

# Psalm 88

**This lament is unique to the Psalmist because of its gloom and unrelieved misery, devoid even of hope.**

**It seems to be a personal account by someone who, like Job, was strained between an undeviating trust in God as the sole source of his salvation and an intensely bewildering experience which seems to negate the foundation of all such trust in God.**

The Psalm is marked in three parts by the verses in which the Psalmist recalls how patiently he has prayed to God, [verses 1, 9 and 13].

**Psalms 88:1-2** [New King James] *“O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry.”*

**The Psalmist’s faith is shown by the fact that throughout this time of trouble he continues to be a man of prayer.**

**Psalms 88:3-5** [New King James] *“For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand.”*

**The situation that prompts this tireless prayer is that his troubled life is about to terminate in death, in which he sees no light of hope, for he feels he is dying without a gleam of divine favour.**

**Psalms 88: 6-9a** [New King James] *“You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah. You have put away my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up, and I cannot get out; my eye wastes away because of affliction.”*

In particular the Psalmist complains about the wrath of the Creator God, the alienation of friends and his bitter personal distress.

**Psalms 88:9b** [New King James] *“LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You.”*

**Notwithstanding such trouble the Psalmist does not cease to pray or falter in his faith, note “daily.”**

**Psalms 88:10-12** [New King James] *“Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah. Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?”*

The urgency of the Psalmist’s cry is provoked by the finality of death, like the New Testament he saw the awful possibility of dying under divine wrath and in that case going beyond the point where the Creator God might be expected to intervene in supernatural wonders or where there would be cause to praise God, [Psalms 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Luke 12:16-21].

**There is now a sense of crisis; if God is to act on the Psalmist’s behalf, it must be now, for all too soon it will be too late.**

**Psalms 88:13** [New King James] *“But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.”*

**Although the threat has reached critical proportions, faith greets each new day with prayer, in spite of the fact that the Psalmist is utterly perplexed by God's purposes for his life.**

**Psalms 88:14-15** [New King James] *“LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me? I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught.”*

Divine wrath, which the Psalmist cannot explain, has been his life for a long time.

**Psalms 88:16-17** [New King James] *“Your fierce wrath has gone over me; Your terrors have cut me off. They came around me all day long like water; they engulfed me altogether.”*

God's wrath is now likely to swamp and destroy his life.

**Psalms 88:18** [New King James] *“Loved one and friend You have put far from me, and my acquaintances into darkness.”*

The last word of this Psalm is “darkness.” This has also alienated human sympathy from the Psalmist as his friends are also in darkness as to what is happening.

**Yet even when the last words of the Psalm are darkness and hopelessness in his friends, we wonder at the faith of a man who sees no physical light in his life, but continues to utter fervent, trustful, prayer.**

**Truly this Psalmist can be our teacher.**