

PSALM 4

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

David speaking to all sinners while addressing himself to Absalom

II. TEXT

1 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.

2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah. 3 But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; The Lord hears when I call to Him.

4 Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the Lord.

6 Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord! 7 You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound.

8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.

THE MESSAGE

¹When I call, give me answers. God, take my side! Once, in a tight place, you gave me room; now I'm in trouble again: grace me! hear me!

²You rabble—how long do I put up with your scorn? How long will you lust after lies? How long will you live crazed by illusion?

³Look at this: look who got picked by GOD! He listens the split second I call to him.

⁴⁻⁵Complain if you must, but don't lash out. Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking. Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.

⁶⁻⁷Why is everyone hungry for more? "More, more," they say. "More, more." I have God's more-than-enough, more joy in one ordinary day

⁷⁻⁸Than they get in all their shopping sprees. At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep, for you, GOD, have put my life back together.

III. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. ONE OF THE LAMENTATIONS—[more than 60]
 - o The second of five in a row—**Psalms 3-7**
2. SPECIAL TYPE OF LAMENTATION—IMRPECATORY
 - a. Open, honest expression of anger and frustration
 - b. Call upon God to punish opponents
 - c. Sound harsh and offensive today; even seems contrary to the Christian ethic

- d. But in that time they were considered acceptable expressions of bitter feelings
- e. Beware: do not apply NT ethical standards in judging OT situations

3. DIRECTION GIVEN TO CHOIR DIRECTOR

a. The Choir Director

- 1. Appointed by David—when planning to move the Ark to Jerusalem
- 2. First one named—Chenaniah—chief of the Levites—I Chr 15:22

b. Direction

- 1. To be accompanied by ‘Neginoth’
 - a. Stringed instruments—like lyres and harps
 - b. David appointed these stringed musicians—I Chr 15:20-21

1. Harp

- Zechariah
- Aziel
- Shemiramoth
- Jehiel
- Unni
- Eliab
- Maaseiah
- Benaiah

2. Lyre

- Mittithiah
- Eliphelehu
- Mikneiah
- Obed-edom
- Jeiel
- Azaziah

- c. Division and duties of all appointed musicians—given in I Chr 25

4. PROBABLY AN ‘EVENING PSALM’

- a. Soothing instruments used—not woodwinds, percussion, or those used for alarm
- b. Further textual evidence—verses 4 and 8
 - verse 4—exhorts reader—meditate upon your bed
 - verse 8—the psalmist—will lie down and sleep
- c. Further historical evidence
 - 1. Used in later Jewish history as part of the ‘Bedtime Shema’

2. Verse four connected with recitation of **Dt 6:4-5**

B. AUTHORSHIP AND CONTEXT

1. PSALM OF DAVID—ATTRIBUTED IN HEADING
2. POSSIBLY STILL DURING ABASLOM'S REBELLION
 - a. Immediately follows Psalm 3—about David's problem with Absalom
 - b. Tone similar to Psalm 3
 - David is humiliated—**v2a**
 - Surrounded by lies—**v2b**
 - Exasperation and anger—**v4**
 - Gloom and pessimism—**v6**
 - c. Connection between verses—in Psalm 3
 - *Many are saying*—unique phrase—found only in **4:6** and **3:2**
 - Psalmist lies down peacefully—**4:8** and **3:5**
3. SITUATION
 - a. Psalmist is besieged by enemies—**v2**
 - Whose opinions are worthless
 - Who are deceptive liars
 - b. Psalmist is surrounded by negative people
 - who are angry and vengeful—**v4**
 - who are pessimistic and gloomy—**v6**

C. SUBJECT

1. THE ISSUE
 - o How to respond when besieged by enemies and surrounded by pessimists
2. THE ANSWER—MAIN THEMES
 - o Appeal to God—rely on Him—not humans—for help
 - o Even when the ungodly are dominant—God secures His faithful ones
3. SECONDARY THEMES
 - a. The victories of sinners are temporary and meaningless
 - b. Humble repentance before God—not vengeance—brings true happiness

D. STRUCTURE

A. FIVE STANZAS

1. STANZA ONE—**verse 1**—Prayer to God for Help
2. STANZA TWO—**verses 2-3**—Responding to Enemies
3. STANZA THREE—**verses 4-5**—Answering the Angry
4. STANZA FOUR—**verses 6-7**—Dealing with Pessimists
5. STANZA FIVE—**verse 8**—Peace with God

B. SUB-STRUCTURE

1. STANZAS ONE AND FIVE

- a. Each is one verse
- b. Each has three parts

1. Verse 1

- Calling upon God
- Assurance from past deliverance
- Appeal to God

2. Verse 8

- Psalmist will lie down
- Psalmist will sleep in peace
- Because he can trust the Lord

