

God's Mercy & Truth via Our King

Psalm 89:1-52

Halifax: 4 May 2025

Introduction:

We have just come to a new section as we work our way through First Samuel.

- For each section, we have sung a Psalm that relates to that section
- The first section, 1 Samuel 1-7,
 - focused on Samuel as the one who would lead the transition from rule by judges to rule by a king.
 - We sang Psalm 113 in connection with this.
- The second section, 1 Samuel 8-15,
 - focused on Saul, Israel's first king, who was a king like the nations that the people wanted—one where appearance was more important than the fear of God.
 - For that, we sang Psalm 21, which shows what a king should want.
- The third section we are ready to begin with 1 Samuel 16,
 - focuses on David, a king after God's own heart.
 - For this we are taking up Psalm 89 which shows God's promise of and description of such a king, of which David is the type, progenitor, and promise receiver.

Psalm 89 is a very long Psalm, so we will be looking at it in an overview fashion.

- It describes the glory of King Jesus and His godly reign that goes on forever and brings perfect peace, but it shows that there will be hard struggles before that peace comes.

As for reading this Psalm, I considered reading it in smaller portions, but since this is an overview, I decided that it would be best to read it all at once.

- So I urge you to give focused attention—without letting your mind wander. You will want to have the words before you when the exposition begins so you can follow along.

So now for the reading of this excellent Psalm, so full of our Saviour. Psalm 89. The word of God:

Psalm 89:1-52: «A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite.» I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. ² For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.” ³ “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ⁴ ‘Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.’” Selah

⁵ And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints. ⁶ For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD? *Who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD? ⁷ God is greatly to be

feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all *those* around Him. ⁸ O LORD God of hosts, who *is* mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. ⁹ You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them. ¹⁰ You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. ¹¹ The heavens *are* Yours, the earth also *is* Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them. ¹² The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name. ¹³ You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, *and* high is Your right hand. ¹⁴ Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of Your throne; mercy and

truth go before Your face.

¹⁵ Blessed *are* the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. ¹⁶ In Your name they rejoice all day long, and in Your righteousness they are exalted. ¹⁷ For You *are* the glory of their strength, and in Your favor our horn is exalted. ¹⁸ For our shield *belongs* to the LORD, and our king to the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁹ Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, and said: "I have given help to *one who is* mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. ²⁰ I have found My servant David; with My holy oil I have anointed him, ²¹ with whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him. ²² The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. ²³ I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him. ²⁴ But My faithfulness and My mercy *shall be* with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. ²⁵ Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers. ²⁶ He shall cry to Me, 'You *are* my Father, My God, and the rock of my salva-tion.' ²⁷ Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. ²⁸ My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. ²⁹ His seed also I will make *to endure* forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. ³⁰ If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, ³¹ If they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, ³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. ³³ Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. ³⁴ My

covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. ³⁵ Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: ³⁶ his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; ³⁷ it shall be established forever like the moon, even *like* the faithful witness in the sky." Selah

³⁸ But You have cast off and abhorred, You have been furious with Your anointed. ³⁹ You have renounced the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground. ⁴⁰ You have broken down all his hedges; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. ⁴¹ All who pass by the way plunder him; he is a reproach to his neighbors. ⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies rejoice. ⁴³ You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and have not sustained him in the battle. ⁴⁴ You have made his glory cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. ⁴⁵ The days of his youth You have shortened; You have covered him with shame. Selah ⁴⁶ How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? ⁴⁷ Remember how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men? ⁴⁸ What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Selah ⁴⁹ Lord, where *are* Your former lovingkindnesses, *which* You swore to David in Your truth? ⁵⁰ Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants— *how* I bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the many peoples, ⁵¹ with which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. ⁵² Blessed *be* the LORD forevermore! Amen and Amen.

Thanks be to God for His precious Word.

I. What qualities are desirable for those who exercise authority over you?

A. It certainly has a huge effect on how well we get on!

1. We are quite mindful of this after the recent election.

- God has chosen to give us a leader, once again, who clearly has no fear of God—which is the most important qualification of a good leader.
- God promises to use political leaders for the good of the church, whether they are faithful or not. We can be certain that He will.

