

Hello Darkness, My Only Friend

Psalm 88

Antidote to “suffering in silence”

- Learn to express sadness, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, grief, & regret to God
- Recover lost language of biblical lament

Psalms of Lament

- more than 1/3 of the book of Psalms are laments (58/150)
- God's people must continue to sing and pray while in pain

Elements of biblical lament

- Turn (cry out to God)
- Complain
- Ask (for help or deliverance)
- Trust (may include a vow of praise)

The “darkest” lament in the book of Psalms

- Turn (cry out to God)
- Complain
- Ask (for help or deliverance)
- Trust

What kind of prayer ends like this?
Why is this prayer in the Bible?

Psalmist pray (cry out) to God

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

2 May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry. (vv. 1-2)

9 I call to you, Lord, every day;
I spread out my hands to you. (v. 9b)

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

13)

Why cry out to God?

- 3 I am overwhelmed with troubles
and my life draws near to death. (v. 3)

Psalmist has 3 complaints

⁶ You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.

⁷ Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have engulfed me. (NLT)

⁸ You have driven my friends away
by making me repulsive to them.

I am in a trap with no way of escape.

⁹ My eyes are blinded by my tears. (NLT)

3 complaints

6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.

7 Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have engulfed me. (NLT)

8 You have driven my friends away
by making me repulsive to them.

I am in a trap with no way of escape.

9 My eyes are blinded by my tears. (NLT)

14 O Lord, why do you reject me?

Why do you turn your face from me?

15 I have been sick and close to death since my youth.
I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.
(NLT)

How does this prayer end?

You have taken away my companions
and loved ones.

Darkness is my closest friend. (v. 18, NLT)

You made lover and neighbor alike dump me;
the only friend I have left is Darkness. (MSG)

Why is Psalm 88 in the Bible?

- It reminds us that God's people are not immune to dark times
- Ps. 88 expresses what it feels like to be abandoned by friends, and by God
- An example of how someone in intense pain cried out to God

Why is Psalm 88 in the Bible?

- “Most of Scripture speaks to us, while the Psalms speak *for* us” – Athanasius (~ AD 297 – 373)
- “The very presence of such prayers in Scripture is a witness to [God’s] understanding. He knows how men speak when they are desperate” – Derek Kidner, Tyndale OT Commentary on the Psalms

Why is Psalm 88 in the Bible?

- We can be completely open and honest as we cry out to God while in pain
- Reminds us that our experiences do not always align with reality

Psalm 88[a]

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.

Who is Heman the Ezrahite?

- **Sons of Korah** - A choir of Levites that King David appointed to serve in the temple worship. These were descendants of Korah, grandson of Levi, head of one of the 12 tribes of Israel

Who is Heman the Ezrahite?

■ Let's find out from 1 Chronicles 25

¹ David ... set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service:

² From the sons of Asaph: ...

³ As for Jeduthun, from his sons: ...

Who is Heman the Ezrahite?

4 As for Heman, from his sons: ...

5 (All these were sons of Heman the king's seer [or prophet]. They were given him through the promises of God to exalt him. God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.)

6 All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the Lord, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God.

Darkness can happen to a believer ... doesn't mean God has abandoned you

■ “This darkness can happen to a believer, this Psalm says. It doesn't mean you're lost. This darkness can happen to someone who does not deserve it, after all it happened to Jesus. This doesn't mean you've strayed. This darkness can happen at any time as long as this world lasts because only in the next world will such things be done away with. This darkness can happen without you knowing why, but there are answers, there is a purpose, and eventually you will know it.” - Michael Wilcock; Commentary on the Psalms

Video clip on Joni Eareckson-Tada



Both Psalm 22 and Psalm 88 are read during Good Friday Service

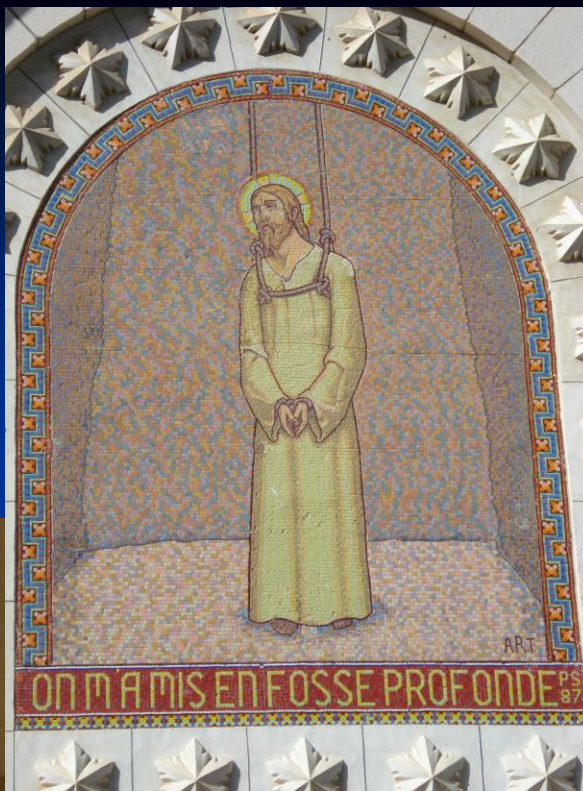
- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.” (Psalm 22: 1-2)

Heman's 1st complaint

6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.

7 Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have engulfed me. (NLT)







Engraved Byzantine
crosses

2nd complaint

8 You have driven my friends away
by making me repulsive to them.

I am in a trap with no way of escape.

9 My eyes are blinded by my tears. (NLT)

3rd complaint

14 O Lord, why do you reject me?

Why do you turn your face from me?

15 I have been sick and close to death
since my youth.

I stand helpless and desperate before
your terrors. (NLT)

■ “Jesus Christ experienced darkness as His only friend so in your darkness you can know that Jesus is still your friend, he’s still there. Jesus was truly abandoned so that you will only feel abandoned, and you can know that God is still there. He’s not going to abandon you, no matter what you have done wrong ... because [Jesus has] taken the penalty.”

– Timothy Keller, sermon on Psalm 88