

Devotional

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Every Christian who has ever suffered persecution knows what it is to be tempted to doubt God's faithfulness. The wicked scoff and boast, prosper and advance. God's children suffer and die under the blows of tyrants and terrorist who have no conscience and no fear of God (Psalm 10:2-11). We cannot help but cry: "Why Lord?" (Psalm 10:1).

Yet Jesus warned us that persecution would come (John 15:18-16:33), indeed, that tribulation/pressure would be inevitable in this world (John 16:33a). "But," he added, "take heart! I have overcome the world" (v33b).

Our omnipotent (all-powerful) eternal God *Yĕhovah* is omnipresent (ever-present). He does not hide himself and is never far off, having promised: "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b). (See also: Deuteronomy 31:8; Hebrews 13:5-6). And all his interventions are defined and motivated by righteousness, justice and everlasting love (*Hebrew: hesed*).

When trouble rolled in, threatening life and liberty, King David exercised radical faith in his faithful God. He petitioned *Yĕhovah* (Psalm 10:12-18), confident that *Yĕhovah* would hear and not ignore the cry of the afflicted/humble (*`anav*) (Psalm 9:12).

You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. (Psalm 10:17 NIV)

Our English translation is very soft compared to what this verse is actually saying, which is: Our eternal God (*Yĕhovah*) hears the desire / longings (*ta'avah*) of the afflicted / helpless / humble (*`anav*); he strengthens / makes firm / establishes (*kuwn*) their hearts, and always remains keenly, sharply attentive with ears pricked (*qashab*) to hear (Psalm 10:17).

It is in arrogance, folly and faithlessness that we invest our hopes in human beings (that are mortal), human institutions (that cannot save), human works (that are insufficient), political power (that is self-interested), military might (that is limited) and money (which can only buy what is unprofitable and useless).

If we will but petition our faithful God, then even if our cry is but a whispered prayer, delivered with heavy heart and failing breath from a dark and lonely place, our faithful *Yĕhovah* will hear because he has inclined / extended (*natah*) his ear toward us (Psalm 116:1-2). Sometimes, in wisdom and providence, God waits¹ / tarries (*chakah*) to show grace and mercy (Isaiah 30:18a). That does not mean he has not heard. "Blessed are all who wait (*chakah*) for him" (Isaiah 30:18b). He has promised salvation. Cry / petition / pray / intercede with confidence to our faithful God who hears, and wait / keep watch (*tsaphah*) in faithful expectation (Psalm 5:1-3).

¹ Wait: as in "remain inactive in expectation (of something)" (Collins Concise Dictionary, Fifth Australian Edition)