

Day 350 - SATURDAY: January 27th

Psalms 144:1-15 NKJV

A Psalm of David. Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle— My lovingkindness and my fortress, My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me. LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow. Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down; Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Flash forth lightning and scatter them; Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them. Stretch out Your hand from above; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, From the hand of foreigners, Whose mouth speaks lying words, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. I will sing a new song to You, O God; On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You, The One who gives salvation to kings, Who delivers David His servant From the deadly sword. Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, Whose mouth speaks lying words, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood— That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; That our daughters may be as pillars, Sculptured in palace style; That our barns may be full, Supplying all kinds of produce; That our sheep may bring forth thousands And ten thousands in our fields; That our oxen may be well laden; That there be no breaking in or going out; That there be no outcry in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!

Psalms 145:1-21 NKJV

A Praise of David. I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works. Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, And I will declare Your greatness. They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, And shall sing of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, And Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The LORD preserves all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.

Psalms 88:1-18 NKJV

A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath Leannoth." a Contemplation of Heman the Ezrahite. O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; Incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, And my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, 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. You have laid me in the lowest pit, In darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah 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; My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You. Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But to You I have cried out, O LORD, And in the morning my prayer comes before You. LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me? I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught. Your fierce wrath has gone over me; Your terrors have cut me off. They came around me all day long like water; They engulfed me altogether. Loved one and friend You have put far from me, And my acquaintances into darkness.

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 144:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 144 is the last in the sequence here of five psalms of David seeking rescue from foes, in this case referring to treacherous foreign enemies in a time of

war or the threat of war. It contains a number of similarities with David's great victory song found in 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18. As the victory song evidently came late in David's life, after all his foes were subdued, and Psalm 144 was written while David still needed deliverance from foreign enemies, it would appear that the victory song borrowed elements from Psalm 144 rather than the other way around. In fact, there is more in the specific wording of both songs to confirm this, as we will see.

Psalm 144 opens with David praising God as his "Rock" (verse 1a), the word here also meaning "strength," which could mean a stronghold or fortress. The same word appears at the beginning of Psalm 18 as "strength" (verse 1), but it is paired in the next verse with another word meaning "rock" (verse 2; compare 2 Samuel 22:2). Note also the references to God as "fortress" and "high tower" (Psalm 144:2; compare Psalm 18:2; 2 Samuel 22:2-3).

In Psalm 144:2 David refers to God as He "who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle" (Psalm 144:1b). Compare the victory song: "He teaches my hands to make war" (Psalm 18:34; 2 Samuel 22:35). Thus David credits God for making him a successful warrior-king. *The Nelson Study Bible* suggests: "It is also possible that this psalm was used in the training of the army (as was Psalm 149). Warfare in ancient Israel was tied closely to the worship of God. Deliverance from the enemy was not just a task for tough soldiers, it was a matter of active piety" (introductory note on Psalm 144). As God's earthly kingdom at that time, Israel and its human ruler battled foreign enemies at God's command. Christians today, who wait for God's future Kingdom, do not have this responsibility and therefore do not participate in physical warfare (compare John 18:36). Of course,

God does teach us to fight spiritual battles against our spiritual enemies.

Verse 3 of Psalm 144, asking what is man (the Hebrew here connoting *mortal* man) that God should care for him, is nearly the same as Psalm 8:4. Actually, David evidently took this wording, as found in both psalms, from Job 7:17-18. In fact, the previous clause of that passage, "For my days are but a breath" (verse 16), is echoed in the next words of Psalm 144: "Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow" (verse 4). "The Hebrew word translated 'breath' [here and in Job 7:16] is *habel*, the name of one of Adam's sons (Abel), and the word translated 'vanity' thirty-eight times in Ecclesiastes. (See also Psalm 39:4-6, Psalm 39:22; Psalm 62:9; Psalm 78:33, Psalm 94:11.) The 'shadow' image is found in Psalm 102:11, Psalm 109:23, Job 8:9 and Psalm 14:2, and Ecclesiastes 6:12 and Ecclesiastes 8:13" (Wiersbe, *Be Exultant*, note on Psalm 144:1-4).

