

Sunday Night Message

April 26, 2015

Psalm 88 –

Series – The Psalms

Text – Psalm 88

Introduction

Notice that this psalm is “upon Mahalath”, which possibly means a stringed instrument. Some think that it represents a particular tune.

“Leannoth” means to be afflicted, humbled, stooped or bowed down, depressed.

The word, “Maschil”, means a song or poem of contemplation or reflection.

It is said to have been written by Heman the Ezrahite. There are two possible Hemans in the Scripture that could be responsible for this psalm:

1 Heman – a temple musician during the time of David. (1 Chronicles 6:33 – 37; also 1 Chronicles 16:41 - 42)

2 Heman from Solomon’s time (1 Kings 4:31)

J. Vernon McGee gives some other possibilities:

It is mere speculation, of course, but this psalm has been applied to Job and to Uzziah who had leprosy and to Jeremiah in the dungeon and to Hezekiah when he was sick. But no matter who is in view, this psalm describes great suffering. Yet in all of his suffering and affliction he maintains his confidence in God as the God of his salvation. That is the great theme of this psalm.¹

This is certainly a depressing psalm. There is almost no hope given in this psalm. We have studied many psalms previously where a dark scene is painted, but there were always some words of hope and encouragement given at least at the end of the psalm; but, here, there are no encouraging words. In this psalm, the writer cannot see God, and has lost all hope. He has been struggling for a long while (v. 15 – “from my youth up”) and is utterly despondent.

Why would God put a psalm in here where there seemed to be no hope at all, especially when doctrinally and even practically, we know that there is always hope?

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 2, p. 812). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I believe it is because he knows that we can all relate to this psalmist. We have all been in situation where we lost all hope; where we could see nothing but blackness and despair. I have been there. There are times that we give up completely because we just don't care anymore. This was the mindset of the psalmist here. There is no rejoicing, no anticipation of deliverance.

What can we do when we are in a seemingly hopeless situation?

We can go to God - even when our faith is weak, and our hope is gone. That is what the psalmist does here.

I He Prayed (vs. 1 - 2; 9; 13)

Prayer is not easy when we feel that all hope is lost, but the psalmist prayed.

II He Complained (vs. 3 - 5)

It is OK to complain as long as you complain to God and not about God. (See Psalm 142:1 - 2)

III He Blamed God (vs. 6 - 18)

Even blaming God is OK as long as you are just being completely transparent with Him. If you are blaming God, you are still exercising faith.

Ultimately, God does cause, or at least allow, all of the painful situations that we face in life. He does it for a reason, but we often cannot perceive what God is doing.

Illustrate - Gary Walch.

IV He Felt Like He Was All Alone (vs. 8 & 18)

It is a shame that the psalmist did not have anyone to bear his burden with him.

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24)

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17)

"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off." (Proverbs 27:10)

Be on the lookout for Christians that have lost hope, and be a friend to them. You can see God for them when they have lost sight of Him.