

# A Psalm of Pain: When in Darkness we Walk

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning. You will find that in the book of Psalms. And this morning at Psalm 88, which I think if you have one of our visitors' Bibles should be page 494.

Otherwise, pretty much in the middle of the Old Testament. And we come this morning really to what is probably the very darkest psalm in the whole Psalter.

It is indeed a psalm of real pain. And the title which begins the text is important. Important. A song, a psalm of the sons of Korah to the choir master, according to Mahalath Leonoth, which is probably the tune or the directions for singing, a maskel of Heman the Ezraite.

O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry 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 Sheol, the grave.

[ 1 : 26 ] I'm counted among those who go down to the pit. I'm a man who has no strength. Like one set loose among the dead. Like the slain that lie in the grave.

Like those whom you remember no more, for they're cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the pit. In the regions dark and deep.

Your wrath lies heavy upon me. And you overwhelm me with all your waves. You have caused my companions to shun me.

You have made me a horror to them. I'm shut in so that I cannot escape. My eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O Lord.

I spread out my hands to you. Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Is your steadfast covenant love declared in the grave?

[ 2 : 30 ] Or your faithfulness in Abaddon, the place of destruction? Are your wonders known in the darkness? Or your saving righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

But I, O Lord, cry to you. In the morning, my prayer comes before you. O Lord, why? Do you go on casting my soul away?

Why do you keep hiding your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors. I'm helpless.

Your wrath has swept over me. Your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long.

They close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me. My only companions have become darkness.

[ 3 : 36 ] Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word. Amen. Well, perhaps you'd turn with me to Psalm 88, a psalm of pain.

And my title this morning is taken from the hymn that we'll sing at the close of the service. When we, in darkness, walk. I want to take a text this morning which perhaps sums up in a single verse the prayer of this bleakest of the psalms.

It's from Job chapter 30 and verse 26. Just listen. When I hoped for good, evil came. And when I waited for light, darkness came.

Last Sunday morning we were rejoicing in Dick Lucas' message from 1 Kings 18 about the God who answers prayer. And of course that makes us want to sing for joy.

But what about when it seems that our prayers receive no answer? Or worse, when the answer from God himself seems to be not good but evil, not light but darkness.

[ 5 : 07 ] What songs do we want to sing then? If we can bear at the thought of singing at all. This week I was at the funeral of a friend, just a few years older than myself, a strong Christian believer, a long-standing leader in his church.

But recently he'd been suffering a terrible period of very severe depression, requiring him to be hospitalized. And while in a hospital just over a week ago, he took his own life.

He had a wife and a son and a daughter due to be married in six weeks' time. And it was a heartbreaking day. What songs could my friend sing in the tortured darkness of the misery that led him, in the end, in the confused agony of his condition, to take his own life?

And what now will his grieving family sing? To express the heartbreak and the trauma that looks into the future with nothing but bleak and barren bereavement.

Just a few weeks ago, likewise, one of my closest friends in ministry called me to say that one of his oldest Christian friends, a man who had mentored him in the faith since his teens, that he too had been found having hung himself.

[ 6 : 36 ] He also had descended into a darkness of desolation, and his death also left many, many others groping in anguish, sorrow, and grief, my friend included.

What songs can a Christian believer sing when their own experience seems to be not good but evil, not light but darkness?

When tragedy strikes and strikes again, perhaps in a sudden grief or sickness or perhaps relentlessly in sorrow or loss of some other kind, what do miserable Christians sing?

That was the title of an article by Carl Truman in a theological journal some years ago, commenting on the fact that the Psalms are so rarely sung in contemporary evangelical churches.

He suggested that the reason was just because so many Psalms are taken up with lamentation, with feeling sad and unhappy and tormented and broken.

[ 7 : 48 ] But we, he says, live in a world that wants to hide away from these things, and so in the church we do the same. And so he says, a diet of unremittingly jolly hymns creates an unrealistic horizon of expectation, which sees the normative Christian life as one long triumphalist street party.

But you see, not only is that quite wrong theologically, it's both disastrous and cruel pastorally. Because the truth is that we do live in a world of broken people.

We live in a world where tragedy and sorrow are real and are present, sometimes in an unremitting way. And to deny that, and to force people to pretend, to hide away their sorrows, to keep it cloaked in a mantle of superficial piety, that's not only to sin against the truth of God, but that is to sin against the child of God, who is suffering so bitterly in that kind of darkness.

