

GOD'S DEPENDABILITY DESPITE DISAPPOINTMENTS

Psalm 89

Psalm 89:1-2

I will sing of the
LORD'S great LOVE forever,

with my mouth I will make your
faithfulness known through all generations.

I will declare that your
LOVE stands firm forever,
that you have established your
faithfulness in heaven itself.

Psalm 89:1-2



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

GOD'S DEPENDABILITY DESPITE DISAPPOINTMENTS: Psalm 89

The Outline of the Psalm

- 1A. THE PRAISE OF THE PSALMIST: 1-18
 - 1b. Praise for God's covenant with David: 1-4
 - 2b. Praise for the God's character: 5-18
- 2A. THE PROMISES OF GOD TO DAVID: 19-37
- 3A. THE PROBLEMS OF THE PSALMIST: 38-45
- 4A. THE PETITION OF THE PSALMIST: 46-51



The Occasion for the Psalm

The occasion of the psalm seems to have been the defeat and deposing of a king in the Davidic line, possibly Jehoiachin (2 Ki. 24:8-17). The disaster and disappointment caused the psalmist to question God's fidelity to His promise to David (2 Sam. 7:8-16). The comments of Allen P. Ross are very much to the point,

The psalmist is not without hope, however. He begins his lament with a hymn that praises God for his loyal love and faithfulness; he recalls the marvelous acts of God in the past; and most importantly, he restates the promises of God . . . the covenant that he swore to David, a covenant that promised an eternal dynasty. On the basis of all this, the psalmist pleads with God to intervene once again and fulfill the promises that he made to David, and therefore to the nation. The prayer is certainly the focus of the psalm; but it is an informed prayer and not a desperate cry out of darkness. Believers down through the ages have been in similar situations; and their prayers are most effective when they are based on the character of God and on his sure promises (*A Commentary on the Psalms*, II, 2013, 840).

The introductory verses stress the key words which occur throughout the psalm:

God's steadfast, loyal love - **חֶסֶד** (*chesed*) (transl. as *mercies* and *mercy*, *lovingkindness*, *lovingkindnesses*)

God's faithfulness - **אֱמוּנָה** (*'amuna*)

Both terms appears seven times:

Chesed: mercy/loving kindnesses Ps. 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49

'Amuna: Ps. 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49 (truth)

Psalm 89:1

I will sing of the *mercies* (CHESED) of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy *faithfulness* (AMUNA) to all generations.

תהלים Chapter 89

א משכיל, לאיתן האזרחי. 1 Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

ב חסדי יהוה, עולם אשירה; לדור ודור, אודיע
אמונתך בפי. 2 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; to all generations will I make known Thy faithfulness with my mouth.

These important divine attributes are placed in proximity. They helped the psalmist survive dismay, disappointment, indeed, disaster. As the believer focuses on the divine perfections he will be able to endure the trials of life, with confidence that God knows and cares, that this loyal love and faithfulness are a constant despite life's conflicts.

With the psalmist let us meditate on and magnify God's faithfulness. One recalls that the distraught prophet Jeremiah, just as the psalmist, was encouraged by God's faithfulness and mercy. May God's faithfulness be our confidence as well.

Jeremiah's Confidence: *Lamentations 3:21-23*

²¹ This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

²² It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

²³ They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

An Overview of God's Faithfulness in Psalm 89

1. Faithfulness endures for all generations, therefore **REJOICE**.

v. 1- I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy **faithfulness** to all generations.

2. Faithfulness is established in the highest heavens, therefore **REFLECT**.

v. 2 - For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy **faithfulness** shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3. Faithfulness is extolled by the angelic assembly, therefore **REVERE**.

v. 5 - And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy **faithfulness** also in the congregation of the saints.

4. Faithfulness envelops the supreme Savior, therefore **REST**.
v. 8 -LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy **faithfulness** round about thee?
5. Faithfulness is experienced by the selected sovereign, therefore **RESPOND**.
v. 24 - But my **faithfulness** and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
6. Faithfulness is extended to the sinning saint, therefore **REPENT**.
v. 33 - Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my **faithfulness** to fail.
7. Faithfulness engenders confidence in the suffering believer, therefore **REMEMBER**.
v. 49 – Where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest to David in thy **truth** {literally, **faithfulness**}.

His **faithfulness** and **loyal love** are manifested everywhere and to everyone.

