

Have you ever been desperately lonely to the point when every element of life seems to cause you to despair? Have you ever been in love and something happened so that you emotionally ached? Well if you have, this is your Psalm.

If you have ever had someone you care about turn away from you and turn against you, you need Psalm 88. That person may have been an acquaintance (**88:8, 18c**). That person may have been a lover (**88:18a**) or that person may have been a friend (**88:18b**).

If you know the hurt and the emptiness and the pain of this kind of thing, you can well relate to Psalm 88. Frankie Vallie used to sing a song “Cry myself to sleep” and in this song in Psalm 88 that really does happen (**88:1**). This Psalm is for the hurting people who feel so all alone. This Psalm has been called the “Saddest Psalm” in the entire book of Psalms.

Now from the superscription to the Psalm we may observe six things:

- 1) It is a song which means this was not only to be taught but sung.
- 2) It is a Psalm of the sons of Korah, which means these imperfect priests were responsible to see that this was sung.
- 3) It is for the choir director again emphasizing that the choir was to sing this Psalm.
- 4) It was “according to Mahalath Lennoth.” Some suggest that Mahalath Lennoth refers to the soothing instrument of a harp (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 464). The meaning seems to refer to employing a soothing instrument in great moments of sorrow and grief.
- 5) It is a “maskil” which means this is a didactic Psalm designed to be taught and give instruction.
- 6) It was written by Heman, who was a very wise man, who lived in Solomon’s day who was only superseded in wisdom by Solomon (I Kings 4:31).

The primary application of this Psalm will be during the Great Tribulation when the Jewish people, who are faithful to God, will face abandonment and death, via the work of the Anti-Christ. As we go through the Psalm, we will point out why we think this. But there certainly is a practical point of this Psalm:

WHEN FAITHFUL PEOPLE OF GOD FACE THE WORST DEPRESSION OF THEIR LIVES, THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND THE ONLY THING THEY MUST DO IS PRAY TO GOD FOR DELIVERANCE.

No matter how depressing things are, which surround us, faithful people of God always have the option of prayer available to them. When you know God, there is the possibility of deliverance. But prayer is a part of that.

There are three main parts to this Psalm:

PART #1 – Prayer is emotionally made to God for deliverance. **88:1-2**

When one of your children cries out in the night, most parents are right there to see what is happening. It is that way with God. One of the things to do when we are emotionally distraught is to use those emotions to cry out to God. That is exactly what Heman does here. Heman realized that God was a God who could save from anything and he cried out to God “day and night” with that belief.

Too many of God’s people view prayer as an afterthought, when it should be the first thought. God’s people at times go through some very dark times to the point that it almost seems as if there is no hope. With God there is always hope.

If you find yourself in a dark and depressing situation, talk to God; tell it to God; pray to God. Let your emotions pour out before Him. As long as you can talk to God you have hope. So talk to God “day and night.” Spurgeon said any evil can be transformed into good when we are driven to pray.

Heman not only prayed, but in **verse 2** he prayed day and night for God to listen and answer.

PART #2 – Prayer is emotionally made to God for legitimate reasons. **88:3-9**

Now in these verses he states his case why he is praying like this. There are four legitimate reasons why this prayer was made:

Reason #1 - The practical reason. **88:3**

It is one thing to have your hands full of trouble; it is quite another to have your soul filled with trouble. **The practical reason Heman prayed was because his soul had finally had enough.** He was obviously troubled in his soul.

Nothing will trouble our soul more than sin. It will make us depressed. It will make things dark. There is only one thing to do when the soul is in trouble and that is to cry out to God.

Reason #2 - The humiliation reason. **88:4-5**

It is clear that this believer was totally and completely humiliated. People were saying that he was on his way down (**88:4a**) and they were saying that he had become a weak man (**88:4b**).

According to **verse 5** he had been forsaken by many people and they were saying his life is over. Even one who had been his lover had abandoned him (**88:18**). They were claiming he was doomed and cut off from God.

Now the description given in **verse 5** is that of an unbeliever who is dead. Unbelievers are not remembered and favored by God when they die; they are cut off from God.

If a person dies as an unbeliever, it is the most depressing moment of all. People were saying these things about Heman. He was totally humiliated.

