

Psalms Book III (Psalm 73–89)

Introduction to Book III

The third section of the Psalter contains seventeen psalms, eleven of which are attributed to Asaph (or those descended from Him), four to the Sons of Korah (including one authored by Heman the Ezrahite), one to King David, and the last to Ethan the Ezrahite.

Among these seventeen psalms are eight psalms of *laments* (Psalms 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86, and 88). In these, the “psalmist calls out ‘O Lord’ or ‘O God,’ [as] he turns immediately to God for help.”¹ Laments aren’t mere opportunities for the psalmist or the community as a whole to vent their emotions, nor are laments intended to blame God and evade responsibility, but instead, laments help God’s people to admit their wrongs, proclaim their grief, and seek God’s help. All laments contain “an implicit statement of faith.”² Laments are the largest category in the Psalter.

The *lament* of Psalm 83 is also considered an *imprecatory* psalm because the Psalmist calls down God’s judgment on his own enemies, the enemies of Israel, or the enemies of God in general.

Psalm 73 (and sometimes also 78) is considered to be a *wisdom* psalm — which teaches something about reality in relationship to God.

Psalm 89 is a *royal* psalm which moves from the reign of David to prefigure the ultimate Kingship of Christ.

Psalm 73: *Struggling with the reality of injustice*

This psalm of Asaph is often considered a *wisdom* psalm—it intends to teach us something about real life. It is a testimony of the psalmist’s struggles with the injustice he sees in prosperity of the wicked vs. the struggles of the godly. He is tempted to despair until he understands God’s intention to bring future justice upon the ungodly and blessing for His people. Through this psalm we learn that, despite present appearances, God will ultimately judge the wicked and do good those who make Him their refuge.

- Key truth (v. 1):

73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart

- Struggle with injustice (vs: 2–14):

2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.

3 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

¹ Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 165–166.

² *Ibid.*

- The reality of future judgment upon the wicked (vs. 15–27):

**16 But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,
17 until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.
18 Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin.
19 How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!**

- God is good and a true refuge for believers (v. 28):

**28 But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.**

Main Idea:

Faith in the reality of God’s goodness and the rightness of his eternal plan will give us stability in the face of temporal injustice.³

Psalm 74: O God, Come to our aid!

Asaph composes a *communal lament* over the destruction and desecration of God’s temple (probably by the Babylonians in 2 Kings 25:8–17). He wonders why God continues to be angry with His people and delays justice upon the enemy. Yet, even when there is no prophetic word from God, the psalmist remembers God’s salvation, power, and covenant promises, and calls God to enable His people to praise Him by coming to their aid and defending His cause against their enemy.

- Why do you remain angry with Your people (v. 1)

1 O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?

- The temple is destroyed! (vs: 2–8):

**6 And all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers.
7 They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name,
bringing it down to the ground.**

- We cannot see your hand or hear your word (vs. 9–10):

**9 We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us
who knows how long.**

³ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, ed. E. Ray. Clendenen, vol. 13, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 29.

- I remember the limitless saving power of the sovereign God (vs. 12–17):

**12 Yet God *my King* is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 You divided the sea by your might...**

- Arise, O God, and remember the enemy's evil and defend Your people (vs. 18–23)

20 *Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence....*

22 Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

Main Idea:

God remains the saving Sovereign King over His people, even when the enemies of God's people seem to be victorious. When all hope seems lost and we are tempted to despair, we must remember God's actions in the past on behalf of His people, and pray believing in His faithfulness to His covenant promises.

Psalm 75: Thanksgiving for God's nearness and justice

Is titled "To the Choirmaster: According to the tune 'Do Not Destroy.'" This was congregational psalm of thanksgiving written by Asaph in thanks for God's nearness and deeds on behalf of His people. The writer records both his own words and those of God Himself, drawing a contrast to the previous Psalm where there was no prophetic communication from God. Instead of a cry for God to come to their aid, there is praise for God's nearness, and then God Himself promises to bring judgment on the wicked.