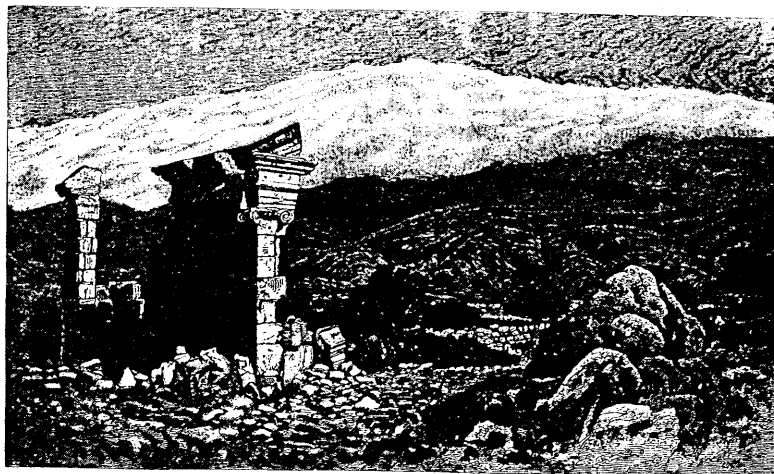
1. To the Saints v. 1
2. To the Stars v. 2
3. To the Spirit beings v. 5
4. To the Savior v. 8
5. To the Summits v. 12 (Mt. Hermon and Mt. Tabor)
5. To the Sovereign v. 24
6. To the Sea v. 25
7. To the Sinners v. 33

It is of the Lord's *mercies*
that we are not consumed,
because his *compassions* fail not.
They are new every *morning*:
Great is thy faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:22–23

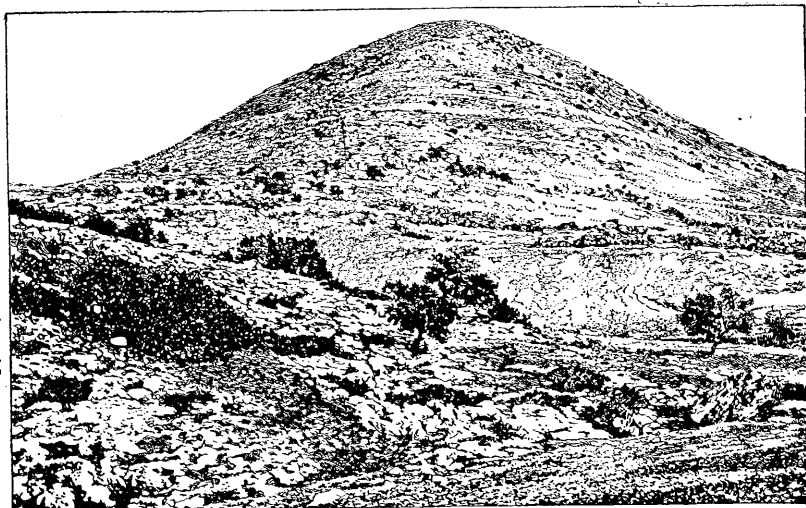
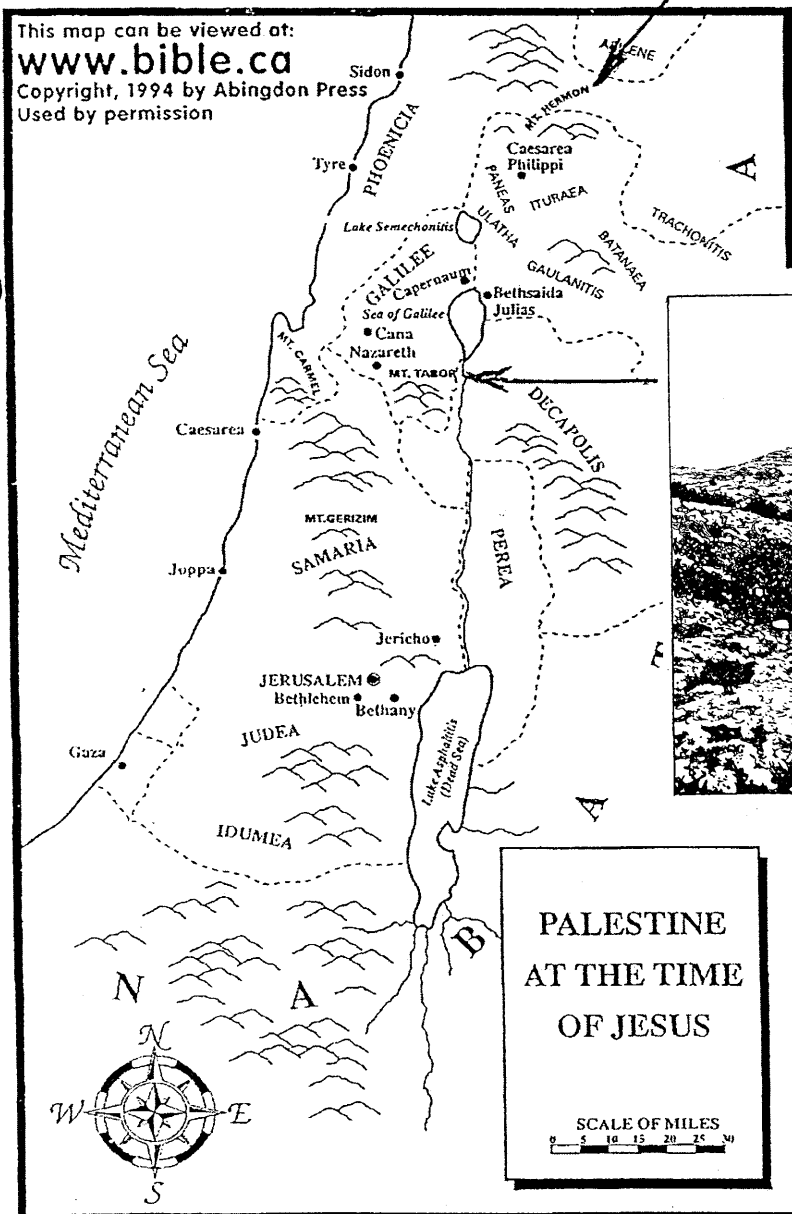
11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.



