

Psalm 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 (בָּור, bor)—The pit represents Sheol, the realm of the dead, a place of shadows and forgetfulness beneath the earth. The verb "counted" (נִמְשַׁבֵּת, 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-אֵיל, 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

כִּי בָּרָךְ פֵּה יְהִי בְּזַרְחָדָה עַמּוֹנָה וְרַדְיוֹן	בְּזַרְחָדָה	בְּזַרְחָדָה	בְּזַרְחָדָה
I am counted H5973	with them that go down H3381	into the pit H953	I am as a man H1961
H2803			H1397

אֵין	אֵין
H369	H353

that hath no strength

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:

