

psalm 102.¹⁷⁻²¹

- ¹⁷He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and not despise their prayer.
¹⁸This shall be written for the generation to come:
and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
¹⁹For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
²⁰To hear the groaning of the prisoner;
to loose those that are appointed to death;
²¹To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem...

In an earlier meditation on another of the Penitential Psalms, we examined a frequently misunderstood part of the Psalmist's testimony concerning the character of God.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise."¹

In this reading, we suggest, the Psalmist returns to bear the exact same testimony:

"He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and not despise their prayer."

One might wonder why the Psalmist, and this writer, returns to this theme so often. I won't be so bold as to speak for the Psalmist. But, for myself, I return over and over again to this aspect of the Divine character because my own experience and those of others to whom I have ministered demonstrate how very difficult it is for so many to believe. Perhaps you will agree when we suggest that those who are spiritually destitute, broken, and shattered are likely to feel that they are on their own when it comes to repairing the self-inflicted damage. Because they almost inevitably brought the destitution upon themselves, they fear to report and confess it to God lest He turn away with a calloused shrug:

"The man [or woman] has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not... impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just."²

Perhaps you know a little something about how it feels to have others "say all manner of evil against you falsely."³ Perhaps, then, you can imagine how God feels when His character is so often maligned; when He is accused of being something other than what the Psalmist claims Him to be in today's reading. It must be particularly galling, hurtful, irritating—whatever—when, in fact, the Psalmist hasn't yet said the

¹ Psalm 51.¹⁷

² See Moses 4.¹⁷

³ See Matthew 5.¹¹

half of it and, indeed, never will manage to find the language that begins to characterize God accurately. For it is the Psalmist's testimony that not only does God rescue the destitute and broken, He goes out of his way to find them. He is constantly on the hunt, looking for souls to repair and rescue.

“For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
To hear the groaning of the prisoner;
to loose those that are appointed to death...”

So, again, just imagine God's disappointment when we resist His efforts; when we “say all manner of evil against” Him by imagining Him to be callous toward our destitution and resistant to His helping us. But it gets worse yet. For when we imagine Him to be what He is not, we become impotent to carry out one of our prime missions: to bear witness of Him in such a way that praise is magnified and increased the world over. When we fail in our mission in this way, we not only fail to bring the “generation to come” to Him, but drive them into the arms of all manner of false, impotent gods.

Lent provides a wonderful opportunity for us to explore more deeply God's character, and, where necessary, repent of having said “all manner of evil against” Him. The season is a good time to yield to one of His fondest efforts: the rescue the destitute, broken, and shattered people. Then, freshly rescued, we can use Lent to broadcast the truth of God until His praise reverberates the world over.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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