

"Blues Psalms" by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture Reading: Psalm 102 The MSG

A prayer of one whose life is falling to pieces, and who lets God know just how bad it is

1-2 God, listen! Listen to my prayer, listen to the pain in my cries. Don't turn your back on me just when I need you so desperately. Pay attention! This is a cry for *help*! And hurry—this can't wait! 3-11 I'm wasting away to nothing, I'm burning up with fever. I'm a ghost of my former self, half-consumed already by terminal illness. My jaws ache from gritting my teeth; I'm nothing but skin and bones. I'm like a buzzard in the desert, a crow perched on the rubble. Insomniac, I twitter away, mournful as a sparrow in the gutter. All day long my enemies taunt me, while others just curse. They bring in meals—casseroles of ashes! I draw drink from a barrel of my tears. And all because of your furious anger; you swept me up and threw me out. There's nothing left of me—a withered weed, swept clean from the path. 12-17 Yet you, God, are sovereign still, always and ever sovereign. You'll get up from your throne and help Zion—it's time for compassionate help. Oh, how your servants love this city's rubble and weep with compassion over its dust! The godless nations will sit up and take notice—see your glory, worship your name - When God rebuilds Zion, when he shows up in all his glory, When he attends to the prayer of the wretched. He won't dismiss their prayer. 18-22 Write this down for the next generation so people not yet born will praise God: "God looked out from his high holy place; from heaven he surveyed the earth. He listened to the groans of the doomed, he opened the doors of their death cells." Write it so the story can be told in Zion, so God's praise will be sung in Jerusalem's streets And wherever people gather together along with their rulers to worship him. 23-28 God sovereignly brought me to my knees, he cut me down in my prime. "Oh, don't," I prayed, "please don't let me die. You have more years than you know what to do with! You laid earth's foundations a long time ago, and handcrafted the very heavens; You'll still be around when they're long gone, threadbare and discarded like an old suit of clothes. You'll throw them away like a worn-out coat, but year after year you're as good as new. Your servants' children will have a good place to live and their children will be at home with you."

Discussion Questions:

1. What's your favorite genre of music? (classical, rock, jazz, blues, soul, etc.)
2. How does it make you feel that "the blues" are found in the Bible? What does that say about our relationship with God?
3. Many times in our faith we feel that we need to put on a persona that we are doing great and everything is smooth sailing—when it actually isn't. Why do we fall into that temptation that strong faith has it all together? How can Psalm 102 help us with this misunderstanding?
4. Look through the psalm again. It is filled with vivid imagery of human struggle. Which ones speak the most to you. Why?
5. This is the heading for Psalm 102, "*A prayer of one whose life is falling to pieces, and who lets God know just how bad it is.*" No other heading for any of the psalms is quite like it. What do you think of it?

6. Bono of U2 described the gospel as “the blues’ perfect cousin.” What do you think the connection is between the blues and gospel?
7. One Bible scholar described this psalm as the psalmist “pleading with God against God.” How do we do this, or is it contradictory?
8. Psalm 102 is quoted in Hebrews chapter 1 in the New Testament to describe Christ. It tells us that everything is fading away—God’s creation and even us, but God is eternal and stays the same. In other words, the infinite God entered into finite creation in Christ. Christ sang the blues with us, but by his death and resurrection he pressed through the sadness and defeat and brings life, even to us. How might this give you hope when you’re going through the blues?