

Psalm 88:1-18: A SONG. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH. TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO MAHALATH LEANNOH. A MASKIL OF HEMAN THE EZRAHITE. O LORD, God of my salvation; I cry out day & night before you. Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry! For my soul is full of troubles, & my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength, like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark & deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, & you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you. Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But I, O LORD, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.

Scott Roberts: Three men, three crosses, one hill; One man cursed, one man prayed, one Man promised. One died condemned, one died forgiven, One died innocent; One died in sin, one died to sin, One died for sin. One was held by death, one was released by death, one conquered death; One lost life, one gained life; One was life. Thank You, Jesus, for Your sacrifice and eternal life only through You!

1. The Original Context Of This Psalm

This is a song of Heman The Ezrahite. This is a lament song. It's a sad, depressed, cry of distress to God for help & comfort. He cries out day & night! He begs to be heard! He confesses that his soul is full of trouble & pain. He even says he's near to death. He says that God has done this to him! God has abandoned him! God has turned his back on him! But he has not lost faith! He is still crying out to God here! He is still begging God for mercy!

This is a song for you! Read "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?" pages 17-18 in Duncan book on Psalm 88

The godly struggle with sadness: 1 Kings 4:30-31: Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east & all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, & Heman

Ligon Duncan: 1) The Psalmist knows the pain of unanswered prayer; 2) The Psalmist knows that God is sovereign over suffering; 3) The Psalmist asks searching questions; 4) The Psalmist keeps his eyes fixed on God

2. All The Psalms Are About Jesus Christ

Bruce Waltke and Fred Zaspel write about how the Psalms are about Jesus Christ: The Psalms are about Jesus. The significance of this royal orientation goes further as we seek to understand the psalms in canonical perspective. We have it on Jesus's authority that the psalms are about him.

Luke 24:44-46: Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses & the Prophets & the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, & said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer & on the third day rise from the dead . . ."

Chad Bird: Are All 150 Psalms about Jesus? The psalms are the prayerbook and hymnbook of Jesus. About half of them were written by David, and others by Solomon, Moses, or the sons of Korah. The coauthor behind all 150, however, is our Lord. What does this mean? Does it mean that they were inspired by the Spirit of Jesus? Yes, for "all Scripture is breathed out [θεόπνευστος] by God," (2 Tim. 3:16). That Greek word, θεόπνευστος (theopneutos) was translated by the Latin Vulgate as "inspiro," whence we get our word "inspire," literally, "to breathe into." But that's not all Christ's authorship of the psalms means, for all Scripture is God-breathed. What makes the psalms

unique? All the psalms are by Jesus and about Jesus, in one way or another. St. Augustine gives a helpful way to think about this with the analogy of a head and body. Here's how it works. My head cannot act apart from my body, nor my body from my head. This is true, but certain actions are particularly head-actions or body-actions. For instance, I run with my body, but my head is involved. And I see with my eyes in my head and think with the brain in my head, but my body is also involved. My feet take me to where I can see a canyon or forest. My hand feeds my mouth so I can concentrate on thinking instead of my hunger pains. So it is with the psalms. Some of the psalms are more particularly about the head, that is, Christ. Psalm 2 is about his sonship and messiahship. Psalm 16 about his resurrection. Psalm 22 about his crucifixion and resurrection. But even in these psalms, the body—that is, the church—is involved. For instance, Psalm 2 is primarily about our Lord, but we body of believers are referenced in vs. 12 as those who are “blessed” because we “take refuge in him.” Other psalms are more particularly about the body of believers. Psalm 13 is the brief lament of those who are suffering, then vindicated. Yet the lovingkindness and salvation for which we thank God in vs. 5 is wrapped up in the Messiah, our head. Psalm 23 is our confession as the sheep of the Messiah, those who are kept safe in his body. Yet the Messiah, our head, is our Shepherd-King whose rod and staff comfort us. So it is with all the psalms. Sometimes they are more focused on Christ the head, or are his very words spoken (e.g., Ps. 22). At other times, the psalm is more focused on the body. And at still other times, both are the same. For instance, is Psalm 88 the prayer of a deeply troubled and suffering believer or group of believers? Or is Psalm 88 the lament of Jesus on Good Friday as he sinks into the darkness of death? Yes. It is both, for Christ as The Man subsumes all humanity into himself. His speech becomes ours and ours his. As you pray the psalms, bear this in mind. These 150 ancient poems and prayers are the treasure of the Spirit, in which he enriches us through the Son of God, who comes to reconcile us to the Father and to teach us to pray . . . Which OT book is quoted more in the NT than any other? Psalms. Which OT verse is quoted more in the NT than any other? Psalm 110:1. Which OT book did Jesus quote when he was being crucified? Psalms. Why are the psalms the heart of Scripture? Because, as Martin Franzmann said, "Theology is doxology. Theology must sing." It cannot remain mute words inside a book, but it leaps off the printed page, exits the mouth, and fills the air with a holy sound. In the psalms we sing with Jesus, and Jesus sings with us, in a hymn to the Father through the Spirit, amidst a choir of saints and angels. Here are God's words to us that become our words back to God. The psalms are verbal tears for the suffering, a steady hand to the wavering, a beating heart to the dying. No other biblical book was on the lips of Jesus as he was about to die. Let them ever be on our lips as well, for they are the songs of heaven on earth.

