

Psalm 4

1 To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David. **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.

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. **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.

6 *There be* many that say, Who will shew us *any* good? LORD, **lift** thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. **7** Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased. **8** I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Peaceful Sleep

OUTLINE

- (1) Casting Your Burden Upon God (v1)
- (2) Confidence of God's Care (v2-5)
- (3) Contentment and Peace (v6-8)

INTRODUCTION

This psalm is commonly known as an evening psalm. The psalmist writes at the close the day when he prepares to close the day, settle in and rest. That he may find good sleep. As a child of God, how should one, as it were, prepare for bed? For the psalmist, this is his testimony at the closing moments of his day when he testified – “*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*” (v8)

You notice how he commits himself to the LORD. There is a sense of calm and serenity in his mind, all the turmoil of the day seemed to have been shut out and kept under control and there is a great assurance that he experiences of God's protection over him as he closes his eyes and rest his mind. This is a picture of God's care in the believer's life. There is that intimate knowledge of a personal relationship with his LORD whom he expresses with confidence of complete help.

Is life so easy for the psalmist? Is he experiencing a care-free life? No. When psalmist begins the psalm at the close of his day, he expresses distress. What was the secret of his calm frame by the time he closes his eyes to sleep? It was his prayer life. He finds peace and contentment through prayer. God's presence overwhelms and calms his heart. Here is a life consecrated to the will of God and to the care of God. He awakes refreshed from his sleep to begin a new day.

Three thoughts for our consideration:

- (1) Casting Your Burden Upon God (v1)
- (2) Confidence of God's Care (v2-5)
- (3) Contentment and Peace (v6-8)

(1) Casting Your Burden Upon God (v1)

1 *To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David. **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.*

David is the author of this psalm. It is not known the setting for this psalm. Typically, the psalmist would reveal them at the preface of the psalm. This psalm is a song put to music. The word "Neginoth" is used in the book of Habbakuk 3:19 to describe "stringed instruments". A song accompanied with stringed instruments.

This psalm begins with a prayer. The psalmist calling out to God to answer his prayer for relieve. His heart seemed to be filled full with distress. The word "distress" literally means "narrow" or "straits" and it means also "adversary" or "foe". He is distressed as a child of God living for God's honour and glory because he faces opposition as he sought to do God's will in his life.

He addressed his God as the "God of my righteousness". Spurgeon observed well in "The Treasury of David", "It is not used in any other part of Scripture. It means, Thou art the author, witness, the maintainer, the judge, and the rewarder of my righteousness; to thee I appeal from the calumnies and harsh judgments of men."

He seeks God's vindication for the false accusation that he was hurled upon him and great disturbs his heart. He plead with God to show mercy and favour to him. His heart does not rebuke him for the matter at hand, he felt that his conscience was clear and he sought his God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His justice to vindicate him. He will not take matters into his own hands but ask God to return his innocence. His appeal is to his God.

Recall the widow who was in great distress for some matter that confronted her and she sought an unjust judge to vindicate her wrong. Jesus gave this story to teach the lesson "*man ought always to pray and not to faint.*" (Luke 18:1). The lesson in this parable is to have faith in God to help us through the distresses in life.

This parable by our Lord Jesus teaches us the lesson never to give up on the Lord: "*men ought always to pray and not to faint.*" Prayer is the believer's power with God. Persistence in prayer is not the natural habit of the believer. Jesus uses this parable to teach this lesson. This parable encourages us to never stop praying even in the toughest of circumstances. Our faith cannot be seen but our prayer life can be seen, it is evidence of true faith. It gives hope to the children of God who are going through any trouble, call upon Him and He will help you. He is always fair, always just, on our part we must make sure we are on the Lord's side.

This widow we can see is in great distress and in her helpless estate, being sorely pursued by her adversary, enemy or tormentor. She sought the help of this judge. She seemed to have only one avenue for recourse – to appeal to this wicked or unjust judge, an almost impossible task. What did she say to the judge? “Avenge me of my adversary” This word “avenge” means to do justice, to vindicate, protecting one from another or taking just “vengeance”. It is in the imperative, a command. It involves the attempt of the widow to exert the force of her will upon the will of the unjust judge.

