

Triumphant Tuesday-Bible Study
Tuesday March 21, 2023
Presenter-Willie Bryan

Psalm 88: New International Version

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to *mahalath leannoth*.^[b] A *maskil*^[c] of Heman the Ezrahite

Author: Heman the Ezrahite.

Review of word definitions:

- Mahalath ... the conjecture it is a guitar; **Leannoth** has reference to the character of the psalm and might be rendered to humble or affect”. (The Bible Dictionary)
- **The whole phrase has “by others rendered, “on the sickness of affliction.**
- **Maskil...** Etymology New Hebrew maskil literally enlightened, intellectual. (M. Dictionary)
- Many biblical scholars believe that a maskil is meant to be meditative and to impart wisdom.

General Introduction

Heman the Ezrahite may be one of the three Levites assigned by King David to be ministers of music. This Heman was a grandson of Samuel the prophet.

He was appointed by King David “for the Ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. (1Chron 25:1 KJV)

Heman was considered very wise but not as wise as Solomon. (1kings2:30-31 NIV)

He served in Israel as a Levite, a seer (1Chron35:15 KJV), a song writer, a godly man, father, and a man of influence during the time of David and Solomon.

He had fourteen sons and three daughters. (1Chron25:5NKJV)

Heman expresses feelings of being overwhelmed, cut off, forgotten, grieved, rejected, terrified, and despaired. Worst of all, he is crying out to God wondering where God is in all his suffering.

The Psalm ends saying, "*darkness is my closest friend*" (verse 18)

Psalms 88 is a lamented song that seems to have been written in a state of despair. It begins with an expression of faith.

It is unclear what Heman's illness or inflections were, but the Complete Jewish Bible headline on psalm 88 says, "A song. A psalm of the sons of Korach. For the leader. Set to "Sickness that Causes Suffering."

Heman says:

^{v 1} Lord, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you.

**^{v 2} May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.**

The NKJV says God of my salvation.

The Passion Bible says Yahweh is the God who continually saves me.

So, in verse one "God of my salvation" indicates that Heman had trusted the Lord to save him.

Verse 2: the word cry (rinnah) in the Old Testament usually "speaks of a loud shout of Joy. Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. The Expositor's Bible Commentary pg. 565 describes cry as "deeply piercing shout", stating it is a "loud cry for divine help, hoping he will hear.

In verses 3-9 Heman is telling God honestly how he is feeling.

**³ I am overwhelmed with troubles
and my life draws near to death.**

**⁴ I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am like one without strength.**

**⁵ I am set apart with the dead,
like the slain who lie in the grave,**

whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.

⁶ You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths.

⁷ Your wrath lies heavily on me;
you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. [\[d\]](#)

⁸ You have taken from me my closest friends
and have made me repulsive to them.

I am confined and cannot escape;

⁹ my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, Lord, every day;
I spread out my hands to you.

In those verses Heman told God exactly how he felt.

Our prayers to God should be honest. “There is a thought that in modern Christianity... in order to be spiritually mature you must hold back the tears and be strong before the lord.”

THIS is a false sense of strength. It should be “unrestrained disclosure to God what is going on inside your head.

Look at what Heman is saying to God in prayer:

- He started out reminding God he was the one who saves him. He expressed being “overwhelmed with troubles (**meaning full as cannot take any more**)
- His life draws near to the grave; **others expected him to die.**
- He was so weak and afflicted “that he felt he was pulled adrift like the slain.” Whom you (God) remember no more. **This is saying he would be cut off from his earthly relationships and from his relationship from God.**
- In vs 6 he” felt God was responsible for his agony.”
- V7, He speaks God’s wrath and terror being against him. **This is not the way God.**

· In vs 8 Heman was fighting his way through this situation alone his friends had abandoned him. Commentators supposed he was a leper infectious disease, separated from his family, is abominable to all -separated in a separated where he does not come out to mingle with society.

He is confined and cannot escape. (Clark's commentary)

· Verse 9 His eyes are growing dim, indicating “**that he is passing over into the realm of death.**”

· His **outstretch hand conveyed his desperation.**

Heman was in a dark place in his life. Darkness disorients, not everything you feel is true.

The Holy Spirit wants us to know we, too, can freely pour out our hearts to God.

God knows what we are feeling; our expressing our thoughts and emotions to Him opens the door for His Spirit to minister and speak to us.

When you have a relationship with God, you can communicate Honestly with Him. BUT !! you should NEVER lose sight of who God is. He is God. We should NEVER give up and stop praying.

James 1:6 Easy English Bible says: “But when you ask God for something, you must trust him completely. Do not have other ideas in your mind. People who are not sure that God will help them are like the waves in the sea. The wind blows the water one way and then it blows the water another way.”

VSS 10-12 Heman pleads to be heard by God--- asking a series question that may demonstrate his anguish and how he felt separated from God whom he knew to be a God of steadfast love, righteousness and steadfastness.

VS 10 Do you show your wonders to the dead?

Do their spirits rise up and praise you?

**Vs 11 Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction^{lel}?**

Proverbs 15:11 NLT says “Even Death and Destruction hold no secrets from the Lord. How much more does he know the human heart!”

**vs 12 Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,
or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?**

In other words, Heman is asking God “how would letting me die at this time bring glory in the present. I am alive in the land of the living, if dead would not be able to praise the Lord.”

Warren Wiersbe Book **BE WORSHIPFUL** noted on this Psalm” Heman’s argument is his death will rob God of a great opportunity to demonstrate His power and glory, or what service could he be to God dead.

