

## Psalm 88-90

Psalm 88 is undoubtedly the saddest of all the psalms. It begins with a cry of despair, its obvious the psalmist is dealing with depression, he's discouraged and feels as though he's on the threshold of death and has been for some time. We've seen these sorts of things before contained in the psalms however as a general rule they usually end on a positive note, a triumphant cry of some sort, psalm 88 ends in darkness. There's not even the slightest glimmer of hope to be found throughout these Vs. He's beat down in the beginning and left in the dark at the end.

Really it's a sober reminder that not everything in life has a fairytale ending, some things don't have fairytale beginnings or middles either, it's just tough from the alpha to the omega of some people's lives. For whatever reason (we don't know the whys of God) some people have a tough life, a hard life, a seemingly unfair life from the moment they come into this life until the time they leave it. Being a godly person isn't a guarantee of amnesty from incredibly trying times, and sometimes these *trying times* can last a *lifetime*. I don't claim to have the answer for it, I don't know God's reasoning behind it, however the fact remains that we're to trust Him in the midst *of* it.

We're to remember, (and it's good for us to have a continual reminder) that God is worthy of our dedication, our consecration and commitment to Him no matter *what* kind of blows life throws at us. We're not committed to Him because of what He does for us circumstantially, but because of who He is personally and because of what's already been done for us in Christ specifically.

Nowhere in the word of God are we going to find that God seeks to show His love for us through the way He causes circumstances to line up for us. So that if you've got plenty of money, no health problems and smooth sailing God loves you, but if you're struggling financially, have health problems continually and rough waters circumstantially God is mad at you or has a problem with you. We often times have a tendency to think that way, however that's not what the bible teaches at all. The bible teaches us that God demonstrates His love for us not through creating a primrose problem free path for us, but through the cross of Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. Remember this Vs? "...*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Rom 5:8 For God so loved the world that *He gave His only begotten Son*, so that by believing *on* Him we'd receive everlasting life *in* Him. That is the single focus point of the love of God for you and me.

Now, beyond that God can in His grace can bless us in other ways should He so choose. However if in the eternal scheme of things He has a plan for us that doesn't involve those things for us who are we to argue with God? Can the clay say to the potter, "Why did you make me like this?" "I want to be this kind of vessel not that kind of vessel?" No, we're the clay He's the potter, He shapes us and molds us how *He* chooses, not how we choose. The place where there's no more sorrow, no more pain, and no more tears is called heaven. In this life we're going to have bumps, bruises, hardship and tribulation... None of us like it, but we need to learn to trust God in the midst of it.

### Vs1-3

If I were to apply a NT principle to this OT picture that's being painted before us it would be this, "...*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*" 1 Peter 5:7 It's really quite an amazing testimony of trust in that this guy cried out to the Lord evidently his whole life concerning whatever affliction it was that plagued him yet as far as we know the Lord never took it from him. Yet he continued to cry out *to* the Lord, to cast his care *upon* the Lord, fixed his hope and kept his trust *in* the Lord.

These 1<sup>st</sup> few Vs give us an important key concerning feeling overwhelmed, full of trouble and at the end. What's the key? "Come to the Lord by faith." Cry out *before* Him; let your request be made known *to* Him.

What characteristics can we find in Heman's prayer life as indicated in Vs 1? #1 He kept his confidence in God. He declared Him (despite his personal problems) to be the, "God of my salvation." He kept confidence in the Lord; he wouldn't abandon the Lord because of circumstantial hardship. He evidently had a grip on the same understanding that Peter had gleaned when the Lord asked the disciples if they wanted to turn away *from* Him because of the difficulties that can be associated with *following* Him. Peter said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" John 6:68 Where else you going to go? There's no other option and it's definitely not going to be better apart from the Lord. So no matter how hard it gets we're going to continue to trust Him and keep confidence *in* Him, that's the position of the psalmist. His life is horrible, yet he continues to place his confidence in the Lord.

#2 There was an *earnestness* about His prayers, an intensity, he says, "I have cried out." His prayers have acted as a distress call to God, there was a fervency there, a passion behind his prayers. I have discovered, no doubt you have as well that being in distress has this ability to place an intensity and a passion behind my prayers that may not be there when everything is going ok. When I'm in distress it's time to get serious! Pain will make prayer warriors out of us won't it? He cried out earnestly.

#3 He cried out persistently, “Day and night” before God. All of the elements of a powerful prayer life were there. His confidence was in the Lord, his prayed earnestly, persistently, yet for all of that nothing seemed to work out for the better in his life, at least circumstantially.

It serves to remind us doesn't it, God is not a genie whose bottle we rub through prayer and He gives us our wishes. He has a plan for our lives and the chief objective of prayer isn't to line God up with my plan, but to line me up with God's plan. That's why we do well to keep the words, “Nevertheless not my will be done but Your will be done” when we're petitioning the Lord concerning our desire. Because we're not trying to manipulate God, or cause Him to do our bidding, we don't want to have not because we ask not, but ultimately we want to line up with His plan even if we don't understand it. So, come to the Lord by faith; then what? Tell Him how you feel.

