

Psalm 4

To the chief Musician with stringed instruments, A Psalm of David.

“Psalm 4”.

Verse 8 indicates that this psalm is an evening prayer.

It may well have been offered on the same occasion as described in the superscription of (Psalm verse 3).

“Have mercy upon me”, (verse 1), is a cry that David and others echo throughout the Psalter: the pious always petition for God’s benevolent attributes to be demonstrated.

“Verses 1-8”:

There are certain similarities between Psalms 3 and 4.

For example, the former is sometimes labeled a morning psalm (compare 3:5), while the latter has been called an evening psalm (compare 4:8).

In both, David is besieged with suffering, injustice and oppression.

Additionally, Psalm 4 also exhibits the changing attitudes of the worshiper in his most difficult of circumstances.

David’s movement will be from anxiety to assurance, as he travels down the road of prayer and trust in God.

At the end of yet another day of pressure, pain, and persecution, David engages in 3 conversations which ultimately lead to a point of blessed relaxation:

1. Praying to God for Preservation (4:1);
2. Reasoning with His enemies about Repentance (4:2-5);
3. Praising God for True Perspective (4:6-8).

Psalm 4 introduces the first of 55 assignments to the master, director or chief overseer of worship services in its title.

Further instruction is given in the direction “on stringed instruments”.

The chief musician, therefore, was to lead the great choir and the string portion of the orchestra in this celebration of worship.

Psalm 4:1" Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me [when I was] in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

"O God of my righteousness":

The ultimate basis for divine intervention resides in God, not in the psalmist.

On union with God's righteousness based on His mercy (see Jer. 23:6; compare 1 Cor. 1:30).

"Distress":

This is an important word for trying circumstances in the psalms.

It pictures the psalmist's plight as being in straits, i.e., painfully restricted.

Here his testimony to God's historical salvation, "thou hast enlarged me"; conveys the picture that his LORD had provided space or room for him.

The chief musician was the director of music in the sanctuary.

We will find that David had set a single person over the music that is in the sanctuary in the following verses.

1 Chronicles 6:31-32 "And these [are they] whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest." "And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and [then] they waited on their office according to their order."

The word Neginoth means instrumental music, or stringed instruments.

It can be extended to mean a poem set to music.

We know that the desire of the believer in Christ is to be a sweet sound in His ear.

Singing and soft music, soothe the troubled soul.

We know also, that Saul had called for David to sing and play for him.

This is the very way David had gotten into the house of Saul.

The word that was translated chief musician, is thought by some to mean [unto the end], which would indicate this was actually addressed to Christ.

It really does not matter to whom it is addressed.

The prayer is to God.

David is definitely calling to God, when he says: Hear me when I call.

David is saying: You helped me before, help me now.

We have all prayed along these lines at one time or another.

Wonder why we think that God will not hear our prayers?

David is not alone in crying for mercy either.

Mercy is not getting the punishment we deserve.

Just like David, we may not deserve God's help, but He will help us anyway how, when we pray to Him.

Notice in this also, that David says his righteousness is from God.

Remember, we were not righteous until Jesus took our sin on His body and clothed us instead with His righteousness.

Our righteousness was as filthy rags, but now our righteousness is in Jesus.

We need to see also, that David thanked Him for answering earlier prayers, while he is asking for this prayer to be answered.

God wants to hear us say that He was the One who brought the last victory to us.

Praise God every chance you get.

He likes to hear it.

Do we truly believe that God answers prayer?

Then pray and believe, and you shall have what you ask.

Verses 2-3: God's agenda for David (verse 3), is radically contrasted with that of his enemies in (verse 2).

The term for "godly" or "pious" in the Old Testament is above all else indicating a person blessed by God's grace.

Psalm 4:2 "O ye sons of men, how long [will ye turn] my glory into shame? [how long] will ye love vanity, [and] seek after leasing? Selah."

The problem above is they are sons of men.

These are men who have not been grafted into the family of God, and become sons of God.

This would be worldly men who have their thoughts stayed upon things of this world.

This really is the condition of our world today.

(2 Tim. 3:2-4), describes these people exactly.

They have no time for God.

Let us see who are the sons of God?

Let's look at two Scriptures that show us that all believers in Christ are sons of God.

Romans 8:15 "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6 "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Until a person, male or female, receives Jesus Christ as their Savior and becomes a son of God, they will do all sorts of things that shame God.

Leasing means falsehood in this Scripture.

