

Psalm 88 – Knowing the sufferings of Jesus

Have you ever felt that God has completely abandoned you, has shut up shop and is not listening to your ongoing cries for help?

... the darkest and bleakest of all the psalms.

So what is Psalm 88 saying?

... a personal lament

1) He keeps crying out to YHWH.

... whilst he knows the YHWH saves it has not (yet) been his personal experience.

2) The suffering he faces comes from God.

... Verse 6-8 ... You have put me in the lowest pit.. your wrath lies heavily on me ... you have overwhelmed me with your waves... you have taken me from my closet friends.

3) Asks God a series of rhetorical questions – 10-12

4) He remains unheard...

... The psalm finishes with darkness

A few things to note

1) This psalm is often seen to be linked to Psalm 89

... begins on a positive note of God's covenantal love and faithfulness.

2) Psalm 88 it is also part of a book that begins and ends with the praise of YHWH.

For us today

1) Is your understanding of God is offended by such a bleak and accusing psalm as this?

2) This is a psalm that is for us.

How do you respond when a fellow follower of Jesus laments like this to you?

3) This psalm is deeply realistic

God is not our genie who is sent to do our bidding.

...he works in ways that we do not always understand or fathom well.

... to draw us closer to him and deepen our trust in him.

Romans 8:31ff ... nothing will ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:18 starts from a place of experiencing deep sufferings because you follow Jesus.

1 Peter 1:6-7

4) Feelings and experiences you have never felt.

5) Psalm 88 is part of a bigger story.

Romans 8:22 ... the world is groaning due to the problem of sin.

Romans 8:23-25, *“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”*

... an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade kept in heaven for us.

6) Trust in what he knows to be true about YHWH even if it is not his immediate or present feeling.

- **Lamenting well – calling out to God**
- **Ends in utter darkness .. (we might find this uncomfortable – like Job’s friends – remember God did not get Job in trouble for his refusal to back down BUT he also reminded Job he had no idea of the big things of life ...) BUT ...**
- **The big picture – of scripture not this psalm**
- **Ongoing trust (in the midst of real overwhelming suffering) ... eternal hope and inheritance, God shaping us, strengthening us.. not fluffy self focussed immediate pleasure centred “religion”. Living in a broken sinful world (As sinners) with a perfect sinless future eternity ahead ... inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade...**
- **Persistent praying and continuation of believe even in deep overwhelming darkness**
- **When we feel our prayers are not heard ... (troubled but unbroken faith in YHWH)**
- **Confronting for us**
- **Reflects the real world .. when life goes significantly pear shaped and it seems like god is not listening**