



Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson

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Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer (Psalm 4:1).

Have you ever had one of those moments when you had to convince yourself that you were right—that what you believed was true? Such a moment requires a certain amount of rehearsing of convictions, as if hearing them spoken aloud will offer assurance.

Someone has said that this psalm is kind of like a midnight conversation with oneself. There is a lot of back-and-forth movement; one moment addressing God, in another directing comments toward unnamed tormentors, and sometimes just thinking out loud in the hope that the “truth” is contained in all of that.

Notably, the psalmist praises God for having given him “room” in which to talk out his struggle—even if that dispensation is for nothing more than an internal conversation. We often work through our psychic conflict by reminding ourselves of what is essential in our belief system. Dare I say that God is big enough to handle whatever we might throw at him?

One of the most memorable moments of my legal training came when I was first exposed to the theories and methods of trial advocacy. I never forgot the lesson. The practical foundation of our American system of jurisprudence is the conviction that powerful advocacy from opposing sides will result in “the truth” ultimately being revealed.

There is no shame in rehearsing and reciting what we believe in order to have those beliefs affirmed. In verse 3, the psalmist speaks as a commentator and declares “But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.” It’s almost as if he has now recalled something about the faithfulness of God, and he only needs to be reminded of it.

Sometimes we remember who we are when we talk about it and say it out loud—even in those moments when we’re not feeling it! What do you think?

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat