

Psalms 88:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength:

Analysis

I am counted with them that go down into the pit (בֹּר, bor)—The pit represents Sheol, the realm of the dead, a place of shadows and forgetfulness beneath the earth. The verb "counted" (נִחְשַׁבְתִּי, nechshavti) suggests being reckoned or accounted among the dead while still living—a social and spiritual death preceding physical death. The psalmist experiences what the living dead feel: isolation, abandonment, purposelessness.

I am as a man that hath no strength (אֵין-עַיָּל, ein-eyal)—literally "without power" or "without help." The Hebrew eyal can mean strength, wealth, or prominent position—all stripped away. This recalls Job's lament of being reduced to nothing (Job 6:13). Unlike psalms that move from lament to praise, Psalm 88 remains in this pit, prefiguring Christ who descended to the dead, entering the ultimate abandonment to redeem those without strength (Romans 5:6).

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, severe illness or social ostracism could reduce a person to living death—excluded from community worship, unable to participate in covenant life. The pit imagery reflects Israel's conception of Sheol as a place of darkness, silence, and separation from God's active presence, though later revelation would clarify that even Sheol cannot separate believers from God's love (Psalm 139:8).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What circumstances in life can make you feel "counted with the dead" even while living?
2. How does recognizing Christ's descent into death and hell provide hope when you feel spiritually powerless?
3. In what ways might God be at work even when you feel you have "no strength" left?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי חֲשֻׁבָּתִי	עִם	י וְרֵדִי	ב וְ	הָ ! יְתִי	כִּנְיָ אִישׁ
I am counted	H5973	with them that go down	into the pit	H1961	I am as a man
H2803		H3381	H953		H1397
אֵין	אֵיל:				
H369	that hath no strength				
	H353				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 28:1 (Parallel theme): Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

Psalms 143:7 (Parallel theme): Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

2 Corinthians 1:9 (Parallel theme): But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