This could mean a lot of things.

They are a liar, or perhaps they are seeking false gods.

It could even be both.

"Love vanity", just means loving this world and all things in it.

Psalm 4:3 “But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.”

It is the privilege of true and heroic natures to rise to a consciousness of their strength and dignity in the hour of peril, and when the victims of unjust persecution.

Besides his innate greatness, David has a grandeur and dignity, derived from his deep sense of the covenant between God and His anointed, and his own imperfect but sincere endeavor to act worthily the part of God’s vice-regent on earth.

His selection by Jehovah is an unanswerable reply to his calumniators, and the surest proof of his own uprightness.

“Hath set apart”:

That is, has distinguished or honored.

So rightly the LXX and Vulgate; the Hebrew word occurs in (Exodus 8:22; 9:4; 11:7).

Of severance between Israel and Egypt (Compare Psalm 17:7).

“Godly”: Hebrew [chasîd], properly, graced or gracious, according as it is used of Israel or of the God of Israel.

The covenant relationship is more prominent in the word than a moral excellence, although this is presupposed.

(See Psalm 1:5), where the word appears to be defined.

There is a difficulty in the construction: lô (to him) may go either with the verb or the object.

By comparison with (Psalm 17:7), we take it with the latter.

LXX, “his holy one.”

The following two Scriptures say exactly what I want to say about this Scripture above.

1 Peter 2:9 “But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”

Revelation 17:14 “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him [are] called, and chosen, and faithful.”

How wonderful to be the called of God, and to have answered that call.

We believers in Christ have been given the authority to pray to the Father in Jesus' name.

God hears and answers our prayers, when we ask in Jesus' name.

John 14:13 "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Psalm 4:4 "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah."

"Stand in awe and sin not":

In this context, the admonition means to tremble or shake in the fear of the Lord so as not to sin (compare Isa. 32:10-11; Hab. 3:16).

This can be translated "come to your senses" or "be stirred, tremble".

Being in this state is not an excuse to surrender to emotions and "sin".

Anger and sin do not have to go hand in hand (Eph. 4:26).

To stand in awe is to reverence God.

The fear, or reverence of God is the beginning of wisdom.

If we truly fear God we will not sin, because we do not want to displease Him.

Commune with your own heart means to think in your heart on God.

Sometimes, in our bed, is the only quiet time that we can think in our heart about God.

Let me give a Scripture that covers "be still".

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalm 4:5 "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD."

"Trust":

This command reflects the primary word group in the Old Testament for faith-commitment.

Sacrifices of righteousness to me, means making a special effort not to sin, because righteousness pleases God.

Our true righteousness, as we discussed earlier, is not being good enough but receiving our righteousness from Jesus Christ.

He took our sin and we received His righteousness.

Trust is beyond faith. It is resting in Jesus, knowing that He saved you.

Trust is knowing in your heart that all is well.

We cannot trust in man. Our trust must be in the LORD Jesus Christ.

Trust the LORD with all your heart, and He will reward you.

Verses 6-8: The taunting skeptics are cut off by the testimony of the psalmist to his rest because of God's personal blessings.

Psalm 4:6 “[There be] many that say, Who will show us [any] good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

Either,

(1) Of my own followers, who are weary of waiting upon God, and ready to despair. Or rather;

(2) Of mine enemies, and of the body of the people, who were either engaged against him, or at least unconcerned for him, and sought only their own case and advantage.

“Who will show us”:

Hebrew; make or give us to see? i.e. to enjoy, as this phrase is frequently used, as (Psalm 27:13; 34:12; Eccl. 2:1 3:13).

“Any good”:

I.e. worldly good, as appears by the opposition of; “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us”:

And by the explication of it of corn and wine in the next verse.

I.e., who will put an end to our present conflicts and troubles, and give us that tranquility and outward happiness which is the only thing that we desire.

Withal, he may seem to intimate the reason and motive which induced so many persons to take part against him.

Which was their eager desire of honor or worldly advantage, which they promised to themselves by appearing against David (see 1 Sam. 22:7).

‘Upon us’:

I.e. upon me and my friends.

Give us assurance of thy love and favor to us, and also evidence it to us by thy powerful and gracious assistance.

There are two separate thoughts in the verse above.

The first part is speaking of those who have not received the LORD as their Savior.

They are living in darkness.

They believe in only the things that they can see with their physical eyes.