So what do we sing and pray when we in darkness walk, nor feel the heavenly flame? Well, as Truman rightly says, in the Psalms, God has given the church a language which allows it to express even the deepest agonies of the human soul in the context of worship.

And Psalm 88 is one such psalm. Derek Kidner says, there is no sadder prayer in the Psalter. And surely that is so. Unlike Psalm 40, which Don Carson preached us so helpfully last Wednesday, which began, remember, in the miry pit and ended with the God of deliverance, Psalm 88 begins with the God of my salvation, but it ends in utter darkness.

[ 9 : 51 ] There's no light. There's no dawn to lift the gloom. There's only unrelenting despair in this prayer. And yet here it is in the Psalter.

And notice the title. It is a song to be sung. It's written to the choir master. And there's instructions about probably the tune and how to sing it. So it's not a prayer to be hidden away in embarrassment.

It's a prayer that is needed by the church of God. And it comes from the pen of a very well-known man, Heman the Ezraite, one of the Korahites, one of the pioneers and leaders of song that David set up in Israel.

1 Kings 4, verse 31, tells us that this man was renowned for wisdom. Only Solomon in all the land was wiser. And 1 Chronicles 6 tells us that he, among others, were put in charge of all the song for the temple of the Lord.

The Korahites, they were responsible for some of the richest psalms in the Psalter, some of the most joyful praise. Let's look back to Psalm 84 and 85, and you'll see that.

[ 11 : 07 ] But here in this psalm, from this man of great gifts and great spiritual wisdom, is a psalm full of deep and dreadful darkness.

And it's not an accident that it's here in our Bibles. It's a provision of the compassion and the mercy of our God, who is a God who knows our frame, who remembers that we're dust, and who bears us gently in his hands in all our darkness, in all our sorrows and despair.

And it is for just such times that he has given us this psalm of deeply painful prayer, which has a deeply pastoral purpose.

I want to consider the psalm under those two main headings. First, let's consider the psalmist's deeply painful prayer. We have in the psalm the honest response of a wise and a mature believer to his deeply painful darkness.

You can see it's structured around three heartfelt cries to the Lord in verse 1 and verse 9 and verse 13. Verse 1, O Lord God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you.

[ 12 : 26 ] Verse 9, Every day I call upon you, O Lord. And verse 13, But I, O Lord, I cry to you. Alec Mateer in his commentary summarizes the substance of these three cries as describing life without light, death without hope, and question without answer.

And that does seem to be very close to the heart of it. Let's look at the first cry. The first outpouring of deeply painful prayer in verses 1 to 9 is a cry of deep agony.

A cry of deep agony. Agony that expresses the deep darkness of a life that is totally devoid of light. He's living, but it is a living death.

Verse 6 encapsulated. You've put me in the depths of the pit into regions dark and deep. That language of the deep is very significant in the Bible, beyond even the obvious allusions of darkness that we instinctively understand.

The opening lines of the Bible in Genesis 1 speak of chaos and void when darkness was over the face of the deep. It's the place of primeval terror before God said, Let there be light.

[ 13 : 51 ] It's the place of utter darkness. It's the place devoid of any life at all. It was the fountains, remember, of the great deep that were opened once again in Noah's day to engulf all of life, to bring darkness and death again over the whole earth.

And it is this overwhelming darkness that has engulfed the psalmist. He's still alive. There's still day and night, verse 1, during which his relentless cries are ringing out.

And yet his day has been turned into night. He lives constantly in deep darkness. And then all the usual comforts of the night, the sleep, the refreshment that it brings, they've leached away into sleepless agonies.

He can't sleep. He tosses and turns. He's crying out to God. But his words are unheard and unheeded. It's as if he's not there.

It's as if he's living in another world, a world of the dead, where no one hears him. Physically, verse 3, he fears he is near death.

[ 15 : 01 ] My life draws near to Sheol, the place of the dead. That may be so. Many scholars think that he is describing leprosy and that verse 5 describes life in a leper colony, a grim place where the living dead lived apart, shunned and stigmatized.

Well, that's possible, I suppose. But we must remember that this is poetry. We mustn't take these things too woodenly. And verse 3 is not just speaking about physical life ebbing away.

My soul, he says, is full of troubles. That Hebrew word means the whole of him. My whole being to the core is deeply troubled. It's a deep melancholy that he is expressing.

And someone can feel that even if they are not physically ill or suffering from some terminal affliction. They can feel as if all their strength is being sapped.