- Thank God for His presence and deeds (v. 1)

1 We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near

- Thank God for his righteous judgment on the proud and tender mercy on the righteous (vs: 2–9):

8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

9 But I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

- Remember, God gets the last word (v. 10)

10 All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

Main Idea:

God's nearness and past actions on our behalf should cause us to be continually thank Him. We sing His praises because He will judge the earth with equity, will humble the boastful and wicked, and will lift up the righteous.

Psalm 76: Humble yourselves before the fearful justice of God

Another congregational psalm of Asaph, to be accompanied by string instruments. A *hymn* which celebrates and praises God's protection of His chosen people, and His chosen city, when He defeated their enemies in war. This may refer to the defeat of the Assyrian army by the angel of the Lord (who wiped out 185,000 enemy soldiers overnight) as recorded in 2 Kings 19:32–36.

- God has revealed Himself to His people in His protection of Jerusalem (vs. 1–3)

1 In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.

2 His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.

3 There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.

— *Selah*

- No one can stand against God in battle (vs. 4–9)

*6 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.*

- Fear God, not man (vs. 10–12)

11 Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them;

let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared,

12 who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

- Key verses (vs. 7–10)

7 But you, you are to be feared!

Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?

8 From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still,

*9 when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. — *Selah**

10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise you;

the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.

Main Idea:

God can destroy the greatest armies of the earth in a moment. So, let us humble ourselves before Him in holy fear. Yet we also praise Him—for His wrath overcomes that of His enemies—and his mercy saves those who humble themselves before Him.

Psalm 77: Finding rest in times of distress

Another congregational psalm of Asaph. A *lament* that quickly turns to *praise* as the he remembers God's actions on behalf of his people in the past. While present distress has brought sleepless nights and overwhelming anxiety—the psalmist chooses to meditate on God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. As he considers the faithfulness of God in the past, his distress in the present is replaced with trust in God who has proved Himself trustworthy.

- Present overwhelming distress (vs. 1–3)

77:1 I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.

2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;

in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;

my soul refuses to be comforted.

- Wondering if God still cares (vs. 4–9)

8 Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?

9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" — Selah

- Choosing to remember God's works and ways (vs. 10–15)

11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

13 Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?

- Recognizing the faithfulness of God (vs. 16–20)

***19 Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.***

20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Main Idea:

There are times when we may find ourselves overwhelmed—in a situation beyond our abilities to handle. In our day of trouble, believers may call out to God and bring our anxieties, fears, depression, and doubts to Him. We should then meditate on who God is and how He has revealed Himself by what He has done in the past. With a fresh view of His past faithfulness, we may rest in his present willingness to guide and protect us through the most difficult times.

Psalm 78: Learn from Israel's history!

Asaph recounts Israel's history so that his present generation, and those to come, might learn from Israel's past failures to trust the Lord. Faithlessness characterized the previous generations, and disaster after disaster followed. Through Asaph's psalm, God calls the succeeding generations to faithfulness, so that they might break the cycle of rebellion and enjoy his blessing and care.

- The purpose of the lessons — so that future generations might not forget God (vs. 1–8)

*1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
5 He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,
6 that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
7 so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;*

- Lesson 1: Ephraim's unfaithfulness (vs. 9–11)

Ephraim was the dominant tribe in northern Israel and may here represent the entire northern kingdom after Israel's division following Solomon's death. It's difficult to pinpoint the event to which vs. 9–11 are pointing, but whatever the case, they are the initial example of unfaithfulness to God's covenant, which would later lead to their deportation from the land.

*9 The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle.
10 They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law.
11 They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.*

- Lesson 2: Israel's unfaithfulness in the wilderness (vs. 12–41)

*14 In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light.
15 He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.
16 He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers.
17 Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High
in the desert.
18 They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved.
...21 Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath;
a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel,
22 because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.*

In spite of this, God continued to provide for their needs...

*24 and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven.
...27 he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas;*

*...29 And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved.
...32 In spite of all this, they still sinned; despite his wonders, they did not believe.*

So, God brought severe discipline upon Israel...

*33 So he made their days vanish like a breath, and their years in terror.
34 When he killed them, they sought him; they repented and sought God earnestly.
35 They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer.*

Yet even their repentance proved empty because...