This presentation of the frailty of human existence sets up David's plea for God's powerful intervention. The imagery of the bowing down of the heavens, the flashing forth of lightning bolts as arrows and the rescue from great waters representative of foreign adversaries (verses 5-7) is all found in the victory song as well (compare Psalm 18:9, Psalm 18:14, Psalm 18:16-17; 2 Samuel 22:10, 2 Samuel 22:15, 2 Samuel 22:17-18). However, Psalm 144 asks for these things to happen, while the victory song shows them as already accomplished. Thus, the victory song is essentially praise and thanks for God answering the plea of Psalm 144—further demonstrating the order in which these psalms were composed.

Verse 8 and the recapitulation of the plea for deliverance in verse 11 seem to imply that the foreign enemies are violating some treaty or other agreement they had made with Israel .

David, anticipating deliverance and victory, says he will sing a new song to God (verse 9; compare Psalm 33:2-3; Psalm 40:3). This could refer to singing an old song with renewed joy and zeal. Yet in this case it may well refer to the composition of a completely new song—the best fit seeming to be the victory song of Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22. In the context of this new song is the reference to God as "the One who gives salvation to kings, who delivers David His servant from the deadly sword" (Psalm 144:10). Considering that the names of the psalmists are rarely included in the lyrics of the psalms, compare the victory song: "Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore" (Psalm 18:50; compare 2 Samuel 22:51).

Praying for God's deliverance in faith, David can foresee strong, healthy children, prosperity, peace and contentment for God's nation (Psalm 144:12-15). Such happiness, as verse 15 makes clear, is the reward of the people of God—both in this age and, in an ultimate sense, in the age to come.

It would be beneficial to read Psalm 18 or 2 Samuel 22 following Psalm 144 to see the intervention of God in answering David's prayer." [END]

Psalm 145:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 145, the last of the final collection of eight Davidic psalms (Psalms 138-145), is a grand hymn of praise for God the Great King and His majestic reign and gracious acts-including the deliverance of His people. It serves as the closing frame of the five prayers of David seeking rescue from

wicked enemies (Psalms 140-144)--perhaps placed here as grateful and worshipful praise in collective response to God's intervention in all these past situations and His faithfulness to continue intervening (compare Psalm 145:18-20). The hymn also serves to transition to the final five untitled psalms of *Hallelujah* ("Praise the LORD") that close the book of Psalms (146-150). This psalm is specifically titled a "praise" or *tehillah* (derived from *hallel*)--the only psalm so titled. From the plural form of this word, *tehillim*, has come the traditional Hebrew name for the book of Psalms--*Sefer Tehillim* or "Book of Praises." David composed Psalm 145 in the form of an alphabetic acrostic, with each succeeding verse beginning with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet--with the exception, according to the Masoretic Text, of the letter *nun*. A number of modern versions, based on other texts, include an additional verse corresponding to this letter after verse 13 (though not numbered as a separate verse). However, this does not appear to be justified. As *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* comments: "This psalm is written alphabetically, as is observed on the title of it; but the letter '*nun*' is here wanting.... Nor is the order always strictly observed in alphabetical psalms; in the thirty-seventh psalm the letter '*ain*' is wanting, and three [letters] in the twenty-fifth psalm. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, supply this defect here, by inserting these words, 'the Lord is faithful in all his words, and holy in all his works,' as if they were begun with the word *Nman*, but they seem to be taken from Psalm 145:17, with a little alteration" (note on verse 13).

David begins his hymn of praise with a powerful declaration that he will *extol* (exalt or lift up), *bless* and *praise* God every day forever and ever (verses 1-2)--demonstrating an understanding

that he himself will live forever to render this worship. He then states the theme of his psalm: "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable" (verse 3; compare Romans 11:33). David can compose praise from uncountable manifestations of God's greatness: His nature, His creation, His plan of salvation, His dealings with mankind.

In verses 4-12 David mentions a number of ways that praise for God will be promulgated. He starts by declaring that praise for God's awesome works will resound from one generation to the next (verse 4). This is accomplished as stories of God's great acts are taught to succeeding generations. The passing on of such knowledge is primarily the responsibility of parents (compare Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:7).

Another means of transmitting this knowledge is through the recording of God's acts for posterity, as was done in the Scriptures. In fact, observe next in Psalm 145 the back and forth of "I will meditate" (verse 5) and "Men shall speak" (verse 6a), "I will declare" (verse 6b) and "They shall utter" (verse 7). Modern Bible versions often eliminate these shifts, but they are clearly present in the Hebrew. Perhaps the idea here is that David is declaring God's praises in this and other psalms-which others in later generations will sing and talk about.

