

## Psalm 88: A Responsive Reading

(congregation reads text in **bold** print)

O Yahweh, 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.**

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.**

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.**

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.**

Yahweh, I have called daily upon You;

**I have stretched out my hands to You.**

Will You work wonders for the dead?

**Shall the dead arise and praise You?**

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?**

But to You I have cried out, O Yahweh,

**And in the morning my prayer comes before You.**

Yahweh, 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;

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Yahweh, 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.**

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.**

Loved one and friend You have put far from me,

**And my acquaintances into darkness.**

### **Praying Psalm 88**

This is an appropriate psalm to pray in times of darkness and despair, when no light seems visible at the end of the tunnel. If that is not presently your situation, then pray on behalf of others who are suffering, including persecuted Christians around the world.

Read verses 1-2. Praise the Lord for being God of your salvation (or the salvation of those for whom you are praying). Commit yourself to perseverance in praying in the midst of your own suffering or for those who suffer. Ask God to hear and respond.

Read verses 3-9a. Describe your own suffering or that of others to God. Be honest, acknowledging His sovereignty and your struggle to understand His role in suffering.

Read verses 9b-12. Pray for God to act into suffering so that those who suffer may be preserved to praise Him. Ask Him to help you be faithful in your praise and worship.

Read verses 13-18. Express again the reality of suffering that you or others are experiencing. Ask God to help you (or others) see present suffering as sharing in the suffering of Christ and that you (or they) may find hope in the promise of sharing also in the resurrection of Christ. Thank Him again for being the God of salvation, even in the midst of trouble.

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