

PSALMS

Chapter 89

I Will Sing of the Steadfast Love of the LORD

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. 2 For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.” 3 You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: 4 ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’” *Selah* 5 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! 6 For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, 7 a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? 8 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? 9 You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. 10 You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm. 11 The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them. 12 The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name. 13 You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand. 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. 15 Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, 16 who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. 17 For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted. 18 For our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel. 19 Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said: “I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. 20 I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, 21 so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. 22 The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. 23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. 24 My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25 I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. 26 He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’ 27 And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. 28 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. 29 I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. 30 If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, 31 if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, 32 then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, 33 but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. 35 Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. 36 His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. 37 Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.” *Selah* 38 But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed. 39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust. 40 You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins. 41 All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors. 42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice. 43 You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not made him

stand in battle. **44 You have made his splendor to cease and cast his throne to the ground. 45 You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame. *Selah* 46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? 47 Remember how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the children of man! 48 What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? *Selah* 49 Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David? 50 Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked, and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations, 51 with which your enemies mock, O LORD, with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed. 52 Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.**

Ps 89 A prayer that mourns the downfall of the Davidic dynasty and pleads for its restoration. The bitter shock of that event (reflected partially in the sudden transition of v. 38) is almost unbearable—that God, the faithful and almighty One, has abandoned his anointed and made him the mockery of the nations, in seeming violation of his firm covenant with David—and it evokes from the psalmist a lament that borders on reproach (vv. 38–45). The event may have been the attack on Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (see 2Ki 24:8–17). (CSB)

As with Ps 44 (see introduction to that psalm), a massive foundation is laid for the prayer with which the psalm concludes. An introduction (vv. 1–4) sings of God’s love and faithfulness (vv. 1–2) and his covenant with David (vv. 3–4). These two themes are then jubilantly expanded in order: vv. 5–18, God’s love and faithfulness; vv. 19–37, his covenant with David. Suddenly jubilation turns to lament, and the psalmist recounts in detail how God has rejected his anointed (vv. 38–45). Thus he comes to his prayer, impatient and urgent, that God will remember once more his covenant with David (vv. 46–51). (Verse 52 concludes not the psalm but Book III of the Psalter.) (CSB)

Speaks of the rise and fall of David’s kingdom, suggesting a date during the time of the kings. Because David’s sons, the kings of Judah, did not remain faithful to God (v 30), God has visited judgment upon His people (vv 38–45). Lamenting this harsh treatment, the psalmist calls upon God to relent and to restore His people once again. *Maskil*. See p 841. *Ezrahite*. See Ps 88 intro.

Format: Vv 1–4, God’s steadfast love; vv 5–18, God’s wonders; vv 19–37, God’s word to David; vv 38–45, rejection by God; vv 46–48, how long?; vv 49–51, appeal to God to remember His faithfulness to David; v 52, closing blessing. (TLSB)

This psalm is an appropriate companion to Psalm 88. They both deal with the distress of God’s people. The major difference is that Psalm 89 provides some relief to the deep gloom of Psalm 88. (PBC)

89:1–2 God’s love and faithfulness celebrated. (CSB)

In the opening praise Ethan sets the tone for the whole psalm by firmly declaring his confidence in God’s faithfulness to the covenant promises he made with Israel. Ethan’s review of the covenant with David has five main parts which are indicated by the groups of passages from verse 3 to 37 that follow.(PBC)

89:1 *love ... faithfulness*. See vv. 2, 33, 49; that is, love-and-faithfulness (see v. 14); see note on 36:5. (CSB)

Cf 2Tm 2:13, where Paul quotes an ancient poem or hymn with similar wording. (TLSB)

love. See vv. 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49. It is God's love and faithfulness that appear to have failed in his rejection (see vv. 38–45) of the Davidic king. The author repeats each of these words precisely seven times (in v. 14 the Hebrew uses a different—but related—word for “faithfulness”). (CSB)

89:2 *in the heavens*. God's love and faithfulness have been made sure in the highest seat of power and authority (see vv. 5–8). (CSB)

89:3–4 God's covenant with David celebrated (see 2Sa 7:8–16). (CSB)

This briefly summarizes the promise: an heir of David will rule on his throne forever. (PBC)

89:3 *covenant*. Defined in v 4. The promise was spoken to David in 2Sm 7:8–16, to Judah before him (Gn 49:10), and is repeated here in v 4. (TLSB)

servant. See vv. 20, 39, 50; here an official title. (CSB)

Samuel referred to David as a king after God's own heart (1Sm 13:14). (TLSB)

89:4 *offspring*. Singular. Similar to the promise God spoke to Adam and Eve and to Abraham. This promise looks past David's son Solomon toward his greater Son, Jesus Christ (cf Mt 1:1). (TLSB)