David then inserts here God's revelation of Himself through His character, essentially repeating God's description of Himself to Moses as gracious, compassionate, full of mercy or loving devotion, slow to anger, and good (verses 8-9; compare Exodus 34:6-7). Similar wording may also be found in other psalms (e.g., Exodus 86:5, Exodus 86:15; Psalm 111:4; Psalm 112:4).

In the next verse (Psalm 145:10a), David says that all of God's works will praise Him, echoing Psalm 19:1-3, where the evidence

of God's creative handiwork in the heavens "declares" God's glory.

And a further method of the transmission of God's praise is through the speaking of His saints--His sanctified people--whose task it is to proclaim His Kingdom and mighty acts to the sons of men, the people of this world (verses 10a-12). This is primarily accomplished today, as the New Testament makes clear, through the Church's proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom. Yet in an ultimate sense, this may picture the saints, when resurrected and glorified as kings and priests in God's future Kingdom, teaching the gospel to all nations.

Verse 13, it should be noted, stresses the eternal nature of God's Kingdom and dominion. We should realize that Scripture presents God's Kingdom in three ways. In the first two senses it is a present reality. God is particularly the King of His people--both ancient Israel and spiritual Israel, His Church, today. Moreover, God is of course always and ever the King of the universe--Sovereign over all His created realm. Yet for the time being, God permits resistance to His rule. And this brings us to the third, future sense of God's Kingdom. When Jesus Christ returns, He will set up God's Kingdom over all nations, enforcing its laws throughout the world and leading everyone to accept God's sovereignty or be removed. All these senses of God's reign appear in the remainder of the psalm.

Verses 14-16 illustrate God's compassion and goodness as, through His sovereign rule, He helps the needy and provides sustenance for all living things. Note that the word "gracious" in verse 8 is translated from *hannun*, meaning stooping in kindness to help (Strong's No. 2587, from 2603). In verse 17 the word translated "gracious" is *hasid* (Strong's No. 2623)--an adjective

form of *hesed* (No. 2617), meaning loyal love or devotion. Indeed, in verses 17-20 we see God's loyal love to His devoted people. He will answer their prayers and save them.

While the deliverance and preservation of God's people in these verses happens today, the ultimate fulfillment of this passage will come with the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth in the future, when the wicked who refuse to come under God's loving authority will be destroyed (verse 20) and David's praise will be part of a vast chorus of all people praising God for all time (verse 21)." [END]

Psalm 88:

The UCG reading program states: "There is some question as to the authorship of Psalms 88 and 89. The superscription of Psalm 88 describes it as a song of the sons of Korah (the last of 11 Korahite psalms in the Psalter) as well as a *maskil*—an instructive psalm or "contemplation" (NKJV)—of Heman the Ezrahite. Psalm 89 is labeled as a *maskil* of Ethan the Ezrahite. Many take these names to refer to David's Levitical choir leaders Heman and Ethan (the latter apparently also known as Jeduthun). Indeed, Heman the singer, grandson of Samuel and choir leader of the Levitical clan of Kohath, was a descendant of Korah (see 1 Chronicles 6:33-38). Yet note 1 Kings 4:31, which says that Solomon was wiser than "Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda." These men were evidently descendants not of Levi but of Judah's son Zerah: "The sons of Zerah were Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara" (1 Chronicles 2:6). The distinction Ethan the Ezrahite here appears to denote Ethan the Zarahite or Zerahite (recall that Hebrew was originally written with no vowels). How do we make sense of this?

