

Psalms 102

Psalms 102:9-11 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away. My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass.

Our Psalm opens with a cry to God, an appeal to be heard and to be answered speedily. The sentiment is familiar. We all want the Lord to hear our prayers and to answer them immediately. And it is not like God is too busy, He does not have a waiting list. If you seek a blessing from the Lord, you will not get a text or email stating that blessings are unfortunately on backorder and that you will receive your item just as soon as it is available. God is not limited by time and space. He is able to hear and respond to every prayer simultaneously. It is impossible to reach such a volume of prayer that God would lose track of your request or to ask for something that is beyond His capacity to perform. And, yet, we would all agree that we often pray and then do not immediately receive what we have asked for.

It is important to point out that God is not Amazon.com It is not His job to take orders

and then deliver the goods by overnight express. But we are frustrated by the belief that He could if He wanted to. He is God and there is nothing too hard for Him. So, why won't He answer my prayer immediately and give me exactly what I am asking for?

In our Psalm, the poet is utterly miserable and has been in this state for some time. The description of this misery (vv 3-11) is very eloquent. To paraphrase, everything he does amounts to nothing, he is beyond hope and even forgets to eat regular meals. If you are near enough to him all you will hear will be groaning, He is gaunt, starving, unable to sleep, and completely alone. He is a target of derision and ill will. His food is his own mourning and what he drinks is his own tears. He feels that God is angry with him and has rejected him so that his life has become just a shadow (no longer of substance) and whatever time remains to him is brief and insignificant.

There is a question here of responsibility. Whose fault is it that he is as miserable as he is? To what degree are we all the cause of our own unhappiness? The poet's concerns begin with the circumstantial. This is a place where we all tend to live. His prayer is that God would change his

circumstances. This, in his view, would change everything.

The song continues in v 12 with a complete change of focus from self to God and from individual to national experience. "But You O Lord, shall endure forever. And the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion..." The song here becomes prophetic, looking it seems, toward the return from captivity. "For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer..."

Notice that v. 17 seems to be a break in expectation from the first 11 verses of the song. In the first section there was utter misery and no hope. Here, there is confident anticipation. God's purposes for His people are certain of achievement.

In the final section, the positions of the first two sections are blended. The old thoughts of unhappiness return but this is mitigated by faith in God's enduring strength and power. The poet is encouraged by in a sense, throwing in with God, so that God's ultimate victory belongs not just to God but to him as well. So, the miserable finds respite with no apparent change in circumstance.