

# What Do Miserable Christians Sing?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, we're going to turn now to God's words this morning. We're taking a little break from our studies in Matthew. We'll be returning down the line. We're looking this morning at Psalm 88.

And later in the month, we'll be beginning a series in Ecclesiastes on Sunday mornings. But this morning, we're going to be looking at Psalm 88. So please do turn in your Bibles and we'll read this Psalm this morning.

Psalm 88. A psalm of the sons of Korah to the choir master.

According to Mahalath Leonoth, a maschal of Haman 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 shale.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] I am counted among those who go down to the pit. I am 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 are 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 am 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 love declared in the grave?

[ 2 : 1 1 ] Or your faithfulness in Abaddon? Are your wonders known in the darkness? Or your 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 cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors.

I am 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 companions have become darkness. Amen.

And may the Lord bless his words to us this morning. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the psalm that we read together, Psalm 88.

[ 3 : 2 5 ] And my title this morning is, What do miserable Christians sing? Well, we're full of joy. Joy of answered prayers and so on.

It's easy to sing, isn't it? And, of course, it's good to do so. But what about when our prayers are not answered? Or worse, when, what about when it's for us, as it was for Job, as he says in chapter 30, when he cried, I hoped for good, but evil came.

And when I waited for light, darkness came. What are we saying then? I'll never forget the funeral of a friend of mine, about my age, leader in his church.

But he'd gone through a period of very severe depression. And while he was being treated in hospital, he took his own life. And he had a wife and a son.

And he had a daughter who was just weeks away from getting married. And it was absolutely heartbreaking. What song could he sing in that tortured darkness, in his misery, that led in the end to such tragedy?

[ 4 : 38 ] What song could his heartbroken family sing that would express their trauma, their grief, the agony of that kind of terrible bereavement? What songs can Christian believers sing when the whole experience of life seems to be not good, but evil, not light, but darkness?

When tragedy strikes, whether it's grief like that, or whether it's sickness, or whether it's some other sorrow, some loss, some great trauma in life, like terrified believers, no doubt, in Afghanistan today.

What do miserable Christians like that sing? The theologian Carl Truman wrote a piece about that, with that title, in fact, some years ago.

He was commenting on how little the Psalms are sung today in contemporary churches. And he suggested that it's because so many Psalms are actually laments, about feeling sad and unhappy and tormented and broken.

But he said, we live in a culture that wants to hide away from all of that. And so, of course, the church tends to just do the same thing. And so he said this, a diet of unremittingly jolly hymns creates an unrealistic horizon of expectation, which sees the normative Christian life as one triumphalistic street party.

[ 6 : 07 ] But not only is that quite wrong theologically, it's both cruel and, in fact, it's disastrous pastorally, because the truth is that we live in a world of broken people.

Where tragedy, where sorrow are real, aren't they? They're present, sometimes in an overwhelming way. And if we deny that, by forcing people to pretend, by forcing them to hide away their sorrows, keep it cloaked in a mantle of superficial, smiling piety, then that's not just the sin against the truth of God.

That's the sin, grievously, isn't it, against the child of God who is suffering so bitterly in that darkness. So what do we sing? What do we pray when we in darkness walk and do not feel the heavenly flame?

Well, as Carl Truman rightly says, in the Psalms, God has given the church a language which allows us to express even the deepest agonies of the human soul in the context of worship.

And Psalm 88 is one such psalm. In fact, Derek Kidna says, there is no sadder prayer in the whole Bible. It begins, look at verse 1, crying out, God of my salvation.

[ 7 : 21 ] But look how it ends, the last verse, utter darkness, no light, no dawn, just unremitting despair. And yet here it is in our Bibles, in this altar.

And notice the title at the top there. It's a song that's got to be sung. It's written to the choir master. There's details about the tune and about how to sing it. So this isn't something to be hidden away as an embarrassment.

This is something needed by the church of God. And if you look, it comes from the pen of a very well-known writer, this man, Hennon, the Ezraite. He was one of the sons of Korah, one of the pioneering song leaders of Israel.

David set them up. You can read about him in 1 Kings chapter 4. He was renowned for his wisdom. In fact, only Solomon was said to be wiser than this man. He was put in charge with all these others of the songs for the temple of the Lord.

