

# Loving the Dust

Psalm 102

Halifax: 4 July 2010

## **Introduction:**

It is time for us to get back to our sermon series in Isaiah.

- We are coming up on one of the most remarkable sections of Isaiah,
  - that section that runs from chapter 40 to the end of the book.

This section is remarkable because Isaiah wrote it to comfort God's covenant people concerning the Babylonian Exile before it had even occurred.

- The exile had been prophesied, but it had not yet happened when Isaiah gave these words of comfort...
  - This was God's way of keeping His people from despair because of the prophesy of so great a disaster...
    - and of preparing them so that they would not fall into utter despair when it did come.
    - They would go into it with these words of comfort and promised deliverance to sustain them in their faith throughout those long seventy years.
      - That they might continue in hope as His people even though they be scattered and without temple or king.
- You may remember how chapter 39 ended with the very dreadful announcement of the coming exile!
  - You remember that King Hezekiah, a very godly king who loved the LORD, had been marvellously delivered from his death bed and promised 15 more years...
    - and that the Lord had given him a remarkable sign in which the shadow on the stairs went backward...
    - and He had also promised Hezekiah that the Assyrian invasion of Judah would be halted at the very gates of Jerusalem...
- Godly King Hezekiah believed all that God had told him...
  - He was filled with gratitude and joy.
  - And he was very excited and encouraged when the king of Babylon sent an embassy to congratulate him about his recovery and to see what the LORD had done for him.
    - Hezekiah showed this embassy all of the treasures that God had given him and told them about all that God had done.
      - Very likely, he saw that God was sending these men in answer to prayer to help to destroy the Assyrians who were causing so much trouble in the world at that time.

- But it was wrong of Hezekiah to look to the Babylonians for help against Assyria because the LORD had plainly declared that *He alone* would deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians.
- And this is when the dreadful prophecy came...
  - God sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to tell him that all the treasures he had shown to the king of Babylon would be carried off by Babylon in future generations!
    - And that the sons who would be born to Hezekiah—the sons of the house of David—would be carried away to Babylon and made eunuchs in his palace!
  - This was parallel to what God had said about Assyria in the beginning of Isaiah’s ministry.
    - King Ahaz, who was an ungodly king, had looked to Assyria to deliver him from Syrian and Ephraim,
      - and the LORD had offered to give Ahaz a sign that Syria and Ephraim would be stopped, but Ahaz had refused the sign...
        - and the LORD had then declared that the very Assyrians that Ahaz was trusting in would come and destroy all of Judah with the sole exception of Jerusalem.
    - This was a terrible prophecy, but it was not nearly as dreadful as the one that Hezekiah had been given about the Babylonians!
      - The invasion of Assyria would leave Jerusalem standing...
        - the house of David would still be there with a son of David on the throne...
        - and the temple at Jerusalem would still stand as the symbol that God was still with His people...
    - But the invasion of Babylon would see an end to the theocracy.
      - Jerusalem! The city of God! would be abolished and the temple destroyed.
      - It was unthinkable!
        - All this time during the Assyrian invasions,
          - The LORD had continually promised to uphold Jerusalem, the seat of David, and the temple...
          - He had assured His people that Assyria would be stopped when she seemed the most unstoppable by His mighty hand.
            - But now this terrible prophecy had been given that Babylon would reduce the city of God to dust and rubble!

What were the godly to think when they heard this dreadful prophecy?

- How were they to deal with it?
- All these years of Isaiah's ministry, they had trusted in God's promise to preserve Jerusalem and the house of David...
  - But now Isaiah has declared that *Jerusalem* itself would become a dust heap!
    - Was this to be the end of the City of God?
    - Were all the promises of God's gracious kingdom to fail?
    - What were the godly to do with these terrible prophecies?
    - Had they misunderstood them?
      - What happened to the promise that David would have a Son to sit on His throne forever whose kingdom would never end?
- This is where Isaiah's wonderful prophecies in Isaiah 40-66 come to the rescue!
  - What comfort they brought to the godly who received them!
    - In these chapters God promises that even though Jerusalem will return to dust,
      - He will still be with the dust, and that He will raise up the dust again!
      - God will at last deliver His city from the exile in Babylon.
      - The dust will rise up again to praise God!
  - But my brothers and sisters, Isaiah's prophecies go even beyond the return of the captives from Babylon!
    - The LORD uses the occasion of this great restoration to point to an even greater resurrection of the City of God from the dust...
      - In these prophesies, He presents to us His suffering servant, even our dear Lord Jesus Christ who is going to come and who will also be cast down to the grave because of His people's sins...
        - But will be raised up to life, and will fill the whole city of God with life—life that will spread to all the nations!
        - He uses it to prepare them for the cross.
          - Even though even the godly could not make sense of the cross when it happened,
            - after Jesus was raised their faith (and our faith) as all the more strengthened when they looked back and saw that it was all according to God's predetermined purpose.