2. STANZAS TWO AND THREE

- a. Each has **two verses** with **four parts**

1. **Stanza 2**—**verses 3-4**—**part one in verse 3**—**part two in verse 4**
2. **Stanza 3**—**verses 5-6**—**part one in verse 5**—**part two in verse 6**

- b. Each stanza has a break—pause—between the two parts

1. **Stanza 2**—**Selah** ends **verse 3**
2. **Stanza 3**—**Selah** ends **verse 5**

3. STANZA FOUR

- a. Has two verses—**vv6-7**—with four parts

1. Parts 1-2—**verse 6**
2. Parts 3-4—**verse 7**

- b. Not pause between parts—one continuous text

III. EXPOSITION

A. STANZA ONE—verse 1

1 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. (NASB)

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. (KJV)

1. APPEAL TO GOD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

a. ‘God of my right’

1. Legal term
2. God is the ultimate means of defense—vindication against unjust charges
3. Only God sees things objectively—only he is ‘right’ and ‘just’
4. God is my vindicator—the Upholder of my rightness

b. Rooted also in the Davidic covenant

1. God has promised to uphold and sustain David
2. If David is faithful to God—if David himself acts justly

2. CONFIDENCE OF PSALMIST

a. Confidence—in God’s character—and David’s cause

- The psalmist knows he can call on God
- Because God is always right—and sides with the right cause
- And David is confident his own cause is right
- So God will certainly come to David’s aid

b. Confidence—in God’s past dealings

1. David draws strength from God’s past dealings with him

2. When *in distress*

- ‘hard pressed’—in a ‘tight corner’

3. *You have relieved* = enlarged

- God **opens** a way of escape

4. Other ways to say this

- When I was tied up—you untied me
- When I was snared/trapped—you set me free

5. Parallel passages

- **118:5**—almost identically—God brought him out of distress to a large place
- **25:17**—appeal to relieve his distress of an anxious heart
- **18:29**—God has brought psalmist to a ‘broad place’

c. Confidence—that God will listen and answer

1. Psalmists plaintive plea for God to hear—at end of **verse 1**
2. He is certain God does listen and answers

➤ **Psalm 3:4**—He has done it before from Mount Zion

B. STANZA TWO—verses 2-3

2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah. 3 But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; The Lord hears when I call to Him. (NASB)

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. 3 But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. (KJV)

1. DAVID STATES THE SITUATION—ABOUT HIS ENEMIES

a. Sons of men

- Probably leaders who were formerly his stalwart heroes—now now rebelling
- The leading one—Absalom—is his own **son**
- David reminds them they are only human—sons—born of men

b. David is humiliated

1. His glory has been turned to shame—**v2a**
2. This humiliation—springs from their delusion and lies—**v2b**

c. David knows their real character

1. Their opinions—their claims—are **worthless**

- a. ‘worthless’ = vanity = emptiness
- b. Absalom’s claim to the throne—is worthless

2. They are **deceptive**

a. They are liars

b. KJV—*leasing*

✓ ‘Leasing’ = archaic English for lying

✓ See 5:6—describes the liar—God hates such men of bloodshed and deceit

c. Absalom’s methods of rebellion—founded on deception

1. Luring people to make him judge—giving them favorable decisions
2. Deceived David—going to Hebron to ‘fulfill a vow’
3. Lured 200 fighters to go with him—at first they did not know his agenda!

2. DAVID’S REMEDY AGAINST ENEMIES

- a. He returns to—appealing to God—for approval
- b. God’s approval is what counts
 1. For office, honor, position—where He puts us is most important
 2. For fellowship—relationship with God counts more than that of humans
 3. The ultimate answer to human wounding and discouragement—God’s approval
- c. David falls back on his relationship with God
 1. Again—based on the Davidic covenant
 2. God has set him apart

Literally—he has been ‘wonderfully selected’

God has selected David for something ‘wonderful’

And God is faithful to fulfill His promise to David
- d. The ‘godly man’
 1. David knows he is ‘godly’ = faithful—pious—merciful
 2. This is a **consequence**—not **cause**—of being set apart
 - a. We are ‘godly’ because God chooses us—and sets us apart
 - b. And He is faithful to shape our character into what He calls us to be
 - c. We are not chosen because of inherent—faithfulness—piety—mercy!

