

SBC – Sept. 24, 2023
Psalm 4:1-8 (NKJV)
“Safety is in the LORD”

Intro:

There are certain similarities between Psalm 3 and Psalm 4 – so much so that many think they relate to the same occasion related to Absalom’s revolt. However, that is not certain.

Psalm 3 is called a morning Psalm while Psalm 4 is called an evening Psalm.

Slide # 1

Psalm 3:5 (NKJV)

5 I lay down and slept; **I awoke,** for the LORD sustained me.

Psalm 4:8 (NKJV)

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

Slide # 2

Psalm 4

- ***“Safety Is in the LORD”***

- Outline:

A. v. 1 Praying for Preservation

B. vv. 2-3 Reasoning Repentance with Enemies

C. vv. 4-5 Responding Properly to Slandering Enemies

D. vv. 6-8 A God-Focused Perspective

Psalm 4 (NKJV)

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

This Psalm is directed to the “Chief Musician” who evidently served as the KEY worship leader among the musicians of David’s time. This designation is found 55 times in the heading of the Psalms and once at the conclusion of Habakkuk.

David instructs that it is to be accompanied with stringed instruments. I am not sure what those churches that don’t believe in using musical instruments do with this. I take it they haven’t studied the Psalms much.

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.

Twice in this verse David asks God to hear his prayer and these requests are sandwiched between remembering how God has worked in the past.

When David asks God to HEAR he is not thinking that God he is not thinking that God is not listening, rather the petition to God to hear is really asking God to move and intervene – to answer in the sense of granting what David is asking.

David refers to God as the “God of my righteousness!” David recognized that God alone is source of righteousness. It is God Who leads David in the right way. Being right is totally dependent upon God. And this was David’s desire – to go in the right way – to have God lead him in the way.

The old evangelist Sam Dalton used to say, “If it’s good that’s God – if it’s goof, that’s me.” How true.

God is our righteousness! If we are in the right way it is because God has made us right through faith. If we go in the right way it is because we are in sync with God. God and righteousness go together. If we have righteousness – right-ness it is because we are properly aligned with God.

Having called on God to hear when he calls, David then recounted how God in the past had relieved him in his distress (cf. Ps. 3:7).

“Relieved” is literally, “Made a spacious place for me.” In the past the squeeze had been on – the pressure was on and God gave David relief.

In prayer it is good to remember how God has worked in the past in answer to prayer. It fuels faith in praying for the current crisis – whatever that may be. As God has answered in the past, He is fully able to do so again!

And with that in mind, David says, “***Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.***” David recognizes that he doesn’t deserve anything, but rather comes humbly asking for mercy (or for God to be gracious) in hearing his prayer.

I am always very concerned about those who claim you can come and DEMAND things from God. Who do we think we are? We can't force God's hand. We can ask – and we should ask humbly! That is the model of David! But there is passion and intensity in David's asking.

There is power in prayer when there is passion.

Slide # 3

Isaiah 64:7 (NKJV)

7 And there is no one who calls on Your name, **Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;** For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities.

David is a good example of a man who stirred himself up passionately to take hold of God. This is intense praying. I mean right out of the gate in this Psalm David is asking for God to hear him and he asks twice. He is all about looking to God passionately.

And then we see what his great concern is as revealed in verse 2.

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

When the oppression is LONG that is hard. It causes us to cry out “How long”. Twice in this verse, showing the intensity of the situation, David cried out to his enemies about HOW LONG they would persist in their sinful activity.

If indeed the occasion was concerning the revolt of Absalom David was calling on his fellow Jews to in effect REPENT. But again we are not certain of the specific occasion. But certainly, the thing that was happening was that these people called “sons of men” were SLANDERING David in an effort to tear him down.

Calling them “sons of men” is a recognition that they are mere mortals. The problem with mere mortals is they like to put themselves up higher than they should and when they do they invariably abuse their fellow man.

David asks, how long “will you turn my glory to shame?” A person's glory in the OT often refers to their reputation – what they stand for.

Slide # 4

He [David] was being maligned by unprincipled men. These carping critics were dragging his name in the mud, assassinating his character, and besmirching his reputation with baseless accusations and downright falsehood. – **William MacDonald**

That is really hard! Interestingly, back in 3:3 David said that the LORD was his glory. In effect, to run David down was to run his God down – because David was so closely identified with the LORD as His anointed.