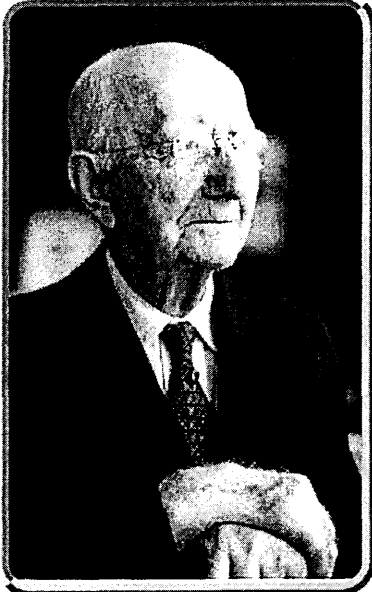
RUINED TEMPLE AT THELTHATHA. JEBEL ESH SHEIKH—MOUNT HERMON



Mount Tabor.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

"Every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23



Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)

Words: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923. According to Chisholm, there were no special circumstances which caused its writing—just his experience and Bible truth. The hymn first appeared in *Songs of Salvation and Service*, 1923, compiled by William Runyan. It is the unofficial "school hymn" of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, with which Runyan was associated for a number of years.

Music: FAITHFULNESS (RUNYAN), William M. Runyan, 1923 (♩ ♪ ♫). Runyan wrote the music specifically for these words: "This particular poem held such an appeal that I prayed most earnestly that my tune might carry its message in a worthy way, and the subsequent history of its use indicates that God answered prayer."



William M. Runyan (1870-1957)

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS © 1923 Hope Publishing Company
380 South Main Place, Carol Stream, IL 60188
(800-323-1049)
Used by permission.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Refrain

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Refrain

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain

A word of caution:

Below is a sad, but ever so typical example of spiritualizing the throne of David. Covenant theologians, with hermeneutical sleight of hand, transfer the throne from Jerusalem to heaven. One wishes that these spiritualizers would consider passages like Amos 9. Note that at times of Israel's greatest apostasy God assures Israel that He would restore the dynasty of David (v. 11) after Israel is brought back permanently into their land in the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 12-15).

Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible

PSALM 89

THE END OF THE DAVIDIC DYNASTY WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY ISRAEL

The occasion for this psalm was the conquest of Jerusalem, the capture of king Jehoiachin, his deportation to Babylon along with Daniel and many other able Hebrews, and the enthronement of the puppet king Zedekiah, a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. A number of able scholars agree on this.

The statement in Psalms 89:45 that God had shortened the days of the youth of the king and covered him with shame may refer to Jehoiachin who was only 18 years old when carried away captive.^[1] - The whole tone of the psalm suggests that it was written when the kingdom was toppling to ruin, or perhaps even after its fall.^[2] - The days of ... Zedekiah, just before the fall of Jerusalem seem to fit the situation.^[3] - The humiliation of a king was probably that of Jehoiachin.^[4] - The occasion is the defeat and deposition of a Judean king ... many think Jehoiachin, probably in the early sixth century B.C.^[5]

The psalm starts off like a song of praise to God (Psalms 89:1-18), after which there follows a rehearsal of God's marvelous promises to David regarding the kingdom to be established "forever" (Psalms 89:19-37); but quite abruptly in Psalms 89:38 the psalm changes into a lament, in terminology that borders on the nature of a reproach against God and a charge that he has failed to keep his promises to Israel. That attitude of vigorous complaint prevails throughout Psalms 89:38-45. Then there comes an urgent plea for God to intervene and restore to Israel the glories to which they believed themselves entitled by the ancient promises of God.

Psalms 89:52 is not part of this psalm but forms the doxology concluding Book III of the Psalter.

By far, the most important verse in the whole psalm is Psalms 89:37 which indicates that the everlasting "throne of David" is not an earthly throne at all. The promises to the Davidic dynasty upon which Israel had so enthusiastically rested their expectations were never to be fulfilled in the literal earthly dynasty of David, the whole institution of the Davidic kingdom being merely typical in a very feeble way of the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, even Jesus Christ, who today is sitting upon the "spiritual throne of David" in heaven itself. See full discussion of all this under Psalms 89:37.

Amos 9:8-15 King James Version (KJV)

⁸ Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.

⁹ For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

¹⁰ All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

¹¹ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

¹³ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

¹⁴ And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

¹⁵ And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

Psalm 89

Words: Isaac Watts

PART 1. L.M.

The covenant made with Christ; or, The true David

- 1 For ever shall my song record
The truth and mercy of the Lord;
Mercy and truth for ever stand,
Like heav'n, established by his hand.
- 2 Thus to his Son he sware, and said,
"With thee my cov'nant first is made;
In thee shall dying sinners live,
Glory and grace are thine to give.
- 3 "Be thou my Prophet, thou my, Priest;
Thy children shall be ever blessed;
Thou art my chosen King: thy throne
Shall stand eternal like my own.
- 4 "There's none of all my sons above
So much my image or my love;
Celestial powers thy subjects are:
Then what can earth to thee compare ?
- 5 "David, my servant, whom I chose
To guard my flock, to crush my foes,
And raised him to the Jewish throne,
Was but a shadow of my Son."
- 6 Now let the church rejoice and sing
Jesus, her Savior and her King;
Angels his heav'nly wonders show,
And saints declare his works below.



PART 1. C.M.

The faithfulness of God.

- 1 My never-ceasing songs shall show
The mercies of the Lord;
And make succeeding ages know
How faithful is his word.
- 2 The sacred truths his lips pronounce
Shall firm as heav'n endure;
And if he speak a promise once,
Th' eternal grace is sure.
- 3 How long the race of David held
The promised Jewish throne!
But there's a nobler cov'nant sealed
To David's greater Son.
- 4 His seed for ever shall possess
A throne above the skies;
The meanest subject of his grace
Shall to that glory rise.
- 5 Lord God of hosts, thy wondrous ways
Are sung by saints above;
And saints on earth their honors raise
To thy unchanging love.



v.7,8&c. PART 2. C.M.

The power and majesty of God; or, Reverential w

- 1 With rev'rence let the saints appear,
And bow before the Lord;
His high commands with rev'rence hear,
And tremble at his word.
- 2 How terrible thy glories be!
How bright thine armies shine!
Where is the power that vies with thee,
Or truth compared to thine?
- 3 The northern pole and southern rest
On thy supporting hand;
Darkness and day, from east to west,
Move round at thy command.
- 4 Thy words the raging winds control,
And rule the boist'rous deep;

Thou mak'st the sleeping billows roll,
The rolling billows sleep.