Some think traditions have become confused and that the superscriptions of Psalms 88 and 89 are in error—that the designation "Ezrahite" was wrongly added to the Heman and Ethan in these psalm titles. But that is not necessarily so. First of all, it is entirely possible that the Heman and Ethan here are not David's Levitical music leaders at all but instead the illustrious descendants of Zerah. If so, it could be, in the case of Psalm 88, that the sons of Korah took the Zerahite Heman's written poem and set it to music—turning it into a song (making it "a psalm of the sons of Korah"). On the other hand, the Heman here could well be David's Levitical choir leader, a descendant of Korah. Note that Korah himself was the son of Izhar, one of Kohath's four sons (see 1 Chronicles 6:18, 1 Chronicles 6:37-38,). Perhaps the descendants of Izhar were referred to as the Kohathite sub-clan of the Izrahites or Ezrahites. However, such an explanation would *not* apply to David's music leader Ethan, who was a descendant of Levi's son Merari. Considering all this, perhaps the Heman of Psalm 88 was David's music leader, the Izrahite, while the Ethan of Psalm 89 was the famous Zerahite and not the Merarite choir leader (more on this in the comments on Psalm 89).

Besides attribution, the superscription of Psalm 88 also contains the phrase *le-mahalath le-annoth*. Recall that Psalm 53's superscription contains the phrase *le-mahalath*. As noted before in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary, this phrase has been variously interpreted as "On sickness," "On suffering," "To pipings" (on wind instruments) or "To dances" (or some sort of choreography). The second part here, *le-annoth*, is thought to mean "of humblings" or "of afflictions." It is not clear whether both parts are to be understood independently or taken together as a

combined phrase (such as "On suffering of afflictions"). Also, one or both parts together could indicate either the subject matter of the psalm or another tune to which the psalm is set.

Heman, whatever his specific identity, is in Psalm 88 enduring some grave, life-threatening trial. Verse 15 in fact says that he has experienced life-threatening affliction for *years*—since his youth. It is not clear whether he means that he has been enduring the same, continuing trial ever since then or that he has experienced numerous similar dire circumstances over the years. The latter seems more likely, though his recurring problems may stem from the same root causes having never abated.

In his despair, Heman voices a desperate complaint against God: "Why, O Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?" (verse 14). He cries out to God day and night (verses 1, 9, 13), pleading for Him to hear (verse 2). He feels death is inevitable and close. He is as good as dead already, "adrift among the dead" (verse 5), cut off from God, no longer remembered by Him (same verse).

Indeed, he perceives his circumstances as coming *from* God: "You have laid me in the lowest pit" (verse 6). "You have afflicted me with all Your waves" (verse 7)—that is, of wrath and terrors (compare verses 16-17). "You have caused my friends to abandon me; you have made me repulsive to them.... I am worn out from the burden of your punishments" (verses 8, 15, Today's English Version). Heman can't escape his misery: "I am shut up, and I cannot get out" (verse 8).

He has called on God every day and worshipped Him with outspread hands (verse 9). Is it to no avail? Is he to die like the wicked? Will God wait to intervene until after he is already dead? (compare verse 10a). Of course, God certainly *can* intervene for

those who have already died through resurrecting them—and He *will* ultimately resurrect all His people in the future. But this thought was far from the psalmist. For how would letting him die at this time bring God glory in the present? If dead, without consciousness, Heman could not declare God's lovingkindness, faithfulness and righteousness to others (see verse 10b-12). In other words, he was no use to God dead. This recalls David's reasoning in Psalm 6:4-5 and Psalm 30:8-9.

The psalm ends gloomily with the situation unresolved: "You have made even my closest friends abandon me, and darkness is my only companion" (Psalm 88:18, TEV). Nevertheless, there is a glimmer of hope in this darkest of laments based on the way it opens, for Heman begins the psalm by addressing the Lord as "the God who saves me" (verse 1, NIV) or "God of my salvation" (NKJV). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says: "Though the psalm ends on a lament, faith triumphs, because in everything the psalmist has learned to look to 'the God who saves' (v. 1). The 'darkness' (v. 18; cf. v. 12) of grief is reminiscent of death; but as long as there is life, hope remains focused on the Lord. [One particular commentator] is right when he writes, 'Psalm 88 stands as a mark of realism of biblical faith. It has a pastoral use, because there are situations in which easy, cheap talk of resolution must be avoided'" (note on verses 15-18).

The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* points out in its note on the closing cluster of Book III (Psalms 84-89): "The final two prayers (Psalms 88; 89) both end unrelieved by the usual expression of confidence that God will hear and act.... However, the editors of Book III have placed them under the near shadow of Psalms 87, the more distant shadow of Psalms 84 and the still more distant

shadow of Psalms 82. From these psalms they should not be dissociated." [END]