

Have you ever had the experience when you pray and expect God to answer straight away, but for His own divine reasons it hasn't happened. I sense in **Psalms 88** that Heman the Ezrahite is going through a similar experience in terms of answered prayer or at least getting answers to prayer at the right time. A few things to think about :

Firstly we see Heman's approach to God v1-2. Heman cries out to the God of his salvation for help. I think it is important that when we cry out to God we recognise He is our only source of help. A couple of important things about prayer (i) *the need to pray*. Often when we hit difficult times the last thing we want to do is pray. This is underlined with Heman's declaration that he had cried out to God day and night. Have you ever prayed like that because you are in a tough spot? Maybe there is a struggle going on in your marriage or one of your children has wandered off the track. Sometimes in our desperation and despondency we can get a bit upset with God because He doesn't respond on cue. (ii) *learn to pray persistently*. Now when we pray in that manner, part of what we are doing is learning to be submissive to God in our prayer. A classic example of this is when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane to His heavenly Father "*not my will but your will be done*." It is important that when we pray we come with a heart attitude that says not my will (as much as I want it) but your will God be done. It's important to keep our focus on God and to be submissive to His divine schedule and agenda, and when we are things don't seem as troublesome as we thought.

Secondly Heman spells out his troubles v3-9. It is important that when we are praying to God we are truly honest in sharing our concerns, and even how we are feeling. I love the way David again and again declares that his heart was failing him; that he was in deep trouble. As we pray about our troubles there are a number of things that are helpful within these verses. First of all we need to accept trials as from God. If you look at v7 it says "*your wrath lays heavy upon me and you have afflicted me with all of your waves*." Now Heman isn't suggesting that God has deliberately set out to hurt or offend him but really to bring about a desired result in his life. We need to accept trials as coming from God. Part of doing this is acknowledging that God is in full control of the situation. As I look around the world and see such chaos I could be thinking that God has lost the plot altogether but in fact the opposite is true. Everything is working towards a divine timetable that eventually will mean that Jesus will return and reign supreme. Another important principle here is that trials can reveal the glory of God in our lives. In Psalm 119v67

David says "*before I was afflicted I went astray but now I keep your word*" and

PRAISE the Lord for:

- Another journalist (Simeon Neo) who has joined the Challenge production team two days per week
- Another fruitful trip to USA for Carl. Many worthwhile connections made
- Those who continue to faithfully pray and give to the ministry of Challenge

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then in v71 *“it is good for me that I have been afflicted that I may learn your decrees.”* In times of trouble I learn most about God and His word.

Thirdly Heman’s argument in favour of God’s salvation v9-12. It is important for us that although we call upon the Lord day and night in agony as it were, we can know that the Lord gives us eternal life v10-12. Then the sufferings of this world seem to lose their significance against the back-drop of the eternal life God has given us.

Lastly, Heman re-states his problems v13-18. In trials and troubles we should never pretend happiness. Sometimes we hear people suggest that we should be going around with a smile on our face even when the wheels have come off in our lives so to speak. When we feel down or discouraged I think it is important we don’t try to pretend nothing is happening. We also need to talk through the issue honesty and frankly with God. Heman is not frightened to state how he is feeling in v14 *“Lord why do you cast off my soul, why do you hide your face from me”*. These are questions I am sure are asked in the depth of trial and difficulties. The reality – God has not cast us off. He hasn’t hidden His face from us – it is just our perception in what are difficult and perplexing times. Warren Wiersbe puts it; ‘trials can either make us better or bent, and how we view these things can determine what the outcome is’.

It is important we recognise that whilst things may look hopeless we should always realise we have hope in God. It’s important to realise that through times of struggle God is using this to strip us of things which are not helpful in our Christian walk. John 15v2

says *“The branches that bear fruit He prunes that they may bear more fruit”*. One of the pruning techniques God uses is trials, and whilst it is not a pleasant pruning method, it can be a most effective one to bring us back to Him. We need to keep our eyes on God and in doing so we can keep on hoping, waiting, praising and trusting despite the pain and the struggle. Isaiah 40v31 sums it up beautifully *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* The word ‘wait’ means to literally wait in faith, and as we do He renews our strength day by day.

I trust and pray you will know the reality of this Psalm in your own walk with the Lord.

{ CARL CARMODY
CEO CHALLENGE }

PRAYER needed for:

- The ongoing development and quality of work that is being done for the many different editions we produce (English and bilingual editions)
- Oneness of heart, mind and spirit with each of our partner organisations
- Our newly appointed South African Director, Cobus Beukes. Cobus joins his wife Ilse who has been working as our Promotion/ Development Officer since April 2023. Pray for wisdom as they continue to grow the Challenge ministry throughout Africa

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