I look forward to beginning this wonderful section next week—

- The very first words of chapter 40 are God's speaking and saying:
  - "Comfort, yes, Comfort My People says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry unto her."
  - See how our gracious God brings comfort to His people in the wake of the announcement of the coming destruction of the city of God!

- He goes on to declare in chapter 40 that we are like the grass that withers and blows away in the wind,
  - but that His word abides forever!
    - His promises concerning the City of God cannot fail!
      - He will bless His people and raise them up from dust to glory!
      - This is a very encouraging section of scripture.
- But before we begin this new section in Isaiah, I want to follow my custom and select a Psalm to sing in connection with it,
  - and to present this Psalm to you in a sermon.
    - I have chosen Psalm 102 for this purpose.
- Psalm 102 is a Psalm that speaks of the church when it is reduced to dust and rubble.
  - It teaches you that instead of despairing and giving up on the church when you see it brought to a ruined state,
    - you are rather to trust in the LORD who will restore the church.
    - As verse 14 puts it, you are to take pleasure in her rubble and show favour to her dust!
      - You are to love her even at lowest point, not because of what she is, but because of what the Lord Jesus Christ is in her and because of what He will do for her!
- And of course we not going to look at this Psalm as nothing more than an interesting piece of history!
  - The LORD has given it to us in the book of Psalms for us to sing in every age.
  - So we are going to look at it and see how it pertains to us.
  - So let's get on with it!

I want you to see first of all that:

**I. It is only right for you to lament when you see the Church reduced to dust.**

A. You are given an example of a godly lamentation for the church in the first 11 verses of Psalm 102.

1. If you glance over these verses, you can see that very strong language is used to express grief.
  - You will also notice that it is very personal—the first person is used so that we are taught to express not only the church's corporate grief,
    - but also our own personal grief as a part of the church in her lowliness.
  - As the Psalm progresses, we see that it is concerned with the state of the City of God.
    - We may draw from this that we ought to be personally grieved by the state of the Church.

2. Surely it is right to come to the LORD in this way when we see the church fallen into disgrace as she so often is.
  - What does it show about us if we are indifferent over the state of the church!
    - If we have no tears to shed and no earnest pleas to bring to our Lord?
      - It reveals that we have hearts that are cold as stone.
    - Consider our LORD Jesus and how He broke out in lamentation when He approached Jerusalem and thought about her rebellion...
      - and how she had not recognised the time of her visitation!
  - Surely all true believers shared in lamentation during the days of Isaiah when the Assyrian was dominate in their land...
    - and how much more when the dreaded prophecy came to them that in the days to come, Babylon would reduce the city of God to dust and rubble.
    - Who could claim to love the Lord and not be moved to tears by such news?
3. And just look at the condition of the church in our day! Have we no cause to lament?
  - a. I do not wish to exaggerate it as many do and say that it is worse than it has ever been...
    - There are many places in the world where God is powerfully at work among His people.
    - But my brothers and sisters, we are very dull if we do not recognise the vexing, apostate condition of the church today in our own land!
  - b. Look around and you will see it! Remember, over 85% of us are baptised in Nova Scotia...
    - 1) Yet, we are full of sin...
      - There is sexual immorality and laziness,
      - There is whining and ingratitude,
      - There is coldness toward God in worship,
      - There is unfaithfulness in marriage—selfishness instead of Christ likeness.
      - There is slackness in parenting
      - There are weak leaders in the church who are afraid to exercise authority.
      - The Lord's Day is ignored
      - The sovereignty of God is denied.
    - 2) And look at all the confusion and division...
      - We are splintered into many pieces because we have no unity in doctrine.

