

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

Psalms Series

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 4

Preached on: Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Truth Community Church

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Back in that other place out west where I used to preach, there was a sweet-hearted woman, grandmotherly type named Frances who would from time-to-time be in the audience when I would speak. She had a very tender heart to Scripture and she had a good sense of humor and she was very gracious to me and my family. There were multiple occasions after preaching that she would come up to me and say, "Don, you're meddling," by which she meant that was a convicting message. People sometimes would describe, "You're getting in my kitchen," and those kinds of things but that was her way of expressing it, "Don, you're meddling," at which she meant as a word of encouragement that the word of God had meant something to her and had convicted her in that particular time.

This is a message that some of you may find to be a meddling kind of message for you because it goes to the very nature of the way that we live and the way that we are able to lay down and what happens when we put our head on our pillow before we go to sleep at night. Do you find that it is sometimes difficult to go to sleep because the issues of life are occupying your mind and you're rehearsing difficulties or recalling people who are opposed to you and you're agitated about that and it's hard for your mind to let you go to sleep? In some ways, the test of our sanctification even, the test of our spiritual maturity, there is a practical way to test that at times and it's found when you lie down at night and how you are unable to go to sleep. Is it hard for you to sleep because you're dealing with anxiety over your problems or over your enemies, so to speak?

James Montgomery Boice says this, he says, "None of us is ever utterly innocent but there are times of relative innocence when we are falsely accused and that creates difficulties in our lives. The question is how do we rise above that? In Psalm 4, David shows us how." So Psalm 4 is a Psalm in which David is being questioned, he's being attacked and it is a Psalm in which he finds his way to lay down and sleep. One of the reasons that we are studying the Psalms is because of their immense practical pastoral value. The Psalms meet us where we live and they address us in our anxieties, in our fears and our joys and our sorrows and our repentance in the words of an inspired writer of Scripture that we can identify with. Well, here in Psalm 4, we are finding another instance where David has given us words from the Holy Spirit that we can all relate to at one time or another at least. The question for tonight is, "How can we sleep peacefully when we have enemies that are attacking us? When we have problems that are

demanding our attention? How can we overcome that and manifest the peace that passes understanding to such a degree that we can lay down and quietly, trustingly go to sleep?" I want to help you to go to sleep tonight. Not right now but later tonight after you get home.

How can we sleep quietly and confidently in times of life agitation? The Psalm that we read earlier is going to help us with that, Psalm 4. First of all, I want to just show you out of verse 1 what David does. The first thing that we could say is that you appeal to God with confidence. This is very, very profound and this does so much to take our prayer lives beyond a desperate cry into the dark to a confident appeal to God knowing that he will hear and that he will listen in a way that puts our mind at rest. I'm very eager for us over time to develop this kind of spiritual trait in our lives as a church body, as fellow believers in the walk of life together, to understand that as we pray, we want to do more than just make requests. We want to learn how to address God and interact with him in a way that is worthy of his honor and in a way that drives us to and carries us to spiritual confidence. It's not that we work up the confidence and then we come to God, we develop that confidence even as we are praying.

We appeal to God with confidence and you saw as I read at the end of Psalm 4 in verse 8, look at that verse with me again. This is kind of the goal that we're moving toward. David said, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." What we want to do tonight is understand how David got to that place of confidence, how he moved from his difficulties into that place of assurance in the person of God and we see first of all in verse 1, his appeal to God with confidence. What is the source of his confidence in prayer? Look at verse 1 with me. David opens up and he says, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer." He opens up and he invokes the name of God right from the beginning but he's doing so with a pattern; he's doing so with a particular approach to God that we need to observe very closely. Notice how he addresses him as he asked God to hear him, to answer him. Notice how he appeals to God. He says, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!" The first thing that you want to see in the midst of that appeal is that he is addressing God with confidence and he says, "God, you are the one who knows the sincerity of my heart. I am surrounded by people who oppose me. I am surrounded by people that are lying about me and trying to undermine me. But God, I can set all of that aside and I can appeal to you unfiltered by their opposition, I can appeal to you and know that you will hear me because you are the God of my righteousness."

What does he mean by that? First of all, he's saying that, "Lord, you know the truthfulness with which I come to you. I can't explain it to others; I don't have to explain it to you, you already know. I am trusting in you to know the righteousness and sincerity of my heart." As he says, "God of my righteousness," he's saying, "You're the source of all righteousness in me." And so here's what he's doing, beloved, here's what I want you to see right from the very start: there is so much packed into these verses of Scripture which testify to us that they are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit. You couldn't get this much genius in content from the mere mind of man. What is David doing here in verse 1?

