

Psalms 88:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

Analysis

But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. After twelve verses of unrelenting darkness, verse 13 introduces a slight but significant shift: "But." Despite everything—overwhelming troubles, approaching death, divine abandonment, friends' rejection—the psalmist continues crying out to God. This "but" represents faith's stubborn refusal to stop praying even when prayers seem unanswered.

"But unto thee have I cried" (וָאֲנִי אֶלֶיךָ יְהוָה שָׁמַעְתִּי / va'ani eleikha Yahweh shivati) emphatically states that despite all the darkness described, prayer continues. Ani (I, myself) is emphasized—"But I, I have cried to You." Shava (to cry for help, call out in distress) indicates urgent, desperate appeal. The direction is specifically "unto thee"—not to other sources of help, not away from God in bitterness, but toward the covenant God (Yahweh) who seems absent but remains the only hope.

This echoes Job's faith: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15), and Peter's response when Jesus asked if the disciples would leave: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). When every circumstance suggests abandoning prayer, faith persists in crying to God because there is nowhere else to go.

"And in the morning" (וּבֹקֶר / uvaboqer) introduces temporal specificity and perhaps hope. After the long night of darkness, morning comes, and with it, renewed prayer. This suggests daily discipline—despite ongoing suffering, each morning

brings fresh commitment to seek God. Boqer (morning, dawn, daybreak) often symbolizes new beginning, divine deliverance, or answered prayer (Psalm 30:5: "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"). Though the psalm's darkness doesn't resolve, morning prayers suggest persevering hope.

"Shall my prayer prevent thee" (שָׁלַח לִי תְפִלָּתִי/tefillati teqaddemekka) uses qadam (to come before, meet, anticipate). The KJV's "prevent" uses the archaic sense of "go before" or "arrive first." The psalmist's prayer will arrive before God at dawn, perhaps suggesting being first in line, anticipating the audience, or intercepting God at day's beginning. This conveys eagerness, urgency, and determined pursuit of divine attention despite repeated apparent unresponsiveness.

Historical Context

Daily morning prayer was central to Israelite spirituality. Levitical priests offered morning sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-39). Daniel prayed three times daily, including morning (Daniel 6:10). Psalm 5:3 declares: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Morning prayer represented fresh consecration, renewed hope, and starting the day by seeking God's face.

Ancient Near Eastern peoples often consulted deities in the morning for guidance, blessing, or oracles. Biblical morning prayer differs: rather than manipulating divinity through ritual, believers approach the covenant God who has revealed Himself and invites relationship. Morning prayer acknowledges dependence on God for the day ahead and renews covenant faithfulness.

The concept of prayer 'preventing' (going before) God suggests both liturgical practice and personal devotion. Corporate worship featured set times and prescribed prayers. Individual believers developed patterns of morning and evening prayer. These disciplines sustained faith during dark seasons when feelings fluctuated and circumstances remained unchanged.

Church history emphasizes morning prayer's importance. Monastic communities structured life around prayer offices, beginning with Lauds at dawn. Reformers

practiced early morning devotions. Puritan divines wrote guides for morning and evening prayer. Modern believers in persecution, illness, depression, or difficulty often testify that morning prayer—even when feeling nothing—sustained faith through years of darkness.

Jesus modeled morning prayer: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). After intense ministry, He sought the Father at dawn, renewing His dependence and purpose. If Christ needed morning prayer, how much more do His followers?

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What enables the psalmist to continue crying to God despite twelve verses of apparent divine unresponsiveness, and what does this teach about persevering prayer?
2. How does daily morning prayer function as spiritual discipline that sustains faith when feelings and circumstances suggest God isn't listening?
3. What is the relationship between continuing to pray (action of faith) and feeling that prayers are heard or answered (experience of faith)?

Interlinear Text

וְאֲנִי יוֹ	יְהוָה אֵל יֵךְ	יְהוָה ה	שָׁמוּ עִתִּי	וּבַבֹּקֶר
H589	H413	O LORD	But unto thee have I cried	and in the morning
		H3068	H7768	H1242
	תִּפְלֹתַי י	תִּקְדָּמְךָ:		
	shall my prayer	prevent		
	H8605	H6923		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 5:3 (Prayer): My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

Psalms 30:2 (References Lord): O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

Mark 1:35 (Prayer): And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.