C. STANZA THREE—verses 4-5

4 Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the Lord. (NASB)

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord. (KJV)

1. KEY CONCEPT = **TREMBLE**—WITHOUT SIN

- o ‘Tremble’ = Heb. to be shaken/unquiet
- o Can mean—trembling with **anger** or **fear**

2. SITUATION

- a. Possibly David has been angry—but comes to terms with it here
- b. Or David’s followers are angry—and seek vengeance
 - Like Abishai—David’s nephew—wanted to behead Shimei for cursing David
 - Like Joan and Abishai—David tries to restrain them from seeking Absalom’s life
 - Like James and John—who want to call down fire upon Samaritans—**Lk 9**
- c. This anger might seem righteous—but it can become ungodly
 - Similar to the raging of the heathens against God—see **2:1**

3. DAVID’S RESPONSE

- a. Righteous anger is all right—but let it go!
 1. Become angry—okay—but without sinning
 2. Paul quotes this text
 - **Eph 4:26**—when he says not to let the sun go down on our anger
 3. Remember—“vengeance is Mine, says the Lord”
 - Principle established in OT—**Dt 32:35**
 - Confirmed in NT—quoted in **Rom 12:19**
 4. **Verse 5b**—final solution—ultimately rely on the Lord—to vindicate
- b. Three step remedy for anger—and vengeful heart
 - **Meditate** in night watch
 - **Sacrifice** righteously
 - **Trust** in the Lord

4. MEDITATE IN THE NIGHT WATCH

- a. **Meditate in your heart** = Heb. ‘to think’
- b. Parallel passages
 - **Ps 63:6**—*On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.*
 - **Ps 119:148**—*My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon your promises.*
- c. Nighttime is when we usually brood and worry
- d. Instead—use quiet time with God to become calm—rest in the Lord
 - **Ps 46:10**—*Be still and know that I am God*

e. Contrasted with

- Trembling with anger
- Being agitated with murmuring and grumbling

5. OFFER RIGHTEOUS SACRIFICES

a. Obedience from persons set apart (made righteous) by God

1. We are not righteous because of our sacrifices/obedience
2. Our sacrifice/obedience is righteous—because God has set us apart

b. Don't let our sacrifice/obedience be tainted by human emotions/designs

1. Not motivated by anger or vengeance, or ungodly designs
2. But they must be from a pure heart

6. ULTIMATE SOLUTION—TRUST IN THE LORD

- o In all we do—totally rely on him—with a 'perfect heart' (whole-heartedly)
- o He is the source of anything right—anything faithful—anything obedient—that we do
- o He alone—is the One who vindicates us—**or** chastises us for disobedience

D. STANZA FOUR—verse 6-7

6 *Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord!* **7** *You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound.* (NASB)

6 *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* (KJV)

1. SITUATION—PROBLEM—**v6a**

- a. David deals with pessimists—who project gloom—and defeatism
- b. Like those who told David—there is no deliverance from God—see **3:2**
 - Same phrasing in both Psalms—**3:2 = 4:6**—*Many are saying*

2. SOLUTION—**v6b**

- a. Proper response
 - Look for the **Lord's favor**
 - Only He can lift the veil of despondence and depression
- b. '*Light of Your countenance*'
 1. Harkens to blessing in **Numbers** blessing

- **Nu 6:24-26**—*May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His fact to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*

2. Parallel passage in **Psalms**—shows how *only* the Lord can encourage us this way

- **Ps 44:3**—*For by their own sword they did not possess the land, and their own arm did not save them, but your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your countenance, for You favored them.*

3. Reiterates David’s confidence in God—made in the previous Psalm

- **Ps 3:3**—*But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.*

3. THE LORD’S FAVOR—IS BETTER THAN ALL THEIR BEST!

a. Situation—Problem

- Absalom’s army/followers had full access to all the harvest
- David—on the edge of the wilderness—has lean provisions

b. But what God provides—is even better

1. The inner gladness of the heart—that comes from the Lord

- Is far more satisfying—than the external pleasures of life

2. The Lord is constant—in season and out of season

- Not variable—seasonal
- Not depending on weather/harvest and temporary circumstances of life

4. VERSE 7—IN HEBREW LITURGY

a. Part of the ‘Prayer for Sustenance’

b. Recited on High Holy Days

- Rosh Hashana (New Year)
- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

E. STANZA FIVE—verse 8

8 *In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.*
(NASB)

8 *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.*
(KJV)

1. SAFETY—IN THE LORD

a. *Safety*

1. Comes from the root word—‘trust’—to be ‘unafraid’
2. This safety—is not just being in a safe and secure setting
3. But—being unafraid—because we can **trust** our Protector

Ex: ‘safety’ of Patriot battery behind us—even in dangerous setting

b. *You alone make me to dwell in safety*

1. Can mean—only God gives this safety [and that certainly *is* the idea]
2. Can also mean—God makes us to dwell in safety when *we* are alone

2. PEACE AND CONTENTMENT—IN TRUSTING GOD

a. *Both* = ‘at once’

- Both actions—lay down and sleep—occur simultaneously

b. *Both* = adverb—meaning ‘directly’

- As soon as the head hits the pillow
- No anxious tossing and turning—no worrying about problems

c. This is the same confidence David had when he rested at the ford—[3:5](#)