*36 ... they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues.
37 Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.
38 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them;
he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.
39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.*

In spite of God's compassion, they continued their pattern of rebellion...

41 They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.

- **Lesson 3:** Israel forgot how God delivered them from Egypt (vs. 42–53)

*42 They did not remember his power or the day when he redeemed them from the foe,
43 when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan.
52 ... he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53 He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid,
but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.*

- **Lesson 4:** Israel disobeyed even after entering the Promised Land (vs. 54–64)

*54 And he brought them to his holy land,
to the mountain which his right hand had won.
55 He drove out nations before them;
he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.*

And yet, in spite of all His care and provision...

*56 Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God
and did not keep his testimonies,
57 but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers;
they twisted like a deceitful bow.*

And they took on the idolatry of the surrounding nations.
Trading worship of Yahweh for images made by men.

*58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places;
they moved him to jealousy with their idols.
59 When God heard, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel.*

And once again they were subject to God's righteous anger for their rebellion...

62 He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage.

63 Fire devoured their young men, and their young women had no marriage song.

64 Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation.

- Lesson 5: God keeps covenant with His chosen tribe, city, and King (vs. 65–72)

67 He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,

68 but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.

69 He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth,

which he has founded forever.

70 He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds;

*71 from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people,
Israel his inheritance.*

72 With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

Main Idea:

God is absolutely faithful to uphold his covenant relationship with all who are in covenant with Him. Yet we, as humans, can be very fickle. Anything that we put before God can become an idol. Certainly, all true New Covenant believers have been chosen by God to enjoy the irrevocable blessings Christ has purchased for us. Yet, until we go to be with the Lord, we must not, like rebellious Israel, give our worship to another. This psalm makes it clear that our patient and forgiving Father deserves and requires faithfulness from His people. Let us learn from Israel's failures and recognize that we too will experience God's discipline if we give our affections to another.

Psalm 79: Avenge Jerusalem O praiseworthy God!

A psalm of Asaph, a *communal lament* over the destruction of Jerusalem, many of the Hebrews from the city, and the temple itself. It is also *imprecatory* as the psalmist calls for God to avenge the blood of his people on their enemies.

- Foreign armies have destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, and killed God's people (vs. 1–3)

79:1 O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;

they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

*2 They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the heavens for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.*

*3 They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.*

4 We have become a taunt to our neighbors, mocked and derided by those around us.

- How long will God remain angry with His people? (vs. 5)

- 5 How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire?**
- Forgive your people and avenge us on your enemies! (vs. 6–11)

**6 Pour out your anger on the nations that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms that do not call upon your name!**

**8 Do not remember against us our former iniquities;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.**

**9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!**

**...12 Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors
the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord!**

- We will praise You forever! (vs. 13)

**13 But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will recount your praise.**

Main Idea:

Even though God caused a severe judgment to fall upon Jerusalem for the sins of His people. The survivors knew that Yahweh is a forgiving God. So, they called out in faith and praise to God for deliverance based on His compassion. And they also cried out for Him to judge those who proved themselves to be His enemies. We too may call out for forgiveness when we sin—knowing that Christ has made atonement for them, and that God might glorify Himself through righteous judgment on those who taunt God and His people.

Psalm 80: A prayer for restoration

A *communal lament* by Asaph sung to the tune of “Lilies.” It contains three sections, each ending with an appeal for Yahweh to “Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.” This is a request for God to forgive their sin and once again let His blessing—first given by Aaron in Numbers 6:25 (“the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you”) be once again upon them:

- O Shepherd of Israel, restore Your people! (vs. 1–3)

80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,

stir up your might and come to save us!

3 Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

- We have suffered under Your hand—restore us to see the smile of Your face (vs. 4–7)

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

*5 You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
6 You make us an object of contention for our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

- By your will, Israel has been devastated by our enemies.
Please rebuke them and restore us (vs. 8–19)

*8 You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.
9 You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.
...12 Why then have you broken down its walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?
13 The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it.
14 Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,
15 the stock that your right hand planted,
and for the son whom you made strong for yourself.
("the son" probably refers to the King in the Davidic line.)
... 19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

Main Idea:

God's people will know God's smile of blessing in obedience. If they willfully sin, they will reap the consequences of their sin. And unless the Lord restores them, "there is no relief from [those] consequences."⁴ God's people seek the restoration of forgiveness for our sins through confession and true repentance.