He is appealing to the promise of God to be faithful to his children. He's appealing also to the omniscience of God. "God, you know the whole situation as I come to you. You know the purity of my heart and so God of my righteousness, the God who has promised to be with me, you are the God that I appeal to." He frames his right thinking and his right speaking about God from the very, very start in this Psalm. In essence, he's saying, "God, you already know the need before I speak to you. Now hear me favorably. God, in light of who you are and the promises that you have made to me, I appeal to who you are, to your character, to your knowledge, to your promise. I appeal to everything good about you and all of your good intentions toward me and I ask you to incline your ear and hear me favorably when I pray now." So from the very beginning he has framed his view, his understanding, the sense with which he appeals to God.

It reminds me of the way Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6. He said, "Pray then in this way, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." When we pray to God, we don't pray out of a desperate sense of panic and urgency because of the trials that we are facing, we stop and step back and say, "No, when I go to prayer, I am addressing the God of the universe who deals with me as a loving heavenly Father." And we have to cultivate that kind of intimate knowledge of God if we are going to actually succeed in our quest for spiritual growth. We do not view God through the prism of our problems and speak to him through the filter of the difficulties that we're facing. We remove that filter and we address him for who he is and what he has made himself known to be to us. He is our heavenly Father. He loves us. He cares for us. He is strong and mighty. He is so committed to our spiritual welfare that he sent the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue us from our own sin.

Beloved, every time you pray, that should be somewhere near the front of your brain, near the very surface of your consciousness that when I come to God, I am coming to one who is favorable to me, who has promised good to me and one whom I can trust with the deepest sorrows, the deepest problems, the saddest weaknesses of my heart because this God is favorably inclined to me. Do you know God that way? Do you trust him like that? If you still view God as some distant, remote deity as a Christian, I've got good news for you: God is not a remote deity to his children. He is a loving gracious Father who knows the numbers of hairs on our head and welcomes us when we pray, says that he will respond, that he knows what we need before we ask him and he bids us to come into his presence and so we come not trembling in fear as true believers in Christ, but we come as those who are confident of a good reception from the hand of our loving gracious God. That's what David starts with and that's where the roots of your spiritual growth can go deep, that soil that you can plunge into to realize that you God is a God to you like that. Everyone of us that knows Christ can speak to God in exactly this manner of confidence with which David prays.

That's good stuff from God's word. We have a loving Father. Now watch this as we continue on in verse 1. I think that one of the things that this teaches us is that it calls us to a much greater degree of deliberate intent in prayer. It forces us to think and to deal with God for who he is. Look at verse 1 with me again, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!" Then watch this, "You have relieved me in my distress; Be

gracious to me and hear my prayer." What is he saying there when he says, "You have relieved me in my distress"? Think about it this way: David is reminding God and as much reminding himself that God has a proven track record with him. David is alluding to the fact that, "God, in times past you have relieved me of prior distresses which no longer trouble me. I have called out to you in times past and you blessed me and you delivered me. When I was feeling squeezed by my adverse circumstances, you gave room to my heart. You alleviated those sorrows. You resolved the problem on my behalf and I walked again in freshness and newness of spiritual life. You've done that for me in the past." Now, what he's doing here in Psalm 4 is, watch this, he is appealing to those past answers to prayer, those past times where God has given him relief and said, "God, just like you have blessed me in the past, now I'm asking you to do something similar again. God, you've done this before and so my confidence is strengthened all the more to ask you again. You've helped me in the past, surely you will help me now as well. My circumstances are different but you're not. You're the immutable unchanging God. You saved me and delivered me out of distress in the past. You will do it again and so I pray with confidence."

