

Psalm 4

To the Chief Musician. With Stringed Instruments. A Psalm of David.

¹ Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

² How long, O you sons of men,
Will you turn my glory to shame?
How long will you love worthlessness
And seek falsehood?

Selah

³ But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly;
The Lord will hear when I call to Him.

⁴ Be angry, and do not sin.
Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.

Selah

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And put your trust in the LORD.

⁶ There are many who say,
"Who will show us any good?"
LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

⁷ You have put gladness in my heart,
More than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

⁸ I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

In 2Samuel 15–20, throughout the entire Absalom-rebellion incident, there are many different kinds of responses to David's distress, and David engages several of them here—before God in prayer, not (at least at that time) in public dialogue... it would become public enough, eventually, when this inspired prayer was delivered to the choir master ("chief musician," NKJV) for use as a song in public worship!

But it is helpful to us to see where David worked through these things: not merely in his own heart, but *before God* in his own heart. For, we too will have to deal with hearts that are responding in these ways—whether our own hearts or the hearts of others around us.

He gives God a special title: "God of my righteousness." Immediately, there is the reminder that **God is the One who vindicates** us (or others). What a relief from worrying about how others will respond to our distresses, and what a warning against jumping to conclusions about the distresses of others! Like Job, and David here, let us cry out for our audience with God and the mediation of Christ. Unlike Job's friends, and the men of v2, let us not jump to conclusions beyond what we know. Though God distresses a man for a time, He may yet vindicate him. In doing this, **God acts according to His character, His covenant, and His previous works**. All of these are implied in v1.

This brings us to the first kind of response we may encounter in our distress: **the fair-weather friend**. These are those who once praised David but have turned his glory into shame (v2). When the winds of opinion blew differently, they changed their tune. To these, David responds that **God will never change His tune concerning the godly**, because He has set him apart for Himself (v3). Nothing in time can convince God to abandon someone whom He has chosen as His own from eternity.

But not all abandon us. Sometimes, **the over-passionate friend** is unhelpful by how upset he is (v4a). There is a place for righteous anger, but one way to discern whether ours is the right kind is whether it is robbing us of sleep at night (v4b).

The Psalm's counsel here is to do just what David was doing in v1 ("speak within your heart, and be still") with the result of v8: that lying down and sleeping come as twins (this is what the "both" indicates) since lying down in prayer is to lie down "in peace." The apostle picks this up in Eph 4:26, when he adds that we should not let the sun go down on our wrath. Certainly, Psalm 3 presented a righteously angry anointed one, but his anger is such that allows for that swift and sweet sleep of 3:5.

We must remember that **God would be right to be angry with us too, if He had not given us what righteousness we have through sacrifice (v5a). Therefore, trust in Him**. The God who turned His wrath away from us by the blood of Christ will not suffer us to be ultimately harmed. "Put your trust in Yahweh" (v5b).

Next, there is **the depressed friend**, who is unhelpful by the greatness of his despair (v6a–b). There are "many" who say "who will show us any good?" This is an easy trap to fall into, because we may think that responding like this is to sympathize with the sufferer. But, to despair like this is to forget the God of v6c–7b.

How can we ever be without hope of light? **As long as we are before the face of God, there is an inextinguishable light of hope (v6c). He Himself can give gladness directly (v7a), just as much and more without means as by the best of means (v7b)**. The grain and wine in v7 are covenantal blessings, so the statement here is extremely strong: God can, as it pleases Him, fully minister His covenantal favor directly to our hearts even without the customary signs and indicators of that favor!

Thus we have explained in Psalm 4:8 the sweet sleep of Psalm 3:5. Even if this Psalm was not written about the same occasion, it presents to us the truths that sustained his believing heart on that occasion.

And then, the Spirit carried him along to write this prayer for us as a song, so that we will respond rightly to our distresses, to others' distresses, and to others' responses to our distresses. **It is ultimately the Lord "alone" Who makes us dwell in safety**—not perceived safety in trouble-free circumstances.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tinysa.com/hopewellarp)

So psalm four.