What was the response of the judge to the widow’s plea? Verse 4a says, “And he would not for a while...” Jesus says, “he would not [help] for a while [after a period of prolonged pleading by the widow].”

Notice here the judge’s continued refusal in response to her continual asking. Here we want to pause to consider this widow’s situation that caused her to be so persistent. **She was at her wits end. There is no other way that she would think of that has the power/influence to right the wrong that she has suffered and continue to suffer. It is so unbearable, she was desperate. The emphasis is not that one need to pester God until He reluctantly responds but that He will vindicate His misunderstood and suffering people. The encouragement is therefore, under any circumstances, we should never give up but continue to trust the Lord, keep on praying.** We are to wait upon God as He works out His justice in apparent slowness.

Our Lord now turns His audience from the unjust judge to God Himself, who always do justice and does not fail in showing compassion for believers who suffer. Even the unjust judge will not tolerate pestering how much more our infinitely just Judge? God will certainly respond to His beloved one “his own elect” by making right the wrong that they suffer when they cry to Him. Our God will always do what’s just and right and is filled with compassion to help His children who are suffering.

God’s respond will be swift and very reassuring, Jesus says, “8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” (Luke 18:8).

(2) Confidence of God’s Care (v2-5)

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.

Spurgeon said well, “In this second division of the Psalm, we are led from the closet of prayer into the field of conflict. Remark the undaunted courage of the man of God.”

The phrase “sons of men” refers to ungodly men who sought to thwart his effort to do the will of God.

Boice observed well verse 2, “David relates to those who are harming him. They were wrong. He is right. He is asking God to help him. Nevertheless, although slandered and injured by them. David speaks of his enemies kindly

and tries to win them from their errors. And there is this: in trying to help them, he unintentionally but inevitably helps himself.”

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

He expresses confidence that his LORD who has set him apart for Himself as His child would also help him to fulfil His will for his life. He is confident that all gainsayers will be silenced because God is there for him.

When Jesus was in the Gethsemane and Judas Iscariot came with the little army of men to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and started flinging it cutting the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus said all who yield the sword will also perish by the sword.

Luke 6:32-38 *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

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.

Tremble and sin not. Rather than plotting mischief while they are awake in their bed search their own hearts if there be any wicked way in themselves. This exercise of examining one’s innermost self is reflected in David’s prayer in **Psalm 139:23-24** *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* **Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* If we often deceive ourselves, don’t know we need to search our own hearts, our intentions and motives, if they are for self or for God? When he has searched himself he may say as Sir Galahad in Tennyson, “My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure” when one has ten-fold strength from a sense of one’s accepted standing before God, then one can rejoice in the Lord despite tauntings hurled from every quarter. (Timothy Tow, Meditations from Psalms).

When the gainsayers would examine their hearts, they would have found themselves guilty and need to seek for forgiveness from God.

(3) Contentment and Peace (v6-8)

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Prayer Meeting - Balm For the Weary (A Devotional Study of the Psalms)
29 March 2017*

*6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, **lift** thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. 8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*

He is happy in his heart because he understands that although situation seemed bleak with men, it is not so with God who is able to work out all things for good to His children who loves Him.

He experiences joy in his heart the kind of joy that is more gratifying than getting a pay rise and receiving a physical bounty. The word "gladness" is joy. As he rests in the Lord, he finds strength in his heart (Nehemiah 8:10).

He was also to find a sense of calmness of God's presence protecting and prospering his ways. He has the assurance in his heart of God's ability to help him through the web of his distress. He dozed off and have a good rest.

CONCLUSION

(1) Casting Your Burden Upon God (v1)

(2) Confidence of God's Care (v2-5)

(3) Contentment and Peace (v6-8)

I Trust In Thee

Hear me, O God my righteousness
Thou hast enlarged me in distress
And in thy mercy heard my prayer
I trust in Thee

O ye the sons of men who seeked
Who loved the way of sin and shame
But thou has set me 'part for Thee
I trust in Thee

Stand now in awe and do not sin
Commune your heart upon your bed
Be still and know that He is near
My God I trust

Give sacrifices of righteousness
And offer at Thy throne of grace
For who will show us any good?
I trust in Thee

Thou hast put gladness in my heart
More than their wine and corn increased
I will both lay me down in peace
And safely sleep

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