Now, I'm going to meddle with you. I'm going to get into your kitchen. If you've been a Christian for any length of time at all, a few months, a few years, those of you many years, listen to what Scripture is saying here. One of the challenges that you have and one of the ways that you need to grow spiritually when you are under times of stress and opposition in your life is you need to remember this particular truth: in times past in your spiritual life, without doubt, without question, you have seen God help you in the past. Now, your responsibility in the present distress in which you find yourself going, is to remember that and not to be sucked into the vortex of what's troubling you right now and forget all of the prior context of your spiritual life. You have to step back and not simply rush into God's presence and ask for help but to remember your own spiritual history. Didn't God help you in that one particular way back when you were first a believer? Don't you remember as you were starting to enter into your relationship with your current spouse of difficulties that you had but the Lord helped you through them? There were times when you were suffering financially and the provision ultimately came. Multiply by that by any number of other examples that we could come up with. What you're supposed to do is remember that and not go to God now in the midst of your present distress as if he has never helped you before. No, no, we step back and we remember and we recite it. We say, "God, I remember when I was down to my last few pennies as a college student and how you helped me. God, I remember how you brought help in the midst of that profound sorrow that men and other human counselors could not help me with. I remember how you helped me then. Lord, I remember how I cried out to you in distress and said, 'Lord, I can't take another minute here,' and you intervened and you provided something that I could not have anticipated and you brought me out of all of those distresses."

You stop and you remember those things and you recite them to God with a spirit of gratitude and a spirit of trust that says, "Lord, I haven't forgotten and so when I pray to you now and ask you to answer me in this present difficulty, O God, I'm praying with confidence, not with a sense that there's any doubt that you're going to help me. You have

too long of a track record. I must honor you with full confidence in my heart in light of your character, in light of your track record. Lord, it couldn't come out any other way except that you will help me again as well. And so, Lord, with that context of trust and memory and your character in mind, I ask you now to answer me when I call. Be gracious to me when you hear." You're not asking God to do something that he otherwise wouldn't do, you're asking him to act according to his established character and his established track record in your own life and so you take time to recite his character. "God, you're the God who defends and upholds your children." You take time to remember God's past help. "God, you helped me there, there, there, there, there and there."

I have to tell you: the privilege of preparing this message was that it forced me to go through that process in my own life and look back and it was so enriching. It was so encouraging. I can't even remember what I was troubled about when I started this Psalm, do be honest with you, because I was just overwhelmed with all of the decisive ways that God had acted and brought me out of my own hardship. How can I do anything else but trust him now? Here's a question for you: how could you betray your own spiritual experience by doubting God's provision now and what you don't see is going to work out today? How can you betray all of his character and all of that past blessing that he's poured out on you by saying, "God, I'm not sure about this one because the guy who is challenging me at work is really powerful. The trouble that I've got here today is bigger than anything I've ever seen before." You can't think that way. You can't let yourself think that way. You have to stir yourself up to faithfulness and the way we do that is by calling to mind the character of God and the past ways that he's helped us. What this does for you, beloved, what this inevitably does for us is rather than making prayer the irksome duty that sometimes we think that it is or the cry of panic, the cry into the dark, it makes prayer something really sweet and precious. When you remember how intimately God has helped you in the past, you can't help but have your affections warmed to the God who has been so good to you and is still with you today, right? Right.

So when the difficulty comes, don't pray like this is the first crisis you've ever faced as a believer or worse, like it's the first crisis that God's ever had to deal with. It's not. It's not. God, pardon the crass metaphor here, God has made his living throughout all of eternity doing the impossible. Let's remember that and pray to him as those who know that and trust him. Beloved, this great God, our Lord Jesus Christ who hung on a cross for our redemption, he deserves our trust and confidence even if we are suffering severely at the moment. Our circumstances don't contradict what he has already done. Our circumstances don't change who he is and so we have to disengage our emotions from our circumstances, unplug that appliance and plug it in instead to the goodness and faithfulness of God. I realize it takes effort. You have to try to do this. It doesn't just happen. You have to rouse up. You have to stir up your soul to move in that direction. That is the exercise of your faith and our God is worthy of that.

So David has stirred himself up to faith in verse 1 and he's appealed to God with confidence. What's going on in the verses that follow in verses 2-5? Well, that brings us to our second point tonight and what you see here in verses 2-5 is that you assess your

enemies with clarity, you appeal to God with confidence. Now in verse 2, David is assessing his opposition with a clarity of thought. Having addressed God in verse 1, now he's going to address his enemies beginning in verse 2. Look at it with me, verse 2. Notice who he's addressing changes. He says, "O sons of men." He's prayed vertically in verse 1, now he's speaking horizontally in verse 2 and he's addressing those who are making life miserable for him. In verse 2 he says, "O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?" This phrase "sons of men" indicates people of nobility. They are men of influence that are opposing David at this point in his life. Somehow and in some way that isn't made expressly clear in the context of the Psalm, they despised David's throne, they were opposed to him, they were trying to undermine him and they had betrayed him for a worthless cause.