It's home for to the chief musician was during the instruments a psalm of David. Hear me when I call oh god of my righteousness you have relieved me. In my distress have mercy on me and hear my prayer. How long you sons of men will you turn my glory to shame?

How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood, salah? But know that Yahweh has set apart for himself him who is godly. Yahweh will hear when I called him? Be angry and do not sin meditate within your heart on your bed and be still say law. All for the sacrifices of righteousness.

And put your trust in your way. There are many who say who will show us any good. Your way lift up the light of your countenance upon us. You have put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increase. I will both lie down in peace and sleep.

For you alone, oh you always make me dwell. In safety.

Now it's quite possible that. The occasion for Psalm 4 is the same as for Psalm 3, there's a lot of overlap. In the Psalm David is in distress he's talks about being able to lay down and peace and sleep which mirrors verse 5 of chapter 3 and whether this was written while you know concerning his fleeing from Absalom or one of the many many many other times that David was under distress.

The theology of why he is able to have peace and particularly peace in order to sleep in Psalm 4 is the same as what is behind his being able to lay down sleep and awake for the Lord sustained him and Psalm 3. Now if you look at the Absalom rebellion incident there are many different kinds of responses to David's distress most of the kingdom went along with Absalom and turned on David.

Some who went with David were very furious, in fact you remember when she made was hurling stones and insults.

Was abishai one of the sons of zero wire who was with David. Said shall I go over across the ravine and take his head off heads do a lot less yelling at you and they're not connected to their shoulders was the implication and so he had those who were on his side who were quite furious and the other kind of response that we see here in this psalm is that of those who are overly despairing.

Or depressed. And there are many different kinds of responses that people had to David's distress and David engages those three different kinds in this psalm the sons of men who turn his glory to shame those who are angry verse four, and then those who are despairing of ever seeing good again verse six.

But notice where David engages them not to them first of all but before God in prayer not at least at that time in public dialogue, although it would become public enough. When this inspired prayer was delivered to the choir master for use as a song in public worship. But he starts out saying here me when I call oh god of my righteousness.

Have mercy on me hear my prayer and so he's telling God about all these different unsatisfactory responses that people are having it's helpful for us to see where David first worked through his responses to others not merely in his own heart not flying off the handle to them, but before God in his heart.

I think often when.

When we are disturbed by how other people are responding to situation in our life we. Make one of two errors one we confront them at a time and in a way that is not necessary we create problems that way the other we stew and we stew and we do we go over it in our minds what we could say, or maybe we've had the conversation we go over what we wish we would have said or.

But David's example here is to present to God what's going on with these different kinds of responses to his distress, he isn't distressed. And we too are going to have to deal with hearts that respond in these ways and not just of hearts of others around us but of our own hearts.

Whether we respond by turning on somebody who's in their distress or by being overly indignant on their behalf and being unhelpful to them that way or being overly discouraged about their circumstances and being an helpful to them that way so as the as David addresses the Lord here. He says hear me when I call oh God of my righteousness so he addresses God with this special title he calls God the God of his righteousness and that immediately reminds us reminds David that God is the one who vindicates us that we don't have to get everybody on our side or convince anyone that we're in the right that the Lord is going to ultimately take care of our name the Lord is going to ultimately set all things, right?

And that he is the one who has made us righteous with himself, which is going to become important is an important thing that David picks up in verse five when he talks about all for the sacrifices of righteousness. So God is the one who've indicates us and that relieves us from worrying about how everyone is responding to our distresses.

Already when he says God of my righteousness that in itself has the theology that he needs to be relieved from worrying about these people who have turned on him. Well, they've turned on him, but God isn't going to turn on him from worrying about his friend who may make things worse by their being over angry.

From worrying about his friends who are despairing God is God of my righteousness. So it's a relief from worrying about how others respond to our distresses and it's a warning for us against jumping to conclusions about the distresses of others. For instance a lot of what Paul went through.

