

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 48

Form: Chorus-Recit (A)-Chorale (SATB)-Aria (A)-Recit (T)-Aria (T)-Chorale  
 Bach uses 2 chorales: one cited instrumentally in 48/1 and sung in 48/7, another in 48/3.

Bach often uses canon to depict law. In the opening chorus (which quotes Romans 7:24), Bach alludes to the larger context of the verse. Rom. 7:22-8:2 (RSV): "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." Evidently, Bach is using canon to reference the 2 laws described here, providing the biblical answer to the sung question with the canonically treated instrumental chorale: "Herr, Jesu Christ."

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 48

### Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen

here, providing the biblical answer to the sung question with the canonically treated instrumental chorale: "Herr, Jesu Christ."

NBA I/24; BC A144  
 19. S. after Trinity (BWV 48, 5, 56)  
 \*Eph. 4:22-28 (Exhortation to put on the new nature)  
 \*Mt. 9:1-8 (Jesus heals the paralytic)  
 Librettist: Unknown  
 FP: 3 October 1723 (St. Thomas)

Instrumentation:  
 Tromba (trumpet or horn\*)  
 Oboe I, II  
 Vln I, II  
 Vla  
 SATB  
 Continuo  
 (\*Title page has "Corno," score in No. 1 has "Tromba," part has "Clarin." See Dürr/Jones, 576.)

**Pianoforte.**  
 Bach effectively captures the anguished cry of the text with Violin I and chorus motives in which a pickup beat in triple meter reaches upward followed by sighing resolution.

48/1. (Coro.) • Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me? Rom. 7:24 (48/1).

Vln I motive = first 4 notes of "mich armen Sünder" in last chorale line of "Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut," stanza 1," reaching upward sequentially.

(Andante ♩ = 100.)

Ritornello

G minor C minor G minor G7

C minor A7 D major G minor

12. Soprano. *Soprano and Alto in canon alluding to the "law of sin" (see above). Motive is similar to Chorale Phrase 5.*

Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - sen vom

Alto. *Rhetorical emphasis: Leap of 6th for "elender" followed by sighing figure, repeated 3 times in the next phrase. See reference to sighing ("Seufzen") at the end of the next movement.*

See Dürr/Jones, 576 and side note.

*Instrumental quotation of chorale adds a hermeneutical layer, presumably added by Bach. Most commonly associated words were "Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut," but could also be "Herr Jesu Christ, ich schrei zu dir," used in the final movement.*

Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - sen vom

**Choral im Canon.** *Chorale in Canon = Allusion to the "law of Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (see above)*

*Trp Trumpet & Oboes play the chorale in canon*

G minor C minor

*Chorale Phrase 1 (changed to triple meter)*

Implied Text (from closing chorale): Herr Je - - - su Christ, ich du schrey zu

18.

Lei - be - die - ses To - des!

lö - - - - sen vom Lei - be - die - ses To - des!

*Ritornello*

dir . . . D7 E-flat major G minor

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24.

G7 C minor D major G minor

29. Tenore.  
Basso.

Bass and Tenor in canon alluding to the "law of sin" (see above).

Choral. Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er -

Chorale Phrase 2

aus hoch- - - - be - trüb- - - - ter See- - - - - le.

34. S & A join vocal canon. G minor

Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - sen vom

Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er -

Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - sen vom Lei - be die - ses To - des,

lö - - - - sen vom Lei - be die - ses To - des,

40. hemiola

Lei - be die - ses To - - - - des!

lö - - - - sen vom Lei - be die - ses To - - - - des!

vom Lei - be die - ses To - - - - des!

vom Lei - be die - ses To - - - - des!

Ritornello

G minor D minor D major

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46.

G minor G7 C minor

52. Tenore.

A Tenor & Bass now lead with canon.

Ich e - len - der

G minor G minor

58.

Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - sen vom Lei - be die - ses To - des!

Basso.

Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - sen vom

Choral.

Chorale Phrase 3 (=1)

Dein All - - - macht laß er - - - schei - en mir

C minor D7

Surprising move to E-flat major

64.

Lei - be die - ses Todes!

Ritornello

E-flat major D7 G minor G7 C minor A7

71. Soprano.

A & S in quasi-canon

Ich e - len - der

Alto.

Choral. Ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er -

Chorale Phrase 4 (=2)

und mich nicht al - - - so quä - - - - le.

D major G minor G minor

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78.

Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen vom Leibe dieses Todes,  
 lösen vom Leibe dieses Todes,  
 Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen vom  
 Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen vom

T & B join in canon.