What David is doing here as he addresses them, "How long will my honor become a reproach?" In other words, "How long are you going to oppose God's anointed king? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?" He is confronting them spiritually and he is addressing them directly and confronting their sin. He is appeal to them to stop and think. He says in effect to them, "You despise me even though I'm God's anointed king. How do you think that that could ever possibly come out good for you? If God has installed me on the throne, what can your opposition to me be anything other than opposition to God himself? Your heart is filled with deception," he says to those people either actually addressing them or addressing them hypothetically in his mind. It's not entirely clear but certainly when the Psalm was published, these enemies would have found the word addressed to them. And notice at the end of verse 2, there is our little word again "Selah." "Stop and think about it. Park it here and contemplate what I am saying to you. You are being ungodly. How long are you going to persist in that foolish path of conduct?"

What does that say for us today? We're not God's anointed king, nah, but we're his chosen people. We're in a position of chosen privilege before a holy God. What this verse is teaching us to do and there is so much spiritual effort, so much spiritual thinking that goes into being able to put your head on your pillow at night and sleep in peace. It's not just thinking about the character of God and his faithfulness to us. That's part of it but when you're under the assault of wicked people misrepresenting you in your employment, family who is treating you wickedly on account of your faith in Christ, mocking you, making life miserable for you and you know that it's for spiritual purposes for which they do that, again beloved, you have to step back and you have to think biblically. You have to process this situation in light of truth and you have to take a longer term perspective than just the immediate events of today or the things that have bruised your sensibilities or threatened your confidence about what the future holds. You have to think like this. You have to think like this in light of that. You have to think like what I am about to say: their sinful dealings with you carry the seed of its own destruction. The way that they are dealing with you is a guarantee of their own lousy outcome of the fact that they're way with you cannot prosper in the end.

Think it through to its logical conclusion and with that, let's go back to Psalm 1 which we introduced, which we said stood as one of the pillars of the introduction to the Psalms. In many ways, the last 149 Psalms are an interpretation and an application of Psalm 1. And go back to this principle in verse 6 of Psalm 1 which David is applying to his present situation. In Psalm 1:6 it says, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous," by which we said it means that he protects and provides for his own, without fail he does that, "But the way of the wicked will perish." The outcome for them will be death and destruction. Even if there is temporary prosperity and they seem to have the upper hand for a time, you must remind yourself that Psalm 1:6 is the guiding principle of the universe. It is the guiding principle of all of God's dealings with men. He will bless the way of the righteous; the way of the wicked will face his judgment. Sometimes in this life temporarily, quite often in this life temporarily, but certainly eternally the outcome for them is eternal destruction as a holy God vents his righteous wrath on all of their sinful ways. That is the outcome. That is the way life turns out. There is the blessing of God on the righteous, there is the judgment of God on the wicked.

Now, what you have to do in your sorrow, difficulty, when people are lying about you and misrepresenting you and doing all kinds of things to make life unpleasant not only personally. As you look on a world of increasing ungodliness and religious deception, you step back from all of that and you remind yourself that your God still reigns even though it has pleased him to let you be troubled for a period of time. Whatever else is happening as godliness takes greater root not only in our world but in the so-called evangelical church, whatever else is happening, Psalm 1:6 still prevails. "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." That is an impossible principle to violate. Nothing, when it's all said and done, will contradict that one main fact and so you take that one guiding principle and you remember that God still reigns. And, "God, if I'm going to suffer here for a little while, I'm willing to receive that and accept that. I'm willing to submit to the wisdom of your providence in it because I know that ultimately your blessing will be manifest upon my life either now or in eternity. Either way, the outcome is good for me and therefore the harshness and the sorrow of the present circumstances are mitigated substantially." You think through that in terms of how it applies to you and then you look at those who we are assuming are wickedly opposing you and you realize, "This can't come out good for them. There is no way that this has a good outcome for them."

So David, with that same principle in mind, look back at verse 2 says, "How long are you going to continue in that? How long are you going to love what is worthless and aim at deception? How long are you going to beat yourself in the head with a hammer? You're ruining yourself not me." And as you pray that way, you remember that you were once like them too. But for the grace of God upon you, that would be the direction of your life as well.