And the sons of Korah that he was part of, they were responsible for many of the psalms, some of the brightest and richest and most joyful psalms. You can just look back to number 84 and 85 for examples of that.

[ 8 : 27 ] But here is a psalm from this man of great gifts, great wisdom. Here is a psalm that is just full of dread darkness.

And it is not an accident that it is here in our Bibles. It is a provision from the compassion and the mercy of our God, the God who knows our frame, who remembers that we are dust, and who bears gently in his hands all our darknesses and all our sorrows and all our despairs.

And so for just such times as this, he has given us this psalm as a deeply painful prayer, but which has a deeply pastoral purpose.

So I want us to think about it under these two headings. First of all, let's consider the psalmist's deeply painful prayer. The honest response of a wise, mature believer to deeply painful darkness.

It's structured around three heartfelt cries. Verse 1, O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you. Verse 9, Every day I call upon you, O Lord.

[ 9 : 43 ] Verse 13, But O Lord, I cry out to you. Alec Mateer in his commentary summarizes these three cries as describing life without light, death without hope, and questions without answers.

I think that gets very close to the heart of it. The first outpouring is this deeply painful cry in verses 1 to 9, and it's a cry of deep agony.

Agony that expresses the deep darkness of a life that is just devoid of light. He's living, but it's a living death. Verse 6 encapsulates it.

You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions of the dark and deep. Now that language of the deep is actually very significant in the Bible, much more than just the obvious illusions of darkness that we clearly understand.

Think back to the opening of the Bible in the book of Genesis. It tells us that there was chaos and void, that darkness was over the face of the deep.

[ 10 : 52 ] And the dark deep is the place of primeval terror before God said, let there be light. It is the place of utter darkness. It's the place that is devoid of all life.

Do you remember later on in Genesis, it was the fountains of the great deep that were opened again in Noah's day to engulf all life, to bring darkness and death to the earth once again. And it's this overwhelming darkness that has engulfed the psalmist.

He's still alive, first one, there's still day and night during which his relentless cries ring out. And yet day has been turned into dark night. And he's living constantly in deep darkness.

And the usual comforts of the night, sleep, rest, refreshment that it brings, they've leached away in sleepless agonies. He can't sleep but he's tossing, he's turning and he's crying out to God but his words are unheeded, they're unheard.

It's as if God's not there at all. And it's as if he's living in another world, he's living in the world of the dead. Physically, look at verse 3, he clearly feels near to death.

[ 12 : 08 ] My life draws near to Sheol, he says, to the place of the dead. And that may be so. Some scholars think that he might have leprosy and they think maybe verse 5 there you see describes life in a leper colony, a place where you are like the living dead, you are apart from all others and stigmatized.

I mean, that's possible I suppose but remember this is poetry, you mustn't press things too woodenly. And verse 3 is not just about his physical life ebbing away, is it?

My soul, he says, is full of trouble. That word in Hebrew means the whole of him. My whole being is deeply troubled, he's saying. It's a deep, deep melancholy that he's experiencing.

And someone can feel that, can't they? Even if they're not in physical illness or don't have a terminal affliction. They can feel like verse 4, all their strength being sapped out of them.

They can feel cut off from normal life. They can feel like they are in living death, that they're in an agony of deep darkness. Depressive illness seems to be such a scourge, doesn't it, in our modern world.

[ 13 : 24 ] And anybody who's got any experience of that, they will recognize the psalmist's words here, his language. But severe grief too.

Especially if the bereavement has been a particularly tragic one, that can plunge people into dark, into depths. So that it feels just like that, a living death.

And people use exactly that language, don't they? They say it, maybe you've said it, a part of me died, a part of me died. When my loved one died, my spouse, when we lost a child.

Well, the stress sometimes just becomes so great, doesn't it, that it does feel overwhelming. So you feel like you're drowning. And that's the language of verse seven. Overwhelmed by the waves.

And there's so many things, aren't there, that can make us feel that way. And it's exactly the language we use. Things are getting on top of me, we say. I feel overwhelmed. I can't keep my head above water.

[ 14 : 30 ] Well, verse six, I'm in the depths, a dark pit of chaos I can't escape. Verse seven, you're overwhelming me with your waves.

