



Praying the Psalms For the Persecuted Church

God is my Rock (Photo of Half Dome,
Yosemite by Faith McDonnell)

I talked about the role of praying the Psalms in a previous one of these Lenten devotions. As advocates and intercessors for the Suffering Church, we can see the Psalms as a great aid to spiritual warfare against the powers and principalities that come against our brothers and sisters. They are a treasure trove of prayers, and as Anglicans, we have them at our fingertips in the Daily Office.

It is quite striking how often the appointed Psalm for the day just so happens to be very appropriate for what is going on in our world. And praying the Psalms is a powerful way to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world when we are unsure of what we should say. For instance, if anyone fits the description “the cords of death entangled me,” it is Christians in Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, or wherever they are suffering for the sake of Christ.

In yesterday’s devotions I mentioned the new initiative of prayer and fasting that has been initiated by clergy leaders and lay Christians in East Africa. For those who wish to commit to this type of prayer, which we are calling #prayercontagion, praying the Psalms is also a great idea. We can do it like this:

First, read one of the Psalms appointed for the day –aloud, if possible. Speaking things is important. Ask God to reveal prayer points to you as you speak the Psalm, and how those prayers might relate to a particular group of persecuted Christians.

Here’s an example from one of today’s Daily Office Morning Prayer Psalms, Psalm 138: 1-3

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; even before the gods will I sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple and praise Your Name, because of Your loving-

kindness and truth, for You have magnified Your Name and Your Word above all things. When I called upon You, You heard me and gave me increase of strength.

Now, a sample prayer for Christians in **China** based on those verses:

Lord, I thank You and praise You with my whole heart. Thank you for the million who follow Jesus in China. Thank You, Lord, that before the Chinese Communist Party regime, the “gods” of atheism and Communism, our Chinese brothers and sisters sing praises to You. And thank You that in spite of their persecution and suffering, they love their country. Thank You for those Chinese Christians that rise very early in the morning to pray for China, and for Your Holy Spirit to bring revival to that massive nation! Because of Your loving-kindness and truth, we know that You are with Your people in China, even as they suffer under the additional misery of this COVID-19. Lord, when the Church in China calls upon You, I know that You will hear them and increase their strength. Help them to be a witness of Your love and power to those who are sick and dying in China from the virus. Help them to be a blessing to the other Chinese, such as the practitioners of Falun Gong and democracy activists who are also persecuted and abused by the Chinese Government. And help them to be an encouragement and light to the Uhyghurs and other people of East Turkestan who are also victims of Communist oppression. Let Your Church in China be a witness to Your glory and to the God who loves all the Chinese people and gave Himself up for death to bring them salvation. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

We can pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters the very words in God’s own Word. We can cry out to Him on their behalf the way that King David cried out — being honest about our fear, anger, frustration, feelings of helplessness, and desperation — even as we trust in His love and justice to prevail on behalf of the Suffering Church.

Scripture: More of the verses from Psalm 138 for prayer. Look at verses 7 & 8. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shall You refresh me; You shall stretch forth Your hand upon the furiousness of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me. The Lord shall make good His loving-kindness toward me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; despise not the works of Your own hands.* Ask God to **refresh** the Christians in China. To stretch forth His hand upon the furiousness of the Chinese Communist Party regime, the secret police, the Chinese Army, etc.

Suggested Actions:

- Finish praying the Psalm verses above, asking God to bless the Church in China.
- Consider joining the #prayercontagion, daily prayer/weekly (Wednesday) fasting to intercede against COVID-19, the plague of locusts crossing Africa/Asia, and famine conditions in many places. Contact <https://www.onetribepople.org/contact> to join.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word. Thank You especially for the Psalms, and how King David used them to praise You, to implore You, and to declare his faith in You. Give us the help of the Holy Spirit to apply Your Word to our hearts and lives and to apply it on behalf of Your persecuted children. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*