

PSALMS
Book 3
Psalms 88

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to mahalath leannoth (either the name of a tune or of a stringed instrument) A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite (1 King 4:31, 1 Chr 6:33).

1. O LORD, the God who saves me (“God of my salvation”), day and night I cry out before You.

a. May (“let”) my prayer come before You; turn (“incline”) your ear to my cry (“loud cry for help”).

b. For my soul is full (“fed up, overwhelmed”) of trouble and my life draws near to the grave.

- I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength.
- I am set apart (“cut off, loose”) with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, who are cut off from Your care.” (Ps 6:5, 28:1, 143:1-12, Lam 3:54)
- You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. (Ps 23:4, Is 53:8)
- Your wrath lies heavily upon me; You have overwhelmed me with all Your waves. (Ps 42:7)

Selah

* You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them.

* I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief. (Job 19:13-19, Ps 31:9-11)

2. I call to You, O LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to You.

a. Do You show (“do”) Your wonders to the dead?

b. Do those who are dead rise to to praise You? (Yes! Phil 2:10-11, Rev 5:13)

Selah

c. Is Your love declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Destruction (“the grave, Hell, ruin”)?

d. Are Your wonders known in the place of darkness, or Your deeds in the land of oblivion? (“forgetfulness”)

3. But I cry to You [for help], O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before You.

a. Why, O LORD, do You reject (“reject, spurn”) me and hide Your face from [me]? (Ps 13:1)

b. From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered (or “carry, endure”) Your terrors and am in despair (or, *faint, exhausted - the idea being that he cannot focus*).

c. Your wrath (“burning”) has swept over me; Your terrors have destroyed me. (Ps 32:3-4)

d. All day long they surround me like a flood (“water”); they have completely engulfed me. (Ps 22:12 - *our Lord suffered complete alienation for us.*)

e. You have taken my companions and loved ones from me;

f. The darkness is my closest friend.

Psalm 88

This psalm expresses the despair and pain of one whose “chickens” have come home to roost. At such times a person can feel utterly alone, isolated and unwanted. Some of it may be the result of bridges they have burned through their actions, much of it is simply how it seems to them at the time. But it is how they feel. Ever been there?

He opens the prayer by acknowledging the Lord as the “God who saves me.” He knows who God is. If you wait to pray until you *feel* like it, you might seldom do so. **It is an act of faith and obedience.** Act - Rev 2:4-7

He feels overwhelmed and can see no way out.

- In his mind he’s ready to plan his funeral.
- He considers his life about over (“Can’t get any worse.” Actually, it sure can! Seek Him now.)
- His friends are avoiding him. Maybe they are angry or maybe he has worn them out. When we are oppressed by our pain, we can be “energy vampires” and people see our number come up on their phone, or see us in the store and hunt cover. What is consuming us will be likely what comes out of us. It can be akin to tunnel vision. Two things:
 - * When it’s you that feel overwhelmed, remember that your close friends and family probably are getting weary of hearing you vent (maybe for the 100th time). Pray and be sensitive to your loved ones.
 - * Dear ones, one of the more important ministries that you can have is to be available. You may have heard it all before (time and again!). But...can you be a listening ear and give a brother or sister’s counsel? (2 Cor 1:4). There is a ministry in availability. Are we our “brother’s keeper?”

He appeals to God to intervene now, before he perishes.

He reiterates his determination to seek God and prays that his alienation might end soon.

- He is not sure how much longer he can take it.
- He feels overwhelmed (“drowning”).
- He feels alone. It is important to note here that his isolation is self imposed. It doesn’t change how he feels but it needs to be understood.
 - * 1 Jn 1:9 - He forgave every sin at the cross.
 - * Prov 28:13 - We need to confess and forsake our sin (Jn 8:11).
 - * 2 Cor 5:17 - We are new creations - old things are passed away, all things have become new.
 - * Knowing this can sustain us in the darkest times: (2 Cor 4). In a similar way, Job suffered. He was hurting and conscious of his own guilt and sin. He was in despair yet he clung to what he knew of the character of his Lord. His wife had thrown in the towel already and told him to “curse God and die.” Yet his one comfort in “unrelenting sorrow” was that he had not denied the words of His God (Job 6:10).

Some of us handle pain, guilt etc. by withdrawing into ourselves, isolating and dwelling on how bad things are and on our failings. In such times we need to seek Him and seek the fellowship of His people more than ever.