G minor  
hemiola

84.

vom Leibe dieses Todes! Ich elender  
 vom Leibe dieses Todes!  
 Leibe dieses Todes!  
 lösen vom Leibe dieses Todes!

B 4-part canon

G minor

D minor

D minor

90.

Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen, erlösen vom Leibe dieses  
 Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen, erlösen vom  
 Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen, erlösen vom  
 Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen, erlösen vom  
 Ich elender

G minor

C minor

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96.

To - des, ich e - lender Mensch, wer  
 lö - sen vom Lei - be dieses To - des, ich  
 lö - - - sen, er - - lö - sen vom Lei - be dieses To - - -  
 Mensch, wer wird mich er - - lö - sen vom Lei - be die - ses

Choral. Chorale Phrase 5

viel grö - ßer ist die Angst und  
 F minor C minor

101.

wird mich er - lö - - - - - sen, wer wird mich er -  
 e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - - sen, wer wird mich er -  
 - des, ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - - - - - sen, er -  
 To - - - - des, ich e - len - der Mensch, wer wird mich er - lö - sen, er -

Schmerz G minor G minor G minor S & A in parallel 6ths

107.

lö - sen, ich  
 lö - sen, ich  
 lö - sen,  
 lö - sen,

Choral. Chorale Phrase 6

Ritornello

G7 C minor A7 D major so an - - ficht G minor



132.

To - des!  
die - ses To - des!  
To - des!  
wird mich er - lö - sen vom Lei - be die - ses To - des!

Christ, ich schrey zu dir, aus hoch be - trüb - - ter See - - - le.

Chorale Phrase 2

C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor C minor G major

48/2. **Recitativo.** • Sin is a poison that infects body; even more the soul (48/2). Tortured chromaticism is used to depict the poison of sin. Diminished 7th chords used to color anguished words.

Chromatic Saturation in the vocal part in 7 mm., then in 6 mm. Since BWV 78/3 achieves chromatic completion twice (12+12 = 24) in 7+7 mm. while referencing Romans 7:24, it is possible that there is numerical allusion here too, since this recit. amplifies the biblical text of the previous movement, i.e., Rom. 7:24.

1. **Alto.** B-flat D-flat E F G A-flat B D

O Schmerz, o Elend! so mich trifft, in - dem der Sünden Gift bei mir in

Sustained strings

E-flat major E-flat 7 C7 F minor B dim.7

4. E-flat C

Brust und Adern wüthet. Die Welt wird mir ein Siech-und Sterbe-haus, der Leib muss sei-ne

C minor E-flat 7 A-flat major

A striking juxtaposition of minor and major keys seems to suggest the bitter-sweetness of dying to sin (the "Kreuzkelch").

7. G-flat A B-flat F D (F) G-flat A-flat (B-flat)

Plagen bis zu dem Grabe mit sich tragen. Al - lein, die See-le füh-let das stärkste

A dim.7 B-flat minor B-flat 7 B dim.7

Surprising chord progression to "Gift" (poison): from B minor ultimately to E major.

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10. D# C# B E G

Gift, da-mit sie an-ge - stecket; drum, wenn der Schmerz den Leib des To-des

13. B7 A C E major A# dim.7

trifft, wenn ihr der Kreuzkelch bitter schmecket, so treibt er ihr ein brünstig Seufzen aus.

48/3. **Choral.** (Mel.: „Ach Gott und Herr.“) D7 F# dim.7 G minor B-flat 7 E dim.7 B-flat major

•Sin's wage is suffering: I would rather suffer now (48/3). Chromatic voice leading depicts painful effects of sin and the struggle to repent.

Soprano. 1.  
Alto.  
Tenore.  
Basso.

Soll's ja so sein, dass Straf' und Pein auf Sünden fol - gen müs - sen: so

Soll's ja so sein, dass Straf' und Pein auf Sünden fol - gen müs - sen: so

Soll's ja so sein, dass Straf' und Pein auf Sünden fol - gen müs - sen: so

Soll's ja so sein, dass Straf' und Pein auf Sünden fol - gen müs - sen: so

Stanza 4 of "Ach Gott und Herr" of the 10-stanza version in "Das privilegirt vollständige und vermehrte Leipziger Gesangbuch," 1758. This stanza relates directly to the sentiments of the preceding aria. For that reason, Martin Petzoldt argues that it should not be considered a separate movement, revealing a more balanced architecture for the work as a whole (see "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 538, 541).

Instruments double the voices.

5. B-flat major F major G minor F major

fahr' hier fort und scho - ne dort, und lass mich hier wohl bü - s - sen.

fahr' hier fort und scho - ne dort, und lass mich hier wohl bü - s - sen.

fahr' hier fort und scho - ne dort, und lass mich hier wohl bü - s - sen.

fahr' hier fort und scho - ne dort, und lass mich hier wohl bü - s - sen.

Melody is drawn out so bass can color the sentiment with chromaticism.

cross relation

Extreme chromaticism for "repentance"

B-flat 7 G minor F minor B-flat 7 E-flat minor B-flat major



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Solo oboe and voice in duet with continuo. Minuet rhythm with harmonically adventurous circumlocutions suggests an ambivalence between joyful acceptance and discomfoting spiritual purification (destroying ["zerstören"] the sinful flesh). See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 541. The sentiments here reflect the Epistle (put off the old nature) and Gospel (Jesus' healing of the paralytic after stating his sins were forgiven).

48/4. **Aria.** *Moderato*  $\text{♩} = 120.$   
 •Prayer: Destroy my sinful flesh but spare my soul (a continuation of the sentiment that ended the chorale just sung. In odd-numbered symmetrical forms, the crux of the matter often occurs in the central, keystone movement, where antithetical elements meet, here Sodom vs. Zion in a process of spiritual purification (48/4).

1. *Ritornello*

E-flat major

7.

E-flat major B-flat major C minor A-flat major

14. **Alto.**

Ach, le - ge das So - dom der sünd - li - chen Glied - er, wo -

Text painting: Solo oboe has sustained note for "laying down one's earthly members."

B-flat major E-flat major A-flat major

21.

fern es dein Wille, wo - fern es dein Wille, zer - stö - ret dar -

F minor E-flat major A dim.7

28.

nie - der! Ach, le - ge das So - dom der sünd - li - chen

B-flat major E-flat major

34.

Glie-der. wo - fern es dein Wil-le, zer - stö - ret dar - nie der!

B-flat minor B-flat major Ritornello

40.

B-flat 7 E-flat major B-flat major

46.

Nur scho - ne der See - le, und ma - che sie rein, um

B-flat major G7 C minor E-flat major Spiritual purification

53.

vor dir ein hei - li - ges Zi - on zu - sein!

A-flat major A-flat major A-flat major

59.

Nur scho - ne der See - le, und ma - che sie rein, nur - scho - ne

F minor E-flat major

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66.

der See-le, und ma-che sie rein, um vor dir ein hei-li-ges

F minor

72.

Zi-on zu sein, um vor dir ein hei-li-ges

F minor  
A-flat major  
F7  
B-flat major  
B-flat 7

78.

Zi-on zu sein!

Ritornello

E-flat major  
E-flat 7  
A-flat major

84.

E-flat major  
B-flat major

90.

C minor  
F7  
B-flat major  
B-flat 7  
E-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 48

Secco

48/5. **Recitativo.** • Christ does wonders among the weak and dead (allusion to Psalm 88:11) (48-5).

1. **Tenore.** Tenor may be seen here in his traditional role of Evangelist.

The sentiments here reflects the Gospel reading, where Jesus heals the paralytic after stating his sins were forgiven, i.e., he heals body and soul, as referenced at the end of this recitative.

Hier a.ber thut des Heilands Hand auch unter de-nen Todten Wunder.Scheint deine

F major F7 D7 G7

4.

See-le gleich er-storben, der Leib geschwächt und ganz ver-dorben, doch wird uns Je-su Kraft be-

C minor E dim.7 C7

6.

Allusion to Gospel reading of the day.

kannt: Er weiss im geistlich Schwachen den Leib gesund, die Seele stark zu machen.

F major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

Harmonies change to consonant major chords to depict healing.

Minuet rhythm with constant hemiolas suggests comfort, joy, and the health referenced in the text. Oboes double Vln I. Tonal transformations are suggestive of the spiritual and physical transformation mentioned in the text.

48/6. **Aria.** (Lento  $\text{♩} = \text{u2.}$ ) • Jesus heals our body and soul by faith, as Jesus did for the paralytic in the Gospel reading (48/6). The rhyme scheme is ABCBBA. Bach divides the text into 2+4, then concludes by repeating the first 2 lines. Alto and top instrumental line (2 Ob + Vln I) move together (the rhythm derived from the ritornello) and often parallel to each other, except for certain important words, where the voice becomes immobile.

hemiola hemiola

G minor

The ritornello theme (characterized by hemiolas) is later adopted by the voice. Even when the voice departs from this material, the instruments continue with it. The resulting structure goes beyond "Choreinbau" (choral part embedded in an instrumental fabric). See Petzoldt, vol. 1, p. 542, quoting Konrad Küster, "Bach-Handbuch," 214

6.

hemiola hemiola

B-flat major C minor

12.

hemiola hemiola

D minor D minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 48

Contrast between soft voice dynamic and louder string response reflects the contrast between human weakness and Jesus' strength.