Psalm 81: Hear, O My people!

A congregational *hymn* of praise by Asaph that becomes an oracle from God Himself.

- God's people are called to praise God for deliverance from Egyptian bondage (vs. 1–7)

*Ps 81:1 Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!
2 Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.
3 Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.*
(The feast of booths)

- God calls his people to enjoy the blessings of faithfulness (vs. 8–10)

*8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you!
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!*

⁴ Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, 106.

**9 There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god.
10 I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.**

- God gave His people over to their sin and yet longs and calls them to listen to His voice and repent (vs. 11–16)

**11 “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.
12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.
13 Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!
14 I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.
15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him,
and their fate would last forever.
16 But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”**

Main Idea:

God reminded His people of the freedom He gave them from Egyptian bondage. But they chose to tune Him out and suffered the consequences of their sin. So, God called them to truly listen to His Word and repent. In a greater way, Christians have experienced freedom too—from bondage to the power of sin. In much the same way as Israel, our spiritual health and experience of freedom from sin depends on our willingness to listen to God’s Word—and to His Son (Matt 17:5).⁵

Psalm 82: Judgment on unjust rulers

Asaph pens an oracle of judgment upon unjust human rulers (probably the rulers over God’s people Israel)—who are so prideful they essential have become their own gods. So, God sarcastically calls them what they wrongly think they are—“gods”—who would dare in their prideful hearts to give counsel to the one true God Himself.

- God charges the rulers with injustice (vs. 1–2)

**82:1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
2 “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? — *Selah***

⁵ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 304.

- God calls them to rule righteously (vs. 3–4)

***3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.***

***4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”***

- God reveals their foolishness and pronounces judgment upon them (vs. 5–7)

***5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.***

6 I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”

- The psalmist calls God to judge the world that He alone owns (vs. 8)

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

Main Idea:

God is the ultimate judge of all. He pays special attention to those who are in positions of authority over others to see if they rule in accordance with true justice. Those who mistreat others under their authority and who refuse to aid those afflicted by the wicked will be harshly judged for their misdeeds. The psalmist’s final call for God—who inherits all the nations—to arise in judgment, points to Jesus—to whom God has given the nations for His inheritance (Heb 1:2; 1 Cor 15:27)—and who, when He comes again, will judge the world in perfect righteousness.

Psalm 83: Arise Most High God, and defend Your people

This final psalm of Asaph is a *communal lament* that includes an *imprecatory* prayer for God to defeat the nations threatening Israel.

- A plea for help against Israel’s enemies (v. 1)

83:1 O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!

***2 For behold, your enemies make an uproar;
those who hate you have raised their heads.***

- The reasons for their plea (vs. 3–8)

***3 They lay crafty plans against your people;
they consult together against your treasured ones.***

***4 They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be remembered no more!”***

5 For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant—

**6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites,
7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Asshur also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. — Selah**

- They call God to intervene like He did in the past (vs. 9–12)

**9 Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon,
10 who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
12 who said, “Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God.”**

- They ask God to destroy their enemies for the sake of His name (vs. 13–18)

**13 O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind.
14 As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,
15 so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane!
16 Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD.
17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace,
18 that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD,
are the Most High over all the earth.**

Main Idea:

God controls the nations of the world. He plants them, determines their borders, and uproots them when He pleases. As Sovereign over the cosmos, He can act to change the course of nations, and God’s people can call out for Him to do just that—so that all might know that Yahweh is the Most High. We should pray that God’s name and God’s Word will be honored in even the highest halls of human governance, and that God might judge those who oppose Him.

Psalm 84: Longing to be near and worship God

A *hymn* of the Sons of Korah (a descendant of Levi) who served as singers and musicians for temple worship. This psalm pictures the eager desire of a true child of God to be in the Temple courts, and to remain there in joyous worship of the one true God.

