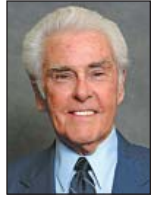


God's promise of faithfulness

Psalm 89 is a royal psalm that focuses on God's faithfulness to his people in Israel. Faithfulness is an eternal characteristic of



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God that leads him into covenant with his people. His nature as holy God distinguishes him from the pagan gods that were often a disturbing force in Israelite worship.

Faithfulness in worship (Psalm 89:1-2). God's faithfulness to us forms the foundation of our praise to him. The root of the word "faithful" is the same Hebrew word that gives us the word "amen." God is described as trustworthy, dependable, trusting and loyal to his word for his people.

Norman Chisholm captured this meaning of God's faithfulness in his worship hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

*"Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassions,
they fail not;
As Thou has been, Thou forever will be."*

His hymn celebrates Paul's message to the Corinthian church when Paul wrote, "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9). Chisholm wrote,

*"Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer
and to guide;
Strength for today and hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousands beside!"*

Faithfulness in heaven (Psalm 89:5-8). When God and heaven are pictured in the Old Testament, God is often described as the head of the heavenly court and the heavenly host. Micaiah was a prophet of Yahweh who predicted the death of King Ahab and the scattering of Israel's forces in battle. In his

prophecy he declared, "I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19). In Job 1:6, "the angels came to present themselves before the Lord."

Even though the Old Testament portrayals of heaven are complex, the psalmist pictures heaven as a location populated by a number of personages of some kind. God's faithfulness is demonstrated "in the assembly of the holy ones." He continues, "Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared [reverenced]; he is more awesome than all who surround him." As the scene is pictured in the psalm, "God's faithfulness surrounds him" (89:5-8).

God's faithfulness is experienced by his followers (Psalm 89:15-18). Another of the psalms proclaims the psalmist's determination to declare God's faithfulness to the great gatherings of the Hebrew leaders. "I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O Lord. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation" (Psalm 40:9-10).

John Stott has pointed to the challenge we face in sharing God's faithfulness through our words and actions. "When God sets our feet on the rock and puts his law in our ears and in our hearts, we cannot keep our lips from making his goodness known" (Favorite Psalms, p. 46).

In 1979, the Nobel Peace Prize committee chose to grant the peace prize to a lonely Mother Teresa, whose life was devoted to serving the poorest of the poor in Calcutta. By the time she was 17, she had a

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deep sense of God's call upon her. In 1928 she formally became a novice in the Sisters of Loreta and was known from this time as Maria Teresa of the Child Jesus. She devoted 10 years to Bible and language study along with further preparation to become a fully professed Loreta Sister.

For seventeen years she taught at the Loreta Convent in Calcutta, where she said, "I am the happiest nun in Loreta." However, when she went outside the convent "she saw firsthand the poverty of Calcutta and it grieved her to the quick." So in 1949, she responded to the "call within a call," which led her from the joys of the convent to ministering in the streets to the poor.

She founded the Order of the Missionaries of Charity in 1950, dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering. "We are called not to be successful but to be faithful," she said. "And faithful she was, right up to the time of her death" (Helen Hosier, 100 Christian Women Who Changed The 20th Century, pp. 284-289).

A faithful God to be served and a faithful woman dedicated to that service made an impact on our world that continues to be felt. She and the now more than four thousand sisters of the Missionaries of Charity never faltered in their loving actions for the poor. Mother Teresa did this by compassionately identifying with those she served in the name of the God who called her to His service.

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