Almost as if in emotional agony David again says, “How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?” This was the burning issue. And David follows it up with “Selah” which called for a meditative pause – to stop and soak this in.

To try and destroy the reputation of the LORD’s anointed, to love worthless falsehoods was truly an incredibly outrageous thing to do. Slander is one of the greatest sins in the Bible. The name “devil” means “slanderer”. Those who slander align themselves with the devil. Slander is the intentional maligning and seeking to verbally destroy someone with lies and falsehood. This is the devil’s work. The devil is the father of lies and he is a slanderer.

To tear down anyone is serious, but to tear down the LORD’s anointed as seen in David was really an indirect attack on God Himself. HOW LONG would this spiritual insanity go on? David is trying to jar his slanderous enemies to their senses. It is so absurd that it calls for a meditative 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.

Here is the principal POINT that David desires to burn into the ears of his slanderous critics! He says “know” this – get this! In contrast to the slander of verse 2 that seeks to destroy him, he wants them to know that the LORD (YHWH- the faithful covenant God) has set apart for Himself who is godly.

God has His hand on the godly in a special way. They are set apart for God Himself. The LORD Himself has done this. These are not self-made people – but God-made people – and God has a special role for them as His set-apart people.

Slide # 5

Set apart is not the normal expression for “make holy” (Hb qadash) but is a word that means “distinguish” or “separate” (Hb palah). The Lord makes a clear distinction between the faithful (those loyal to Him) and the “exalted men” in how He relates to each of them (cf. Ex. 11:7). - **HCSB**

David is emphasizing that God makes a special distinction between the godly who are set apart for Himself and the ungodly – which by application would seem to refer to the slanders of verse 2.

The word “godly” (Heb. Hasid) is a form of the word hesed which refers to steadfast or loyal love. God treats with distinction those who are loyal (godly) to Him. God is for them. They serve His special purposes.

And so David says, “The LORD will hear when I call to Him.” The implication is clearly that David is godly in his commitment to God and therefore as one in a special set-apart role he has confidence that God will hear his prayer.

The ungodly don’t have a prayer – but the godly do! They have a distinct relationship with God that gives them the privilege of prayer.

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

Some think that David is continuing to speak to his enemies at this point, but I prefer the view that David is now addressing himself and his loyal followers who are very worked up over the whole situation. What is the proper response of the godly?

Well, David says, “**Be angry and do not sin.**” There is a proper place for anger. There is a place for righteous indignation. Sin should anger us.

Jesus in righteous anger drove the money changers out of the temple (Jn. 2:15). There is a problem if one is not bothered by slanderous sin.

I often say it is easy to obey the first part of this verse, (“Be angry”) but the second part “and do not sin” can be challenging. It is proper to be angry regarding sin but there is also DANGER. Anger so quickly leads to SIN! The Bible is clear that “wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God”. (Ja. 1:20)

In the matter of sin we want to share in God's righteous anger, but not in the sinful wrath of man. And sometimes it can be a challenge to discern what is righteous and what is carnal. We have to be real careful with anger.

Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth and yet when the people contended with him over a lack of water in anger he struck the rock in Numbers 20 instead of simply speaking to it as God had commanded. That error in anger was so serious that God would not allow him to go into the promised land (cf. Num. 20:10-12).

On the other hand, we have Phinehas in Numbers 25. An Israelite was so brazen in his sin that he dared bring a Midianite woman right into the middle of the camp – right in the sight of Moses. Phinehas, the son of Aaron the priest saw it and took a javelin and went after them – going into the tent they were in and thrusting them both through to death.

Slide # 6

Numbers 25:10–11 (NKJV)

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

11 “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because **he was zealous with My zeal** among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

The Key is to have the mind of God in all our anger – but even then we have to be very careful with it because it easily leads to sin. Controlled anger that is angry with what angers God is good, uncontrolled anger that is vengeful or human-oriented is not good.

Paul in the NT quotes from Psalm 4:4 making this application...

Slide # 7

Ephesians 4:26–27 (NKJV)

26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: **do not let the sun go down on your wrath,**

27 nor give place to the devil.

There is a place for anger but we should not let it linger, because to do so is to give room for the devil to work in our heart. Prolonged anger leads to sin.

Instead of continually working yourself up over SIN David says, “Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah”

In the quiet of the night when you are all alone with God and your thoughts work this out with the Lord. David says, “and be still”. Don’t be agitated. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Leave it with God – vengeance is His!