We may learn a very important principle here and that is we do not need any strength to pray; what we need is faith. Times when we are weak are some of the best times for us to pray because strength comes from God.

Reason #3 - The Divine sovereignty reason. **88:6-9**

These are very important verses because these verses clearly teach us that even in the darkest hour of life one of the most important doctrines we may cling to is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

This believer had an awesome view of the sovereignty of God. This believer who finds himself in a serious and desperate situation believed totally and completely in God's sovereignty and he believed that God could intervene at any point and turn things around.

There are four perspectives he had of God's sovereignty:

(Perspective #1) - God had sovereignly ordained this dark time for this believer. **88:6**

He believed God oversaw this and had put him in this state. When things are dark the best thing we can do is to cling to the sovereignty of God.

(Perspective #2) - God had sovereignly afflicted this faithful believer. **88:7**

Now this has personal and eschatological ramifications. Clearly there is a reference here to the Great Tribulation in which Israel will be the target of horrific things because that Tribulation is classified as the time of wrath and we may observe that "all" the waves of wrath are hitting, which again lends itself to the Tribulation.

However, there is a very personal application to this as well and that is even when we have done something that could anger God to the point that He is afflicting us with negative things, we may cry out to Him for He has the sovereign power to put an end to the negative affliction.

"Selah"—Stop and think about it.

(Perspective #3) - God had sovereignly isolated this faithful believer. **88:8, 19**

It is very clear that the isolation was due to the fact that people close to him had turned their backs on him and were mocking him and even loathing him. It is important to realize that when someone close to you turns against you, God is still sovereign and the reason why they may turn against you is because you are right with God and they are not.

One of the worst disasters you will ever face in your life is when someone you love turns against you and abandons you. There will be times you will cry yourself to sleep. But those are times to also cry to God because He is still sovereign.

(Perspective #4) - God sovereignly permitted a wasting of this faithful believer. **88:9**

In the Tribulation God's people will not be able to buy or sell food and will literally physically waste away. It is at that time when she needs to cry out to God and to Jesus Christ.

When you are hurting; when you are struggling; when you are even hungry, what most forget is that God is still sovereign and God's people always have a right to cry out to God for help. They need to cry out as **verse 9** says, "every day."

Reason #4 - The apologetic and evangelistic reason. **88:10-13**

These verses are fascinating. The central point of the verses is that dead people cannot testify of the greatness of God and of the attributes of God. The point is only delivered people are in a position to testify for God, not dead people. In fact, he says "selah," stop and think about this.

Now there are four main declarations that people who have been delivered by God can make:

(Declaration #1) - Delivered people can testify of God's mercy. **88:11a**

Redeemed people testify of the grace and mercy of God, not dead people.

(Declaration #2) - Delivered people can testify of God's faithfulness. **88:11b**

(Declaration #3) - Delivered people can declare God's wonders. **88:12a**

(Declaration #4) - Delivered people can declare God's righteousness. **88:12b**

We learn from **verse 13** that every morning this believer cried out to God.

PART #3 – Prayer is personally made to God individually. **88:14-18**

God is a personal God and He desires that His people have a close, personal relationship with Him even in times of trouble. This obviously was an open, honest relationship and there was heartfelt communication taking place:

Communication Point #1 - God seems to be rejecting the desire of the soul. **88:14a**

Communication Point #2 - God seems to be hiding His face from His people. **88:14b**

Communication Point #3 - God knows all trouble one has from youth. **88:15**

Some people suffer at a young age. Regardless of how much one does suffer, one always has the right to cry out to God.

Communication Point #4 - God does get angry and He does target people with His anger.
88:16

We can make God angry, but by crying out to Him, He can turn His anger from us.

Communication Point #5 - God can surround His people with negative things all day long.
88:17

Communication Point #6 - God can remove from us even those closest to us. **88:18**

Now here is the point of this. When God is doing these things, what option do His people have? There is only one—cry out to God.

During the Tribulation this will be the only option Israel has. The entire nation will be forced to cry to God. She will have no other option.

Perhaps you are stressed out in your world. Perhaps you are an emotional disaster. Cry out to God. He cares for you and He can and will answer you.