

Part One

Scripture: (Focus passage in italics)

(NIV) Psalm 102^a

A prayer of an afflicted person who has grown weak and pours out a lament before the LORD.

- 1**Hear my prayer, LORD;
let my cry for help come to you.
- 2**Do not hide your face from me
when I am in distress.
Turn your ear to me;
when I call, answer me quickly.
- 3**For 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**In my distress I groan aloud
and 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 roof.
- 8**All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who rail against 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, LORD, sit enthroned forever;
your renown endures through all generations.*
- 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.*

*15The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.*

*16For the LORD will rebuild Zion
and appear in his glory.*

*17He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;
he will not despise their plea.*

18Let this be written for a future generation,
that a people not yet created may praise the LORD:

19“The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,

20to hear the groans of the prisoners
and release those condemned to death.”

21So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem

22when the peoples and the kingdoms
assemble to worship the LORD.

23In the course of my life^b he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.

24So I said:

“Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations.

25In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

26They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.

27But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.

28The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you.”

Definition: Theodicy is a defense of the goodness and omnipotence, especially when contrasted with surrounding circumstances.

Part Two

#1. The reality of God overarches all situations.

#2. We come to perceive a time of difficulty in certain situations.

#3. In other studies, we have seen the middle phase of faith, what is called the Contradiction. It comes after the promises of God (Phase 1 of the Phases of Faith), and seems to oppose them. Yet in Phase 3, God Himself resolves the difficulty/impossibility of the Contradiction. Thus, Promise, (opposed by) Contradiction, (God provides) Resolution.

#4. Another way of looking at this is to see at the end of Phase 1 something arising, the onset of trouble.

#5. Next comes the Theodocian Parenthesis, a time in which trouble persists but the sovereign care of God, often unseen, still prevails.

#6. At the end of that Parenthesis, the power of God acts. This produces a change, a time when God's favor can be perceived. It is followed by an actual change of circumstance, a discontinuity (when the Contradiction is resolved.)

Part Three

#1. Thus, visually: Onset of trouble -> || (theodicean parenthesis) || -> Power of God produces a time of God's favor || -> a discontinuity is effected (the contradiction is resolved.)

#2. Christians

- cannot reason on the basis of the appearance of the contradiction or what's in the parenthesis
- must reason on what's outside the parenthesis
- recognize that that someone in a parenthesis would tend to put a premium on sensory evidence

#3. However,

- what's outside the parenthesis transcends sensory evidences
- we don't have to be blind to spiritual reality (in other words, being within a parenthesis doesn't *have* to blind us)
- we operate within the parenthesis but do not reason on the basis of the parenthesis
- we recognize that God has placed the parenthesis in our lives for a reason, but since we don't reason from the outside "real world dynamics," we can live in the world but not of it.

Part Four

#1. The parenthesis wants to be a complete frame of reference for our thinking.

- It has logic
- It appeals to the self-explanatory
- You can "make predictions" based on what's inside it

#2. In the book of Revelation, where people were surrounded by horrific situations, they did not locate their behavior within the Theodicean parenthesis. Their behavior had to be based on faith, whose source is always outside the seen.

#3. Scientific atheism sees the world without a Theodicean Parenthesis, but sees everything in life as a totality. Everything event and circumstance and state of being in the universe, including episodes of trouble, are seen as being of the same substance, tone, and likeness.

#4. In contrast, a Christian cannot allow the Parenthesis to supply the logic of behavior and a psychology of depression, worry and fear. Unfortunately, this is what the Israelites did in the desert.

Part Five

#1. Why does God put such a parenthesis in our lives? Answer: To show His power.

Examples:

- The Babylonian Captivity
- The birth of John the Baptist to a barren woman
- Joseph questioning the virginity of Mary
- Death of the innocents at the hands of Pharaoh and Herod

#2. Other examples: 2 Kings 4, 1 Samuel 17, John 9, the plagues in the book of Exodus

#3. Others in biblical history showed us how they recognized that the parenthesis of crisis in their lives (in these cases, not because of any sin they'd committed) wasn't the whole picture:

- Job
- Esther
- Samuel
- Joseph
- Moses
- Jeremiah

#4. Those who depend only on the sensory and/or on human intelligence become blind to what is outside the parenthesis. They cannot see God's purposes.

#5. In fact, a parenthesis, by definition of God, is not supposed to be viewed as self-enclosed, self-defining and self-organizing. God provides and institutes them to prove faith!

Part Six

#1 Phase Two of the Phases of Faith is a Theodicean Parenthesis. In it, God must help us manage our behavior and the parenthesis itself.

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Word of God	Theodicean Parenthesis	The power of God

#2. Spiritual blindness means being swallowed up by the parenthesis, not seeing it at all. It's not just a phase. When properly seen as the place where God works invisibly in an impossible situation, it is everything! It is our proper understanding of time and space.

#3. 2 Peter 2:4-10 shows a basic comprehension of a belief in the concept of a Theodicean parenthesis:

⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell,^[a] putting them in chains of darkness^[b] to be held for judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶ if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. ¹⁰ This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh^[c] and despise authority. (NIV)

#4. Thus all of human temporal existence is the Theodicean Parenthesis! It is our proper understanding of time and space.

Part Seven

#1. The presence of simultaneity can “suggest” ambiguity. That’s because there are several things that happen (or should happen) in the parenthesis: waiting, worship, belief, prayer.

#2. From the time of the onset of a parenthesis, time seems to stretch or dilate (especially if pain is involved) and experience seems to protract.

#3. Thus the issue is: which of these will dominate the Theodicean Parenthesis? Simultaneity does not in itself determine what will dominate.

#4. Waiting, worship, belief and prayer allow us to jump or bound over the influence of time and experience. But not just any type of prayer, worship, waiting, and belief; but that behavior which anticipates a time when there will be a resolution, and a post-resolution perspective.

#5. During our time in the Parenthesis, we maintain the assumption that all causation is rooted in God; not rooted in materiality, nor time and space.