19. **Tenore.**

Ver-giebt mir Je - sus mei-ne Sünden, so wird mir Leib - und Seel' ge - sund.

D major G minor G minor B-flat major

26.

Ver-giebt mir Je - sus mei-ne Sün-den, so

C minor

32.

wird mir Leib - und Seel' ge - sund, so wird mir Leib und Seel, Leib und Seel' ge -

D minor

38.

sund. Er

D minor D minor F major

45. Martin Petzoldt suggests 4 successive biblical allusions: Rom. 4:17, 2 Cor. 12:9, Deut. 7:9, Ps. 3:9 (3:8 in English bible). See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 537, 542.

kann die To - dten le - bend-machen und zeigt sich kräf - tig in den - Schwa - chen; er

G minor G minor

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51.

The voice pauses, then departs from the ritornello-derived material while the instruments continue with it.

hält den längst geschlossnen Bund: dass wir im Glauben Hil - fe fin -

A minor

57.

den. Er

A minor A minor D7 G7 A7 B-flat major B-flat major

64.

kann die To - dten le - bend ma - chen und zeigt sich kräf -

C minor E-flat major G7

71.

Voice pauses, phrase is extended, departing from the ritornello-derived material while the instruments continue with it.

...tig in den Schwa - chen; er hält den längstgeschlossnen Bund: dass wir

C minor D7 G minor

78.

The voice pauses twice, departing from the ritornello-derived material while the instruments continue with it (except for m. 77).

...im Glau - ben Hil - fe, dass wir im Glauben Hil - fe fin - den.

G minor E-flat major

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85.

Ver - giebt mir Je - sus mei - ne Sün - den, so wird mir Leib -

C minor

91.

— und Seel' gesund. Vergiebt mir Je - sus meine Sün - den, so

E-flat major

F minor

99.

The voice pauses, then departs from the ritornello-derived material while the instruments continue with it.

wird mir Leib und Seel' ge - sund, so wird mir Leib und Seel, Leib und Seel' ge - sund.

F# dim.7

G minor

G minor

106.

Ritornello

G minor

B-flat major

112.

B-flat major

C minor

118.

G minor

G minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 48

•Prayer: I turn to Jesus for relief in my heartache (48/7).

## 48/7. Choral. (Mel., Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut:)

The chorale tune played in the opening chorus now returns. In "Das privilegierte vollständige und vermehrte Leipziger Gesangbuch" (1758), this is the 11th stanza of 14 in "Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut." In the 1620 Freiburg hymnal, it is the 12th stanza.

The chorale provides the answer to the question raised in the first movement as if in catechismal response. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 543. (In the first movement, the answer was suggested by the instrumentally played chorale.) The reference to Christ as "Trost" may allude to Haggai 2:8.

**Soprano. 1.**

Herr Je - su Christ, ei - ni - ger Trost, zu dir will ich mich wen - den;  
mein Herzleid ist dir wohl bewusst, du kannst und willst es en - den.

**Alto.**

Herr Je - su Christ, ei - ni - ger Trost, zu dir will ich mich wen - den;  
mein Herzleid ist dir wohl bewusst, du kannst und willst es en - den.

**Tenore.**

Herr Je - su Christ, ei - ni - ger Trost, zu dir will ich mich wen - den;  
mein Herzleid ist dir wohl bewusst, du kannst und willst es en - den.

**Basso.**

Herr Je - su Christ, ei - ni - ger Trost, zu dir will ich mich wen - den;  
mein Herzleid ist dir wohl bewusst, du kannst und willst es en - den.

G minor 5. G minor B-flat major B-flat major

In dei - nen Wil - len sei's ge - stellt, mach's, lie - ber Gott, wie -

In dei - nen Wil - len sei's ge - stellt, mach's, lie - ber Gott, wie

In dei - nen Wil - len sei's ge - stellt, mach's, lie - ber Gott, wie

In dei - nen Wil - len sei's ge - stellt, mach's, lie - ber Gott, wie

G minor

8.

dir's ge - fällt: dein bin und will ich blei - - - ben.

dir's ge - fällt: dein bin und will ich blei - - - ben.

dir's ge - fällt: dein bin und will ich blei - - - ben.

dir's ge - fällt: dein bin und will ich blei - - - ben.

B-flat major G minor G major