

Psalm 88: Darkness is My Closest Friend

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.
A song to be sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction."
A psalm of Heman the Ezrahite.

- ¹ O LORD, God of my salvation,
I cry out to you by day.
I come to you at night.
- ² Now hear my prayer;
listen to my cry.
- ³ For my life is full of troubles,
and death draws near.
- ⁴ I am as good as dead,
like a strong man with no strength left.
- ⁵ They have left me among the dead,
and I lie like a corpse in a grave.
I am forgotten,
cut off from your care.
- ⁶ You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.
- ⁷ Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have engulfed me.

Interlude (Selah)

- ⁸ You have driven my friends away
by making me repulsive to them.
I am in a trap with no way of escape.
- ⁹ My eyes are blinded by my tears.
Each day I beg for your help, O LORD;
I lift my hands to you for mercy.
- ¹⁰ Are your wonderful deeds of any use to the dead?
Do the dead rise up and praise you?

Interlude (Selah)

- ¹¹ Can those in the grave declare your unfailing love?
Can they proclaim your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
- ¹² Can the darkness speak of your wonderful deeds?
Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness talk about your righteousness?
- ¹³ O LORD, I cry out to you.
I will keep on pleading day by day.
- ¹⁴ O LORD, why do you reject me?
Why do you turn your face from me?
- ¹⁵ I have been sick and close to death since my youth.
I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.
- ¹⁶ Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me.
Your terrors have paralyzed me.
- ¹⁷ They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long.
They have engulfed me completely.
- ¹⁸ You have taken away my companions and loved ones.
Darkness is my closest friend.

Psalm 88: Darkness is My Closest Friend

Have you ever heard someone say something like “*If God doesn’t seem as close as he used to be, guess who moved?*” What do you think of sayings like that? Does this psalm have anything to say about it?

This is a most unusual, gloomy psalm. One Bible scholar called it “*an embarrassment to conventional faith*” and asked “*What is a psalm like this doing in our Bible?*” CH Spurgeon wrote, “If ever was a song of sorrow and a psalm of sadness this is one.”



What does Psalm 88 show us?

- This is an honest, unflinching, authentic prayer
- That darkness can last a very long time
- The language of lament this gives us both the *words* for lament and *permission* to lament

If this psalm describes the “winters” of our soul, it’s helpful to describe some things we might find (or not find) in winter...

The absence of light ; The perceived absence of God ; The absence of friends*; Living death **be willing to enter into the loneliness of other people*

Winter’s work:

- prayer – keep digging out, keep praying!
- pruning (II Corinthians 1:8-10; 4:16-18) pruning increases fruitfulness
- waiting (Luke 24:13-34) waiting builds faith’s backbone



When Darkness is Your Closest Friend:

- “Don’t forget in the darkness what God has shown you in the light.” (Joseph Bayly)
- The dark times are often the best times to learn of and grow in grace and in relationship with God
- The hope of a new heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 21:1-4)
- Jesus endured total darkness; abandonment from God so that we don’t have to (Psalm 88:14; Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:45-46)

It might be the end of the chapter but it’s not the end of the story. (Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40; Revelation 6:9-10)

Michael Wilcock: “This Darkness can happen to a believer; it doesn’t mean you’re lost. This darkness can happen to someone who doesn’t deserve it (Jesus, for instance); it doesn’t mean you’ve strayed. This darkness can happen any time as long as this world lasts because only in the next world will such things be done away with. This darkness can happen without you knowing why but there are answers, there is a purpose, and eventually you will know it.”

Psalm 34:18; Psalm 30:5