- We try to create a pretended unity by ignoring doctrine and end up as nothing more than a social club that tries to be moral.
- Our worship is full of idolatry and compromise.
- We trust in marketing schemes rather than Christ and His Spirit.
- There is strife and division over petty matters.
- We are not known for our love.

- 3) And besides all this, the church is not feared in many parts of the world.
  - In North America, we are a joke.
  - In some countries, the church is persecuted.
  - And then there are many bodies of God's people that are lying in the grave as we wait for Jesus to raise them up.

TRANS> This is an unacceptable state of affairs for those who love the LORD.

- We cannot but be moved when we see the pitiful condition of the church.
  - It is only right that we should lament.

B. See how we are taught to lament in Psalm 102.

1. You see that you are to come with a sense of urgency.

a. The Psalm begins with a desperate plea that God will hear:

- Psalm 102:1-2: Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; Incline Your ear to me; In the day that I call, answer me speedily.
- The thought is that if God does not do something we will perish!
- Genuine faith cannot look at the church in ruins and be indifferent.
  - It rises to the occasion with fervent prayer!
  - You know how Daniel prayed for Jerusalem three times a day.
    - He could not rest until God had restored His city.

b. In verses 3-5, we (in singing this psalm) express our anguish before God in the most striking terms...

- Psalm 102:3-7: For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, So that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin.
- Here is a true spirit of fasting...
  - Here is one who is so burdened that he does not even think about eating...
    - He is gaunt, not as one putting on a display of piety, or as one who has no food to eat,
      - but as one who is sincerely overcome with grief!
  - How far we are from such a spirit of concern!

- We are like the disciples in the garden who slept while the Lord Jesus poured out ardent prayers and tears before the Father.
  - Sadly, few of us could use these words to describe our personal feelings about the church...
    - We can only sing them as those who are in fellowship with Jesus Christ as part of His mystical body—and with Jeremiah and with many of our forefathers who poured out prayer like this for the church in their days.
- c. In verse 6-7, we express the sense of extreme loneliness that the godly feel when the church is in a ruined state...
- Here it says:
    - Ps 102:6-7: I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.
    - Here are creatures in a solitary state, a very unnatural condition for the sparrow...
      - Elijah had this sense of loneliness when the church was reduced to a mere 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal...
      - How lonely Moses was with so few to share his concern in the wilderness...
      - How alone our Lord Jesus felt when His disciple forsook Him and He was left alone to bear His sorrows...
    - Brothers and sisters, the church is to gather the nations under Christ,
      - but how few there are in our nation that are truly worshipping Him!
      - How few you have to share fellowship with in the work place or in your neighbourhood...
        - There is this aloneness that ought not to be.
          - Even many in the church are more concerned about their own petty problems than about the honour of Christ.
          - It is cause for lamentation!

TRANS> So you see that you are to come to God with a sense of urgency, but that is not all...

2. In coming to God, you must also come with a sense of shame because of our sin.
  - a. In verse 8, we confess that “our enemies reproach us all day long” and that they “deride us by swearing an oath against us”...
    - The idea here is that the church is in such a pitiful state that our enemies are given occasion to laugh at us,

- and even to wish upon those they curse that they would be like us...
- They would say to their enemies, “May you become like the City of God”—as weak and as powerless and as shameful...
- Many times, if people want to insult someone, they will say to them,
  - You are acting like those crazy Christian—
    - and the one insulted will be very quick to deny it.
    - That is what it is like when you are a reproach.

TRANS> And in verse 9-10,

- b. We confess that God has brought these things upon us because of our sin.
  - Psalm 102:9-10: 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.
  - Too often, we are slow to admit that we fully deserve the trouble that has come upon us.
  - Come now, my brothers and sisters,
    - can you explain the condition of the church today in any other way?
    - Is it not right for us to humble ourselves and admit that we have brought this all upon ourselves by our sin?
  - Of course I don't mean to say that we are never persecuted for righteousness sake,
    - but can we claim that the church is in the lowly state that it is in because of righteousness?
    - I think not—we need to confess our sin and repent.
      - God is visiting us in North America because of our sin...
        - 9-11 did not just happen...
        - The economic collapse did not just happen...
        - The oil spill in the Gulf did not just happen...
        - This is the visitation of God and we need to lament with tears of repentance, not act as if we are victims.
  - c. Surely, we will perish like the lengthening shadow if we are left in our present condition without deliverance...
    - That is the sentiment expressed in verse 11:
      - Psalm 102:11: My days *are* like a shadow that lengthens, And I wither away like grass.
      - The shadow lengthens when it is about to disappear!
        - The church seems, at times, to be about to come to an end!