Now, the beauty of this Psalm is that David is not praying that with a sense of vindictiveness but with confidence and even an appeal for the spiritual welfare of his own enemies. Look at verse 3, he says, "But know," he's giving them an imperative, "You need to know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears

when I call to Him." "You may think that you're getting the upper hand here but you need to step back and realize that," particularly in David's situation as God's anointed king, "God has set me apart for himself. You can't get away with this. Don't you see that this ends in your destruction? So cease from your foolishness. You're ultimately slitting your own throat with what you're doing because God is for me, God has set me apart." He's telling them that the power of this is just immense. He is telling them as they are opposing him, "You should reorient your entire life. You need to completely rethink your life paradigm because you're going the wrong direction and it cannot come out well for you. Instead of attacking me, you should fear God and the inevitable consequences of your rebellion."

Look at verse 4, he says, "Tremble, and do not sin." He's speaking to those sons of men who are opposing him. This is not directed to the godly man who is later reading the Psalm trying to go to sleep in peace at night. This is his appeal to those who are opposing him. He tells them, "Tremble, and do not sin. Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still." What is he saying? He's trying to wake them up. He's saying, "Wake up. In your arrogant opposition to the people of God, you need to realize that you are just storing up wrath for yourself. You need to tremble. You need to fear God. You need to repent and manifest that by turning away from this sinful course that you are pursuing." And as they're laying down in their bed, he speaks to their conscience and he says, "If you would just think about this in the quietness of your own bed, if you would stop the evil agitations of your heart long enough to think about what I'm saying, you would see that what I'm telling you is the truth." It is a very direct, clear rebuke and call to repentance upon those who are opposing him. He says, "Meditate in your heart." In other words, engage this with all of your being. You have to appreciate the generous, magnanimous character of David here and see through the words of David as he addressed his enemies the gracious appeal of God to sinners. That there is a sincere, genuine offer of mercy upon repentance to be received. And David, rather than like the Sons of Thunder in the New Testament calling down fire upon his enemies, he's actually appealing to them to repent for their own sake.

You see, that "Selah" at the end of verse 4. Our message to a sinful world is that, "We're not intimidated by your increasing ungodliness. All the more, we're strengthened and deepened in our conviction of the righteousness of our God, the righteousness of our cause and the truth of what we believe. The more you pound the hammer on the anvil, the more we are strengthened in our confidence in God, our confidence in truth, our confidence in Christ, our confidence in the gospel. The more you push against it, it's just like wind under our wings, it causes us to fly higher and more nobly than ever before." And our message to them is, "No, we're not frightened. Far from bending to your ungodliness, all the more, we stand up straight and call on you to repent once more. You need to tremble. You need to fear God. Your very vicious behavior is the very proof that you need that you need to repent. Your opposition to all things scriptural and biblical and the people of God is the mark and the seeds of your own destruction. Oh, won't you please tremble and fear God in light of it? You'll see it," David says, "if you'll just think about it silently on your bed, if you'll just meditate on what you have heard. So selah, stop, be still and listen."

As he addresses his enemies, he's also strengthening his own soul, he's strengthening his own audience of those that hear him. We should see as he addresses the enemies of God, we should in that another stream flowing into our river of confidence that says, "Yeah, that's right. Of course they're going to be destroyed. What am I afraid of? Why do I tremble in front of this? Why do I get agitated over this? The outcome is obvious. It doesn't matter who's ahead in the fourth inning. What matters is who's ahead after the third out in the ninth. And I know who comes out ahead in the plan of God, it's the people of God and I'm with the people of God. I belong to the God who reigns. I am not afraid." And beloved, we're just going to need this line of thinking more and more in the days and the years that lie ahead as the opposition to Christ and his church becomes more and more open and flagrant and even violent. We must embrace these things. We must learn to think this way. We must learn to pray this way now while we have a time of comparative peace so that we are ready when we have to engage the conflict. This is our life blood for a church in persecution. This is where the martyrs found their courage to stand while they were being burned at the stake. An utter, unshakeable confidence in the reigning purposes of a supreme God.

We of all people should be exhausted of and see through the emptiness of political solutions to the problems of our culture, right? There is no relief there and I think part of the reason that God has allowed the church to suffer and has allowed wicked people to prosper in this is, one of the primary lessons for us as the people of God to take out of that is that we never should have been putting our trust in those mechanisms to begin with. And now that we see that they're futile and now that we're on the receiving end of the minority status, now we come back to where we never should have departed. We come back to our character of God and we get rooted in where the real confidence is to begin with and the adverse circumstances become that which drive us back to the truth of our trustworthy God and we find in that our confidence and our peace and realize that that was far superior than any political solution that was ever offered to us. Wisdom is sometimes found in keeping your mouth shut and that's what I'm going to do right now. Let's not get too far from the text.

