

Introduction to the Song:

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" (or simply "Motherless Child") is a traditional African American spiritual. It dates back to the era of chattel slavery in the USA, when it was common practice to sell children of slaves away from their parents. The song is an expression of pain and despair as it conveys the hopelessness of a child who has been torn from parents. The 'motherless child' could also be a slave separated from and yearning for his or her African homeland, his or her spouse, parents, siblings or child(ren) (from all or any of which he or she may have been separated in the trafficking process) or a slave suffering 'a long ways from home'—home being heaven—or most likely all.

Slavery is still a part of global life, and present in the USA and the UK as people are trafficked for domestic, agricultural, sex or other work. Alienation and isolation, especially among migrants, is a part of our immediate community and our own experience. How do you identify with this lament?

Sometime I feel like a motherless child (Paul Robeson)

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometime I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home
A long way from home
A long way from home
A long way from home

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone
A long way from home
A long way from home
A long way from home
A long way from home

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Psalm 139

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.
O that you would kill the wicked, O God,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—
those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil!
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

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