- It is like the grass in arid places that withers and completely disappears!

TRANS> Isaiah had prophesied that Jerusalem would be reduced to dust and rubble, that the sons of David would be made eunuchs in Babylon!

- Surely it was fitting that God's people should bring cries of lamentation before Him as in this Psalm!
  - Surely it is fitting today when we see so the state of the church in our land that we should lament before Him...
    - because we care.
- Let me point out right here that raising a lamentation like that in verses 1-11 is not an expression of hopeless despair!
  - People who fall into despair do not pray like this!
  - You pray like this because you believe that the LORD will raise up the church even though it lies in ruins!
    - Like the widow before the unjust judge, you simply won't accept the current state of affairs!
      - You will not leave God alone until He makes His city a praise in the earth again!
      - You will continue to pour out your soul in anguish to Him until He answers and fulfils His promise!
    - This is a true spirit of prayer and supplication!
      - Blessed are those who are given this spirit.
      - This is true prayer.
- How then, can you have confidence to raise a lamentation before God?

## **II. You can have confidence to pray in hope, even when the Church is but dust and rubble, because God is with the dust and rubble.**

A. There is hope for the church because God is God!

1. See what a marvellous contrast is set up between verse 11 and verse 12!
  - a. Here, let me read these verses, emphasising the pronouns:
    - Psalm 102:11: "My days are like a shadow that lengthens (about to disappear), and I wither like grass..."
    - Psalm 102:12: But You, O LORD, shall endure forever and the remembrance of your name to all generations!"
  - b. We see the holy people of God through the ages dying and turning to dust,

- and we see great advances that were made by many in the church forgotten.
    - We see advance and then we see decline in the church.
      - It has always been like this.
  - But the Lord God is altogether different.
    - He continues from generation to generation.
    - The word **endure** means to sit, as on a throne—
      - He continues to be seated on His throne through all the changes of this world,
        - constantly working out His purposes without a skip.
- c. What a contrast between us and Him!
- We see the weakness and impotence of the church, but we see His enduring strength and unwavering purpose!
  - Let us rejoice in His strength when we see our weakness!
    - That is the foundation of our hope.

TRANS> But of course the mere fact that He is unchanging does not help us unless we also see that He has an unchanging purpose for us, His church.

2. When verse 12 adds that not only God, but also the remembrance of God's name will endure.
- That expresses the certainty that He will continue to openly display His work upon us!
- a. In other words, He is going to do all that He has promised concerning the church because He has tied His name to the church...
- He has bound His reputation to what He does with the church...
    - That means that when the church is full iniquity, He chastens it for the sake of His name...
    - And, on account of His promise, He raises it up again for the sake of His name.
  - That is why it is so meaningful to receive the benediction as God's people.
    - Benedictions are found all through the Bible, and when they are pronounced upon us,
      - God tells us that He puts His name upon us...(see Numbers 6:27)
      - In this way, He ties His reputation to what He does with us!
        - Obviously, He is going to purge out the unbelieving and to purify and perfect and bless forever those that are His!

