

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

CII: Praying To God When Afflicted And Spiritually Weak

(Psalm 102:1-28)

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus once gave a parable to teach that believers must always pray and not faint, Luke 18:1.
- B. However, one may wonder how to pray effectively if his faith is fragile and he is spiritually weak, when he has a hard time even believing God either wants to hear him or that He wants to hear his plea for God's help.
- C. Psalm 102:1-28 provides guidance for such folk who are afflicted and spiritually weak as to how to pray:

II. Praying To God When Afflicted And Spiritually Weak, Psalm 102:1-28.

- A. The introductory remark of this psalm comprises the first verse in the Hebrew text (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1062), so we stay with the English Bible's numbering system for clarity with this lesson.
- B. Accordingly, we translate Psalm 102:1-28 (as follows): (1) "O Jahweh, hearken to my prayer, and let my cry for help come before You." (2) "Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress. Turn Your ear to me; when I call, answer me." (3) "Because my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers." (4) "My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food." (5) "Because of my loud groaning I am reduced to skin and bones." (6) "I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins." (7) "I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a housetop." (8) "All day long my enemies say sharp things against (*harap*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 357) me; those who rail on me use my name as a curse." (9) "For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears" (10) "because of Your great wrath, for You have taken me up and thrown me aside." (11) "My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass." (12) "But You (emph. pron.), O Jahweh, sit enthroned forever; Your renown (endures) from generation to generation." (13) "You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come." (14) "For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity." (15) "Now the nations will fear the name of Jahweh, all the kings of the earth will revere Your glory," (16) "for Jahweh will rebuild Zion and appear in His glory." (17) "He will turn toward the prayer of the destitute and will not despise their prayer plea." (18) "Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise Jahweh," (19) "that: 'Jahweh looked down from His sanctuary on high, from heaven He viewed the earth," (20) "to hearken to the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death.'" (21) "So the name of Jahweh will be declared in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem," (22) "when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship Jahweh." (23) "In the course of my life He broke my strength; He cut short my days." (24) "So I said; 'Do not take me away, O my Elohim, in the midst of my days (middle of one's lifespan); Your years go on from generation to generation.'" (25) "'In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.'" (26) "'They (emph. pron.) will perish, but You (emph. pron.) remain standing; they will all wear out as a garment. Like clothing You will change them and they will be discarded.'" (27) "'But You (emph. pron.) are He (the One just described as the One remaining standing, J. A. Alexander, Psalms, 1975, p. 413), and Your years will never end.'" (28) "'The children of Your servants will settle down (in inheriting the Land); their descendants will be established before You.'" (29)
- C. We note important observations about this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. The introductory remark, verse 1 in the Hebrew text, reads, "The prayer of an afflicted man when he is faint and pours out his lament before Jahweh," *Ibid.*, Kittel. As such, the psalmist presents himself as one who is in spiritual weakness with a weak faith in God, seen in the remarks of verses 4-8 and 10 where he struggles with feelings that God has angrily discarded him in wrath, a sign of a weak faith.
 - 2. Thus, verses 12 and 24 together reveal that the **solution** to a weak faith in the midst of trouble is for the afflicted to cast himself on the Lord Who has an infinite nature and infinite attributes for sure deliverance.
 - 3. The psalmist thus takes his reader from the viewpoint of a weak, defeated faith to a victorious faith since his faith is placed in the great, good, gracious Almighty God of Israel versus the petitioner himself.

Lesson: *God calls afflicted, spiritually weak believers to focus on Him in His greatness that they pray in faith in Him as opposed to focusing on their weakness or the troubling greatness of their trials.*

Application: *If we are afflicted and have a frail faith in God, the Lord wants us to shift our attention away from our weakness and imposing trials to focus on our great God so that we trust in Him, and thus pray effectively.*