thing has its revolution - its conception, growth, perfection, decay, dissolution, and death, or corruption. It may be said that regeneration restores all these substances; and so it does in a measure, but not without deterioration. The breed of animals, as well as vegetables, wears out; but God's eternal round has no completion. I repeat it, - what is necessarily eternal is unchangeable and imperishable; all created beings are perishable and mutable, because not eternal. God alone is eternal; therefore God alone is imperishable and immutable.

PSALM 102: 28 The children of your servants will continue. Their seed will be established before you."

Verse 28

The children of thy servants shall continue - Thy Church shall be permanent, because founded on thee, it shall live throughout all the revolutions of time. And as thy followers are made partakers of the Divine nature they shall live in union with God in the other world, deriving eternal duration from the inexhaustible Fountain of being. Nothing can be permanent but by God's supporting and renewing influence.