

## When Darkness Becomes Our Only Companion

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### PSALM 88

- (1) *A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite. O LORD, God of my salvation; I cry out day and night before you.*
- (2) *Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry!*
- (3) *For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.*
- (4) *I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength,*
- (5) *like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand.*
- (6) *You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.*
- (7) *Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah.*
- (8) *You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape;*
- (9) *my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you.*
- (10) *Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah.*
- (11) *Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon (destruction DF)?*
- (12) *Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*
- (13) *But I, O LORD, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.*
- (14) *O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?*
- (15) *Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.*
- (16) *Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.*
- (17) *They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together.*
- (18) *You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.*

I remember reading Psalm eighty-eight for the first time. I was shocked. The psalmist is in deep lamentation. He brazenly questions and indicts God. He demands answers. The closing line is one of the most haunting verses in the entire Bible: *my companions have become darkness.*

Where is the hope for God's rescue? Where is the resolution? Where is the happy ending? The psalm abruptly ends in darkness. This troubled psalmist could not be more different from the psalmist who fearlessly walked in the valley of the shadow of death.

Life can become darkness. Like Paul, sometimes all hope of being saved is lost and we despair of life itself (Acts 27:20; 2 Cor. 1:8). Sometimes all we can do is cry out in anguish to God and ask, "Why?" As hopeless as this lament appears, there are valuable lessons that the psalmist communicates to us.

**1. It's ok to not be ok.** The psalmist pours out his heart to God. He is fully open and honest with God. He shows readers that it is not sinful to process loss. It is not sinful to try to make sense of disorienting experiences. It is not sinful to ask God deep, dark questions.

The grieving process can be prolonged. Sometimes we become impatient with those who are suffering. We want them to "move on" or "get over it." We must be understanding. This psalm teaches us that it's ok to not be ok. To process our grief and accept our plight, we must lean into it. But, this is not the only lesson of Psalm eighty-eight.

**2. The Lord is our salvation.** This lament begins with the psalmist addressing God as the Lord of his salvation. This is the one bright glimmer of hope in this darkest of psalms. The psalmist does not give up on God. He does not lose his faith. He does not curse God. Instead, he looks to God for his salvation for understanding.

This may be the only bit of hope in the psalm. This was all the psalmist was clinging to in his despair. Everything and everyone else in life had failed him. His life was quickly fading. All he had was his faith in God. There may be times in life when everything around us fails. The only strong chord left to grasp is our faith in God.

**3. There are answers to some questions.** There are some answers to questions we may ask in the depths of suffering. While we may never know the specifics to why something bad has happened, there are answers to some of the questions this psalmist asked. And, the answers we are given as it relates to suffering and death are more than adequate to compensate for unanswered questions. Notice verses ten through twelve:

*(10) Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah.*

*(11) Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon (destruction DF)?*

*(12) Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

God does wonders for the dead. The departed will rise up to praise Him. The steadfast love of God is declared in the grave. The wonders and righteousness of God are performed even when we do not realize it. These answers are given to us by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This event shows us that God can do for us in death what He did for Jesus. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is our comfort when our loved ones die and is hope for our deaths.

### **Conclusion**

Psalm eighty-eight is a lament. Lamentation is not just an expression of anguish. Lamentation is born from faith that God will make all things right. While this psalm ends in darkness, it is ultimately answered by Jesus.

Jesus is our rock when we are shaken. Jesus is our light when darkness becomes our only companion. Jesus is our hope when our future is snatched away by death. Jesus abides. Jesus never fails. Jesus is our salvation. These are not small truths to cling to when all else fails around us. Faith in Jesus is how God is going to make everything right.