I'm underwater. A living death, the natural joys of life are gone. And even the natural appetites for food, for sleep, are killed dead.

And the psalmist, he's giving voice to that dreadful sense of isolation. that these feelings bring. Look at verse eight, shunned by friends, shut in upon himself, desperate loneliness, and a sense of rejection.

Now, that isolation when people are in that state, that isolation can be real because people are generally not very good at knowing how to relate to somebody who is suffering in great pain.

Whether it's depression or whether somebody is suffering from grief or loss, people find that very hard to know what to say, and so they back off. They don't know what to say, and people can become genuinely isolated.

[ 15 : 39 ] But often, of course, actually it is an imagined isolation. It's just part of the distorted view of reality that people have in that condition.

Or sometimes an experience of pain or fresh loss can bring all sorts of past hurts that have been buried for a long, long time. We're right up to the surface. Maybe past rejections or past abuse that's been long repressed.

And you project that onto your current relationships. All those feelings. And so you start to believe that you are scorned and rejected by other people, that everybody else is looking down on you, even though that's not so.

And those kind of experiences, whatever bring them, for anybody, they can bring an overwhelming sense of darkness into life. That really makes you feel like the light of life has just been absolutely snuffed out.

And you can never escape from that deep, dark pit. And this man, Hinnon, a gifted, a wise, a mature believer, he was experiencing exactly that.

[ 16 : 50 ] and because he was a man of faith, he felt it even more keenly and with even greater agony. Look at verse 7, you see there's a sense there, isn't there, of something even more terrible than his present earthly darkness.

There's the terrifying horror of heavenly darkness. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, he says. And it's his knowledge, you see, of that eternal dimension that is the deepest agony of all.

And that's what he articulates in his second cry from the second half of verse 9 to verse 12. It's a cry of dreadful anxiety. It's the anxiety that expresses the dread darkness of death under God's wrath.

You see, this man is living with a fear of looming damnation. Verse 11. Is your steadfast love, your covenant love, your saving love, is it declared in the grave?

Or verse 12. Your righteousness, your saving righteousness, is that in the land of forgetfulness? See, his fear is death looming upon him, but he has no assurance of eternity.

[ 18 : 03 ] No assurance of any ongoing relationship with the Lord. No salvation from the God of his salvation. His fear is death with God's wrath still hanging over him.

so that he should be then beyond the place of salvation, beyond God's righteousness, beyond his covenant love and faithfulness, beyond his saving wonders, you see.

Now, don't misunderstand. He's not articulating here some sort of ignorance that Old Testament believers are supposed to have, as though they knew nothing about life beyond the grave.

He's not assuming at all that he has hope in this life only. He's not thinking that death means the end of all things. No, his point actually is quite the reverse of that.

His point is that we're told in Hebrews chapter 9 that it's appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment. And he fears that judgment because he fears that he is still under the wrath of God.

[ 19 : 15 ] God. The psalmists and all the Old Testament saints, they knew that fine well. Psalm 1 that opens the whole book of Psalms, speaks openly, doesn't it, about the wicked who will not stand in that judgment and the righteous who will.

Psalm 49 is one of the psalms of the sons of Korah composed, no doubt, by this same man along with others. It's abundantly clear. Listen to this. He speaks of the wicked. Their form, he says, shall be consumed in Sheol with no place to dwell.

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol. He will receive me. You see, the godly, he knows, will be ransomed from the grave, received into the presence of God forever.

Many other psalms testify to that glorious truth, as does all of Scripture. But here, you see, his great anxiety is that this won't be so for him.

Because he fears that he's been abandoned by God. Verse 5, that he has been remembered no more. And he feels submerged under God's wrath, under God's anger.

[ 20 : 30 ] That's what he's saying. Verse 7, your wrath lies heavy on me. And so it's not death, physical death that he fears, it's damnation. And for any believer, that is a far, far worse darkness than any fear of physical death, isn't it?

He fears that his physical life is drawing to a close, my life draws near to Sheol, but his soul, his whole being, is deeply troubled because of that great dead.

He can't face death with a steady eye, with any peace, because of that dread darkness. He believes he's lost. He believes that his sin is still upon him.