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This often occurs in the middle of a psalm and which apparently signals an interlude. “The Sela indicates that one must be still and quickly think through the words of the psalm; for they demand a quiet and restful soul, which can grasp and hold to that which the Holy Spirit there presents and offers” (Luther). (Psalms – The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer p. 23)

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89:5–8 The Lord's faithfulness and awesome power set him apart among all the powers in the heavenly realm, and they acknowledge him with praise and reverence. (CSB)

The paragraph that makes up verses 5-14 demonstrates God's ability to fulfill his promise. (PBC)

89:5 *The heavens*. All beings belonging to the divine realm in the heavens. (CSB)

wonders. God's mighty acts in creation and redemption. (CSB)

The focus of the praise is God's “wondrousness” (s.v. Ps. 139:5). He himself is wonderful. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

assembly of the holy ones. The divine council in heaven. (CSB)

Worshippers of God, including angels. (TLSB)

89:6 *heavenly beings*. Lit. “sons of god(s).” (CSB)

Stars or angels. (TLSB)

89:8 *your faithfulness all around you*. It also surrounds this stanza (see v. 5). (CSB)

89:9–13 The Lord’s power as Creator—and creation’s joy in him. (CSB)

Now the psalmist begins to enumerate the attributes of the Lord that show his wondrous nature. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

89:9–10 Poetic imagery borrowed from ancient Near Eastern myths of creation, here celebrating God’s power in ordering the primeval chaotic waters so that the creation order could be established. (CSB)

89:10 *Rahab*. Mythical monster of the deep, probably another name for Leviathan (see 74:14; 104:26). The last half of this verse is probably echoed in Lk 1:51. (CSB)

Refers to neither the famous Gentile believer of Jsh 2, nor Egypt (Is 30:7), but possibly is another name for Leviathan, monster of the deep. (TLSB)

89:11 *Yours*. God has right of ownership as Creator. (TLSB)

89:12 *the north and the south*. Reference may be to two mountains, here parallel to Tabor and Hermon: “Mount North” and Mount Amana (see SS 4:8). (CSB)

Tabor. Mountain near the site of Deborah and Barak’s victory over the Canaanite king Jabon (Jgs 4:6). (TLSB)

Hermon. Mountain once ruled by Og, King of Bashan (Jsh 13:11–12), whom Moses defeated. In both cases, God’s “mighty arm” gave the Israelites the victory. (TLSB)

joyously praise your name. In the exuberant language of the psalmists, all creation—even its inanimate elements—joins the human chorus to celebrate the goodness of God in creation, blessing and redemption. (CSB)

joyously praise your name – This figure (personification) indicates that everything in the land between these mountains as well as what is on the mountains under the blessing of the Lord, the creator. The abundant growth is like a joyful shout, a response to the decree of the creator. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

89:14–18 The Lord’s righteousness and faithfulness in his rule in behalf of his people—and their joy in him. (CSB)

This section shows God’s desire to keep his promise. He wants to give glory, strength and power to his people. (PBC)

89:14 *Your throne*. God’s reign. (TLSB)

Righteousness and justice are the foundation stones of God's throne; love and faithfulness are personified as angelic attendants that herald his royal movements. (CSB)

89:15 *festal shout*. Joyful reaction to the good news of God's salvation. (TLSB)

89:17 *horn*. Israel's king. (TLSB)

The "horn" is a symbol of kingship. And so he anticipates that God by his grace (i.e., "face") will raise their king up with honor and power. The king belongs to the Lord first and so God through him blesses the people with security. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

89:18 *shield*. Israel's king, who protects God's people from harm. (TLSB)

89:19–29 The Lord's election of David to be his regent over his people, and his everlasting covenant with him. The thought is developed by couplets: (1) introduction (v. 19); (2) I have anointed David as my servant and will sustain him (vv. 20–21); (3) I will crush all his foes (vv. 22–23); (4) I will extend his realm (vv. 24–25); (5) I will make him first among the kings (vv. 26–27); (6) I will cause his dynasty to endure forever (vv. 28–29)—a promise fulfilled in the eternal reign of Jesus Christ (see Jn 12:34). (CSB)

This paragraph provides a more detailed statement of the promise to David. (PBC)

89:19 *vision*. Reference is to the revelation to Samuel (see 1Sa 16:12) and/or to Nathan (see 2Sa 7:4–16). (CSB)

godly one. Samuel, who anointed David as king (1Sm 16). (TLSB)

89:21 *My hand*. Expression of God's power; Jesus is later described as sitting at God's right hand (Lk 22:69). (TLSB)

89:24 *horn* – An image of power. Animals with horns are bold; in Israelite thought, a horned animal with its head held high symbolized strength and triumph. (TLSB – p. 842)

