

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith LXXXVIII: Learning To Keep Trusting God When We Do Not Understand Him (Psalm 88:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. It is always beneficial to learn from a wise person how to deal with life's seemingly insurmountable hardships.
- B. We have such a provision in Psalm 88:1-18, and we view this psalm for our insight and edification:

II. Learning To Keep Trusting God When We Do Not Understand Him, Psalm 88:1-18.

- A. The introductory remarks of this psalm comprise the first verse of the Hebrew text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1052), so we stay with the numbering system of the English Bible for clarity with this lesson.
- B. We thus translate Psalm 88:1-18 as follows:
 - 1. "O Jahweh, the Elohim Who saves me, day and night I cry out before You; turn Your ear to my cry," v. 1.
 - 2. "May my prayer come before Your face; turn Your ear to my ringing cry," Psalm 88:2.
 - 3. "Because my life principle is glutted, excessively filled with (*saba'*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 959) calamity and my physical life draws near to Sheol (place of the departed dead)," Psalm 88:3.
 - 4. "I am counted with those who go down to the pit (grave); I am like a mighty man without strength," v. 4.
 - 5. "I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, who are cut off from Your care," Psalm 88:5.
 - 6. "You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths," Psalm 88:6.
 - 7. "Your wrath lies heavily upon me; You have overwhelmed me with all of Your waves. Selah," Psa. 88:7.
 - 8. "You distanced my acquaintances (*yada'*, "know" in the intensive passive Pual stem, used substantively as "acquaintance", B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 394) from me who were with me and have set me as being an abomination (*to'ebah*, Ibid., p. 1072). I am confined and cannot go out," Psalm 88:8.
 - 9. "My eyes are dim with grief. I call to You, O Jahweh, every day; I spread out my hands to You," v. 9.
 - 10. "Do You show Your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise You? Selah," v. 10.
 - 11. "Is Your loyal love declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in destruction?" (Psalm 88:11)
 - 12. "Are Your wonders known in the place of darkness, or Your righteous acts in the land of oblivion?" v. 11.
 - 13. "But I (emph. pron.) cry to You for help, Jahweh, and in the morning my prayer comes before You," v. 12.
 - 14. "Why, O Jahweh, do You spurn my life principle and hide Your face from me?" (Psalm 88:14)
 - 15. "From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I suffered Your terrors and I am in despair," 15.
 - 16. "Your wrath has swept over me; Your terrors have destroyed me," Psalm 88:16.
 - 17. "All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me," Psalm 88:17.
 - 18. "You have distanced from me my loved ones and companions; the darkness is my acquaintance (*yada'* in the Pual stem used substantively again, cf. v. 8)," Psalm 88:18.
- C. We note significant observations and applications regarding this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. This psalm was authored by (a) the **wise** Heman the Ezrahite (intro. remarks with 1 Kings 4:31) as (b) a **maskil** (intro. remarks), a "contemplative poem" (Ibid. p. 968) that was meant to **teach**. (c) It is very sad throughout with **no end** to the **pain** or the **troubles** behind it, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 857.
 - 2. Thus, this psalm (a) encourages those who face many overwhelming trials, including a loss of supportive loved ones and acquaintances (v. 18), to keep on trusting the Lord like the psalmist even if they do not understand God's purpose in it all! (v. 14) (b) Since Heman was wise (1 Kings 4:31), he implies by such a psalm that the sufferer must become less self-centered (as shown throughout the psalm), less worldly and less reliant on others who are sinful and hence unreliable so as to mature and become wise, Psalm 131:1-3.
 - 3. The wise man thus urges sufferers not to rely on their own understanding, but to keep trusting the Lord since He has a good reason for allowing the trials and our misunderstanding of them and Him, Prov. 3:5-6.

Lesson: (1) *The wise Heman taught by this psalm that we should keep on trusting the Lord amid all sorts of great trials and confusion since God has a good reason(s) for it all, and (2) that those reasons are connected to God's directing us away from relying on a futile world system, on others who are sinfully unreliable and selfishness that we might be at peace with God's assigned lot in life, thus gaining true wisdom, Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 131:1-3.*

Application: *If we face insurmountable trials where we do not understand God's work to let them occur, we should keep on trusting Him without relying on our understanding in order to mature and become truly wise.*