- This does not, of course, mean it will be easy to have ungodly leaders, or that they will not cause great harm to many and even bring the church into very hard times to chasten us and train us.
- 2. We might speak of other authorities besides governors: parents, ministers and elders in the church, employers, teachers...
 - They also have a huge place in our lives for good or ill.
 - So what qualities are important and desirable in our leaders?
- B. There are two that are highlighted in Psalm 89: *mercy* and *faithfulness*.
 - This word pair is found a lot in the Psalms, but it is especially the focus of this Psalm.
 - Both of these words appear 7 times in this Psalm.
 - You can find the pair in both the first and the second verse.
 - Let's consider these words.
 - 1. ***Mercy*** translates the word *hesed*.
 - It is a key word in the Old Testament.
 - Some versions translate it *steadfast love* or *lovingkindness*.
 - It describes one who loves you and who pours himself out to do good for you—one who delights to have authority and strength to enable him to bless you.
 - 2. ***Faithfulness*** translates the word *em-oo-nah*.
 - It is often translated by the word *truth* or *truly*.
 - The root of the word is the word *aw-man* which we use at the end of our prayers to affirm what we have said.
 - It describes a person who is true in the sense that they are faithful to do what truly is good for the one they love.
 - A worker who is faithful is one who is not only loyal to you, but also one who is competent. They end up doing a great job.
 - 3. A leader with these two qualities joined together is a leader greatly to be desired!
 - Both words are hard to translate by any one English word because both are packed with so much meaning.
 - To have an authority like this is to have an authority who loves you with and absolute unrelenting devotion that is not only committed to doing you good, but also capable of doing you good.
 - *Hesed* is loyal love, steadfast love, goodness, kindness, mercy even when you are unworthy, and *Aman* is faithfulness, genuineness, purity, truthfulness that brings results that are true.
 - When it is God who sets this mercy and truth upon you, it ensures that you will be supremely blessed, and that with loving delight

II. This Psalm opens with the announcement that it is a song about these two qualities in God—mercy and faithfulness (see v. 1).

- A. We declare that we will sing of His mercies (acts of *hesed*) forever and make known His faithfulness to all generations.
 - 1. We are so pleased with Him that we cannot do otherwise...
 - The very thought that our sovereign LORD is so committed to us as the people that He has chosen to salvation... we who were once rebels and outcasts.

- We must sing of this steadfast love and faithfulness that is absolutely committed and effective in bringing perfect blessings to us beyond our imagination!
 - We love Him because He has so greatly loved us first.
2. If you are not one of His people who can sing this Psalm—if you are under condemnation as one that He must destroy for your rebellion...
 - Will you not come to Him for mercy with humble repentance?
 - How can you go on resisting such great love to your own detriment?
 - If you will come to Him to be reconciled to Him, He will welcome you.
 - I plead with you to come.
 - All you need to do is commit your soul to Him and He will do the rest.
- B. The Song wonderfully describes how God’s mercy and faithfulness makes His people merciful and faithful.
1. The good that His loving mercy and truth bring to us is that we become those who are also faithful lovers who bring true good to others.
 - He reproduces these exceptional qualities in us—that is what His mercy and faithfulness do. We become a kingdom that is full of love and truth!
 - Nothing could be better. We will be good, and we will have the ability to do true good. God, the fountain of faithful love, will make us fountains of faithful love that will be forever fed by Him.
 2. Is this not the glorious message of verse 2, where it says: **“Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.”**
 - Mercy and love built up forever is mercy being established in us. God already has it, but He builds it up in us! We go about truthing in love.
 - His faithfulness—His truth in people He makes true and faithful—is established in the heavens—in His glorious presence. He makes us beautiful in His eyes!
- C. And look! He brings these promise through His anointed king (His Christ)!
- In verse 3-4, He speaks and He promises to bring these blessings to us through Him!
1. He says: **“I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ‘Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations.’”**
 - God raised up David as a king after His own heart, and to David He promised that a Son would be born to him who would be established forever.
 - It will be by this Son and through this Son that God will bring mercy and faithfulness to His people.
 - This, of course, speaks of Jesus Christ.
 - It will be through Him, or by Him that God will build up His people in mercy and truth forever.
 2. This will bring forth, as verse 5 says, praise to God for His faithfulness—for His love and truth that has brought such blessing to ruined sinners.
 - By Jesus, He is in the process of establishing this kingdom of righteousness.
 - In the end, we will be able to live in perfect love and be faithful in truly doing good to one another. God is the source of mercy and faithfulness, Jesus is the fountain of God that brings mercy and faithfulness to us, and when He does, mercy and truth are in each of us and flows from one to another.

