

## When Life Is Full of Troubles

What do you do when darkness settles in?

Psalm 88

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • July 28, In the year of our Lord, 2013

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Something on prayer

### **Prelude:**

#### **I. Some sad times are so bad**

- A. that we desire nothing upbeat, but
- B. we want something that expresses how we feel.
  - 1. God knows this about human nature, and
  - 2. He provided Psalm 88 to touch us during those times.
    - a) Psalm 88 does not have anything cheery in it, yet,
    - b) it shows the way out of the darkness.
      - (1) Somehow I feel better after reading it.

#### **II. Some believe it is the saddest psalm of all the Psalms.**

- A. The psalm shows a man without encouragement, and
- B. even God Himself appears to have abandoned the psalmist, nevertheless,
  - 1. the psalmist clings to his faith in God, and
  - 2. trusting God during the darkest times of life helps the psalmist survive.

### **Persuasion:**

#### **I. Psalm 88.o – A Soul in Contemplation**

o A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician. Set to “Mahalath Leannoth.” A Contemplation of Heman the Ezrahite (Psa 88.o).

- A. The sons of Korah and Heman the Ezrahite were all skilled in music,
  - 1. whether writing it or singing it.
  - 2. We need men and boys who will learn music.

- a) We tend to think that song leading is nothing more than
  - b) just standing up front and beginning the songs,
    - (1) that no skill is required, but
    - (2) we should pursue excellence in all that we do,
      - (a) including our singing.
      - (b) The largest Book in the Bible is comprised of songs!
  - c) Parents, please encourage your boys to take music in school.
- B. Please pray for
1. the music of the church, and
  2. our song leaders.

C. With Psalm 88,

1. Heman wrote the words and
2. the sons of Korah wrote the music.

## **II. Psalm 88.1, 2 – A Soul in Prayer #1**

- 1 O Lord, God of my salvation,  
I have cried out day and night before You.
- 2 Let my prayer come before You;  
Incline Your ear to my cry.  
(Psa 88.1, 2)

- A. As we shall see, Heman the Ezrahite had so many troubles
1. that they were bringing him to an early grave.
  2. What did he do about the situation?
    - a) What would you do?
      - (1) Would you take antidepressants?
      - (2) Would you take it out on your family?
    - b) Heman began the Psalm, revealing what he did,

- (1) with all his might and
- (2) with all his time,
  - (a) he sought the Lord,
  - (b) crying out to Him,
    - i) that God would let Heman's prayer ascend before Him, and
    - ii) that God would incline His ear to hear Heman's cry.

B. Yet, Heman did not see help from God immediately.

- 1. At that, most people give up, concluding that prayer does not work.
- 2. However, the Holy Spirit put Psalm 88 in the Bible to show
  - a) that prayer does work, but
  - b) we have to wait for *God's* timing.

### **III. Psalm 88.3-9a - A Soul in Trouble**

3 For my soul is full of troubles,  
And my life draws near to the grave.  
4 I am counted with those who go down to the pit;  
I am like a man who has no strength,  
5 Adrift among the dead,  
Like the slain who lie in the grave,  
Whom You remember no more,  
And who are cut off from Your hand.  
6 You have laid me in the lowest pit,  
In darkness, in the depths.  
7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,  
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves.  
Selah  
8 You have put away my acquaintances far from me;  
You have made me an abomination to them;  
I am shut up, and I cannot get out;  
9 My eye wastes away because of affliction.  
(Psa 88.3-9a)

A. Heman had a soul full of troubles.

1. Can you relate to him?
2. Could the two of you sit down and feel a kindred spirit?

B. Starting at verse 6, he said that the Lord put him through some of his troubles.

1. Whether the Lord truly did those things or allowed it, or
2. that was Heman's impression,
  - a) He saw the Lord as against him,
  - b) just as Job did.

C. He did not specify the problems, but

1. starting with the second line of verse 3,
2. he painted several pictures of the doom he was experiencing:
  - a) He was drawing near to the grave.
  - b) He was counted among those who go down to the pit.
  - c) He had no strength.
  - d) He was adrift among the dead.
  - e) He felt as though he was in the grave already.
  - f) He was in darkness.
  - g) He believed God's wrath weighed upon him heavily.
  - h) He thought that God afflicted him with waves, making him drown.