- b. You may remember in Exodus 32 and 33 that Moses pled with the Lord after the golden calf incident on these grounds.
    - God had threatened to destroy the nation and raise up another because of their stubbornness and idolatry,
      - but Moses said, “What about your promise to Abraham? What about your name? What will the nations say about you if you destroy the people you said you would save?”
      - And the Lord did not destroy them for the sake of His name.
    - God will uphold His name!
      - This is such a powerful encouragement to pray with hope when the church is brought low!
  - 3. You see how verse 13 affirms that the LORD will arise to have mercy upon Zion (another name for the church) at His set time.
    - Psalm 102:13: “You will arise and have mercy on Zion! For the time to favour her has come, yes the set time has come.”
    - This is not just wishful thinking!
      - God has a plan—He has a set time to bring our final deliverance that we are waiting for, and it will be done!
- B. Oh brothers and sisters, it is for you to love the church even when she is dust and rubble!
1. We love her because we know that God is still with her and that she has future glory.
    - God loves the stones and the dust of His city—
      - He has made a promise to the stones and dust and He will have mercy yet!
    - And so we are told what God’s true do in verse 14:
      - Ps 102:14: Your servants take pleasure in her stones and show favour to her dust.
      - They know that the dust of God’s city is not like any other dust because it is dust that has God’s promise...
        - Let it be scattered all over the world, God will bring it together and build His glorious temple!
          - This dust will be eternally glorious and perfect...
            - and no enemies will molest her ever again!
        - Everything—even death itself—will be brought under Christ and nothing will remain that is not put under Him!

2. Therefore, you must not kick the church when she is down, when she is weak and contemptible.
  - a. This is what faithless men do.
    - 1) This is what Shimei did when he cursed David.
      - He saw David in his lowliness cast out of Jerusalem, and he said,
        - “Look at David! Now he is helpless! The time has come for me to curse him.”
      - He did not believe that God would raise David up again!
    - 2) This is the very same spirit we see in the Jews who mocked Jesus when He was on the cross...
      - It was Satan’s hour, but Satan’s hour will not last!
      - See that you do not despise the church, even when she is in her weakest and most pitiable condition.
  - b. Yes, it can be hard to glory in the church when she is so divided and sinful and such a reproach...
    - I run in to people all the time who claim to love Jesus, but want nothing to do with His church.
      - They try to separate Him from His church—the very church that He is the head of and that He has sent forth His servants to govern.
      - I have met people who say that they are much better off because they have disassociated themselves from her!
        - But no my brothers and sisters,
          - you must not ever cut yourself off from her.
          - God loves her when she is dust and rubble.
          - Christ loves her and He is in her and you must love her and be in her too.
        - You will say, but there are many hypocrites in the visible church—
          - “I am part of the true invisible church—it is the visible church that I am not associated with.”
          - The Lord knows about the hypocrites and He will deal with them—but the church He established on earth is a visible church with visible members—He was a part of it and so are His officers and so ought you to be.
    - And there is another related temptation of which you must also guard yourself...

- It is the temptation to blame the lowly condition of the church on those within the church who are upholding the truth...
  - Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus Himself were seen as trouble makers because they stood for the truth.
  - There are people today who will say that if you use church discipline and practice Biblical worship, that you hinder the church.
    - They say we ought to avoid saying certain things that might cause offense to people—
    - Robert Schuller has said that we should not speak about sin because people don't want to hear about that.
      - This is one of Satan's most successful devices in our day.
      - He raises up men to criticize what is right in the church instead of dealing with what is wrong.

TRANS> But whatever the condition of the church, my brothers and sisters,

- It is for you to believe what God says about the church even when she is dust and rubble!
  - The true servants of God are described in verse 14!
    - Psalm 102:14: "take pleasure in her stones and show favour to her dust."
      - You must love her even when she is reprehensible in the world.
      - You must not be ashamed of her even though she is lowly.
      - She belongs to Christ and Christ is in her.

C. See the affirmations of faith that are set forth here for us to encourage us concerning the church—even when she is at her worst!

1. There is the affirmation of verse 15 that the nations (now boasting) will one day fear when God raises up the church.
  - What terror there will be for those who have mocked when they see that just as Jesus was raised from the grave, so the church is raised from the dust in which she lies!
  - What they have mocked, God loves and restores, not because we are good but because He is so gracious.
2. There is the affirmation that "God will build up Zion" (verse 16)
  - Even though the church may be torn down, it will be built again.
  - Jesus gave us this promise when He said,
    - "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."
    - The gates of Hades are the gates of death—