- Longing to be near the Lord (vs. 1–2)

**84:1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.
3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.
4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! — Selah**

- Those who draw near are strengthened by God (vs. 5–8)

5 *Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*

6 *As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.*

7 *They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.*

8 *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! — Selah*

- Those who draw near are satisfied by God (vs. 9–12)

9 *Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!*

10 *For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor.*

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

12 *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!*

Main Idea:

Do we long to be in God's presence alongside His people in worship? Do we find strength in Him as we seek His face in adoration? Are we regularly satisfied with the goodness of God as we come to Him, obey Him, and trust Him? These are the blessings of those who diligently seek His face. Let us seek His face together as we worship today!

Psalm 85: Revive Your people O Lord!

A communal lament of the Sons of Korah in appeal for God's work to restore His people to right relationship with Him.

- Calls upon God to remember His past favor toward Israel (vs. 1–2)

85:1 *LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.*

2 *You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. — Selah*

3 *You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.*

- Asks God to forgive and restore His people again (vs. 4–7)

4 *Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!*

5 *Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?*

6 *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*

7 *Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.*

- Expresses confidence that God will restore those who are faithful to Him (vs. 8–13)

8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

11 Faithfulness springs up from the ground,

and righteousness looks down from the sky.

12 Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

13 Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.

Main Idea:

God loves to glorify Himself by restoring his people. As their faithfulness “springs up from the ground” in prayer, God will certainly “look down from the sky” in “righteousness” and restoration. May God move his “saints” today to prayer for revival among His people, so that every land, including our own, may know the glory of our God.

Psalm 86: A confident appeal to God in time of need

A *lament* by David. A prayer appealing to God for protection in a time when men are pursuing his life. This placement of another Psalm of David is unusual here—as biblical scholar Philip Eveson points out that “most of the psalms in Book III reflect the period from the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC through to the return from the Babylonian exile.”⁶ But even though it’s unexpected in this section, David’s prayer fits well here—because He, like exiled Israel, is in great need of Yahweh’s help to survive.

- I’m in great need of help! (vs. 1–7)

86:1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

2 Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.

...6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.

7 In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.

- You are the incomparable one true God whom all nations will worship (vs. 8–10)

8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

9 All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

10 For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

⁶ Philip Eveson, *The Book of Psalms: From Suffering to Glory*, vol. 2, Welwyn Commentary Series (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP, 2014–2015), 102.

- Teach me and unify my heart so that I might glorify You (vs. 11–12)

*11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear your name.*

*12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.*

- I trust in Your mercy, for you love me (vs. 13–17)

*13 For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*

*14 O God, insolent men have risen up against me;
a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.*

*15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

*...17 Show me a sign of your favor,
that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you,
LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*

Main Idea:

In a time of great distress, David held tight to His confidence in the Lord's character. He knew the Lord's love and mercy would preserve Him. And He desired that the Lord teach Him how to live in even more reverent fear, so that His life would be filled with thanksgiving, and God be glorified in him. We too should pray that God would teach us and unite the scattered pieces of our hearts so that we might singleheartedly revere Him and bring Him glory with our lives.

Psalm 87: The Joy of the Lord fills His people in Zion

A hymn of the Sons of Korah.

- God loves the city He founded as His own possession (vs. 1–3)

*87:1 On the holy mount stands the city he founded;
2 the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.
3 Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. — Selah*

- All who worship Yahweh will be counted by God as native citizens of Zion (vs. 4–6)

*4 Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon;
behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush— “This one was born there,” they say.
5 And of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her”;
for the Most High himself will establish her.
6 The LORD records as he registers the peoples, “This one was born there.” — Selah*

- All who worship Yahweh will find their home in God's city to be overflowing with joy (v. 7)

7 Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."

Main Idea:

This psalm pictures the future day when every nation will worship the Lord in Jerusalem. People from every tongue, tribe, and nation will become native citizens of the capital city of God's Kingdom by grace. And God's people will rejoice with joy unspeakable and filled with glory as they behold their King. May we look forward to that day with great anticipation.