D. Then at verse 8, he spoke of how his friends treated him.

1. They wanted to get away from him.
2. They treated him like an abomination.
3. He was living the life of a shut-in.

E. To show us his huge grief,

1. he wanted us to see his eye wasting away,
2. crying endlessly made his eyes dry,

- a) all because of his affliction.

#### **IV. Psalm 88.9bc – A Soul in Prayer #2**

9bc Lord, I have called daily upon You;  
I have stretched out my hands to You.  
(Psa 88.9bc)

A. A second time, Heman reminded the Lord of how often he prayed.

1. Daily Heman spoke to the God of salvation about the plague of troubles.
2. He called on the Lord, because He was Heman's hope.

B. See Heman stretching out his hands to the Lord.

1. See the man begging and pleading.
2. See him in total humility before the Lord.

#### **V. Psalm 88.10-12 – A Soul in Danger**

10 Will You work wonders for the dead?  
Shall the dead arise and praise You?  
Selah  
11 Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave?  
Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?  
12 Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?  
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?  
(Psa 88.10-12)

A. Listen to how Heman reasoned with the Lord.

B. If Heman ended up dead, how could he continue

- i. praising the Lord,
  - a) declaring the Lord's lovingkindness,
  - b) declaring the Lord's faithfulness,
    - (1) making known the Lord's wonders, and
    - (2) making known the Lord's righteousness.

2. If our lives are supposed to be about glorifying God,
  - a) how shall we continue to do that when dead?
  - b) Granted it can be done after this life, but
    - (1) those still living on Earth
    - (2) cannot hear what the departed saints are saying.
      - (a) In heaven praise for the Lord flows endlessly, but
      - (b) on the Earth we need more people doing it.

C. Heman knew that eventually he would do as all the Earth does, and die, but

1. he obviously addressed a situation
2. where he would be dying before his time.

### **VI. Psalm 88.13 – A Soul in Prayer #3**

13 But to You I have cried out, O Lord,  
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.  
(Psa 88.13)

A. Heman did not just accept depression in his life, but

1. He cried out to God about it.
2. He put the matter in the hands of God.

B. Therefore, he began everyday with prayer that he sent up before God,

1. knowing that the foundation of the day is the Lord, and
2. prayer determines how we build upon that foundation.

### **VII. Psalm 88.14-18 – A Soul in Desperation**

14 Lord, why do You cast off my soul?  
Why do You hide Your face from me?  
15 I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth;  
I suffer Your terrors;  
I am distraught.

- 16 Your fierce wrath has gone over me;  
Your terrors have cut me off.
- 17 They came around me all day long like water;  
They engulfed me altogether.
- 18 Loved one and friend You have put far from me,  
And my acquaintances into darkness.  
(Psa 88.14-18)

A. Perhaps verses 14-18 comprise his morning prayer.

B. First, he had questions for the Lord.

1. Why do you cast off my soul?
2. Why do you hide your face from me?
  - a) Heman felt alone.
  - b) He felt forsaken by God.
  - c) He lived in emotional darkness.
  - d) He felt helpless.
  - e) He did not know what to do.

C. Since he was young, these problems had plagued him.

1. He suffered terrors.
2. He was distraught.

D. He believed that the Lord was after him,

1. going over him with wrath,
2. cutting him off with terrors,
  - a) surrounding the psalmist like water,
  - b) producing the feeling of drowning, and
    - (1) even his loved ones and his friends,
    - (2) the Lord put away from him,
      - (a) so that they were so far away from him,

- (b) it was as though they were in darkness,
  - i) he could not see them.
  - ii) With that Heman and the sons of Korah ended the psalm.

### **Exhortation:**

#### **I. If you live in the darkness of Heman the Ezrahite,**

- A. you saw what he did.
- B. Do it!
  - 1. Let us do it for you also!
  - 2. Why continue in dark despair?
- C. Remember these words of Paul,

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us (2Co 1.8-10)

#### **II. Trust in God,**

- A. not in yourself, because
- B. He raised Jesus from the dead.
  - 1. What then can God do in your life?
  - 2. The first thing you should experience is forgiveness.

#### **III. Therefore, we have set aside the next moment to sing a song**

- A. to give you time to think about your eternal destiny, and then
- B. to give you time to do something about it.
  - 1. During that song, you can come forward,
  - 2. I will meet you and tell you what you must do.