Slide # 8

This should perhaps be taken as a conditional sentence: “*If you feel anger at those who slander you (which you may well do), nevertheless do not sin by seeking revenge against them.*” The way to prevent sin is to ponder and be silent: that is, reflect on how the Lord has shown Himself trustworthy. – **ESV Study Bible**

Slide # 9

This does not discourage the faithful from using legal recourse when necessary; instead it speaks against personal revenge that circumvents the law and consumes the lives of the vengeful.

– **ESV Study Bible**

Slide # 10

David spoke of the Biblical practice of meditation, not the Eastern practice of meditation. In Biblical meditation, we **fill** our heart and mind with God’s word. In eastern meditation, the idea is to **empty** the heart and mind, leaving it open potentially for deceiving spirits.

– **David Guzik**

There are two “Selah’s” in this chapter. The one comes after noting the horrendous ungodly slander being committed by David’s enemies – as if to say stop and think about what you are really doing!

The other follows David’s prescription of how to respond to it – namely, yes anger is appropriate, but don’t sin. Instead work this out meditatively with God in the night and be still – which is like saying give it over to God instead of trying to handle it in the flesh.

Slide # 11

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV)

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

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

And then following the train of thought of verse 4 David calls for the response of worship and trust in the LORD. In effect, David calls on himself and those with him to be among the true worshipers and to be those who trust in the LORD.

With every difficult people problem in life, it comes down to this: Am I going to trust God with this or am I going to try and handle it in the flesh? David calls for the appropriate response of trusting 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.

I take it the “many” in view here continue to be the “godly” mentioned in verse 3. The “many” are literally saying, “***Oh that someone would provide us what is good.***” They are godly but they are struggling. The circumstances leave them with feelings of “uncertainty”. Hence, the call for them to TRUST in the LORD as just mentioned in verse 5.

And then in response, David offers up yet another prayer saying, “***LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.***” This prayer is essentially a recitation of the Aaronic priestly blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26 which God put forth as blessing to be bestowed on His people.

Slide # 12

Numbers 6:24–26 (NKJV)

24 “The LORD bless you and keep you;

25 The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;

26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’

What wonderful words of comfort and assurance. The smile of the LORD’s blessing upon His people means everything including assurance and peace. You can REST in that reality and sometimes we just need to be reminded of the LORD’s blessing which rests upon us as His people.

And just that quick, as David has bathed his situation in prayer and reflected on his special relationship with the LORD, just that quick his heart was filled with gladness and peace.

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

When the face of God shines on a person it fills their heart with gladness – great gladness – supernatural joy. Note David said to God, “You have put gladness in my heart”. What a wonderful reality – to focus on God and have Him put gladness in our heart.

When the farmers had finally gathered in their crops it was a time of exuberant JOY. But that couldn’t even compare to the gladness and joy David now felt in his heart.

And so David says...

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

Not only was David filled with gladness but also PEACE. He could now go to sleep in peace. He has worked it through in his own heart with God and God has filled him with gladness, peace, and assurance. David had called for “trust” in the LORD and he is there.

David could sleep well at night, even in distressing times and surrounded by the ungodly. He slept well because his safety was from the LORD, not from circumstances or even feelings.

– David Guzik

David began this Psalm in intense prayer – greatly bothered by the terrible slanderous things being said about him. But as he prayed and reflected on how God had worked in the past; his current position in the Lord; and the promised blessing of the LORD, he was then filled with gladness and peace.

Suddenly, it didn’t matter what all his critics were saying, because his focus was totally on the LORD. He could trust God with this Who would fulfill His distinctive purposes for Him.

Whatever you are dealing with tonight know that God brings relief in distress; He puts gladness in our hearts; and He makes us to dwell in safety. You can REST in the reality of God and His care. I closed the morning Psalm of Psalm 3 with this, but it also fits with the evening Psalm of Psalm 4 – and that is “He gives His beloved sleep” (Ps. 127:2).

It is funny the little nuggets you remember in life. Many years ago I remember Pastor Eddie Masters (who was instrumental in my conversion) shared about Psalm 4:8. Pastor Eddie was the pastor of visitation for many years at Indian Hills Community Church in Lincoln.

He shared how that often he would be with people just before they were to be put under and go into surgery. Psalm 4:8 was his “go to” verse. He said he often would read this verse and have a short prayer with the person and how God used that to comfort people.

May it comfort you tonight as well...

Psalm 4:8 (NKJV)

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

May God help us all to sleep well tonight and as we trust in Him He will!