So there were people who were opposed to Paul and they took that opportunity to say that well, you know, Paul's being suffering or Paul's being in prison and so forth that that was some indication of God being against him. We should not jump to conclusions. Based on the trouble that someone goes through.

The most famous perhaps an example of this in the Bible or James friends. Who draw all kinds of conclusions about Job based on the trouble that Job is going through although the trouble was not for a particular center jobs, but for the glory of God and to increase jobs knowledge.

Of the Lord. So like Job did and like David does here. When we are in distress and it let us remember that God is the one who've indicates us and cry out for an audience with God and the mediation of Christ. That's very important that's you can't cry out for God to vindicate you unless you're coming through the righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus because there's no vindication from God withoutonement from the Lord Jesus and His righteousness standing for you.

And that too if you read the book of Job is very significant part of Job's crying out continually. Asking that there would be someone who would go between the two of them and who would plead his case? So that's the big difference in the book of Job between Job and his friends Joe believes in the gospel.

He knows that no man is righteous enough to be clear before God without a mediator but Joe believes in a mediator and his friends don't. So unlike Job's friends and the men of verse 2 who turned David's glory to shame. Let us not jump to conclusions beyond what we know.

Though God distresses a man for a time, he may yet vindicate him. And then doing this he acts according to his character he is the God of our righteousness and God of mercy. There towards the end of verse one his covenant he has God of my righteousness he has connected himself to us he's joined himself to us and his previous works.

Look at the middle of verse one when he talks about you have relieved me in my distress the Lord acts consistently. So that brings us to the first kind of unhelpful response that we may encounter in our distress and that's the fair weather friend these are the ones who once praise David but as verse two says they've turned his glory into shame as soon as the winds of opinion seem to be blowing differently they changed their tune but today to these.

David responds in verse 3 know that Yahweh has set apart for himself him who is godly. They changed their tune but God will never change his to concerning the godly because the way they came to be godly with God set them apart for himself. And. Nothing in time is going to convince God to abandon someone whom he has chosen as his own from eternity and that's the only way that person ended up being godly anyway.

So if you are trusting in Christ and you go through you're going through something and it feels like people are turning on you you can say the only way I came to trust in Christ was because God set me apart for himself let all the rest of the universe turn on me my God will not turn on me.

And you have that if God is for us who can be against us there. But not all will abandon us sometimes the overpassment friend is unhelpful by how upset he is. In verse 4. David is addressing someone else he says be angry doing but do not sin meditate within your heart on your bed and be still and the Hebrew there is speak in your heart on your bed and be still there is a place for righteous anger, but.

Verse 4 actually gives us a helpful way to discern whether ours is the right kind perhaps you have been in a situation and one of the difficulties for you is you feel very angry. And because you love the Lord you want it to be righteous anger, you don't want to have ungodly anger and so verse 4 is helpful because it gives us one of those tests for as my anger righteous and that test here is is it robbing me of sleep at night or?

Nice beak in my heart unto the Lord as he is calling out to God like David is basically telling the friend and verse 4 to do the same thing he was doing in verse 1. So that his friend can have the same outcome in verse 8. When David finishes this prayer he's going to say, all right?

I can go to sleep now. I'll best lie down in peace and sleep for you alone, oh you always make me dwell and safety and so he's basically telling the friend to take the same spiritual medicine he's saying be angry and do not sin speak in your heart on your bed and then be still it's done.

And that helps us with righteous anger righteous anger leaves the vengeance to God, it doesn't need to stew on it it cries out to God it tells him all about it, but that done it knows that the situation is in good hands it's safe with him. By that test a lot of my anger that I have felt was right just in the course of my life turns out not to have been so much and may God mix all of our anger more with faith that we can follow Psalm 4:4, in fact in the way that the apostle taught us in the passage we were recently in an Ephesians.