- This will bring praise in heaven and earth to the glory of God's grace who has done such great things for ruined sinners in both heaven and earth...
- Verse 5 says: **"And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints."**
- We see this fulfilled in Revelation where saints on earth and angels in heaven are seen praising God—what we do now—with Christ at the head.

III. From here the Psalm goes on to praise God at length.

A. First, it praises Him that there is no one like Him.

1. He is completely in a class by Himself!
 - **Who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD**, we say in verse 6!
 - And then in verses 9-10, we tell of how He even subdues the restless world (represented by the raging sea) and the god of this world (Rahab, the sea monster—also a name given to Egypt when they oppressed God's covenant people).
2. He is able to fully (faithfully) bless us because He is sovereign over the whole creation. In the fall, He turned it against us so that we die because of our sin.
 - The whole creation praises Him, both with bringing His righteous judgment to punish sinners, as well as bringing mercy and truth to the sinners that He redeems.
3. Verse 15-18 speaks of blessing that belongs to those who "know the joyful sound of the praise of God—
 - We rejoice in Him all day long as the recipients of His grace!
 - We delight in His unlimited power and strength because He uses His unlimited power and strength in for us.
 - When someone has great strength, it often means that they are an oppressor, but with God, it means that He has a tremendous, unlimited ability to show His love to those who are His by doing us good, enriching us, and protecting us.

➤ Indeed! There is no one like Him—so loving and so mighty to bless.

B. In verse 19-29 it speaks of how He blesses His anointed king.

1. Once again, we are glad that He fills His anointed king with love and truth, mercy, and faithfulness, because with these His king serves us and saves us.
 - He speaks of Him as His David because (of course) Jesus is the one that was promised to David, the Son who would live forever.
 - Vs 19-20, speaking of God the Father, says: **Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, and said: "I have given help to *one who is* mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. ²⁰ I have found My servant David; with My holy oil I have anointed him, ²¹ With whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him.**
 - The song goes on to rejoice in this because no enemies will be able to prevent God's King from being able to bless us—what His love does faithfully and truly.
 - The enemies can neither "outwit Him" (v. 22) nor overpower Him.

2. Indeed, the LORD declares that His anointed one, our Jesus, will have mercy and faithfulness—in other words, He will be able to keep on loving us in a way that truly does bless us forever.
 - Verse 28-29: **“My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. ²⁹ His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.”**
 - God will never stop loving Him faithfully, and He will never stop loving us faithfully, and then we will grow up to forever love faithfully and truly!
3. In verses 30-37, the LORD addresses a wretched reality about His kingdom while it is being built over the centuries.
 - Even David and sons who succeeded him on his throne would at times forsake his law. The LORD promises that He punish them—
 - Verse 30-33: **“If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, ³¹ If they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, ³² Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.**
 - While that will be hard for the nation, this is actually part of God’s love and faithfulness—in that He won’t let them go on without correcting them—
 - If He had, they would have rejected Him and been lost forever... but He says plainly in verse 33-37: **Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. ³⁴ My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. ³⁵ Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: ³⁶ His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; ³⁷ it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.”**
 - That is God’s sure promise, ultimately to Jesus and to all His seed—that is, to all the people that He redeems, the people who come to King Jesus for salvation. How could you not!

TRANS> God’s mercy and faithfulness will bring us blessing at last, no matter what. This is something about which we can be absolutely certain!

IV. But the song takes a terrible turn at verse 38. This unrelenting love and faithfulness that was so sure seems to be seriously disrupted in our experience.

- A. The Song goes on in this way to the end...
 - First, in verses 38-45, there is a lamentation that God seems to have forgotten His promise of unceasing love and faithfulness to David.
 - Then, in verses 46-51, there is an earnest prayer of complaint asking God how long this is going to go on.
1. Look first at the lamentation—it is just the opposite of what we saw about this invincible son of promise that was to come!
 - Ps 89:38-45: **But You have cast off and abhorred, You have been furious with Your anointed.** [The anointed king is supposed to have God’s favour forever.] ³⁹ **You have renounced the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.** [The anointed king is supposed to reign forever.] ⁴⁰ **You have broken down all his hedges; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. ⁴¹ All who pass by the way plunder him; He is a reproach to his neighbors. ⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his**

enemies rejoice. [The anointed king is supposed to be absolutely invincible.] ⁴³ **You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and have not sustained him in the battle.** ⁴⁴ **You have made his glory cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.** ⁴⁵ **The days of his youth You have shortened; You have covered him with shame.** [The anointed king is supposed to be in honour forever.]