Now look at verse 5. I know you're all dying to know. I'm sorry. You know, look, I was a political science major. I was engaged in politics as a young man. You go through all of that and you just realize it's empty, it has nothing to offer the Christian church. There is nothing in that that helps our cause. There is nothing in that that advances the gospel. There is nothing in that that can do anything but alienate the very people that we're trying to win. It's a false hope that politics can change the orientation. Only a sweeping revival borne out of the Holy Spirit can answer the ills that we see all around us in the headlines day-by-day. Look, part of what reemphasizes that here in Psalm 4 for us is recognizing that David is speaking this way as the king. He is speaking as the anointed of God with the majesty and authority of the throne and he's not exercising his political prerogatives, he's appealing on a spiritual basis to his enemies. We anonymous Christians in the system, if David did that, how much more should we? Right? It's okay, you can nod and agree even if you don't. Pretend that you do. Alright, I'm glad to get that off my chest.

David is still appealing to his enemies in verse 5. He tells them, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD." Trust in the Lord. It's a call on his enemies to repent and receive mercy from the God of Israel. David is doing something remarkable here as people are lying about him and undermining his reign. He is appealing to them to be reconciled to God. He was not vindictive. He was not addressing them in anger. He would have them repent if only they would. His heart was pure and gracious. This helps us frame our own disposition in the face of our own hostilities that we are on the receiving end of. Beloved, what this Psalm 4 is teaching us, the spiritual ground that it's calling us to is lofty. It is high. It is rarefied air that we are breathing in as we read this Psalm because you see David responding not with fear toward those who oppose him, not with anger against those who are lying about him. He sees them as men in need of repentance and he gives them the gospel presentation: repent and be reconciled to God. I'm meddling in my own life right now with those things to say.

This is more than help in our personal lives that it gives us. This frames the way we look at a wicked world. Beloved, we've got to stop being angry Christians. We've got to stop being fearful Christians and afraid of what people are going to do to take away what we've got. We're not to be angry. We're not to be anxious. We're to be confident and we are to ever have that reconciling message of the gospel: repent and be saved. Be saved from this perverse generation. It's a sober message but it's a true message and it's an honest message and it is a clear message. The more that our enemies pound against us with sinful weapons, the more that we respond, "You need to fear God and repent. I'm not angry. I'm not afraid. I'm telling you the truth for the sake of your own soul." That's the mindset with which we address the world. Our message is far more sober than, "Oh, do you know that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life?" This is far more sober than that. David says, "Tremble and do not sin." He's telling them to fear God. Our message that we graciously communicate is, "Your worthless passions and the deceptions that you pursue lead you to destruction and as much as you may hate me for saying it, I don't want that for you. I invite you to repent. You should fear God while he is still extending a gracious offer of mercy to you." Now, I hardly need to tell you that today in the aftermath of the cross, we don't tell them to offer animal sacrifices in accordance with Old Testament instruction, we tell them to look to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary to be reconciled to God and put their trust in the revealed Lord Jesus Christ who was slain for sinners.

So David appeals to God with confidence; he assesses his enemies with clarity; final point for tonight: you acknowledge your trust with peace. You acknowledge your trust with peace. Look at verses 6-8 now. David knows that even his supporters are discouraged by what's going on around and I understand that many of you came in here discouraged and weighed down also. Perhaps you can identify with the somewhat despairing plea that's expressed at the beginning of verse 6, "Many are saying, 'Who will show us any good?'" "I'm so tired of the conflict. I'm so tired of this weight. Is anything good ever going to come out of it? You know, it has been years for me." If that's you, I can relate by past life experience and what you see here in verse 6, if you're a believer weighed down like that, is not the rebuke of God upon that but, again, the call, the gracious call to higher ground. Here, finally, in verse 6, David expresses his prayer. He

identifies with those who are saying, "Who will show us any good?" David says, he speaks up now and addresses God and here's his request, simple like we saw last week. He says, "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!" Lift up the light of your countenance. In other words, "Show your favor to us. That's all we need, God. We just need you to sprinkle some mercy here and all will be well. I don't have to give you a detailed prescription of how to deal with everything, God, I'm just going to pray more generally. I'm going to pray in that which will cover everything. Lift up your countenance. Give us your blessing."