Psalms 139:8 AMP says **If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead), behold, You are there.”**

].” Job 26:6 AMP “Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) is naked before God, And Abaddon (the place of destruction) has no covering [from His eyes.

Addendum:

Verses 6, 10-12 could be considered prophetic, pointing to Jesus Christ.

Consider 1 Peter 4:6 MSG “Listen to the Message. It was preached to those believers who are now dead, and yet even though they died (just as all people must), they will still get in on the life that God has given in Jesus.”

1 Peter 3:18 ERV “Christ himself suffered when he died for you, and with that one death he paid for your sins. He was not guilty, but he died for people who are guilty. He did this to bring all of you to God. In his physical form he was killed, but he was made alive by the Spirit.”

1 Peter 4:6 NLT “That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.”

**13 But I cry to you for help, Lord;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.**

**14 Why, Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?**

Warren Wiersby noted “Heman prayed to the Lord for healing and strength. He prayed before he went to the sanctuary to assist in the worship and prayed with the end of the day. During his daily ministry he heard the priestly benediction; **Numbers 6:22-26 AMP2 “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The Lord bless you, and keep you [protect you, sustain you, and guard you]; The Lord make His face shine upon you [with favor], And be gracious to you [surrounding you with lovingkindness]; The Lord lifts up His countenance (face) upon you [with divine approval], And give you peace [a tranquil heart and life].”**

From Heman’s perspective, “But the blessing did not come to him. “He felt rejected and “believed” God’s face was turning away from him.” He needed to know why God was not answering his prayers.

BUT HE KEPT ON PRAYING.

Luke 11:8-10 NLT (in red letters) “But I tell you this—though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. “And so, I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

In verses 15-18 Heman continues to wait for God’s answer.

**HIS COMPLAINT TO GOD ABOUT UNFAIR AND UNBEARABLE
TREATMENT 88:13-18**

**15 From my youth I have suffered and been close to death;
I have borne your terrors and am in despair.**

**16 Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.**

**17 All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.**

**18 You have taken from me friend and neighbor—
darkness is my closest friend.**

He continued to pray and look to God for help.

This psalm seems to end in darkness; but the good news Christians (we) that accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the story ends in his presence where there will be no more darkness and every tear will be wiped away. So let us cling to Him and never stop praying, never stop trusting Him.

Job 13:15 CEV2 says “**God may kill me, but still, I will trust him and offer my defense.**”

In conclusion, James tells us:

James 1:6a EASY Bible2 “But when you ask God for something, you must **trust him completely.**”

James 1:6 KJV2 says “But let him ask **in faith, nothing wavering.** For he that wavered is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

James (Jacob) 1:6-8 TPT “Just make sure you **ask empowered by confident faith without doubting** that you will receive. For the ambivalent person believes one minute and doubts the next. Being undecided makes you become like the rough seas driven and tossed by the wind. You’re up one minute and tossed down the next. When you are half-hearted and wavering, it leaves you unstable. Can you really expect to receive anything from the Lord when you’re in that condition?”

Lesson for us to remember:”

§ Lament in the Bible is not simply an outlet for our frustrations. A lament is a form of *prayer*. Many of the laments in the psalms are calls to action. They plead with God to pay attention to them and to act on their behalf. In fact, many Old Testament scholars identify “petition” as an essential element of a lament psalm

§ Here in Ps 88 faith faces life as it is. **The psalm shows that the experience of darkness also has its place in the life of faith.** Psalm 88 reminds us that life does not always have happy endings. Suffering and loss are part and parcel of our human existence, even for people who are devoted to God.

§ When in the deepest imaginable personal distress, and thinking that God is unfair, that He has forgotten you, and that you are in danger of dying, remember

that Heman turned to the Lord in prayer. Even when you think God has forgotten and is unfair, TALK TO HIM ANYWAY!”

§ we are to remember... in the hardest of trials and loneliest of seasons? The Trinity is working in you and for you. Which leads us to our next glorious truth: though our trials may be long, **we are never left alone in them.**

§ Isaiah 53 tells us It is by Jesus strips we are healed. John1:29 Jesus is the lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world.

§ Thank God that when we are in the valley of the shadow of death, God is still there, even if we might think He has forgotten us. But praise be to God that when He brings us through, we are refined like pure gold. This result motivates us to endure really tough times in our walk with the Lord. Thank you, Lord Jesus, Hallelujah!

§ **Warren** Wiersbe noted “God always has the last word, and **it will not be darkness.** We should never doubt in the darkness what God has taught in the light,”

Lastly, when you have a relationship with God, you can communicate Honestly with Him. BUT !! you should NEVER lose sight of who God is. He is God. We should NEVER give up and stop praying and trusting God.

REMEMBER, when in despair, prayer tethers us to the Lord. A tether is a line or anchor that fastened as to restrict its movement. A line to which someone or something is attached as for security.

There’s a poem about an anchor that says: Our faith in God is the anchor that will hold us strong as we go through these times.

This anchor holds in the day of adversity.

This anchor keeps my vessel (life) from drifting.

This anchor holds us in the midst of an angry world.

This anchor is trustworthy and faithful.

This anchor holds through life and death’s fingers.

This anchor will calm and quiet my spirit, shoring me on with mercy and peace.

This anchor holding me in Jesus. He is my hope, my comfort.

He Jesus is the anchor of my soul.

So, do not allow the darkness silence you.

MAKE SURE YOU ARE ANCHOR TETHER TO JESUS

what trial are you facing right now?

AMEN

Sources used:

NKJV; KJV: NIV

Be Worshipful by Warren W. Wiersbe

Bible Study tools

Webster Dictionary; Wikipedia