2. And then look at the prayer of complaint in verse 46-51.

- Ps 89:46-51: **How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire?** ⁴⁷ **Remember how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men?** ⁴⁸ **What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?** ⁴⁹ **Lord, where *are* Your former lovingkindnesses** [the word *hesed*], **which You swore to David in Your truth?** [The word *aman*.] ⁵⁰ **Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—*how* I bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the many peoples,** ⁵¹ **with which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.”** [Where is the honour and glory that is supposed to come to you from your blessing of your people?]

B. There is some discussion about how this Psalm was brought together.

1. Some say that Ethan composed the first part when David had received the promise that God would build his house and that his Son would reign forever.

- This was promised in 2 Samuel 7.
- The Psalm was written to celebrate the wonderful promise.
- But years later, wicked kings arose from David’s line so that the throne of David that was to endure forever was cast down—his sons who were supposed to reign were cast down and taken into exile.
 - Then this portion of lamentation and earnest pleading was added.
 - It was so upsetting that this Psalm was written to express the distress between what was promised or seemed to be promised and what happened.

2. However, I think it is better to suppose that Ethan wrote the entire Psalm in David’s time—there was an Ethan in his time.

- After David received this promise, he experienced terrible disturbances to his kingdom, such as Absalom’s rebellion when David’s throne was overthrown for a time.
 - It looked like the LORD was no longer building David’s house the way He had promised. The Psalm was written to help the people remember and sing of the promise despite what had happened.

3. In any case, that is clearly the purpose of the Psalm.

- Don’t look at the things that are presently seen, look at the eternal promise of God that He has been faithfully working out in stages from the start.
- It was never meant to be received all at once. It was always meant to be received by faith in God, realising that only He can save.
 - We are to know and be sure that His mercy and faithfulness will not fail.

C. This Psalm can be applied to every age until the kingdom is fully established.

1. It could certainly have been applied in David’s day.

- The sure promise of mercy had been given, but how many trials David went through—first the persecutions of Saul, and then the dreadful rebellion of Absalom because of David’s unfaithfulness!
 - Where was this glorious king and this glorious kingdom of mercy and truth?
2. It could be applied again when the kingdom was divided after Solomon, and again, even more, it could be applied when the kings became so wicked that the Lord sent Assyria and then Babylon to overthrow them.
- With Babylon, David’s sons were carried into exile and the temple was destroyed. The exile went on for 70 years and the throne was never restored until Jesus came. Where was the promise of a throne forever with God’s mercy and truth never departing?
 - The mercy and faithfulness of God could still be the theme of their song because the focus was on the Son who was to come.
 - What a comfort this Psalm must have been for true believers in those terrible days!
3. And then, finally, the Son of promise, Jesus Christ, came—
- The eternal Son with eternal righteousness, exalted to sit on David’s throne at God’s right hand in glory forever and ever.
 - But first there was the cross—where was the promise then?
 - God’s mercy and truth were being exercised at the cross more than ever!
 - It was there that atonement was made and righteousness was fulfilled for the whole kingdom.
 - Yes, there He is, risen from dead and ascended to sit at God’s right hand forever!
4. But where is the kingdom of mercy and truth?
- Yes, there is a church in the world, a people who are redeemed, a people called to serve in love and truth (hesed and aman),
 - but we see them full of heresies, divided, weak, full of sin and rebellion.
 - Still we are to sing of this kingdom of perfect mercy and truth.
 - Indeed, the Son of mercy and faithfulness continues on, as sure as ever, with the lamentations and earnest pleading that the kingdom will come as promised.
 - These are the sentiments that we share with those who have held the promise of God’s anointed king through the ages.
 - He has brought mercy and faithfulness (love and truth) down to us from heaven. Christian, do not lose heart!
 - He has exercised covenant love and faithfulness gloriously to save us from our sins...
 - And He is working that love and truth in His people who continue in hope as His bride the church. We continue in the certainty that He who promised will finish the work.
 - Mercy and truth will prevail. It will continue in Christ and He will bring it to us to the glory of God’s mercy and faithfulness.

- Let us sing with joy and hope. His word will not fail.
- No matter the present state of the church or of our nation, the God of mercy and faithfulness will not fail to establish His kingdom in His anointed Son of mercy and faithfulness.