He believes he's guilty. He believes he's damned. And his hope has just been quenched by that deep darkness and he fears that for him it's too late.

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

[ 21 : 46 ] And it's a terrible 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 very severe psychosis, that that tends to reflect the deepest beliefs of a person's heart and soul.

And so, of course, for a Christian believer, those deepest things are to do with the things of God and of salvation. And that's why very often when a Christian person is suffering in that way, they can be overwhelmed by a sense that they have committed the unpardonable sin.

And they're terrorized by that thought, they're terrorized by thoughts of judgment, of hell, of the devil, and so on. And sometimes that can make Christians believe that when they feel like that, their only problem is some kind of spiritual issue, when really, they also do need the help of doctors as well as of God's people.

And God, in his mercy, has given his people access to medicine, access to psychiatry, as well as to prayer, and we should be thankful for both of these things, and use both of these things, when necessary.

But of course, it's not just those who are physically ill or mentally ill who can suffer from these anxieties about eternity. Anxiety about a lack of assurance of salvation, that's been a problem for many, many Christians, and still is.

[ 23 : 23 ] Confession of Faith of our church, the Westminster Confession, acknowledges this. And although it asserts very, very strongly against the doctrine of the Roman church, that those who truly believe in Jesus Christ may surely, certainly be assured of that grace, that they may have, quote, an infallible assurance of faith.

That's so precious and so true. But nevertheless, it does also recognize that even true believers may have their assurance shaken and diminished in various ways.

It may be because of sin, it may be because of temptation, but sometimes it may be because God inexplicably, quotes, withdraws the light of his countenance and suffers even such as fear him to walk in darkness.

And we know that happens. We know that sincere believers can feel the darkness of that dreadful anxiety. Am I really forgiven? could I really be sure?

Because of what's happened, I begin to doubt whether really I'm a real Christian at all. And maybe that's why God is not answering my prayers. And you see, when you feel like that, if other foolish Christians or false teachers, if they peddle a theology that reinforces that belief, that if God doesn't answer prayer the way that you want to, the problem must be with you, it must be with your faith being inadequate, friends, that will lead you to real despair.

[ 25 : 07 ] Well, verses 13 to 18 certainly express despair, don't they? It's a cry of despairing abandonment. He's expressing the despairing darkness of a God who's hidden.

And the psalmist is living in a life of lonely desertion. verse 14, oh Lord, why do you go on, it's present continuous, why do you go on casting my soul away?

Why do you go on hiding your face from me? There's real desperation, despair in that cry, isn't there? He's crying out for an explanation.

It's that great question, why? Why? Why won't you even answer me to explain why you're angry with me, why you've abandoned me? There are few things so desolating in life as to find every attempt you make to communicate with somebody is just ignored, is just met with silence.

Your phone call's not returned, the text is ignored, you get no answer, unacknowledged. Or you go to speak to somebody and they turn their face away from you.

[ 26 : 19 ] There are few things more awful than that. Well, how much more when the one who is ignoring and turning his face away from us is the God of our salvation? Silent and distant and absent.

And yet it's a dark paradox here, isn't it? God is absent, he says, verse 14, you hide yourself, he's casting him away, and yet God is not absent because he says it's God who is afflicting him.

Verse 15, it's your terrors, it's your wrath. Verse 16, it's your dreadful assaults. So God is absent for any answers, but he's very present to afflict him.

He's absent to give any comfort, but he's present to send calamity. Your dreadful assaults destroy me. And the only response to his despairing prayer, as Derek Kidner puts it, is a rain of blows, unremitting as his cries.

Verse 17, they surround me like a flood all day long. They close in on me together. God has abandoned him, it seems.

[ 27 : 40 ] So has the whole world. Even his nearest and dearest, verse 18, my beloved and my friend, shun me. And his only companion left is the darkness itself.

And that's the psalm's last word, isn't it? There's no turning point in this psalm. There's no wonderful testament at the end to answer prayer after all. There's no return to the songs of joy.

There's just darkness. Deep and dreadful. Despairing darkness. And this believer, this is a man committed to God, committed to persevering prayer.

And as Alec Mateo says, he finds no remedial answers. The wrath of God, the alienation of friends, 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.

[ 28 : 54 ] Well, maybe, maybe you felt like that at some point in your life. Maybe recently.