Turn back to Numbers 6 where there is an echo. This passage in Psalm 4 is an echo of this benediction that you see in Numbers 6 and will help us have a sense of the spirit of what's being said here. Numbers 6:24, "The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." "God, show your protection. Give us your provision. Bless our hearts with your peace." All of that is wrapped up in that request in verse 6, "Lord, lift up Your countenance upon us. Just pull back the veil and let us see your grace and blessing on our lives. That's all we need."

And the resulting peace of answering that request, he says in verse 7, would be better than any external blessing that God could give. Once again, the Psalms refute the prosperity gospel. In verse 7, David says, "You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound." He said, "Lord, to have the peace that comes from knowing you and being confident in you is better than a bumper crop. It's better than abundant provision all around me." Charles Spurgeon said, "Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn." That's right. That's how much we must love Christ. That's how sweet he is. That is how precious he is that we would look and say, "If all is well with me with Christ, then that is better than any earthly prosperity I could ever have. Better to have Christ than to have everything else." That's the spirit of what David is praying. David says, "Lord, if I can have an assured sense of your presence, that will make me happier than they are when their barns are overflowing, when they have all that they need and want to eat and so much more, Lord, than in all of their houses on Malibu Beach. Lord, they can have that superficial stuff. If I have your peace, if you would renew the sense of your presence deep in my heart, I prefer that, I value that than anything this world has to offer."

Is that where you're at spiritually tonight? Do you love Christ like that? Would you trade peace with Christ for some other earthly thing or earthly relationship? If you're willing to exchange Christ for something else, you need to get alone with God and the Scriptures because the true believer sees the surpassing value of Christ and realizes that nothing compares and prefers him to all else. Some of you, I know, have paid supreme prices for Christ. Take heart in this and share in that same joy that David had.

So, where does all of that leave us? Verse 8, we come back where we started the message out. Having worked his way through all of this spiritually in the presence of God, now he's done. Now nighttime can arrive and he says in verse 8, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone," notice the word "alone." He's not relying on anything else or

anyone else, "You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety." I've got all I need to sleep tonight. You have all you need as a Christian to rest well tonight. You don't need anything to change of that which has troubled you, rather, you appeal to God and you sleep in peace. David says, "I don't need anything else, God, if you're going to keep and protect me." Watch this, "The opposition of man, O God, does not disturb my peace. The travail of difficult circumstances does not cause me to fail to slumber because, God, in you I have all I need. In Christ alone my hope is found."

Is that where your heart is resting tonight? Can you enter into the spirit of Psalm 4? What happens to you when you lie down to sleep? That's the measure of spiritual life from Psalm 4.

Let's pray together.

Father, it's a marvelous thing that you are the God of creation and that you spoke the worlds and the universe into existence. That's wonderful. It's a majestic display of your power that we believe and affirm here at Truth Community. Father, it's also an expression of your majesty and your greatness that you can help the human heart be at rest, the heart that is reconciled to you through our Lord Jesus Christ, the heart that appeals to you in confidence and can transcend earthly opponents and enemies and circumstances and lay down at night and sleep in peace, Lord, that is an equally awesome display of your greatness and we thank you for it.

I pray, Father, for all of us in here tonight that we would live in the spirit of Psalm 4, that we would be confident of the God of our righteousness, that we would remember those past times where you have delivered us and have our hope renewed that you will deliver us once more. Help us, Father, not to fear men but to call them to fear you. And Father, in the midst of life here in the 21st century, here tonight in response to your word, our simple prayer is that you would lift up the light of your countenance upon us, that you would show us your blessing, your favor, and that we could live in peace unafraid of what swirls around us. Father, if you would just put that kind of gladness in our heart, we would rejoice more than those who have everything the world has to offer. Father, I pray tonight for each one that is here, that in a greater measure than what happened last night, when they lay down to sleep in the next few hours, that you would help them so that they would lie down in peace, confident that you alone help them, make them to dwell in safety. With gratitude for your past, present and future goodness, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You have been listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church. For more information about our ministry including Pastor Don's blog and our location and service times, please visit us at truthcommunitychurch.com. You will also find Don's sermon library where you can download free messages on many biblical passages and topics. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.

