

**May 23**

**Scriptures:** Read Psalms 86, 87 & 88

**Key Verse:** “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.” (Psalm 86:9)

### **Overview**

Psalm 86 is a prayer of the master psalmist, king David. It is an emotional expression of a godly soul who makes many requests to the Lord. Throughout the psalm, he asks that the Lord would hear, preserve, save, show mercy, teach, deliver, strengthen, and show him a sign. With every request, he gives a reason why he believes the Lord will answer Him, and voicing these reasons builds his faith. The first basis for his faith is because his pleas are based on personal necessity. He admits that he is needy and oppressed, and he knows that God defends and helps the helpless, for he has experienced God’s help in the past (86:13,17b).

Secondly, his pleas are based upon his faith relationship to God. The psalmist is set apart and consecrated to God (“holy” 86:2). He is the Lord’s child and His servant. He also trusts in God, has lifted up his soul to God, and walks in His truth. Because of David’s faith, he worships God by offering Him praise and thanksgiving with his whole heart and by giving Him glory.

The third reason the psalmist is confident that God will answer his cry is based upon God’s divine nature. David has a close relationship with the Lord, and therefore knows the Lord’s character. From the many references in this psalm to the writings of Moses, we know that David was familiar with the Law, and knowing God’s Word, along with prayer, is the best way to draw closer to Him. The psalmist is certain God will answer because He is good and “ready to forgive” (86:5), “full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (86:15; cf. Exodus 34:6). There is none other like Him. The gods of the heathen are merely imaginary. He alone is God who does great and wondrous things and has a redemptive purpose for the whole world (86:8-10; cf. Exodus. 15:11).

Psalm 87 is a remarkable little gem that is unique in the Psalter. It is an expansion on the thought of Psalm 86:9, which foresees the salvation of people from every nation. Psalm 87 may have had an historical background, such as the favour Israel received by other nations in Hezekiah’s day (2 Chronicles 32:23), but the main interpretation of this psalm is prophetic. The psalmist envisions Zion as the capital of the Kingdom of God, which cannot be explained geographically but rather spiritually (Hebrews 11:10; 12:22; 13:14; Revelation 21:10). It is the new Jerusalem that has been founded and built by the Lord; therefore, the Holy City is sanctified and her gates are loved by God (87:2; Isaiah 60:11). Glorious things are spoken of Zion, which could never be said of any earthly city, even though it be very beautiful (e.g. Isaiah 2:3; Psalm 46:4-5; 48:1-3).

Those from nations that were historical enemies of Israel, such as Egypt (“Rahab”), Babylon, Philistia, and Tyre will come to know the Lord and have their names written in the Lord’s register. There will also be those from distant places that make Zion their home, who are represented by Ethiopia/Cush (cf. Isaiah 18:7). All people, whether Jew or Gentile, who know the Lord Jesus will be equal citizens and receive the same privileges (Ephesians 2:18-19;

Colossians 3:11; Philippians 3:20). Their unity will be found in the Lord, and Zion will be the mother city for all who are born of God, having experienced the second birth from above through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:3-6; Galatians 3:8; 4:26; Rev. 7:9). In the City of God, all inhabitants will enjoy the spring, which is the source of joy and life (87:7).

Psalm 88 is a personal lament of a man named Heman, whose identification is uncertain but may have been one of David's chief musicians (1 Chronicles 15:17-19). This is yet another unique psalm. It is unlike the laments of David, in that it is one of deep despair without any expressions of hope or praise to God. The way Heman expresses his turmoil is very similar to the way David spoke when he called upon God in distress; therefore, Heman was likely familiar with the psalms of David. If he was indeed the levitical singer, he would have sung many of David's compositions.

Heman has been sorely afflicted since the time of his youth and believes it is the wrath of God upon him. He feels that if God does not intervene soon, he will die; therefore, his desperate cry reflects the extreme urgency of the situation. He prays that God would let him live, that he might continue to praise Him, but he has a very limited understanding of the afterlife. He may have been suffering from a contagious skin disease such as leprosy, which would make him unclean, and that would account for why his family and friends were kept far from him (88:8, 18), and this is the sad note upon which the psalm ends. Although words of faith and hope are not expressed, the fact that Heman cried out to God day and night is in itself evidence of faith, for he knew his only hope was in God. Therefore, he could cry out: "O Lord, God of my salvation..." (88:1).

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord, we know that one day soon every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that "You are Lord, but for many this confession will be too late. We pray that "Your Holy Spirit would empower us and give us wisdom to win souls for you.