

\*Psalm 102:1-12

*Through the Eye of the Storm*

[READ Psalm 102:1-12]

It's so important that we learn how to read the Psalms. The pain here is so thick you can feel the agony of the writer. This prayer is not filled with pretty words. The author is in trouble and begs God: "Do not hide Your face from me... answer me... when I call."

The fear of loss or emptiness is *right now*. And we might wonder: What's the cause of the writer's pain? Is it a broken heart? What has he lost? How has she been rejected? What are they afraid of?

What is it in your life?

Have you ever had this sort of religious "fox-hole" experience? The idea of fox-hole religion came from wartime experiences, when men found themselves under heavy attack from cannon fire or the rain of bullets from enemy guns. In those desperate times, when death seemed certain, soldiers were known to plead, beg, and bargain with God in prayer!

In the fox-hole there's no playing around with King James poetry!

I want you to hear part of this plea from a couple contemporary translations. [READ 102:1-2 from the New Living Translation or The Message]

When you're desperate, you don't wait to find just the right word, in the right phrases. The kind of anxiety expressed in this Psalm demands that we just cry aloud, "God! Help me!" With this kind of urgency we're not trying to pretend with God. "My days pass away like smoke!"

I *hope* you find freedom to express yourself from a Psalm like this, because it reveals a depth of awareness we rarely acknowledge. This prayer gives courage to cry out!

But how do we get in such trouble?

Listen to vs. 3 from *MSG*: "I'm wasting away to nothing, I'm burning up with fever." In *God's Word*: "My days disappear like smoke. My bones burn like hot coals."

It brings to mind the squealing, screeching tires of a NASCAR racer; spinning hot with smoke – like the one who's constantly on the run, constantly on the go, the workaholic giving every ounce of himself or herself, giving every effort. I think we call it "burn-out!"

[READ vs. 4-5 from *God's Word*] You get the impression of one who's "heaving," buried in stress, grief, even depression! When you're *worried* it can be so hard to eat; in fact, those who eat often feel nauseated because their stomach is in knots. And sleeplessness is another symptom for anxiety. Some of you know what this means! Vs. 7: "I lie awake. I'm like a lonely bird on a housetop!"

How do we get in such trouble ...that God seems so far away? Is it because we run away from Him? We occupy our time imagining the worst. We spend our energy on some insignificant task – we get so tied up in the world that we spend no time...with heaven. We make stupid choices. We get buried under the avalanche of our work or worry. We become lost in our grief over ... treatment for disease, coping with a loss, a broken relationship, the threat of divorce, the loss of income... we don't "hear" the Spirit calling us.

Before we know it, we wonder if God has abandoned us.

Is the Bible speaking for you?

I can't help but hear another pilgrim struggling for answers. From vs. 9 our mind races to another friend from the Bible: "I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink." I hear Job, whose tragedies are beyond comparison to anything we ever felt. Everything that Job had –

his children, his livestock, his property – were destroyed. Then his own body was afflicted with disease and sores, “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a broken clay pot with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.”

The writer of the Psalm could’ve been Job, accusing God, demanding to be heard!

Would you raise your voice to God? Have you ever been desperate? Have you ever asked “Why?” Why me? Why now?

We have faced the dangers of disease, we have walked through the valleys of death, with the dark shadows threatening our own life. We have battled grief, separation, loss of every kind.

What spiritual resources do you have for such a time as this?

The Church is filled with people who don’t know they need grace – until they need *grace!*

And then, what do you do? What do you do when the doctor says *cancer*? What do you do when the funeral director guides you back to your car? What do you do when the divorce papers come? What resources do you have to find help? To find hope and grace? I’m talking about finding kindness and mercy and love from God!

Because if we’re not practiced and if we’re not attuned to seeking and finding, we may stumble around looking for God ... wondering if He’ll ever answer ...unsure, because we never really needed an answer before. We were fine on our own. Until the words burst out, “Answer me when I cry aloud!”

Jesus Himself challenged God with the question. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus was overwhelmed and pleaded, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me...” Within that prayer are the questions, “Why Me? Why this? Why now?” And, then, in that eternal moment when heaven itself seemed to shut the door, Jesus was heard to cry out, “My God, My God, *why* have You forsaken Me?”

If the Prince Himself has asked the question, doesn’t He offer you the same privilege to plead with the King when your own suffering includes the silence of Heaven?

Job was brash in his confrontation with God. But who would blame Job? He sinks lower and lower in his suffering.

But with every obstacle and road-block, God would ask Job, “Will you trust Me? I have never forsaken you. I have never given up on you!”