- Even death will not keep us from praising God because Jesus will raise us up from the dead to serve Him forever in His kingdom.
3. There is the affirmation in the second half of v. 16 that God “will appear in His glory”...
- The church will not be a cause of shame to Him when He comes in His glory.
    - She is under construction now, but at the last day, she will be presented before the Father as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing!
    - Everyone will see the marvellous work that He has done in her.
      - She will be a cause of glory to Him instead of a cause of shame.
4. And then in verse 17, we affirm that God will answer the prayers of His people when they cry to Him from the depths of their struggle and weakness...
- Ps 102:17: He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer.
    - This is a wonderful assurance that we have that God will hear us when we pray and answer us from heaven!
  - There are so many examples of this throughout history...
    - He heard the groans His people when they cried out to Him in Egypt and delivered them.
    - He heard them again and again in the time of the judges when he delivered them into the hands of their enemies because of their sin.
    - He heard David when he cried out to him as Saul persecuted him and in the time of Abasalom’s rebellion.
    - He heard Daniel when he prayed in Babylon.
    - And He heard Jesus when He cried out to Him from the cross, oppressed by His enemies and oppressed by the wrath and cruse of God on account of our sins.
      - He heard and He answered and accepted His sacrifice so that Jesus could call out in victory, “It is finished!”
        - And then He raised Him from the grave to show His complete victory over sin and death for the sake of His people!
        - Indeed, when Jesus was delivered, it was the deliverance of the whole church in all ages!
          - It is all because God heard Him that we are now saved who come to join ourselves to Him in faith.

TRANS> And this brings us to the next section of our Psalm—verses 18-28 where we are shown that:

### **III. The fall and rise of the church will redound to the glory of God forever.**

- It seems backward to speak of the “fall and rise” because we are so used to speaking of the “rise and fall” of nations...
    - You see, in this world, there is death,
      - but for the Church, joined to the Word of God in faith, it is not the “rise and fall,” but the “fall and rise” that we speak of!
        - Christ is every bringing us out of death and despair and ruin and into His very own fullness!
    - Anyway, I digress...
      - The point is that the fall and rise of the church will redound to the glory of God forever!
- A. In verses 18-22, we see that God’s deliverance of His people in one generation becomes an occasion for the praise of God in next generations.
- Did you follow all that?
    - To put it in a slightly different way,
      - When God delivers His church in one generation, subsequent generations shall praise Him for it in the church.
1. God has chosen in particular to reveal His glory through the salvation of His church...this is how He makes Himself known.
- a. You see in verse 18 how it says that God’s deliverance of His people is written down for the generation to come...
    - so that future generations will know what He has done for His people and praise Him.
    - He reveals Himself to them by declaring to them in His word the great things He has done to save His people!
      - Again, I would mention
        - His deliverance of His people from Egypt...
        - His deliverance of His people from Babylon...
        - But most of all, His deliverance of His people in the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ!
          - This is written for us in scripture so that we might know Him.
  - b. Verses 19-20 reiterate how He looked down from heaven and saw us in our desperate condition and saved us...
    - It says
      - Ps 102:19-20: For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth, To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To release those appointed to death,
    - In this way we see His grace and strength!

- His grace that He was willing to do for a sinful people such great things to secure our pardon!
- And is strength in that He was able to deliver us from our sin and to give us new live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. But why does He do this? Why does He deliver us?

a. Verses 21 and 22 explain it...

- Ps 102:21-22: To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

b. Do you see?

- This is what we do when we come together with all the nations of the earth to worship God each Lord's Day.
- The peoples gathered together is the great ecclesia—the church brought together in Christ from every nation.
- We come as His people to declare His name and to praise Him.
- We are delivered that we might see His glory and make His glory known as the gracious and mighty God that He is!
  - We are the example of His mercy as the God who saves sinners!
    - Paul says that he is the chief of sinners and that God saved him to be a pattern of his mercy for all to see!
    - The whole church is that!

c. Isn't this a wonderful thing?

- Although the LORD shook the earth at Sinai and displays His majesty in storms,
  - His primary way of displaying His glory is by showing His mercy to His church!
  - How good that is for us who are part of the church!
    - Who would not want to come to Christ to receive such mercy?
      - Oh be a part of this if you are not!
      - If you are resisting His grace, stop it right now!
      - Come to Him by faith and share in the joy of His delivered ones.
    - What a great thing it is to be saved from our sins, saved from eternal misery in Hell, saved to live in God's house praising His name forever!