The second half of the statement that’s above, is saying, open my eyes that I might see Thee more clearly.

Let your Light shine upon us.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

Those who have received Jesus as Savior, walk in His Light.

John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

Notice the contrast in the next Scripture.

John 11:10 “But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

If we belong to Jesus, we must walk in His Light.

John 12:35 “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.

Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

All of these Scriptures mean the same thing.

They are all showing the difference in a man who is not saved, that must see everything with his physical eyes, before he will believe.

And the saved man who believes, because he sees through the eyes of the spirit.

Psalm 4:7 “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time [that] their corn and their wine increased.”

Whatsoever thou shalt do with me for the future, as to my outward distresses and concerns, I have, at present, unspeakable pleasure and full satisfaction in the manifestations and testimonies of thy love to and in my soul.

Hereby thou hast, many a time, put gladness into my heart.

Not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable, and therefore this it is which I will still pursue, and which I will seek after, all the days of my life.

Observe reader, when God puts grace into the heart, he puts gladness into it.

Nor is there any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favor.

No, not the joy of harvest, even of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine greatly increase.

This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy.

But the mirth of carnal and worldly people is only a flash, a shadow, for even in laughter their hearts are sorrowful (Prov. 14:13).

We see the very same separation in this verse as in the previous verse.

The gladness of the unsaved is over physical benefits here on the earth.

The gladness of the saved is from within.

There may be calamities that is all around the saved person, and yet they still have the joy of the LORD within.

There is no greater blessing than having Jesus in our heart.

The Bible says we are not like those who have no hope (unsaved).

We have hope of the resurrection to eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

Life would be most miserable, if the only time we could rejoice was when a material blessing came along.

Most of the time, we would be down and out. Praise God!

I have my joy within, and it does not depend on earthly things.

Psalms 4:8 “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.”

“Dwell in safety”:

The word “safety” introduces a play on words by going back to the term “trust” (in verse 5).

David evidences a total confidence in God amidst his crisis.

One of the most popular memorized prayers of children begins, “Now I lay me down to sleep”.

Many adults in our society lay down to sleep, but the cares of this world will not let them sleep.

If a person has perfect peace, sleep should come easily.

Fear seems to be a way of life today.

So many bad crimes occur in the night.

We cannot protect ourselves 24 hours a day.

We cannot trust society, but we can trust God to watch over us and keep us safe.

Psalms 91:5 “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; [nor] for the arrow [that] flieth by day;”

When you lie yourself down to sleep, pray that God will watch over you as a Shepherd watches over His sheep.

You know we are His sheep.

There is a peace that passes understanding.

Pray that God will give you that peace that you might sleep.

Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Nothing we do keeps us dwelling in safety, only God makes us dwell safely.

Romans 15:33 “Now the God of peace [be] with you all. Amen.”

Psalm 4 Questions

1. Who was chapter 4 of Psalms addressed to?
2. Who penned Psalm chapter 4?
3. What was the role of the chief musician?
4. Who set the chief musician in the sanctuary?
5. Who was to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem?
6. What does Neginoth mean?
7. What 2 things soothe the troubled soul?
8. Why was David called to live in the house of Saul?
9. Who do some people believe this Psalm was addressed to, besides the chief musician?
10. The prayer is to _____.
11. What is mercy?
12. Where did David’s righteousness come from?
13. The Christian’s righteousness is in whom?
14. Do you truly believe that God answers prayer?
15. What is the real problem in verse 2?

16. What chapter and verse of the Bible describes our generation?
17. What 2 Scriptures show Christians as sons of God?
18. What special name can God's children call Him?
19. What does leasing mean?
20. What does loving vanity really mean?
21. Who are the chosen of God?
22. What 3 other things are the chosen called?
23. In Revelation 17:14, who are with the Lord?
24. What special authority have the believers in Christ been given?
25. What is meant by stand in awe?
26. What is the beginning of wisdom?
27. Why will we not sin, if we truly love God?
28. In our busy lives, when is sometimes the only time we can commune with God in our heart?
29. What goes beyond faith?
30. What is trust?
31. What are the 2 separate thoughts in Psalm 4:6?
32. Who is the Light of the world?
33. Who walk in the Light of Jesus?
34. What cleanses the Christian from all sin?
35. Describe the eyes of the believer.
36. What is the only thing that makes the unbeliever glad?
37. Why does the Christian's joy not depend on earthly things?

38. Why are so many people afraid at night?