When we suffer to ask “Why?” nothing is settled until God speaks. We yearn for an answer. But don’t be surprised that when God responds, He offers no answer; instead He presents a new perspective. We see Jesus do this over and over in the gospels. Like a master Teacher, God knows that when we struggle – when we seek Him and search for Him – He will be found. For in the seeking we have to ask ourselves, “What do I really believe about the character of God? And what do I really believe about my relationship to God?” If we have positioned ourselves with Job and the Psalm writer, we can ask, seek, search ...and God will be found!

In our persistent “Why?” God answers, but often with a question, “Who *am* I? Who do *you* say that I am?” and He may ask, “Who are *you*?” Hear this fundamental truth: when we ask, “Why must I suffer?” God answers, “Who do you say that I am?”

When you know the real answer to that question, “Who is God?” the other questions fall into place.

Think about our original question: What answer, what possible answer could there be to the question, “Why did my friend, or why did my child have to die?” “Why was I cheated out of my savings?” “Why did this happen to our family?” Is there any answer that could possibly

satisfy that cry? What could God say that would explain your loss or your grief?

No! There is no answer! Only a Presence ...and a Promise from Jesus who says, “I will always love you!”

Sometimes our idea of God is too small. But if we know Him – we can trust Him!

Some of us are horrified by the Psalm and Job’s utter disrespect for God. It’s like someone shaking a fist at God! You might feel as though these expressions are immature ...or dangerous! But I hear this plea from the mature believer who’s able to honestly open their heart to God – who is confident in God’s love – who’s comfortable enough with their self to confess their deepest need, their angry cry, and cry out to *Father!*

Because it’s the cry of *faith*.

And this is what you’ll find from this agonizing Psalm, too! Though the writer feels he’s a victim in the path of a storm, “thrown aside” as one might be hurled from out of a tornado, He believes in God. He’s praying, he’s asking God...! “Answer me ...because I’m in trouble!”

So search for God now! Learn who He is and discover His love and faithfulness ...so that in your day of trouble you come through your trouble where the writer leads us, vs. 12: “But You, O Lord, are enthroned forever; Your name endures to all generations!”

The Bible tells us who God is – and who I am. And I know myself to be a pilgrim in a land broken by pain, disease, meanness, evil, and suffering. But I have a guiding light, a Savior who comes with me to show me the way through to the land of promise, a land of life and healing, and peace!

As Jesus asked his friend Peter, He asks you and I as well: “Who am I? What do you really believe about Me?” Sometimes our idea of God is too small. But through the worst of times we discover the depth of God.

Who is the God you worship? Who, really, is this Jesus you believe in?

For He answers:

- I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and eternal One.
- I am the Bread of Heaven for the wanderer in the wilderness; the Living Water for the scorched and thirsting souls!
- I am the Shepherd of the flock, the Seeker of the lost.
- I am the Father who rushes to meet His wayward son or daughter.
- I am the Pearl of Great Price! The Cornerstone of truth. The Foundation of Faith; the Keystone for each new life of purpose.
- I am the Rock of Salvation; the Fortress and Protector!
- I am the Way for the confused; the Truth for the seeker; New Life for the dead.
- I am the lover of the lonely, the stranger, the straggler, the rebel, the enemy, the unforgiven, the unclean, the guilty, the forgotten, the sick and the afflicted.
- I am the Healer of the hopeless; Wisdom for the godly; Joy for the sinner; Peace like a river.
- I am the Champion of the least; Servant for the last; the Compass for the lost.
- I am the Light for those living in darkness. I am the One who calls when you are adrift; the Beacon from the lighthouse of hope.
- I am a Companion to the lonely; courage to the meek; rest for the weary; and strength when you are weak.
- I am your Comfort and Counsel.

- I am a Friend to a stranger; a Guide to the foreigner; the Pioneer of your salvation; the Composer of Holiness.
- I am the King of kings; I am the Lord of lords; the only begotten of the Father; the First-born of Creation; the Host of Heaven.
- I am your Savior; I am your Lord; I am all and your everything!

Is He all this for you? For if God is any *One* of these – He will be *every One* of these.

You see, we are saved through faith. So God asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Not that the “Why?” question is unimportant. But for people of faith, the question of “Who?” is more urgent. Because if we know the truth of *Who* God is, we can bear any “What?” or “Why?”

Does God really know what He is doing? Is God really in control of life and history? Oh yes. And if you trust Him, if you’ll tell Him that you want to believe today, you won’t need to be afraid – for You will find that God will give you a new heart, from which confidence to trust Him through the worst crisis will pour forth.

I’m talking about the way God’s love works in your spirit and your heart. And that work belongs to the Master Healer, the Surgeon General, the Transplant Specialist ...the Creator and Re-creator of my heart!

*God will make a way where there seems to be no way.  
He works in ways we cannot see; He will make a way for me.  
He will be my guide; hold me closely to His side,  
With love and strength for each new day.  
He will make a way! He will make a way.*