Maybe even today. Perhaps as you watched the loved one die slowly, painfully, from a dreadful disease, you felt utterly helpless.

Perhaps you had to come to term with a sudden tragedy. Perhaps the death of a child, the death of a spouse, suddenly. Drastically. Or as your life just came apart, as you lost your job, or as your business collapsed perhaps over this past year.

Or you've watched your family, members of your family, being battered by the effects of drugs, or alcohol. Or been through the bitter, bitter darkness of a marriage breakup.

Or perhaps just through the aching, longing of a marriage partner that never came, or that children you longed for were never conceived. Or a thousand other sorrows where your prayers were just met, it seems, with divine silence.

[ 30 : 08 ] Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? You cry that out to the Lord, and the only answer is darkness.

When I hoped for good, evil came. When I waited for light, darkness. darkness. Well, that's the psalmist's deeply painful prayer, isn't it?

But why is it here in our Bible such a sad utterance, such a dark prayer? Well, like everything else in scripture, it's written for us.

And it's here to help us in our time of darkness. darkness. In fact, it's very presence in the Psalter is evidence that God is not absent in our darkness, but that he's present with words of mercy, with words of grace, with words to minister to us, even when we are in that deepest and darkest pit.

So I want you to see also the psalm's deeply pastoral purpose. This psalm, like all the scriptures, it brings us help in real trouble.

- [ 31 : 22 ] It brings us real succor in times of pain. It brings us real assurance, even in the deepest darkness, and that is because it speaks with real honesty about our experience and about this world and about God himself.

There's no assurance to be fine, friends, in pretense and self-deception, but there is assurance, there's great assurance in reality. So I want you to see three things that this psalm gives testimony.

First, it tells us, honestly, that there are real sorrows. Real sorrows, even for Christian believers, living in this cursed world.

Suffering and even really dark and dreadful despair is real, even for the most godly person, even for the most mature Christian. Christian. And when these things come upon Christian people, it does not mean that they've handled things badly, that they made mistakes, that they've been foolish, necessarily, although we can be all of these things, of course.

But Haman was a man full of wisdom. Only Solomon was wiser than him. And yet he knew this great darkness. And when sorrows are real, when they're dark, friends, a denial of that reality is utterly destructive.

- [ 32 : 53 ] Trying to sing happy Christian songs and convince yourself that everything is fine, that is no answer to the darkness. Christians do face sorrows, real sorrows, and they suffer from stresses, from anxiety, from depression, from real darkness.

And very often their darkness is made far worse by that sense of spiritual failure. But as Christians, oh, we shouldn't experience these things.

And that only adds to the weight of despair. And that's why we need the dark reality of a psalm like this. That's why we need the witness of Haman's deeply painful prayer that tells us, yes, believers, even godly, mature, wise believers, believers, yes, they can face deep, dark, despairing darkness.

The Bible is real about sorrow and sufferings in our lives. And actually, that is a blessed relief and a comfort all of its own.

Our health does fail and will fail at times. And death will come to the least and to the greatest alike, sometimes in a horrible way.

- [ 34 : 12 ] Friends will abandon us in this world. Calamities will happen and we will not escape them. In this world, said our Lord Jesus Christ, you will have tribulation.

Spirit-filled Christian believers will be groaning until the very end, says the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8, that chapter that is about the zenith of the spirit-filled life.

And that does not mean that you're lost. Does not mean that God has abandoned you. Even if those sorrows seem to be unrelenting.

And 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 say that they are. Even if they believe that to be so, so dark that they even want to end their own life and are thinking about that or even may succeed in that awful thing.

There are real sorrows and there will be real darkness in the Christian life. And that's why God has given us this prayer to pray.

- [ 35 : 26 ] Because secondly, it tells us that there is a real song for believers in these times of darkness. This song 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, the grammar, the syntax necessary to lay your heart before God in lamentation.



It's here to help us to know how to cope in our times of suffering and despair and heartbreak and to help others in theirs. It teaches us, doesn't it, that it's okay to cry out to God, to be honest with God.

It's okay to lament, to weep, to express that darkness and despair. It's not wrong not to want to be a jolly Christian singing jolly songs when the world is full of darkness and your life is full of darkness.

