

Psalm 4 • You alone, O Lord, Make Me Dwell in Safety

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Psalm chapter 4.

Psalm chapter 4 has some similarities with Psalm chapter 3. You'll notice that it begins with David referring to God in a special way, and I want you to see this in verse 1. He says:

“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! (I want to talk about that in just a moment. I'll finish reading the verse.) You have given me relief when I was in distress. (He's talking about past tense.) Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!” (ESV)

Now, did you notice there that David refers to God as, *“O God of my righteousness!”* This is another of David's declarations of faith, like I was just talking. He is declaring that God can be depended upon as judge to judge properly and righteously even when men cannot.

Here's the point: David is going through a situation where men are turning against him, but he's saying to God, as he opens up this prayer, Lord you are the One who judges my situations without negative influence, without turning away from the truth, and I know that You see the real facts of what's going on, and I know that justice is going to triumph in the end. I know that it's going to triumph in the end. And David comforted himself with those kinds of statements.

Verse 2. Now, he begins to speak to men:

“O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain (or empty) words and seek after lies?”

Now, all right, this verse tells us what's going on. David usually does that at some point in his prayer; usually gives away. And it helps us to understand that David was being slandered. He was being maligned by men who loved to gossip and repeat false accusations, and that sort of thing. And he comes to the Lord and prays about this. But he even speaks to men: how long are you going to do this?

It's very disheartening when people say things that are untrue about you—because people like to spread rumors. It's fun. It's enjoyable, actually. But what's really discouraging is when you're trying to serve the Lord, you're trying to do what's right and people take that which is honoring to the Lord and twisted into something that's dirty or shameful—and that's the kind of thing that can really flatten your tires pretty fast.

But that's what David is crying out to the Lord about, even as he speaks in his prayer to those who would speak against him. 'How long are you going to do this—turn my honor, or glory, if you will, into shame?'

Check out David's response in verse 3:

“But know (he says) that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.”

This is where we see the heart of David. He was convinced of God's love for him and God's willingness to listen to him whenever he approached the Lord in prayer. And he's saying, in essence, to the people who are slandering him and speaking this way; he's saying, I just want you guys to know who you're messing with. You're messing with a praying man.

Isn't that interesting? That's essentially what he's saying here. He says, I want you guys to know God has set apart the godly for Himself, and oh, by the way, the Lord hears when I call. The Lord hears me when I call.

Isn't that a great statement of faith? How many times in your life have you felt like God didn't hear you when you cried out to Him—because that's what our emotions tell us during those times of difficulty? But David is— and David felt that way too. We're going to see some Psalms where he actually felt that way, too. *“How long, O LORD,”* he'll say, and so forth. But here, he makes this declaration of faith: The Lord hears me when I call.

Verses 4 and 5, he goes on. This is— he's still talking to the people who are speaking against him. He says:

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. (For heaven's sake)” I threw that last part in there.

David is actually speaking to his detractors, and he tells them to be angry but not to sin. It's interesting—we're going to get to this. Paul actually quotes this in Ephesians. We're in chapter 4 on Sunday morning, and this is in Ephesians 4: 26. We're going to get to this probably this next Sunday or the week after, but—David or Paul is addressing believers when he says, “*Be angry... (but) do not sin.*”

But here in Psalm chapter 4, the words are meant to confront wicked men as a warning against their anger overflowing unto violence, which it often does. And David actually counsels them here to think deeply, even think deeply upon their beds, which is something he did. He says, think deeply about what you're doing, and keep your mouth closed. Be silent before the Lord. And this is really good counsel.

In verse 5, you'll notice that David tells them to offer right sacrifices and put their trust in the Lord, not in what their anger can accomplish—because some people, that's all they've got. And even though these words might be wasted on the wicked men that came against David, we can certainly learn something from them because—have you noticed how angry our culture is? We live in a very angry time period in human history.