Verse 4, they can feel cut off from normal life. They can feel like theirs is truly a living death in an agony of darkness. Now, we know depressive illness seems to be such a scourge, doesn't it, in our modern world.

[ 16 : 20 ] And anyone who has any experience of that will well recognize the psalmist's words here. But so via grief, too, especially if the bereavement has been particularly tragic, that, too, can plunge people into a dark and deep region so that it feels just like that, a living death.

People use exactly that language, don't they? A part of me died, they say, when my beloved wife died. A part of us died when we lost our child.

I'm sure you've heard people say things like that. Maybe you've said that sort of thing yourself. Or the stress that sometimes becomes so great as to feel simply overwhelming so that you feel you're drowning.

That's the language, isn't it, of verse 7? Overwhelmed by the waves. So many things can make us feel this way, and it is exactly the language we use, isn't it?

Things are getting on top of me. I feel overwhelmed. I can't keep my head above water. I'm drowning. I mean, the depths. Verse 6.

[ 17 : 41 ] A dark pit of chaos that I can't escape. Verse 7. You overwhelm me with your waves. It's a living death.

All the normal joys of life are gone. Even natural appetites for food and for sleep are killed dead. And the psalmist gives voice to the dreadful sense of isolation that these feelings bring in verse 8.

Shunned by his friends. Shut in upon himself. A desolating loneliness. A sense of total rejection by everyone. Now, that isolation can be real, of course.

People are generally not good, are they, at knowing how to relate to somebody who's suffering great pain like that, somebody who's suffering a grave depression or grief or loss. People tend to back off.

We don't know what to say. And there can be a real isolation. But often it is just imagined. It's part of the distorted view of reality that we have in that condition.

[ 18 : 50 ] Sometimes an experience of pain or loss like that causes past hurts that are long buried in our lives to rise up to the surface. Past rejections.

And we project that onto present relationships. All of those feelings. You believe yourself to be rejected and scorned and looked down on by everyone.

And these experiences, for anyone, of course, can bring an overwhelming sense of darkness. A darkness into their life that really feels like the light of life has been totally snuffed out.

As though you'll never escape from the depths of a deep, dark pit. And that is what this deeply respected, mature, wise believer called Heman.

This is what he felt. And because he was a man of faith, he felt it even more keenly and with even greater agony.

[ 19 : 56 ] Look at verse 7. There's a sense, isn't there, of something even more terrible than his present earthly darkness. There's a terrifying horror of what you might call a heavenly darkness.

Your wrath lies heavily upon me, he says. And it's his knowledge of that eternal dimension that brings the deepest agony of all. And that's what he articulates in his second cry in verses 9 to 12.

It's a cry of dreadful anxiety. Anxiety. Anxiety. That expresses the dread darkness of death under God's wrath.

He is living with the fear of looming damnation. Verse 11. Is your steadfast covenant love declared in the grave? Verse 12.

Is your saving righteousness found in the land of forgetfulness? See, his fear is of death looming with no assurance of eternity. No assurance of an ongoing relationship with the Lord.

[ 21 : 01 ] No salvation from the God of his salvation. His fear in death is God's wrath still heavy upon him.

Therefore, it will soon be beyond the place of salvation. Beyond his righteousness. Beyond his covenant love and faithfulness. Beyond his saving wonders.

I don't misunderstand. He is not here articulating the general ignorance of Old Testament believers who supposedly knew nothing about life beyond the grave.

He's not assuming that hope is only for this life and that death just means the end of everything. His point here is precisely the reverse of that.

His point is that it is appointed for man to die once and then comes judgment. And it is that judgment that he fears because he thinks he is still under God's wrath.

[ 22 : 03 ] The psalmist and all the Old Testament saints, they knew that fine will. Psalm 1, the first psalm in the Psalter, opens speaking about the wicked who will not stand in the ultimate judgment, whereas the righteous will.

Psalm 49, one of the Korahite Psalms, no doubt written by this same man, along with many others, is absolutely clear. It's worth just turning it up so that we are clear on this point.

Just look at Psalm 49 for a moment. Psalm 49, verse 14. The psalmist describes plainly the judgment of the godless and the contrast for those who do trust in God.

Like sheep, they, that is the godless, are appointed for shale. Death shall be their shepherd and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in shale with no place to dwell.

But God will ransom my soul from the power of shale, for he will receive me. The godly will be ransomed from the power of the grave.

[ 23 : 12 ] They will receive God's righteousness. They will be received into God's presence forever. Many, many other psalms likewise proclaim that glorious truth. But here, this man's great anxiety is this will not be so for him.

He fears, verse 5, that he is abandoned by God. That he'll be remembered no more. He feels submerged, verse 7, under God's wrath, under God's anger.

It's not death that he fears. It's damnation. You see, for any believer, that is a far, far worse darkness than the fear of natural death.

He feels like his physical life may be, drawing to a close. Verse 3, my life draws near to shale. But his soul, his whole being, he says, is deeply troubled because of this great dread.

He can't face death with a steady eye. He can't face death with peace because of this great darkness. He believes he's lost.

[ 24 : 27 ] He believes his sin is upon him still, that he will be damned. And his hope is quenched in that darkness. It's too late for me. That's what he thinks.

Verse 12, are your saving wonders known in the darkness? And friends, that is, very often, the great fear of the Christian believer who is overcome by the darkness of depressive illness.

And it is the great dread anxiety that tortures their soul day and night. It's the nature, you know, of mental illness that the phenomenology of the symptoms, especially in psychosis, that it reflects the beliefs that are closest to a person's heart and soul.

And for believers, of course, these are the things of God. And so often, a Christian who is suffering this way will be overwhelmed with the sense that they've committed the unpardonable sin, that they're beyond hope of grace.

And so often, they're tormented by terrible thoughts about their sin, about the devil, about hell. Sometimes it can make Christians believe that their only problem is a spiritual thing in nature, when, in fact, they really do need the help of expert doctors as well as the support of God's people.

[ 25 : 54 ] Friends, God, in his mercy, has given his people access to psychiatry and to psychology as well as access to prayer. And we should be thankful for that and praise God in his mercy.

Because it's not just those who are ill, is it, who can suffer these great anxieties about eternity. Lack of assurance has been a problem for many, many, many Christians all down the years.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, our standard of doctrine, acknowledges that. Although it asserts very, very strongly against the Roman Catholic dogma of the day, it asserts very strongly that those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus may certainly be assured of his grace.

That we can have an infallible assurance of faith, as it calls it. Nevertheless, it does recognize that even true believers may have their assurance shaken and diminished in various ways.

Perhaps, understandably, because of some sin or some great temptation. But also, sometimes inexplicably, I quote, God withdrawing the light of his countenance and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness.

[ 27 : 17 ] And we know that that happens. That sincere believers can feel the darkness of that dreadful anxiety. Am I really forgiven? Can I be sure?

Perhaps I'm not really a real Christian. Maybe that is why God doesn't answer my prayers. I'd be surprised if many of us in this room hadn't thought that at some time.

And if other foolish Christians or foolish and wicked teachers peddle a theology that reinforces that belief, that if God doesn't answer prayer, then the problem is with you and is with your faith, then that can and will sometimes lead to real despair.

Well, verses 13 to the end certainly express despair, don't they? This third cry is a cry of despairing abandonment.

It expresses the despairing darkness of a God who is hidden. The psalmist is living a life of lonely desertion. Verse 14, O Lord, why do you go on casting my soul away?

[ 28 : 28 ] Why do you go on hiding your face from me? It's a present continuous. There's real desolation of despair in that cry. He's crying out for explanation.

Why? Why won't you answer? Why won't you even explain why you're angry with me? Why have you abandoned me? There are few things in life that are so desolating as having every attempt at communication you make with someone you love met with absolute silence.

Every call you make hung up on. Every text, every email you send unanswered. Every time you look at the person, their eyes turn away. That is a desolating thing. How much more when it seems to be so with the God of our salvation.

And he is silent and distant and absent. And yet it's a dark paradox here, isn't it?

God is absent, it seems. Verse 14, he hides himself. He's cast him away. And yet he's not absent because it's he, God, who is afflicting him.

[ 29 : 42 ] Verse 15, it's your terrors. It's your wrath. Your dreadful assaults. Verse 16, that are upon me. He's absent for any answers, but he is very present for dreadful affliction.

He's absent to give any comfort, but he is present to send calamity on his life. Your dreadful assaults destroy me. The only response to his despairing prayer, as Derek Kidner says, is a rain of blows as unrelenting as his cries.

Verse 17, they surround me and they surround me like a flood all day long. They close in on me altogether. God has abandoned him, it seems, and so has the whole world.

Verse 18, even his nearest and dearest is shunned by his closest friends and his only companion now is the darkness. And that is the psalm's last word.

There's no turning point. There's no wonderful testimony here to prayers heard and answered. There's no return to songs of joy. There's only darkness, deep and dreadful and despairing darkness.