Vs4-9

These are the words of a man who has nothing to hide; he's bearing his soul before the Lord. As long as I'm with holding information from the Lord, or I'm trying to color the way I feel so that it doesn't seem as bad as it is, I'm not being true before the Lord. Prayer is a time for transparency. Heman says, “I know I'm alive but I may as well be dead, my strength has gone from me, I'm in the lowest pit and Your wrath is heavy upon me.”

Now, understand that he was living under the O.C. what happens beyond the grave hadn't really been revealed, it wasn't until Christ that God gave the revelation fully concerning life after life. In Vs 5 he says, “When people die they're cut off *from* You, no longer remembered *by* You.” We know that's not true, #1 God doesn't forget His people when they die, nor are they cut off from Him. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

But the point here is that honesty and transparency are essential to a healthy prayer life, God already knows what's on and in your heart, there's no reason whatsoever to try and candy coat it, now I'm not saying we need to be disrespectful or rude, but share with God the fullness of your heart, what's going on in there? Let Him know.

Vs10-12

You might note the fact that even though his life personally is suffering tremendously he still declares the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the wonders and righteousness of the Lord. I think sometimes we begin to doubt those attributes of God when our life is on “spin cycle” and there's no relief in sight.

We're not sure how loving and kind God is when we're suffering, we begin to doubt His faithfulness, the wonders that He could do if He wanted to for us and the righteousness with which He acts in our lives. But we need to be resolved in the fact that God's lovingkindness, and His righteousness, His faithfulness isn't related to the circumstances around us, they've been displayed in His goodness and grace toward us in Christ. We commend the psalmist for his transparent honesty regarding himself personally yet being able to keep the proper perspective concerning God's character. That He moves in righteousness, lovingkindness and acts faithfully toward us, even in the circumstances that concern us though we may not understand.

Vs13-18

What a pretty psalm huh? This guy has thought that death would be the better option even from his youth, people stay away from him, even his friends and family seem to have abandoned him and he's left despondent and with out hope. Not every story has a happy ending as it pertains to life in this world.

Yet we need to realize that it's times like this that force us to examine the motives of our own heart. Why do we follow the Lord? We're find ourselves in a place of inspecting our walk with Him, why do we seek to draw near to Him or have a relationship with Him? Because of what He gives us, what He can do *for* us, or because we love Him, we want to serve and lay down our lives for Him because He is worthy of all that we are and so much more. He's done for us what we could never do for ourselves and shame on us for ever thinking that God somehow or for some reason *owes* us anything. We owe Him everything, He owes us nothing, yet He's given us His Son, paid the purchase price of our sin and has given us everlasting life in Him.

We should take note of the fact that though this psalm is layered with discouragement, depression, despondency and death the psalmist maintained a position of seeking God, praying to God, and placing his confidence, his hope in God, he never abandoned his relationship with God. Never said, "Well if this is the way it is, see ya later." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Job 13:15

### Psalm 89

Psalm 89 emphasizes God's faithfulness, over and over again we'll read of how faithful God is to His word, to keep His covenant, to establish His will. Yet the psalmist runs into a familiar snag, it seems to him that God really *hasn't* kept His word, at least as far as he can tell, so how do those dots connect? "God this is what You've said, but this is what I see, how do these things come together?"

## Vs1-2

Vs 1 “Your faithfulness”, Vs 2 “Your faithfulness”, in Vs 5 “Your faithfulness”, again in Vs 8, “Your faithfulness” what’s this psalm about? God’s faithfulness. He says, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations.” What’s the point here? If you’ve been a recipient *of* God’s mercy, you should praise God abundantly *for* His mercy. God is faithful, He is merciful, He is faithful to move in His mercy toward us, “Mercy shall be built up forever.” God’s faithfulness is the chief basis upon which Ethan appeals to God in his dilemma, there seems to be a conflict or a contradiction happening here, yet God is faithful to His word, faithful in His mercy, so why then are things not adding up?.. We’ll get to that... In Vs 3-4 God responds.

## Vs3-4

Evidently this psalm was written after the Babylonian captivity; the problem, or predicament is beginning to surface here isn’t it. The promise of God to David was to have his Son, his Seed upon the throne forever, to build up his throne to all generations. The problem is that right now there isn’t anyone on the throne from David’s line, so the question would be, “How are these 2 things reconciled?” What are we to do when there’s an *apparent* conflict between a promise of God and its practical fulfillment, what do we make of that, how do we reconcile those things? Again, we’ll get to that in a bit.

## Vs5-14

The incomparable attributes of God, there is none like Him either in the heavens or on the earth. He’s created all things, and all things are subjected and submitted to Him who has righteousness and justice as the very foundations of His throne. There is none like Him in strength; He’s scattered His enemies and rules the raging of the sea. Both the heavens praise Him and the saints of the earth, notice Vs 5, “The heavens will praise Your wonders, Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints.”