People are just angry. I guess there's probably a lot of things to be angry about. Even as Christians, there's things that we can choose to be angry about and so forth. But we're reminded of something in the book of James that I want to remind you of, here on the screen, from James chapter 1, and that is:

James 1:20 (NIV)

...man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

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It's a great reminder, isn't it? So, be angry but don't sin because you know what? When you give in to that full vent—and by the way, the Proverbs tells us that the fool gives full vent to his anger—when you give in to that and you just let go, that's not going to bring about anything good related to the kingdom of God. (Proverbs 29:11) As James tells us here, our “*...anger does not bring about... (that) righteous life that God desires.*” So, be careful.

In fact, our angry response can often be an expression—listen to me—of our unbelief. Anger can also be an expression of unbelief, and that's why David says to his detractors, “*put your trust in the LORD.*” Put your trust in God rather than in your anger, or whatever else.

And then he ends here in verse 6 by saying:

“There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?”

In other words, people are looking for a change in their circumstances and for some kind of hope in challenging times, and so they ask the question, who can show us some good? Who will lead us into times of prosperity? Times of peace?

Sounds to me like the cry of our culture today, doesn't it? And you know what? It's going to continue to be the cry of our culture, and it is going to lead the people of this world right into the hands of the anti-Christ. Because they are going to continue to cry out and say, who can show us some good? He's going to come along, and he's going to say, I can.

People today want to be happy, and they're constantly yearning to see something good in life. But the trouble is, they want blessing and they want happiness without bending their knee to the Lord. They're looking for blessing without coming to Him who blesses, and understanding His Word, and understanding that the God who created this earth and created the people who live upon it knows best how they should live.

And instead of people looking God in the eye and saying, no, I'm not going to live the way you tell me to live, they want to live their own way and still want to be happy. That's just not going to happen.

Notice David's answer to their question of who can show us some good. David says:

“...Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!”

David knew that it was God and God alone who can deliver what our hearts need and want the most. And listen as David ends this Psalm, now speaking of the benefits of knowing and trusting God. Look at verse 7:

“You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.”

Here, now, David is describing the joy that is in his heart from knowing the Lord to the joy that people go through when they're in times of prosperity. You and I—when he says when their wine abounds, he doesn't necessarily mean when the wine is flowing and you're happy because you're drunk. He's talking about when the harvest comes in. Because they had their vineyards and their

grain fields, and when there was a prosperous harvest, there was great joy because they knew that they were going to be well-set for the next year. And David understood that from a cultural standpoint.

And yet he challenges by saying that the joy the Lord has placed in my heart exceeds that of a worldly joy that is predicated upon some nice thing that just happened to you. We might look at this different—you've put more joy in my heart than when they get a big fat raise and go out and buy a nice house and a nice car or something like that. You've put more joy in my heart than those people can experience. Why? Because their joy, their happiness is based on temporal changing circumstances. You have a great harvest one year? Wonderful; the next year is a lousy one. What happened to the joy from the year before? It's gone. Same thing about the passing circumstances of our own lives. And so, he says, I have this joy in my heart.

Look at the same result that we saw in the previous psalm. Look at verse 8:

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

Have you ever been up all night worrying? Have you ever been unable to get to sleep because you just had this adrenaline running through your system, because you were concerned or worried or upset about something maybe that's coming up or whatever, and so you basically just watch the night pass hour after hour?

Now, David knew what it was like to have those kinds of fears, but he also knew what it was to have the joy of the Lord in his heart that caused him to be able, even in the midst of difficulty, to lie down. And not just lie down, but to sleep. To fall asleep because he knew his safety was bound up in the hands of the Lord.

It's a wonderful thing to experience that peace. But we don't get it by opening up our Bible quick, and reading a couple of passages, and shooting off a quick prayer. It's probably going to take some pressing in on God.

It's going to take crying out to the Lord, getting down on our knees and spending some serious time before the Lord, coming to the throne of grace, and saying, Lord, I need strength and ability. I need power, and that's why I'm coming to the throne of grace because You've promised to give it. But I'm not going to get up until I have it. I'm not going to move from this place until You touch me with peace that passes understanding. I'm not leaving this place of prayer until my heart rejoices in Your salvation and my mind is ready to rest and sleep with the knowledge that You make me dwell in safety.