[ 30 : 59 ] This believer, a man committed to God and committed to persevering prayer, well, as Alec Mateer says, he finds no remedial answers to suffering.

The wrath of God, the alienation of friends, and inescapable, debilitating grief fills the whole of life. The upward look sees only wrath.

The inward look, terror. The outward look, present threats and absent friends. And the forward look, unrelieved darkness. Maybe you've felt like that at some time in your life, perhaps recently.

Maybe even now. As you've watched a loved one die slowly and painfully from some dreadful, wasting disease. Felt utterly helpless.

Or as you've come to terms with a sudden tragedy, perhaps the death of a spouse, the death of a child. Or as you've experienced your whole life apparently coming apart through the loss of your job, through the collapse of your business.

[ 32 : 14 ] Or your family, perhaps, battered and torn apart through the influence of drugs or alcohol. Or through the bitter, bitter darkness of a marriage breakup.

Or through the aching longing for the marriage partner for you that never came. Or the children that were never conceived.

Or a thousand other sorrows. Where every cry and every prayer was met with this divine silence.

Why? Why? Why? Your cry goes up constantly and the only answer, darkness. When I hoped for good, evil came.

When I waited for light, darkness. that is this psalmist's deeply painful prayer.

[ 33 : 22 ] Why is it here, though, in our Bibles, such a sad and dark utterance? Well, friends, because it is written for us, for you and for me, to help us in our times of darkness.

darkness. And indeed, its very presence in the Psalter is evidence that God is not absent in our darkness, but that he's present. That he is present with words of mercy and grace to minister to us even in the deepest, darkest pit.

I want you to see the psalm's deeply pastoral purpose. this psalm, like all the scriptures, brings us real help in trouble, real succor in our pain, real assurance, even in our deepest darkness, because it speaks with real honesty about our experience about this world and about God himself.

You see, there is no assurance, none at all, in self-deception and pretense. happy songs. But there is assurance, there is great assurance in reality.

So let's see as we draw to a close three real things that this psalm gives testimony. First, it tells us that there are real sorrows.

[ 34 : 50 ] Real sorrows for a believer in this cursed world. Suffering, even utterly dark and dreadful despair is real, even for the most godly and wise and mature believers there can be.

And when these things come upon Christians, it doesn't mean that they have just handled things badly or made mistakes or been foolish. Heman was full of wisdom, none other than Solomon, wiser than he, and yet he knew this great darkness.

And when sorrows are real and dark, denial of that reality, friends, is just utterly destructive. Trying to sing happy songs and convince yourself all is well is just no answer.

Even secular science acknowledges that. You probably read of a study done recently that showed that when you're feeling bad, sad songs to listen to are better for here than happy songs. Even the world knows that.

Christians do face sorrows, real sorrows. And they suffer from stresses and anxieties and depression and real darkness. And very often, friends, our darkness is worse because of our sense of spiritual failure that is added to that.

[ 36 : 11 ] That as Christians, we shouldn't somehow face these things. And that just adds to our despair. And so we need the dark reality of this psalm.

we need the witness of Heman's deeply painful prayer that tells us that yes, believers, even wise, godly, mature believers, even they can face deep and dreadful and despairing darkness.

Just as we need the book of Ecclesiastes to remind us that we live even as believers with a mortality that we cannot control, with mysteries that we cannot comprehend in this cursed world under the sun.

The Bible, friends, is real about sorrow and sufferings in our lives. What a blessed relief and a comfort that is to us.

Health will fail and does fail. Death will come to greatest and least alike. Friends, alas, sometimes will abandon us.

[ 37 : 15 ] Other calamities will happen. In this world, said the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have tribulation. Spirit-filled believers will be marked by groaning until the very end, says Paul, in that great chapter on the spirit-filled life, Romans 8.



And that doesn't mean that you're lost. It doesn't mean that God has abandoned you. Even if it seems to be so, nor does it mean that a loved one of yours is lost or abandoned by God.

Even if they're engulfed in deep darkness and believe that to be so, so strongly that in their confusion and their darkness, they even try to end it themselves. Even if they succeed, there are real sorrows darkness.

And there will be darknesses in the Christian life. And that's why God has given us this prayer and others, secondly, as a real song for believers in times of darkness.

This psalm is for using. That's why it's here. Carl Trueman rightly says that in psalms like this, God himself has given us the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax necessary to lay open your heart before God in lamentation.