Psalm 88: *Crying out to the God of my salvation*

A *lament* of the Sons of Korah. Sung to the tune of Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite—a Levitical singer from the time of David. This psalm is very similar to the cries of Job in the midst of His suffering. The psalmist appeals to the only one who can save Him, because, as verse one says, he knows Yahweh is the God of his salvation.

- Crying out to the God of my salvation (vs. 1–2)

88:1 O LORD, God of my salvation; I cry out day and night before you.

2 Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry!

- The cause of my cry—I am nearing the grave (vs. 3–5)

3 For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength,

5 like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave,

like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand.

- The cause of my woes—God's wrath (vs. 6–9a)

6 You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. — Selah

8 You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them.

I am shut in so that I cannot escape;

9 my eye grows dim through sorrow.

- Can I praise you from the grave? (vs. 9b–12)

Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you.

10 Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? — Selah

11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?

12 Are your wonders known in the darkness,

or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

- Cast me not away, O Lord! (vs. 13–18)

13 But I, O LORD, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

14 O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?

15 Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.

16 Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.

17 They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together.

*18 You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;
my companions have become darkness.*

Main Idea:

True faith calls upon God in the direst of circumstances. Even when heaven seems shut and God seems to have closed His ear, true faith knows that the merciful “God of my salvation” is the one who can bring him out of his soul’s darkness. So, he persists in crying out in faith to the one who can save Him—and so should we during the “dark night of the soul” when we experience it.

Psalm 89: God will keep His covenant with David

A royal psalm by Ethan the Ezrahite.

- The psalmist sings of God’s loving faithfulness to the descendants of David (vs. 1–4)

*89:1 I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

*2 For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever;
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”*

*3 You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:*

*4 ‘I will establish your offspring forever,
and build your throne for all generations.’” — Selah*

- The heavens join in the song (vs. 5–8)

*5 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!*

6 For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?

Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,

*7 a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him?*

*8 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD,
with your faithfulness all around you?*

- God rules over all in power (vs. 9–13)

9 You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

*10 You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.*

*11 The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it,
you have founded them.*

*12 The north and the south, you have created them;
Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.*

13 You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand.

- Blessed are all who know Him (vs. 14–18)

*14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.*

*15 Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,*

16 who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted.

17 For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted.

- The Holy one of Israel protects and establishes the line of David eternally (vs. 18–29)

18 For our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel.

19 Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said:

“I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people.

20 I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him,

21 so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him.

23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

*24 My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him,
and in my name shall his horn be exalted.*

25 I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.

26 He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’

27 And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

*28 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever,
and my covenant will stand firm for him.*

29 I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens.

- God will keep His covenant, even when David’s descendants do not (vs. 30–37)

30 If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,

31 if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,

32 then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes,

33 but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.

*34 I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
35 Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.
36 His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.
37 Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.”
— Selah*

- Has God now renounced the covenant He promised to David? (vs. 38–45)

**38 But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed.
39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant;
you have defiled his crown in the dust.
40 You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins.
41 All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice.
43 You have also turned back the edge of his sword,
and you have not made him stand in battle.**

A likely reference to King Jehoiachin who was taken prisoner to Babylon (2 Kings 24:12).

**44 You have made his splendor to cease and cast his throne to the ground.
45 You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame.
— Selah**

- How will the covenant promise of God be fulfilled now? (vs. 46–52)

**46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is!
For what vanity you have created all the children of man!
48 What man can live and never see death?
Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? — Selah
49 Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
50 Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked,
and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations,
51 with which your enemies mock, O LORD,
with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed.
52 Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.**

Main Idea:

The psalmist turns to God with a question he cannot answer, but God can. From our vantage point on this side of salvation history we know that God will reestablish the line of David through the incarnate Son of God, born as a man as a true son of David in his first coming. And who will return to rule from David's throne in Jerusalem at His second coming.

God always keeps His covenant promises even when men do not. As Paul said of Christ, so can also be said of God the Father: "He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim 2:13). And just as the prophet Jeremiah predicted:

***5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,
when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,
and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.
6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.
And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'
(Jer 23:5–6)***

That's Jesus.

