

Intro:

“There is no sadder prayer in the Psalter. Here, as with other laments, the reader’s part need not be that of spectator, whatever his current mood, but that of companion in prayer to the depressed or outcast people whose state of mind the psalm puts into words: words which are for use.”¹

The superscription is doubled – it is possible that the first part goes with Ps 87, as a subscript to round off the whole.

The rest of the superscript refers to the writer of the psalm, Heman the Ezrahite.

There is a Heman mentioned in 1 Chr 6.33 who is a grandson of Samuel and the leader of the choir called the sons of Korah, see 1 Chr 6.37.

Though the Psalm is black and desolate, its prevailing assumption is that there is a God who answers such prayers.

Notes:

Compare v. 1 to Lk 18.7-8. What is the Lord’s attitude to prayers like this?

The Lord intends to avenge his people quickly – he hears their constant prayer.

How does Heman address God in v. 1? What is significant about this title and the pleas of vv. 1-2?

He calls God ‘the God of my salvation’. This signifies that Heman views God as the answer to his prayer – it displays his faith in God.

What kinds of words does Heman use to describe the depth to which his life has gone in its fear, depression, and suffering? (3-7)

Sheol (3); pit (4); forsaken (5); dead (5); lowest pit (6); wrath (7)

In psalm 6.5, reference is made to being in Sheol. Comparing that reference and this psalm, what new level of suffering does Heman take us to? (3-7)

He sees himself not just in the grave and unable any longer to speak for God but indeed he sees himself as if he is numbered with the wicked and subject to God’s wrath.

Consider the pronouns in vv. 6-8. Who does Heman think is responsible for the position he is in?

God himself — ‘you’ have done this to me.

¹ Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, pp. 316-317.

In spite of this low ebb, what does Heman yet do? What does his activity imply? (9)

He still, day and night, calls on God – this implies a bedrock of faith in God, no matter how low he sinks.

Would that all who suffer from depression hang on to this faith!

What is the answer to the questions of vv. 10-12? Why?

The answer is 'No.' God's miraculous intervention and displays of covenant love belong to the land of the living – death is the exact opposite of God's will for mankind, it is the negation of creation and the antitheses of all God's plan. It is called 'the last enemy' in the NT.

What is the persistent activity of this dark singer, our psalmist? (13)

He persists in prayer.

In his prayers, what is the dominant question? (14)

Why?

What is the persistent response Heman seems to receive for his prayers? (15-18)

"A rain of blows"² ... darkness, terror, loneliness

"With darkness as its final word, what is the role of this psalm in Scripture?"³

1. *It is possible that a believer can live a life that is simply unrelieved suffering in this age. "The happy ending of most psalms of this kind is seen to be a bonus, not a due."⁴*
2. *The groans of this psalm are legitimized by their inclusion in Scripture – though we may be called to suffer for now, such suffering is anti-Creation and anti-God. Our prayers are justified, though we may have to wait till the next age for an answer.*
3. *We ought not to give up on God, no matter how desperate our sufferings might be.*
4. *The psalmist's name indicates that he is part of God's plan though that plan may not be clearly seen by him – he is a grandson of Samuel, a descendant of Korah, a significant person in a significant family of Israel. The presence of his name exhorts us to trust God – even though we know less of our place in God's overall plan than he did.*

² Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 318.

³ Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 319.

⁴ *Ibid.*