B. The church's testimony is given in verse 23-28.



- Here we see that the church's hope and glory is all to be found in Jesus Christ.
1. In verse 23-24, we speak of how the LORD humbled us deliberately...
    - Listen to what it says:
      - Ps 102:23: He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.
        - God Himself did this.
        - It is His punishment of our sin that brought the sentence of death upon us and that brings us to brink of the grave.
          - Death is the penalty of sin—our days are shortened so that we are desperate because we see that apart from Him we would perish in our sin.
    - Consequently, we cry out to Him when we once grasp that the threat of death is His judgement and that we cannot save ourselves...
      - As in verse 24 we say to Him,
        - Ps 102:24: "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days."
        - This is nothing else by a request to deliver us from death—
          - a cry that we will not perish.
  2. But it is right here that I want you to remember something about the Psalms!
    - The Psalms are covenantal in nature.
      - What I mean is, they prayers and praises that we are given to offer up to God as a whole church, with Jesus Christ as our head.
    - And although we were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world,
      - It is not our cry for God to deliver us that ultimately brings us deliverance.
      - It is Christ who originates this prayer that God will not cut us off in the midst of our days!
      - It is Christ who is the head of the church who leads us to the throne of grace so that we are heard.
        - As the One who prays in His capacity as the redeemer of the church,
          - He cries out and says, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days."
  3. And it is in response to Him, to Jesus Christ the Son of God, that the Father responds when He says (beginning in the third part of verse 24):
    - Ps 102:24-28: "Your years are throughout all generations. Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You."

- a. The Father is here declaring the eternity of the Son!
  - This interpretation is confirmed by nothing less than the authority of God's Word in Hebrews 1.
    - In Hebrews 1:10-12, we are told that these are the God the Father's Words spoken to God the Son!
  - The emphasis of these words is that the Son is eternal while the whole creation is transitory.
    - Even the heavens will perish, but He will endure!
    - They will grow old and be changed, but the Son is ever the same and His years will have no end.
  
- b. But here is the marvellous wonderful thing!
  - It is not just that the Son of God Himself is eternal...
    - It is that the Son of God who is joined to His people—His church—is eternal!
    - In other words, the eternal Son has joined Himself as redeemer to a people that were ready to perish in their sin under the wrath of God!
      - But the Son cannot perish, even though He has joined Himself to us.
      - The outcome is, that instead of the Son perishing because He is united with the Church that perishes...
        - the Church lives forever because the Son lives forever!
  - This does not mean that the Son, in joining Himself to us, did not have to bear the penalty for our sins.
    - In becoming one with us, He took responsibility for our sins...
      - but because He is the Son of God, He was able to pay the full penalty of our sin and now neither He or the church can perish!
  - Verse 28 expresses clearly that those who belong to Him—His servants—will continue forever, established before their LORD!
    - Ps 102:28: The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You."
    - And this will be true of every generation...
      - No generation will be saved in any other way than by association with Jesus Christ.
  
- c. This teaches you to look for salvation from nowhere else but Jesus!
  - 1) We are sinners and as such, we have been sentenced to return to dust.

- We have been sentenced to great humiliation such that the very ground that we were created to have dominion over now takes dominion of us.
  - That is what death is about...
    - and we are sentenced to an eternity without ever regaining this dominion...
      - being trampled upon by the curse.
- 2) We perish, but the Word of God endures forever!
- And the Word of God, the incarnate Son of God who is the promise, has been joined to His people...His church... all those who believe...
    - And it is because of Him that we have eternal life because death cannot keep Him!
    - He takes away our death and swallows it up in His glorious life!
- 3) Therefore, it is for the whole church of God to seek our salvation not in the righteousness that we have done,
- but in Jesus Christ our redeemer and our righteous Saviour and God.
    - He is the source of life!
    - We have hope and assurance that the church will never perish because *He* will never perish.
      - All of our hope is in Him!
      - And we are delivered from death to praise His name with all those He has redeemed for so great a salvation!
  - When you see the weakness of the church, when you see her under God's displeasure for her sins,
    - There is but one thing to do!
      - Join your voice to that of Jesus Christ in this Psalm and cry out to God for deliverance...
      - And do it with the assurance that deliverance will come,
        - not because of you or me, but because of Jesus Christ, the Son of God from heaven, who endures forever!
        - The Grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of Lord endures forever!