- 5 Heav'n, earth, and air, and sea, are thine,
And the dark world of hell;
How did thine arm in vengeance shine
When Egypt durst rebel!
- 6 Justice and judgment are thy throne,
Yet wondrous is thy grace;
While truth and mercy, joined in one,
Invite us near thy face.



v.15,&c. Part 3. C.M.

A blessed gospel.

- 1 Blessed are the souls that hear and know
The gospel's joyful sound;
Peace shall attend the path they go,
And light their steps surround.
- 2 Their joy shall bear their spirits up
Through their Redeemer's name;
His righteousness exalts their hope,
Nor Satan dares condemn.
- 3 The Lord, our glory and defense,
Strength and salvation gives;
Is'r'el, thy King for ever reigns,
Thy God for ever lives.



v.19,&c. Part 4. C.M.

Christ's mediatorial kingdom; or, His Divine and

- 1 Hear what the Lord in vision said,
And made his mercy known:
"Sinners, behold your help is laid
On my Almighty Son.
- 2 "Behold the Man my wisdom chose
Among your mortal race:
His head my holy oil o'erflows,
The Spirit of my grace.
- 3 "High shall he reign on David's throne,
My people's better King;
My arm shall beat his rivals down,
And still new subjects bring.
- 4 "My truth shall guard him in his way,
with mercy by his side,
While in my name through earth and sea
He shall in triumph ride.
- 5 "Me for his Father and his God
He shall for ever own,
Call me his rock, his high abode,
And I 'll support my Son.
- 6 "My first-born Son arrayed in grace
At my right hand shall sit;
Beneath him angels know their place,
And monarchs at his feet.
- 7 "My cov'nant stands for ever fast,
My promises are strong;
Firm as the heav'ns his throne shall last
His seed endure as long."



v.30, &c. Part 5. C.M.

The covenant of grace unchangeable.



- 1 "Yet," saith the Lord, "if David's race,
The children of my Son,
Should break my laws, abuse my grace,
And tempt mine anger down;
- 2 "Their sins I'll visit with the rod
and make their folly smart;
But I'll not cease to be their God,
Nor from my truth depart.
- 3 "My cov'nant I will ne'er revoke,
But keep my grace in mind;
And what eternal love hath spoke
Eternal truth shall bind.

- 4 "Once have I sworn (I need no more)
And pledged my holiness,
To seal the sacred promise sure
To David and his race.
- 5 "The sun shall see his offspring rise
And spread from sea to sea,
Long as he travels round the skies
To give the nations day.
- 6 "Sure as the moon that rules the night
His kingdom shall endure,
Till the fixed laws of shade and light
Shall be observed no more."



v.47, &c. Part 6. L.M.

Mortality and hope. A funeral psalm.

- 1 Remember, Lord, our mortal state,
How frail our life! how short the date!
Where is the man that draws his breath
Safe from disease, secure from death?
 - 2 Lord, while we see whole nations die,
Our flesh and sense repine and cry,
"Must death for ever rage and reign?
Or hast thou made mankind in vain?"
 - 3 "Where is thy promise to the just?
Are not thy servants turned to dust?"
But faith forbids these mournful sighs,
And sees the sleeping dust arise.
 - 4 That glorious hour, that dreadful day,
Wipes the reproach of saints away,
And clears the honor of thy word:
Awake, our souls, and bless the Lord.
-  v.47, &c. Last Part. As the 113th.  L.M.
- Life, death, and the resurrection.*
- 1 Think, mighty God, on feeble man;
how few his hours! how short his span!
Short from the cradle to the grave:
Who can secure his vital breath
Against the bold demands of death,
With skill to fly, or power to save?
 - 2 Lord, shall it be for ever said,
"The race of man was only made
For sickness, sorrow, and the dust?"
Are not thy servants day by day
Sent to their graves, and turned to clay?
Lord, where's thy kindness to the just?
 - 3 Hast thou not promised to thy Son
And all his seed a heav'nly crown?
But flesh and sense indulge despair:
For ever blessed be the Lord,
That faith can read his holy word,
And find a resurrection there.
 - 4 For ever blessed be the Lord,
Who gives his saints a long reward
For all their toil, reproach, and pain:
Let all below and all above
Join to proclaim thy wondrous love,
And each repeat their loud Amen.