89:25 *sea ... rivers*. David's rule will reach from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. But the author uses imagery that underscores the fact that, as his royal "son" (see v. 26) and regent, David's rule will be a reflection of God's. (CSB)

Reference to the extent of David's rule, which stretched from the Great Sea, going beyond the Jordan to the Euphrates River. (TLSB)

89:26 *Father...rock of my salvation* – David lived by faith and trust in God. (TLSB)

rock – Translates two terms: Hbr *sela'*, "rock" or "cliff face"; Hbr *tsur*, "massive rock" or "boulder." Psalms use the terms interchangeably for a place of refuge or hiding. The Lord is "the Rock of my salvation" (TLSB) P. 843)

89:27 *firstborn*. The royal son of highest privilege and position in the kingdom of God (see 2:7–12; 45:6–9; 72:8–11; 110), thus the most exalted of the kings of the earth (see Rev 1:5). (CSB)

A title. The man of God's own choosing, David was granted preeminence above all monarchs on earth. (TLSB)

89:30–37 The Lord's covenant with David and his dynasty was everlasting and unconditional—though if any of his royal descendants is unfaithful he will individually suffer under God's rod (to the detriment of the entire nation). (CSB)

This paragraph states the terms of the covenant, already hints at the answer to the psalmist's question. (PBC)

89:30–31 *law ... rules ... statutes ... commandments*. Repetition to emphasize the point that David's successors are to keep the Word of the Lord. (TLSB)

89:32–33 *rod ... stripes*. Both refer to God's acts of judgment, executed by the Gentile nations. Chemnitz: "Because the regenerate still have sinned against the Law, therefore these punishments also remain, e.g., physical death; but because their sins have been forgiven and covered, the punishments are mitigated" (*LTh* 2:358). (TLSB)

89:33–35 *faithfulness ... holiness*. God swears by His attributes that He will keep His promises. (TLSB)

89:36 *as the sun*. Cyril of Jerusalem: "See that the discourse is of Christ, not of Solomon. For Solomon's throne endured not as the sun" (*NPNF* 2 7:78). (TLSB)

89:37 *witness*. The moon is a reliable witness to God's faithfulness in that God has never failed to keep it in its patterns and seasons. (TLSB)

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89:38–45 God's present rejection of David's son, and all its fearful consequences—the undoing of all that had been promised and assured by covenant (see especially vv. 19–29). (CSB)

89:38 *You*. Psalmist now speaks directly to God, lamenting the judgment brought upon Israel. (TLSB)

89:39 God's punishment makes it seem as though He has forgotten His promises, even though He remains faithful always. (TLSB)

89:41 *All that pass by have robbed him*, that is, all men of the world and the nations, as Is. 10:6 says: "[I send the Assyrian] to tread them down like the mire of the streets." (LW-V-11). (TLSB)

neighbors. Nations. (TLSB)

89:42 *foes*. Rivals in Israel. The king's enemies have become powerful against him. (TLSB)

89:45 *covered him with shame*. The king's guilt is undeniable. (TLSB)

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89:46–51 The prayer, an appeal—in spite of all—to God's faithfulness to his covenant with David. In this dark hour, that remains the psalmist's hope. (CSB)

89:46 *How long ... ?* Such language of impatience and complaint is found frequently in the prayers of the Psalter (usually “how long?” or “when?” or “why?.” It expresses the anguish of relief not (yet) granted and exhibits the boldness with which the psalmists wrestled with God on the basis of their relationship with him and their conviction concerning his righteousness.. (CSB)

wrath. God's anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

89:47 Psalmist longs to see Israel quickly restored. (TLSB)

For ... vanity. Human existence is brief and weak. (TLSB)

89:48 Only Jesus Christ, the God-man, can do this. (TLSB)

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89:49 *of old*. Extending into the most ancient days of creation. (TLSB)

89:50 *Remember*. Speaker feels the weight of Israel's troubles and sins. (TLSB)

89:51 *mock the footsteps*. The king's enemies mock his repentance and his desire to follow God's Word. (TLSB)

89:52 A brief doxology with which the final editors concluded Book III of the Psalter. (CSB)

Ps 89 Speaks primarily of David, who enjoyed God's faithfulness (vv 2, 24) and promises. Even when David sinned and felt the weight of God's Law (vv 38–47), he still relied completely upon God. "How long, O LORD?" (v 46) easily comes to the lips of all who, because of their sins, have suffered under the weight of God's Law. God's steadfast love of old (v 49) and His faithfulness (vv 2, 24) are shown most clearly in Christ, whose death and resurrection provide the remedy for all troubles (v 48). • "Blessed be the LORD forever!" Preserve the faithful, O Lord, and provide for their future security and service. Amen and Amen. (TLSB)