Actually, that kind of pretense is very destructive of faith. But real prayer, expressing deep pain, expressing sorrow openly, that is actually what guards faith and strengthens faith and does bring reassurance even in the midst of deep darkness.

When you cry out, Lord, why don't you hear me? Listen to me, please. Lord, why are you doing this? Why are you assaulting me? See, even when you pray that way, you're acknowledging, aren't you, that it's not just mindless chance and misfortune.

[ 37 : 08 ] Because you're praying to God, recognizing that he actually is God, he is sovereign. That these things are not out with his control. Even if we can't fathom it, we know that he is the one that we need to do something about it.

That's why we cry out to him. And even in our darkest times, we know that, don't we? We know that God is sovereign. That's our problem actually.

That's why we get so angry. That's why we're full of agony. That's why we accuse God and say, why don't you listen? Why don't you change things? Because we recognize he's there.

And there's a great assurance paradoxically, even in our sense of abandonment. Even in our sense of God's absence. Because we wouldn't go on praying like that, would we?

Remonstrating with God unless God had planted real believing faith in us by his spirit so that we will go on praying to him. In the very real agony of our sense of forsakenness is actually a very real assurance of the certainty of our unforsakenness.

[ 38 : 19 ] Because we're still naming him Lord. Yahweh, the covenant God, the God of my salvation. So you see, when we're in the midst of real sorrow, if we let the psalmist's words lead us in this real song that reaches out in trust and in faith, even amid deep darkness, then you see, we will find that he is leading us inexorably to the real Savior, to a God, verse 1, whose name is salvation.

Oh God, God of my salvation, he cries. In fact, oh Lord, my Yeshua is what the Hebrew says there, and surely that brings it home to us so clearly. Oh God, my Yeshua, my Joshua.

Or as we would name that name, my Jesus. Jesus. Yes, that was his name. See, God has given us the very words to pray in our darkness because he himself 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. These are the words of the God who became flesh to be our Savior in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

[ 39 : 58 ] And he was heard. But he was answered only with darkness, with deep dread, with despairing darkness.

In the garden of Gethsemane, when he cried out in deep agony, let this cup pass from me. And when he cried again in dread, anxiety, if it cannot pass, thy will be done.

As he contemplated the cup of God's wrath heavy upon him, him, the Father's only Son. And above all on the cross, when he cried out in the words of Psalm 22, words that echo so closely, the words here in verse 14.

Why? Why have you forsaken me? A cry of despairing abandonment. As insults showered over him.

As the terrors of hell engulfed him. As the wrath of God swept over him to destroy him. And as the deep dreadful darkness and despair closed in on him altogether.

[ 41 : 17 ] Our God knows this prayer from the inside. He knows those agonized cries. In the Lord who is our salvation, our Yeshua.

In him, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses or our darkness, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, says Hebrews 4 verse 15.

In an infinity of suffering, more deep, more terrible than anything we could imagine. So friends, whatever your darkness or mine, and they may be real, they may be deep, they may be terrible, as you cry out to God in anxiety, in agony, and with maybe a sense of abandonment totally, when you wait for light where only darkness seems to come.

Let that darkness lead you to that darkness of Calvary and to Jesus, Yeshua, the God of our salvation, who won your salvation through salvation through his real abandonment on the cross.

And let that darkness itself proclaim to you the assurance of his glorious gospel and all that it brings, that through his suffering of infinite darkness, we have a promise of infinite light.

[ 42 : 53 ] Whoever follows me, says Jesus, will not walk in darkness forever, but will have the light of life. Your darkness cannot be endless and infinite because his was for you.

The darkness he endured for you and for all who love Jesus Christ, who love the name of our salvation. So when we in darkness walk, nor feel the heavenly flame, then is the time to trust our God and rest upon his name.

His name. Let's pray. Our gracious God and Father, how we thank you for Jesus Christ, your Son, the name of our salvation, who knows intimately and infinitely the depth of darkness that we shall never have to know, that knows deeply and personally every darkness that we can face in this life, in this world.

And so we thank you that we have one who is able to help able to understand and ever present with promises of saving mercy.

So hear us, Lord, and out of our darkness, we pray, lead us to Calvary. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.