3. Psalm 88 Is About The Sufferings Of Jesus Christ

V. 1-2: O LORD, God of my salvation; I cry out day & night before you. Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry! [See Jesus cry out to His Father in Gethsemane!]

V. 3: For my soul is full of troubles, & my life draws near to Sheol: **Mark 14:33:** [He] began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

V. 4: I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength: **Luke 22:43:** And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. [Simon of Cyrene carrying His cross.]

V. 5: like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand: [Jesus did die! He did lie in the grave! He was forsaken – remembered not more! He was cut off: **Isaiah 53:8:** he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?; **Daniel 9:26:** Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing]

V. 6: You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark & deep: **Matthew 27:45:** Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land² until the ninth hour.

V. 7: Your wrath lies heavy upon me, & you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah: Propitiation; Forsaken

Vs. 8-9: You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you: [Judas betrays Jesus; Peter denies Him; All the disciples leave Him! He cries out in Gethsemane & on the cross.]

Vs. 10-12: Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah ¹¹ Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? ¹² Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? [Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!]

Getty Hymn: 1) When trials come no longer fear; For in the pain our God draws near
To fire a faith worth more than gold; And there His faithfulness is told; And there His faithfulness is told!
2) Within the night I know Your peace; The breath of God brings strength to me
And new each morning mercy flows; As treasures of the darkness grow; As treasures of the darkness grow!

Vs. 13-18: But I, O LORD, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. ¹⁴ O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? ¹⁵ Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. ¹⁶ Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. ¹⁷ They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. ¹⁸ You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.

Robert Godfrey: Yet, beyond sovereign comfort, we also find salvific comfort in the words of Psalm 88. These cries of sorrow not only apply to the Psalmist, but they also point us to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Savior knew the Psalter well, and he fulfilled the Psalter's promises . . . The Psalmist revisits the themes of forsakenness and God's wrath in the closing of the psalm. In v.14 the Psalmist's troubled soul cries out with the final questions, "O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?" These questions sound very similar to the words we considered from Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God why have You forsaken me!?" The poetic language in both Psalms 22 and 88 unpack the immense suffering that Christ endured on Calvary. As Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 44 declares, "Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment." In Christ's agony upon the cross we are reminded that we shall never be forsaken! Though we still may cry out the words of v.14 in times of great despair, nevertheless we must remember that this question of forsakenness has been answered once and for all upon the cross in Jesus Christ our Lord. Furthermore, the theme of abandonment is fulfilled in Christ, when the righteous anger of God was put upon our Savior. The Psalmist calls out as one who is surrounded by God's wrath in vv.16-17, "Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together." These are similar to vv.6-8, which we considered as the "fog" of darkness. For our Savior, however, these words were not some fog of deception—He truly endured the Lord's righteous anger and was offered up as an atoning sacrifice. As Questions and Answers 39 and 40 from the Heidelberg Catechism state, "By this death I am convinced that he shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God...[and] because God's justice and truth require it; nothing else could pay for our sins except the death of the Son of God." He endured the wrath of God upon the cross, and He was forsaken that we might have life in Him.

Christ Jesus Prayed This Psalm Meditation
The Psalms Point To Him, For He's Their Foundation
He Cries Out "My LORD! My God! My Salvation!"
"Take This Cup Away! Full Of Fury Damnation!"
He's Troubled As Death Draws Near In Vexation
He Has No Strength As He Falls In Prostration
In Darkness He Hangs For The Full Duration
Bearing God's Wrath As Our Propitiation
His Soul's Cast Away In Hell Devastation
God's Face Turned Away In Full Condemnation

Cut Off In The Grave, He's Dead Life's Cessation
His Companions Are Gone, He's Alone In Damnation
Yet Wonders Are Worked For The Dead Incarnation
The Departed Do Rise Up And Praise Adoration
Your Steadfast Love Is Declared Our Salvation
For Jesus Did Rise For Our Justification
And Now He's Forever Our Preoccupation
Our Holy Fascination Who Causes Intoxication
More Than Anything Else In All Of Creation!