[ 38 : 39 ] It's here to help us to know how to cope and what to say in our own times of suffering and grief and heartbreak. It's to help us to help others know how to deal with their times of grief and heartbreak too.

It teaches us that it's okay to cry to God to be honest with him. It's okay to lament, to weep, to express darkness and despair.

It's not wrong not to want to be a jolly Christian when you're sad. It's not wrong. It's right. That kind of pretense is so, so destructive of real faith.

But real prayer like this, expressing deep pain and sorrows openly with words like this, that is what guards real faith. That's what does bring reassurance even in the deepest darkness.

Lord, why don't you hear me? Listen to me, please. Lord, why are you doing this? Why are you assaulting me? You see, even to pray that, it's an acknowledgement, isn't it, that you know it's not just mindless chance and misfortune that's happening to you.

[ 39 : 58 ] it's to say that God is real, that God is sovereign, that things are not out with his control, that even if we can't fathom it, he is the God who can do something about it.

That's our whole problem. Even in our darkest times, deep down in our hearts, we know God is sovereign. That's why we're in agony.

That's why we get angry with God. That's why we accuse God. Why don't you listen? Why don't you change things? And it's an assurance, isn't there, paradoxically, even in our sense of abandonment, even in our sense of God's absence, because we wouldn't keep on praying like that, remonstrating with God, unless God had planted real persevering faith in our hearts.

In the very agony of our sense of forsakenness is a very real assurance of the certainty of our unforsakenness. We're still naming him as Lord, the Lord, the covenant God, God of my salvation.

And so you see, when we are in the midst of real sorrows, if we will let the psalmist's words and prayers lead us in this real song that reaches out in trust even in the deepest darkness, we will find that he is leading us inexorably to a real savior, to a God whose name really is salvation.

[ 41 : 28 ] Oh Lord, God of my salvation, he cries. Oh Lord, God, my Yeshua. This is what the Hebrew says here. Surely that brings it home to us so wonderfully and so clearly.

Oh God, my Yeshua. Or as we would say, my Jesus. See, God has given us the very words to pray in our darkness because he knows these words.

Not only did his spirit inspire the psalmist, but in another sense, in a deeper sense, in a more profound sense, these are his words, the words of the God who became our savior ultimately in the person of his son, the Lord Jesus.

In the days of his flesh, says Hebrews 5, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard.

But he was answered only with darkness, deep, dread, despairing darkness in the garden of Gethsemane when he cried in deep agony, let this cup pass from me.

[ 42 : 46 ] And cried again in dread anxiety, if it cannot pass, thy will be done as he contemplated the cup of the fury and the wrath of God upon him.

And above all, on the cross, when he cried out in the words of Psalm 22, but words that echo so very closely, these very words here in verse 14 of our psalm, why?

have you forsaken me? Surely a cry of despairing abandonment as the insults showered over him, as the terrors of hell engulfed him, as the wrath of God swept over him to destroy him, and the deep and the dreadful darkness of despair closed in on him altogether.

our God knows this prayer. He knows these agonized cries.

In the Lord, who is our salvation, our Yeshua, our Jesus, we don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses or our darkneses, but who in every respect has been tested as we are, and much, much more, an infinity of suffering, more deep and more terrible.

[ 44 : 19 ] And so, my dear Christian brothers and sisters, whatever your darkneses or mine, and they may be real and deep and terrible, as you cry out to God in agony and in anxiety, perhaps with a sense of great abandonment, and when you wait for light and only darkness seems to come, let that darkness lead you to the darkness of Calvary and to the Jesus, the God of our salvation who won your salvation through his own abandonment there on the cross for you.

And let the darkness itself proclaim to your troubled soul the light and the assurance that his glorious gospel brings.

that through his infinite suffering in darkness, you have a promise of infinite light. Whoever follows me, says the Lord Jesus, will not walk in darkness forever, but will have the light of life.

Your darkness cannot be endless and infinite. darkness just because his was darkness that he endured for you and a need for all who love Jesus, the name of our salvation.

salvation. And so, when we in darkness walk nor feel the heavenly flame, then is the time to trust our God and rest upon his name.

[ 46 : 17 ] Let's pray. O Lord, God of our salvation, how we thank you for the darkness, the deep, dreadful, despairing darkness of Calvary, where in all our darkneses, however deep, however dread, however despairing they may feel to us, are assured of an end.

But when we pray, seeking light, ultimately, light shall come and life. So hear us, O God, and lead us always, we pray, to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we ask it in his name. Amen.