If you haven’t underlined Vs 7 I would encourage you to do so, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him.” The fear of God seems to be almost a forgotten thing in the body today, there’s almost a nonchalant sort of a flippant disposition that we can have a tendency to take with God. Like God is our buddy or something; it’s true that Christ is a friend who sticks closer than a brother but we do well to not forget that God isn’t our right hand man, He is the Lord God of all creation, our Redeemer who is to be held in reverence by all those around Him and to be greatly feared in the assembly of the saints.

We should have a holy reverence for God, not a casual, almost disrespectful attitude toward the Lord. Hold Him in reverence, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom/knowledge. “O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty like You, O Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.”

Vs15-18

He’s spoken of God’s attributes, faithful, merciful, and strong. In light of that blessed are those who know Him and enjoy the benefits of His favor upon them. “They walk in the light of Your countenance” God’s favor is upon them, and they rejoice in Him. You see it’s not, “I’ve been a good boy so God has blessed me.” It’s not about me, it’s about *Him*, rejoicing in and walking with *Him*. In *His* righteousness they are exalted, whoever exalts himself will be humbled but whoever humbles himself the Lord will exalt. Notice (Vs 17), “For *You* are the glory of their strength and in Your favor our horn (or strength) is exalted.” It’s a simple picture of God lifting up and using the one who trusts in, delight themselves in Him.

Vs19-29

Is it beginning to come into focus for you? “God You are faithful, You are merciful, Your strength is 2<sup>nd</sup> to none, You scatter Your enemies, exalt the ones who delight in You and Your righteousness, You raised up David, and promised to protect him, to give authority and dominion *to* him, You’ve promised that Your mercy would be kept *for* him and that Your covenant would stand *with* him. You even made an everlasting *covenant* with him saying that his seed would be made to endure forever and his throne as the days of heaven.”

Vs30-37

Over and over again he speaks of God’s faithfulness, the everlasting covenant with David, “You’ve said it, I believe it, You’re not a man God that You should lie and once You’ve sworn by Your holiness, the deal is sealed, You do not relent nor do You change, Your word You’ve exalted above all Your name.”

Vs38-51

You see it’s not adding up to the psalmist is it? “How can you say You’ll establish the throne of David forever yet there’s no one on the throne of David? We’ve been plundered by our enemies, cast down and broken before our enemies having been taken into captivity, what happened to the promise of Your word?” When Paul was writing to the Corinthians who thought he was being wishy washy he addressed the issue of seeming inconsistency when he said, “*But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us — by me, Silvanus, and Timothy — was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*” 2 Cor 1:18-20

When it comes to the promises of God to us that are found in His word, they are not “Yes” and “No”. It’s not a wishy washy uncertain thing that we can’t really count on, the fact is when God gives His word it’s a guaranteed certainty.

Where the seeming inconsistencies come in aren’t on His behalf regarding what He’s said, but rather they’re on our behalf having limited understand of what He’s said and the context in which He said it. God did tell them that David wouldn’t fail to have One of his lineage seated upon the throne. He *also* told them that if they disobeyed Him that they would be chastened and eventually if not repentant scattered and carried off into captivity. So often we have selective memories when it comes to God’s promises.

We remember what He said that will benefit us in a way we like, but we fail to balance those things with the warnings of disobedience, sowing to the wind and reaping the whirlwind kind of promises that are there as well.

Beyond that there’s often times things that God tells us that we presume to understand fully when in reality we may only understand partially at best. The psalmist is thinking that it should’ve been David, then Solomon, then one of his sons, and this his sons forever with out end. When God promised David that He would build him a house and One from his lineage would be seated forever upon his throne He wasn’t speaking about an ongoing succession forever with out end. He was telling him that the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God would also be a Son of David, God would bring His Son through the line of David and the Son of God (who would come from David’s line regarding His humanity) would reign eternally upon the throne of David. The psalmist didn’t understand that therefore he couldn’t connect the dots regarding what was happening, how God said a son of David would rule but there was no son of David upon the throne.

I suggest the same thing happens with you and me today. What are we to do when there’s seeming inconsistency, a seeming conflict between God’s promise and it’s realization in my life? We should come to the conclusion that we’re lacking in our understanding of exactly how it plays out, when it plays out or whatever. God’s promises are sure, they’re not “Yes” and “No” in Christ there are “Yes” and “Amen”. However we may have limited understanding of the promise, or not really have a grip on the big picture concerning the context of the promise. Foresight is hazy, hindsight is clear, in the end we’ll see it, as for now we’re to trust the Lord regarding it. He sees the big picture, we only see one little piece of the puzzle, why then lean on our own understanding? How much better to trust the Lord.

Vs52

“I don’t know how this all is going to work out presently, but I know it will ultimately so, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord forevermore!’” We don’t have to get it, we just need to trust the Lord in it...

Prayer Points:

Father I’m not sure why we feel entitled to understand everything, or like we need an explanation for everything but so often that’s the attitude we have, would You forgive us? Help us to simply trust You, to keep confidence *in* You, and to draw strength *from* You regardless of the situation, whether we’re confused, or in the midst of unsettling circumstances. Lord we praise You for Your faithfulness, the surety of Your word, Your lovingkindness and Your mercy, Help us to walk in Your ways to the glory of Your name.