That we would not let the sun go down on our wrath here then as the method for not letting the sun go down on your wrath or not carrying your wrath off to sleep with you is entrusting the Lord with whatever it is. Certainly Psalm 3 presented a righteously angry anointed one he says arise oh you always save me oh my God, you have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone you have broken the teeth of the ungodly and yet in this righteous anger he was able to let it go on his bed verse five and and psalm three.

I lay down and slept. I awoke free always sustain me. So you've got the fair weather friend who's abandoned him the overpassionate friend and. The overpassionate friend in coming to God needs to remember or if we are the over-passionate friend we need to remember that God would be right to be angry with us too and that's where verse 5 comes in says all for the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord yeah, what right do you have to be angry when the God of heaven?

Could rightly burn his fury upon you forever and ever but he is not done so he's offered a substitute the Lord Jesus Christ, so when we come to God through the sacrifice of Jesus it. Reminds me reminds us that we ought to have been the objects of wrath, but we have been spared that and so that does two things.

One it cools our spirit and two it reminds us of the wrath of God. And God's wrath is going to be much more perfect against whatever it is than ours.

And that'll enables us to put our trust in Yahweh and diversify. Finally the depressed friend. There are many who say who will show us any good. They don't think that there's any good in the situation. And this is actually an easy trap to fall into which may be why verse 6 says there are many.

When you have someone who's in the in a who's distressed about their situation, we often feel the desire to be sympathetic with them and. And so we may overdo it and speak in a way that does not honor the fact that the Lord is our light and that the Lord is our gladness and so he is our hope and our gladness.

So to despair by thinking or talking as if it's impossible that any good could happen that any good could be in it or come out of it is to be like the friend in the beginning of verse 6, who will show us any good. And to them. We're in response to them.

David remembers the God of Six C you always lift up the light of your cat and it's upon us and verse seven. You have put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. That shows us why it's a bad to say who will show us any good because who will show us any good has an answer.

It's God. As long as you are before the face of God, that's the word countenance means right? You always lift up the light of your countenance upon us. As long as you're before the face of God, you have an inextinguishable light of hope. As long as you have the Lord himself you have the one who can give the gladness directly look at verse seven, he says you have put gladness in my heart.

More than in the season that there's rain and wind increase. Now, this isn't just talking about how wonderful bread and wine are although they are. But just as we have been given bread and wine as signs and seals at the Lord's table the Israelites in particular were promised that when things were good between them and God he would make their grain multiply and he would increase their wine.

And yet God says even when I don't give you those signs I can still take my gladness and put it directly into your heart even without the means by which I ordinarily glad in you because the Lord himself can gladness you remember the glorious him with which the book of Habakkuk ends how he says even if I don't get any of the ordinary covenant blessings the long as I have the Lord I will praise him.

And so we must never permit ourselves to descend into the despair of the beginning of verse 6 because that's to forget the Lord altogether. That means that sometimes you'll have a friend that you have to tell you know, I don't know how winner if it's gonna get better. It might be the Lord's providence to you to die in the midst of this distress.

But you still have him in the midst of this. Those are the kind of sturdy truths that we can help one another with and do so let us not be overly despairing either about our distress or our brothers lest we cause him to stumble as well. So we have explained by the end of this psalm Psalm 4:8 summarizes there is after he's done praying this prayer he says okay, I will both lie down in peace and sleep and the Hebrew word really means together the idea being that he lies down peacefully and falls asleep immediately how many of us on however many nights of wished that the sleep would come that quickly and here he's talking about it happening in the mid.

St of such a distress as has caused all these other different kinds of responses it's the same thing that causes the sweet sleep in Psalm 3 verse 5 because ultimately it is the Lord alone who makes us dwell in safety and so one more reason for us to be thankful that the Lord distressed David was so that he would pray pray prayers on his bed to deal with the distress in a godly manner.

And then the spirit would carry him along to take his bedtime distressed prayer and make it a song for use in public worship. This is what our God has done for us. So that we may be reminded how to take things to him when we are distressed and. Avoid some of these responses and deal with other people who are responding in incorrectly.